



Eklavya Schools: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

In present study main emphasis is on improving the quality of education in rural schools. The origin of activities of Eklavya dates back to 1972, when two voluntary organisations viz. Kishore Bharati and Friends Rural Centre in Madhya Pradesh joined hands to promote a scientific temperament in the society through improved science education in schools. Eklavya encourages regular attendance of students. Regularity is important. To inculcate the good habit of brushing teeth at night before going to bed, JS gives the children a 'Sunshine Smile' Badge. All educators are required to know more than 80% of the students by name and always address them as such. The morning Assembly in each school starts with the blowing of the shankh (conch). Eklavya believes in holistic development of a child. Tabla, Keyboard, Guitar, Drums, Mouth Organ and Flute are offered as activities. There are many ways through which discipline can be reinforced in the students. One method to do this is to display a Behaviour Chart in the class. All the educators of Eklavya take an oath in the beginning of each academic year. Eklavya believes that every child is unique and has inborn gifts and talent. However, its main approach is to enable social justice through appropriate education. Productive and meaningful learning will result through a dynamic interaction between the teacher and the children. A teacher's role should be that of a facilitator. Evaluation should not pose any threat to the learner.

Introduction

Eklavya is a voluntary organisation based in Madhya Pradesh with the main objective of making education a joy for children and promotion of science education in Government schools. Their main emphasis is on improving the quality of education in rural schools. The organisation does not run schools of its own. Instead their focus is on suitable intervention in the regular school programme by providing alternative curricula and teaching methods at the primary and middle levels. The teaching material developed by them for classes 1-8 is widely acclaimed for its approach towards exploiting the creative potential of children and making the process of learning and teaching an integral part of the playful activities of a child. They organise regular training programmes for teachers for effective implementation of the innovative teaching material.

At present, Eklavya is working in 14 districts of Madhya Pradesh. About 500 schools in these districts are implementing the teaching material and methodologies of Eklavya benefitting about 1 lakh children. About 2000 teachers of various schools have already been trained. Eklavya works very closely with Madhya Pradesh Government and hence has been able to have an impact on the education at mass scale.

Eklavya also publishes many magazines for children as well as teachers. They publish many low cost books of general reading for children and also produce and market educational toys.

Historical Background

The origin of activities of Eklavya dates back to 1972, when two voluntary organisations viz. *Kishore Bharati* and *Friends Rural Centre* in Madhya Pradesh joined hands to promote a scientific temperament in the society through improved science education in schools. They launched a programme called the *Hoshangabad Science Teaching Programme* (HSTP) in 16 middle schools of Hoshangabad district. Resource persons from various premier institutes of India like Delhi University, TIFR, IITs, various colleges of Madhya Pradesh and other places joined hands in this programme. The popularity of this programme led to The *Social Science Teaching Programme* (SSTP) in 1981. Eklavya got registered as a society in 1982. The experiences from the HSTP and SSTP programmes made the volunteers of Eklavya realise the dire need for basic reforms in the primary education. For 3 years starting 1983, the group was involved in intensive classroom observation and discussions with teachers and parents and an analysis of their observations so as to translate it into a strategy and action for

change. Field testing of the Eklavya teaching material was also carried out. In 1986, started the *Prathamik Shiksha Karyakrama* (Primary Education Programme) acronymed to PRA_SHI_KA. The programme was initiated in seven primary schools of Harda and Shahpura blocks. In 1989, it was expanded to 25 schools and by 1995, the entire block of Shahpura with 130 schools had been covered under this programme. At present, the PRASHIKA programme is being implemented in 150 rural schools of Madhya Pradesh.

100% Attendance

Eklavya encourages regular attendance of students. Regularity is important. With this aim, 100% attendance awards are given to students every month. The data is collected from the class teacher on the last working day of each month and the names of students getting 100% attendance is announced in the assembly the next day. Students are also given a sticker of appreciation to stick in their diaries.

In PS, JS and MS badges are given every month. The name of the child and the month for which she has received it is written on it. The child then proudly displays the badge for 3 days.

This helps in motivating the students to maintain their record throughout the year. Students getting 100% attendance throughout the year receive a certificate and a medal at the Annual Prize -Giving and Investiture Ceremony. A two-day grace is considered for awarding this certificate but these two days should not be the last working day before a vacation or the first working day after a vacation.

Educators also receive a certificate for 100% attendance for the year on the same day. Parents who attend the Mother's Workshop 100% are also felicitated on the Investiture Ceremony Day.

This award is a very prestigious one and students come to school regularly and work for it trying not to be absent even for a single day throughout the year. Many times a child may feel slightly sick or low in the mornings. Yet she makes a good effort to be present so that she may be eligible for the award.

Sunshine Smile Badge

To inculcate the good habit of brushing teeth at night before going to bed, JS gives the children a 'Sunshine Smile' Badge. The children honestly tell their class teachers whether

they have followed the good habit for the entire month or not. If not, they do not accept the badge and make a promise to follow the good habit for the next month and win it.

Knowing 100% Names of Students

All educators are required to know more than 80% of the students by name and always address them as such.

This is facilitated by the following practices –

- All students and educators wear name tags for one month in the beginning of the academic session
- In their free periods educators may attend other classes
- A class - wise photo - matrix is prepared (In one page 25 photos of students are put with their names). This is then circulated among educators.
- Educators go to each other's classes and take attendance.
- Educators go to each other's classes during lunch break.

One parent shared with us that her child left Eklavya and went to another school. After a year the child came back to Eklavya. On asking the reason for coming back the parent said the child wanted to come back because in the other school he was called – ‘that new boy’ for the whole year! The sense of belongingness that the child feels with the institution is immense because every adult knows him by name. It gives the child a sense of security and well-being and makes him want to be in school.

The Principal is required to know 100% names of students. She is also expected to know the names of most parents and in many cases their profession/business and family background.

In other words, the Principal is expected to know each student quite well. The Principal takes 10–16 periods per week in nearly all classes of her school. These are either a subject or Value Education.

In Eklavya the whole school is divided into four schools (PS, JS, MS and SS) and therefore each Principal does not have more than 400 students under her care.

100% prayers

The morning Assembly in each school starts with the blowing of the *shankh* (conch). After this, students chant a *shloka* and sing a prayer. All educators and students chant prayers together in the same posture. The educators and students are expected to know all the prayers 100%. To ensure that this takes place, practice is given in the home period. During assembly for the first month students carry their School Diary which has the prayers printed day-wise so that they learn all prayers by heart.

Activities - General

Activities are important. Eklavya believes in holistic development of a child. In the Junior School children are exposed to all the activities namely Music, Dance, Art, Craft, Nature Club, Skating and Computers. A student is given no choice and has to do all activities. Each class has a period allotted to each of the above activities. After four years when the child reaches MS she chooses an activity that she likes and wants to pursue. So it is in MS that she gets a chance to pick up the nuances of the activity. In MS activities are held four days of the week – Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday & Friday.

Students choose one activity from a list given and pursue it for the entire year. To enhance the child's creativity, in SS activities are offered twice a week Monday & Tuesday for Class 11 & 12 and Wednesday & Friday for class 9 & 10.

In the beginning of the year, the child chooses (from a range of activities offered) one activity that they pursue twice a week. The school offers the following activities: Drawing, Painting, Pottery, Knitting-Embroidery and Needle Work, Keyboard, Guitar, Tabla, Drums, Vocal-filmi and non filmi, Western dance, Electronics, Chess and Carrom.

Throughout the year, students get ample opportunity to display their talent, learnt in various activities, be it through Euphoria, Phoenix, Picasso and Inter-house Competitions. Part-time activity teachers are recruited by the school to teach students. These teachers maintain attendance and also plan what they will teach the students for the entire year.

Activities - Musical Instruments

Tabla, Keyboard, Guitar, Drums, Mouth Organ and Flute are offered as activities. Some students have an inborn talent for music and art whereas others develop it through these activities. Many students do change their activity when they go from Class 5 to 6 but after that

more or less settle down and pursue the activity they are good in. Music is relaxing. It soothes the mind and helps one overcome the stressful period. It also enhances the creativity and imagination of the students. By playing wind instruments like mouth organ and flute breathing becomes deeper and healthier. The slow and soothing melody gives instant relaxation. Instruments like these are easy to carry and students can play on their own even later in life for relaxation.

Students are encouraged to practice the instrument they learn in school at home also. Most of them buy an instrument for home.

Activities - Clay Work

Through clay work as activity students learn to handle the potter's wheel. The class begins with the fun of making the clay dough to giving it different shapes and forms. Students learn to make jewellery, utensils, masks as well as artistic showpieces of clay.

This activity not only develops fine motor skills but also gives a different dimension to the imagination and creativity of the students. Clay Work is also considered to be very therapeutic - where the children feel calm and relaxed while handling the potter's wheel and the wet clay.

Clay Work is done by the PS students also. Students with special needs have a class every day. It helps them to give expression to an idea as also helps them develop motor-coordination. All work that the students do throughout the year is displayed on *Kala Sarjan*.

Activities - School Band

School band is an activity wherein children learn to synchronize different musical instruments like drums, euphonium, baritone, Bugle, saxophone, trumpet, and *khanjari*. Students learn and master one instrument and then all of them play a tune together as a team. Co-ordination of different instruments is an integral part of the school band. Students develop the skill of co-ordination and co-operation with each other during this activity.

We have the entire set. But have not found a band master who knows all the instruments and can teach children. Even if they come they do not continue for long. We wish to have this as an activity and as yet are not successful.

Activities - Wood Workshop

Wood Workshop is a curricular subject in MS where children learn to give different shapes to small pieces of wood. Students learn the art of cutting, hammering the nail, screwing and polishing of wood pieces.

Students make artistic key holders, pen stands, showpieces by bending the wires and intricate designs on chalk. Wood Workshop is also offered as an optional activity. Here children learn to handle heavy drilling and sandpaper machines used for finishing of wooden pieces. The scientific principles of screw, pulley and gear learnt during the science classes are made practically clear and applicable.

Students are instructed how to handle machines well, to avoid accidents and are made aware of all safety precautions to be taken during the class. Wood Workshop activity develops in the students' observational, analytical and organizational skills along with development of fine motor skills. Students learn to take care of one's self and others during the activity classes.

They learn to handle equipment with all safety requirement and precautions. For e.g. – the use of the saw is taught to them or else they will cut their hand. Therefore they develop a sense of responsibility and learn to look after themselves. They take equipment from its place, use it and keep it back and not leave it on the table.

This ensures others find it in the proper place for use. They maintain a safe distance and take care of each other's safety. Like clay modelling this activity is fascinating and gives a sense of satisfaction and achievement to the student who starts with a raw piece of wood and transforms it into a product like a key stand.

All work that the students do throughout the year is displayed on *Kala Sarjan*. Here they see each other's work and compare and improve upon their work the next time.

Activities – Embroidery

Here students learn needle and thread work. They learn basic stitches and then move on to make intricate designs. Students learn to make tea coasters, cross-stitch frame, embroidery on pillow covers, patchwork napkins, soft toys, cross-stitch bags and crochet caps. This activity motivates the student to build up their confidence and concentration by exploring their potential.

This activity teaches children eye - hand co-ordination, to be nimble with their fingers, sense of neatness, enhances aesthetic sense, exposes them to colour combinations and arrangement of patterns.

Most important is that the back of the cloth is paid as much attention as the front of the embroidery for neatness and finesse.

So far only girls opt for this activity and Eklavya is working on how to make it a gender-free activity. All work that the students do throughout the year is displayed on *Kala Sarjan*.

Behaviour chart

There are many ways through which discipline can be reinforced in the students. One method to do this is to display a Behaviour Chart in the class. This is done in MS– Classes 5 to 8.

This chart is put up in all the classes with the names of the students of the class. The students are then marked in the chart with abbreviations (given in bracket) of the desired behaviour that they have not fulfilled.

They are marked on various criteria as follows –

Regularity in homework submission (HW),

Books Forgotten (BF)

Proper and correct Uniform (U)

Nails / Hair (N)

Reading for the day (R)

Books maintained well (BM)

Behaviour in class, library, activity, discipline between the classes, in the corridor, breaks, etc. (BEH)

Exam Behaviour - cheating or copying (EB)

For every good and remarkable behaviour a tick is given (or left blank) and the abbreviation filled in red for inappropriate or unacceptable behaviour. This chart helps the student to evaluate herself. Also putting up the sheet on the classroom soft board reminds students everyday about areas they need to improve upon. They see that some students do not have a single cross and this motivates them to try and achieve the same.

If the number of red abbreviations exceeds the desirable limit then the student is counselled. Ways and means of emulating acceptable behaviour are shared. Parents are also informed periodically through the diary through the PEC (Parent Educator Communication) pages and if need be a personal meeting is also held in the Principal's office.

Educator's Oath

All the educators of Eklavya take an oath in the beginning of each academic year. A day is fixed in the first week of June when the Principal of each school renders the oath to the educators of the respective school. Just like doctors take the Hippocratic oath as soon as they are ready to practice so the educators take an oath on similar lines reiterating their dedication towards the profession.

Oath for Teachers of Tomorrow

On my honor, I swear that I shall, at all times and places, in thought, word and deed, live up to the high ideals and dignity of the noble profession of teaching.

I shall see myself as a friend, philosopher and guide to the learners in my care, recognizing all the while that I am no less a learner myself.

I shall try to empower them to actualize their individual potentials.

I will not only help her dream, but help her realise that she has been given the power to actualize that dream.

I shall not be judgmental, but see the unique greatness of each child.

I shall care for every child without any show of partiality or favour.

I shall not, at the same time, hesitate to confront her and tell her things she doesn't like.

Keeping such responsibilities in mind I shall try to develop the golden skills of love, kindness and patience without which I will be unable to make any impact in this noble line.

I will not be ashamed to say “I know not” and will not shy away from the onus of finding out and sharing with my students.

I shall not misguide, misrepresent or mislead; nor point the wrong way to my students.

I will not try to be popular and earn favors or appreciation from students by any unethical or unfair means.

I will remember that warmth, empathy and understanding are as important as academic results.

I will respect what Mahatma Gandhi said : the literary qualifications of teachers is not so essential as their moral fibre.

Finally I will not permit considerations of nationality, prejudice or material advancement to intervene in any way with my work and my duty to the present and future generations.

Jai Hind

Eklavya Slogan (Motto)

The central aim and purpose of all education is the child. Eklavya believes that every child is unique and has inborn gifts and talent. The role of the school and its educators is to help the child discover and develop her talents by focusing individually on her, and not in a "mass production manner.”

Each person must first look within and learn about herself, since this is an active, on-going exploration, the call is to discover oneself. Rabindranath Tagore, in his poem *Ekla Chalo Re*, exhorts us to walk alone. “When the night is dark, and there is no one to walk with you; fear not; but burn your heart in the lamp of your rib-cage, and in its light, O Traveler, Walk alone!

Each person creates her own path by her actions. To believe that a path has to be simply found, rather than created, is to miss the opportunity and challenge of building one's own future.

Ideology

Eklavya, like many other voluntary organisations has social justice as its root concern. However, its main approach is to enable social justice through appropriate education. Hence education is the core activity of Eklavya.

Eklavya works with the main belief that with some care and extra effort, it should be possible to *provide interesting, meaningful and constructive opportunities to children to acquire knowledge and to equip them with observational and analytical skills*. They feel that to implement this, one does not require major structural changes and that the educational reforms can be brought about in the existing set-up itself. Hence all their attempts are towards creating inputs for education at the mass level for maximum impact and not run isolated schools which can benefit only a selected few.

It believes that the educational curriculum and methodology should never be imposed on children. It must be developed in close interaction with children, their parents and the teachers.

All their educational material is child-centred keeping in view what the child can enjoy and appreciate the most. Their emphasis is on creating an interest for learning among the children in the first few years of the primary education, to reduce the number of drop-outs and increase the efficacy of education. They also firmly believe that curriculum development and improvement in teaching methodologies is a continuous process and not a one-time affair.

The Programmes – methodology and impact

Eklavya has been involved in many programmes like HSTP, SSTP, PRASHIKA. For implementation of all these programmes, projects are envisaged, which are funded by various sources. The project elements are worked out by the concerned group. The group engages in extensive study of the existing curriculum and methodologies of teaching, interacts with the teachers, parents and the children and arrives at alternative teaching material and methodologies. The material is then disseminated in the schools after adequate training to the teachers, while its use is monitored very closely. Resource persons visit the schools regularly, observe the way the programme is being implemented, carry out detailed discussions with the teachers, which serves the dual purpose of training the teachers and the valuable feedback for improving the programme further. While the underlying ideology is the same in all these programmes, of making the process of learning a joy for the children and hence increasing its

efficacy, each programme has its own thrust considering the specific objectives of the programme.

Science and Social Science Teaching Programmes

The Science Programme has been most widely implemented till now. This programme is meant specifically for middle schools. Under this programme, Eklavya has tried to introduce the laboratory work in science education from standard VI onwards. Earlier laboratory was introduced only in class IX.. The objective is to impart science education through experimentation. The teachers are expected to encourage the students in observation, analysis of the results they obtain and conclusions from their own experiments so as to understand the underlying laws of science. The students are allowed to work with the equipment to get hands-on experience. The teachers are trained for the purpose. They are told to act as a facilitator while the students carry out experiments in small groups of four each. A low cost kit is also made available to the schools for laboratory experiments. The kit can be even carried to the classroom without the requirement of a separate laboratory space. The descriptive part in the curriculum has been reduced considerably, the stress being on ‘learning by doing’. The teachers are also required to take the students out of the classroom and allow them to learn by direct contact with nature.

It is found that through experimentation, the students develop a habit of asking questions. This attitude gets transmitted to other courses as well. It has been found that in schools where Eklavya’s science or social science programmes have been implemented, the students tend to ask questions much more freely in classes of other subjects too, once they develop this habit in the science experiments. This is considered to be a major achievement of Eklavya’s 30 years of involvement in Science Teaching Programme.

The books on science developed by Eklavya are in simple Hindi and are written in a way that will create an interest in the students to read the text. The explanation of various concepts is introduced in a practical way that the students can easily relate to. Frequent reference to stories about scientists and other historical accounts related to scientific facts make these books quite popular. Various customs are also analysed in a scientific way so as to understand their importance. Overall, this induces an attitude of reasoning and analysis against an attitude of blind faith.

The science curriculum is supplemented by bal melas, science exhibitions, science quizzes and cultural programmes organised from time to time in various centres of Eklavya to

promote interest in science. Scientific and educational toys made and marketed by Eklavya also help in promotion of science among children. Libraries maintained by Eklavya and a magazine on science called *Srote* add to the above. Another magazine for children called *Chakmak* is also very popular among its readers.

In the Social Science Teaching Programme, the emphasis is again on learning by relating to the facts. The curriculum allows the student to analyse the historical facts to appreciate the importance of historical studies; extensive use of maps and an understanding of their own surroundings helps in doing away with the 'rote' element in the study of geography. The SSTP is still at the stage of a pilot project being tried out in a restricted number of schools.

An interaction with some students of class VII reflected the spirit with which the above programmes are being implemented. The students could clearly identify the difference between the methodology of Eklavya adopted in their schools and that in other schools. They were able to point out that they can now understand the science and social science subjects and do not need to cram them while their friends in other schools have to resort to memorising the material without being able to appreciate the content. The examinations for the subjects taught as per Eklavya curriculum are open book exams. Moreover the textbooks are much more interesting with their 'story-telling' approach. That creates a motivation for the children to read the entire text despite the books being much more voluminous as compared to the earlier ones.

On the other hand many teachers were found to complain about the increase in work load for them due to the Eklavya curriculum. They are now required to prepare their lessons before they come to the class, since the children are prone to asking questions. They are also expected to make use of stories for explaining the concepts and facts, which certainly requires more effort on their part. It was found that some teachers evade giving the creative inputs from their end and only read the textbooks in the class from cover-to-cover. Even such teachers cannot refrain from appreciating the textbooks for their approach that makes the subject interesting and the positive impact on the children. However, at the same time, they complain against the volume of the books, which is one of the factors increasing their work load. Thus, the teachers at large, for whom teaching is 'just another profession', are unable to digest the increase in their own work due to the curriculum of Eklavya's and they express the same openly.

Prathmik Shiksha Karyakram

As it seems from the documentation on PRASHIKA, this is one of the most ambitious programmes of Eklavya which has seen a group of extremely dedicated persons put in intensive efforts for many years, into carrying out ‘field level research’ on the current state of primary education and working on the alternatives. In this small write-up it is difficult to sum-up the richness of experiences and understanding that the PRASHIKA members acquired in the process. It will be possible to quote only a few points stated so lucidly in the book ‘PRASHIKA’, which is the documentation of six years of experiences of this programme, including the conclusions drawn from three years of preparatory work for the programme.

An indepth understanding of the process of learning and teaching made the group form many principles which became the foundation for developing the educational material and teaching methodologies. Some of these are reproduced here with respect to various elements or aspects of teaching-learning process :

The Learner

Productive and meaningful learning will result through a dynamic interaction between the teacher and the children. It is a mistake to treat children as empty receptacles in which knowledge is to be deposited.

Two basic needs of the learner are a sense of security and a feeling of self-worth. Learning is impossible without these. This requires a drastic change in teacher-student relations. Treat the child as a responsible person and not somebody who executes orders. We must have faith in a child’s ability and encourage cooperation among children.

Nature of Learning

A process of collective reflection, group discussions and attempts to identify rational explanations will lead to sound learning.

Learning is not a linear and additive process. It is not always desirable to segment each bit of a complex whole and teach it step by step, hoping that this process will lead to an understanding of the whole.

Errors should be seen as necessary steps in the process of learning rather than deviations from a norm.

Curriculum

Knowledge in a sense is unified. Its division into different ‘subjects’ is artificial. The same text can often be used for many purposes such as language skills, mathematical abilities or social awareness.

The curriculum should be dynamic. It should not be confined to the prescribed textbooks only. It must embrace the world outside the school as well as the creativity of the child and the teacher.

Teaching Methods

There is no one sacred method of teaching anything. Children learn what makes sense to them. Therefore, all learning should be contextualized. A child’s freedom to experiment should be respected. Disciplined children often lose their creativity, expressiveness and curiosity.

Teaching Material

Information-based teaching materials encourage rote-learning and hamper rather than facilitate the learning process. Teaching material should be sensitive to the children’s environment and to their history and culture.

Teachers

Teachers, if given an opportunity, can be surprisingly innovative and creative. They should not be rigidly bound by a preplanned programme. Teachers must be involved in planning curriculum, teaching materials and methods. Interactive and participatory training is essential to acquaint teachers with new ideas, methods and materials and to learn from teachers. A teacher’s role should be that of a facilitator.

Evaluation

Evaluation should not pose any threat to the learner. Assessment procedures should be pleasant and friendly. A one-shot examination surely becomes a threat. A variety of normal activities, group discussions etc. conducted over a period of time should be the basis of evaluation.

Evaluation should not be used to filter children. Continuous assessment constitutes essential feedback to the curriculum.

Intervention

It is necessary to intervene in the state education system if the above assumptions are to constitute the foundation of an innovative primary education programme. The intention is not to create islands but to introduce innovation within the existing constraints evolving micro-level models which can be potentially expanded at the macro-level.

PRASHIKA has tried to implement the above principles in the materials and methodologies developed by them. They have outlined various techniques to help the child develop language and mathematical skills in the first two years of schooling, with minimal resort to the use of books. Even in classes III-V, books are to provide guidelines for the teachers rather than be treated as ‘textbooks’ to be followed from ‘cover-to-cover’ in the rigid sequence.. Eklavya team has developed a set of highly innovative books called ‘*Khushi-Khushi*’ books which can serve as guides for the teachers as well as work-books for children. The distinctive feature of these books is their doing away with the traditional approach of compartmentalizing the material into lessons aimed at covering a given syllabus. A single book serves as a source of creativity for children, be it in learning language, mathematics, or social sciences in an integral way. The structure of the books allows the teacher to pick up any page considering the ability of the student. It also gives a flexibility of allowing different children to do different activities at the same time in a class.

While enormous amount of effort went into conceptualization of *how and what* of primary education and development of the books, it appears that the amount of effort required in ‘sensitization’ of teachers and hence an effective implementation is indeed mammoth and many times higher than what could be achieved by PRASHIKA programme. Despite sincere efforts by PRASHIKA team, it was recognized by the team itself that it was difficult to make the teachers implement the above principles in the true spirit. A large number of teachers were found to accept the need for participatory learning. However, there were many reasons for their inability to put it into practice to a large extent. Prime among these are the mindset of the teachers as well as children in not being able to look upon the child as a contributor to the learning process and the difficulty associated with giving freedom to the children which can lead to a noisy atmosphere. The teacher finds it difficult to accept a state of ‘indiscipline’ nor can he/she handle it. The limitations of the teachers themselves in evolving creative methods

and also their own level of understanding of the subjects also acts as a hindrance in promoting an open atmosphere for learning. Most teachers could not be trained intensively since most often their presence in the schools was indispensable.

The ‘rote learning’ which according to PRASHIKA methods, must be completely done away with, is still being widely used in the schools, where PRASHIKA curriculum has been implemented. Large groups of children are made to repeat texts to facilitate its memorisation. This practice has been prevalent for many years. Despite PRASHIKA’s sincere efforts, it could not make the schools do away with the practice. The teachers insist that this helps in improving the pronunciation in children. Even the parents supported the practice, and hence PRASHIKA had to accept it as a part of the school’s activity.

The ground reality in the primary schools of rural areas is indeed very grim. In one of the schools, there were only two teachers to handle the entire school of five classes. Both the teachers had an agreement with each other to take care of the entire school for half the month. Thus, each teacher had to be present in the school only for 15 days in a month. The practice of ‘mass learning by rote’ was a very convenient one for the teacher in such circumstances.

Many teachers also grudge the increased expectations from them due to the Eklavya curriculum. They are unable to appreciate intermingling of various subjects in the same workbook. They are not used to exercising any freedom in the way curriculum can be handled and hence get more perturbed by the new methodologies and feel uncomfortable. Most teachers have been insisting that mathematics lessons be separated from the other subjects in the workbook.

The experiment fell short of its own goals in involving the teachers in the process of curriculum development. While teachers were involved to a great extent in the curriculum development for class I-II, for classes III-V, this could not be due to the time constraint. Shortage of manpower was recognized as an important reason why PRASHIKA’s methods and materials could not be fully implemented in more than a handful of schools.

The PRASHIKA team was sensitive to the limitations and problems encountered in the field level implementation. Despite the problems, it was felt that at least a fraction of the teachers had been influenced and had been able to *convert their classes into a joyful experience*. It was also found that among the 25 schools covered in the second phase of the programme, fifty percent of the children really wanted to come to school. This can be considered as a major achievement of the PRASHIKA programme. The programme was also

successful in creating a state-wide debate on need for change in primary education, which is a step forward in itself.

Source of Funding

Madhya Pradesh Government has been the major source of funding for all the programmes of Eklavya. Apart from that funding is received from MHRD, DST, Indian Council of Social Science Research and many other Government Departments.

Eklavya's educational toys and publications which include books and magazines for children as well as adults are also able to cover a part of the cost of the organisation's activities.

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