

REPORT OF THE

INTERNATIONAL VALIDATION WORKSHOP [IVW]

ON

GENDER FRIENDLY SCHOOL INDICATORS [GFSI]

Institute for Social and Economic Change [ISEC], Bangalore, 3-4 November, 2008

Introduction

The Commonwealth Secretariat [CS], the Commonwealth Foundation [CF] and the Commonwealth of Learning [COL] jointly organised along with the ISEC an International Roundtable [IRT] on “Indicators of School Quality: Towards Gender-friendly Schooling Environment” with special emphasis on the South Asian experience. This was held from 26th to 29th of March 2008 at the ISEC in Bangalore. This Roundtable developed a set of Process Indicators. After streamlining the indicators developed by the IRT; the COL in association with the ISEC decided to field-test them at school/community level in different parts of India. The ISEC requested three persons who had attended the IRT and participated in the development of the indicators to carry out the field-testing and they kindly agreed. They were Advocate S.Suhruth Kumar, Grameena Patana Kendram [GPK], Karakulam, Trivandrum, Kerala, Dr.Niranjana Radhyia, Centre for Child and the Law [CCL], National Law School of India University [NLSIU], Bangalore, Karnataka and Sri Bharat, Vishakha, Group for Women's Education and Research, Jaipur, Rajasthan. After several rounds of discussion the process indicators as they were developed so far were put on the Wiki Educator. The same were field-tested at different schools/communities by the three Partners. Though the sample was not at all adequate for such a big and complex society as India, we had to restrict to these three schools where the indicators could be tested. A bigger sample of schools/communities would have involved greater expenses and organization.

The initial testing was done either by the three persons mentioned in the preceding paragraph by themselves or by a group of individuals associating with them. The actual testing (after the streamlining which was done through internet) was carried out only in October 2008. October was not exactly the best month for testing indicators at the school level in all parts of India, because holidays intervened. As a result the results of the initial testing were uneven. Even in spite of these problems, as it was decided earlier, a Validation Workshop [IVW] was held in ISEC jointly by the COL and ISEC. Though it was originally meant to refine and finalize the indicators drafted for each group to date, it was not possible to carry out these objectives at the IVW conducted on 3rd and 4th of November, 2008. Instead further refinement and streamlining of the indicators were attempted at the IVW. In this effort, apart from the two partners along with specialists from Bangladesh and Karnataka along with Dr.Tanyss Munro from the COL and also experts from the faculty of ISEC participated. [See the list of participants attached]

Proceedings

The IVW was inaugurated by Professor M.R.Narayana Acting Director ISEC. [See the Agenda/Programme attached] In his address Professor Narayana pointed out that in his own studies on Education Index it was found that the measurement of indicators and variables are non-comparable. In addition comprehensiveness of indicators have to be emphasized upon since different areas of endeavor have to be coordinated within. Dr.Tanyss Munro who made a short intervention with regard to the scope and objectives of the IVW highlighted the need for comparability across different localities for the indicators. They need to be both attractive and useable. They may have to be also prioritized. She explained the interest indicated by the UNICEF in the exercise that is being conducted.

Following these, the two partner organizations who were present at the IVW reported and reflected upon the experiences of their initial testing. They talked about the necessary changes that are required in the indicators. They discussed the methodology and approach adopted by them. Dr.Niranjanaradhya who due to pressing circumstances could not attend had reported in writing in great detail about the initial testing done by his group as well as the insights that he gathered. In addition to this, the participants from Bangladesh as well as others reflected upon the points already raised.

On the second day there were attempts made to further facilitate the process of indicator development for these three communities and to identify the next steps in further evolution of them. The points made were, after detailed discussion, gathered together for re-arrangements of the list of indicators. [See the Revised Indicators attached] There were also discussions about the organizational /practical problems involved. The consensus was to re-test the refined indicators once again at the school/community level and use that experience to finalise the indicators for use by any group interested in using them to measure Gender-friendliness in schools/communities anywhere. This is to be done in the form of on-line development of a **Toolkit/Booklet** which would include, besides the indicators suggested, also pointers toward school policy development. Therefore the time framework of the school/community level testing was re-worked to be extended to the end of January 2009. The draft report will be prepared by the ISEC in February 2009 and along with the COL will finalise the Toolkit and statement towards school policy development. The extra expenses that are likely to be incurred as a result of the new time-frame are to be met from additional sources.

Main Issues Discussed

The main focus of the discussions were on the planned outcome of producing a Toolkit, which will consists of [a] the background/context of each school/community where the testing was conducted [b] the developed indicators for each group and [c] **"how to"** guidelines. The exercise is to focus upon the four main stakeholders identified who are **[A] TEACHERS [B] STUDENTS [C] PARENTS OF STUDENTS [D] SCHOOL MANAGEMENT BOARDS**. The IVW discussed the field-level experiences and perspectives of each of the partners separately in such a way as to facilitate the creation of a useful Toolkit. Therefore the field level experiences and

perspectives of each of the partners were listened to and discussed initially. Out of this discussion the following points emerged:

A]. VISHAKHA, JAIPUR

1. They have selected a mixed school managed privately unaided with four sections.
2. The school is situated in a densely populated urban area.
3. They could make only peripheral observations so far but from them they could make the following tentative conclusions:
 - 3.1. Girls are more engaged in cultural activities while boys in sports
 - 3.2. Parent-Teacher Association [PTA] is attended by more mothers for the primary section while more fathers are attending the meetings for higher classes.
 - 3.3. Parents interact only with the class-teachers of their children.
 - 3.4. There is no interaction between parents and parents.
 - 3.5. There is widespread and strong belief in the rightness of teacher's position among parents.
 - 3.6. They reported that much more is to be found out for which it will require more than the time already allotted.
4. Their interest is not in grading but in finding out the basic characteristics of the school community and the teaching-learning process that is conducted there.
5. They emphasize the need to have at least a woman among the team that test the indicators.

B]. GPK, TRIVANDRUM

1. The GPK has formed a core group consisting of educational experts, activists, etc. to guide the testing as well as to do the actual field-level testing.
2. They have selected three neighboring schools having primary, middle and high and higher secondary sections. The lower sections feed their students to the higher sections.
3. They have also been able to collect primary data alone.
4. They have been using the following tactics:
 - 4.1. Use games as tools to observe whether the teachers consciously or unconsciously tend to select boys over girls for doing important functions.
 - 4.2. They observe the level of interaction among students as well as between students and teachers within which some important characteristics of teacher-attitude is taken note of.
 - 4.3. Their approach is to test most of the indicators in a non-interventional way. For instance, when boys and girls were descending by a staircase it was noted that several boys were jumping from three or four steps above to the ground-level. The teachers (both men and women) who did not comment on the boys behaviour shouted at a girl who did the same. This they felt is due to the subconscious influence of the "cultural" values that they hold.
5. The group reported certain important challenges that they met in the course of the testing. They were:
 - 5.1. On some issues direct data collection was found to be difficult.
 - 5.2. They adopted some indirect methods which are likely to consume more time.
 - 5.3. They found wide unfamiliarity with the concepts used among the stakeholders.

- 5.4. The data collection interfered with examination dates.
- 5.5. Implementing rating scales like Becks rating scale of depression and anxiety was not possible due to time limitation.
6. They also proposed some possible indicators. They were:
- 6.1. Students' home environment including individual and continuing support from both the parents, restriction on schooling due to religious practices, household economic barriers to schooling and home study, educational background and awareness of parents, participation of parents in School Support Functions [SSF], community pressure upon parents.
- 6.2. The problems faced by the physically and mentally challenged and differentially abled children should also be looked at for instance, infrastructural facilities provided, special care and protection, availability of specially trained faculty, financial and monitoring support from state/society, expert guidance, community support groups, special teaching and learning tools and implementation of the Kerala Public Works Department [KPWD] Act - 1995 in schools.

It should be noted that though the GPK had only to report the preliminary findings they have already rated on a 1-4 scale inferences arrived at with regard to all the process indicators suggested initially.

CJ. Dr. Niranjanaradhya, CCL [with support from Village Education Co-ordinators, Ramanagar District, Bangalore, Karnataka]

Dr.Niranjanaradhya could not personally attend the IVW but presented two documents for the consideration of the rest of the group. In the first one an e-mail message dated October 9, 2008 he raised the following points:

1. The Government schools were on holidays for most of October.
2. Since the process indicators have been framed as positive statements which could be tested only at the individual level, the testing will only help us to understand the existing reality but not much to alter the contents or parameters in terms of policy prescriptions.
3. Since the process indicators are communicated not in the local language, the responses are not based on the self-read spontaneous action but a facilitated one.
4. It would be better if the reason cited by the primary stakeholders for choosing a specific option on the rating scale to understand her/his perspective on the issue, which could be used at a later stage by us to identify the means and sources for the verifications of the process indicators.
5. In the remarks coloum it is better to ask the perspective of the primary stakeholders to transform their school into a gender friendly one which may help us to provide the rationale for determining the process indicators saying that the input from the grassroot level is also fed into the process of developing such indicators.

In the brief note explaining the steps during the testing process of GFSI at school/community level presented to the IVW it was pointed out that,

1. The students, teachers and School Development and Monitoring Committee [SDMC] representatives were very active during the process of testing compared to others. [parents?]

2. The SDMC members had grater knowledge about the school related issues compared to Gram Panchayat [GP] and Self-help Group [SHG] members.
3. Stakeholders are willing to spend time on issues related to schooling.
4. Since Dasara holidays coincided with the testing the Field Assistants [Education Coordinators] could spend more time with the children.
5. Time factor is a constraint.
6. There is difficulty in orienting the Field Assistants [Education Coordinators] to the specificities of the testing.
7. Difficulty in sustaining the interest of SDMC, GP, SHG members for long periods.
8. The stakeholders themselves lack in-depth understanding of each indicator and therefore it becomes a difficult task.
9. It is better to involve the stakeholders at all levels so that they can internalise the process and thereby participate more meaningfully.
10. There should be a Focussed Group Discussion [FGD] were collective responses and consensus can be achieved among stakeholders.
11. In addition to the suggestions expected to be derived from the stakeholders there should be a fair understanding of gender friendly components/interventions in the existing policy framework to develop a set of tools to verify the implementation of those components at the school level as bare minimum towards GFSI.
12. This group has selected three government schools within the Bannikuppe Panchayat in Ramanagar District covering lower primary, [class I-V] higher primary [class I-VII] and a composite high school [class I-X] sections.
13. They have already tentatively graded according to the source [stakeholders] from whom the such grading was collected for all the indicators provided.

FURTHER STEPS

The IVW very intensely discussed these issues and in the light of them tried to streamline further the process indicators. The general consensus was that the persons conducting the test at the field level should have relative freedom to make whatever changes found necessary. What is required is that they should report why and how they made the changes. Already such very fine examples of innovative practices and its excellent reporting are available from the partners in all three groups. The IVW congratulated the Partner Organizations [PO] for the excellent work that they have already undertaken.

The revised version of the process indicators are attached herewith. Needless to say even the revised version may not have been able to accommodate all the issues that were raised at the IVW. But care has been taken to see that the revised process indicators are an improvement on its earlier version. This version also is to be taken as only as a pointer.

It was also decided that whenever the testing is undertaken and the results are processed they should be conducted in such a way as to facilitate policy formulation towards building up GFSI for each of the schools/communities as well as certain general indicators for policy making.

It was agreed upon that the scaling should be on a 1-3 scale rather than the earlier 1-4 scale suggested. The testing/retesting can go on till the end of January and even the first two weeks of February 2009.

CONCLUSION

The IVW came to conclusion on the afternoon of the 4th of November, 2008. It was expected that more grassroot level groups from other parts of South Asia will take up such testing of the indicators developed by the IRT held in ISEC, Bangalore from 26th to 29th March, 2008. The IVW invited such cooperative action by other groups.

List of attachments

1. List of Participants
2. Agenda/Programme
3. Revised Indicators
4. Group Photograph.

[Prepared by P.K.Michael Tharakan with the assistance of Savitha.B.C.]