

2.4 Pratibha Parv: Strengthening quality of education in government schools of Madhya Pradesh

Launched across all government schools in Madhya Pradesh in 2011 by the School Education Department, Government of Madhya Pradesh, Pratibha Parv, literally a festival of excellence, is a comprehensive initiative for the assessment of teaching and learning, and evaluation of educational facilities and activities. This initiative has successfully contributed to raising the attendance of primary school students from 71 to 78% (2011-2013), raised middle school attendance from 79.1 to 84% (2011-2013) and reduced the fear of conventional classroom examinations among students. This initiative has covered approximately 1,00,00,000 students in 1,12,788 schools.

Rationale

The Pratibha Parv initiative in Madhya Pradesh evolved as a response to address key education issues and shortcomings in facilities provided in government schools. Even as the government is making efforts to address problems related to infrastructural shortages and student dropouts by implementing schemes such as Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and the Mid-day Meal programme, it is equally important to concentrate on aspects of teaching and learning to improve the performance of students in schools.

The school education system suffers not only from a lack of infrastructural facilities but also from the shortage of well-trained and motivated teachers. Factors such as a high rate of teacher absenteeism, increased drop-out rates and under-staffed government schools adversely affect the quality of education.

There is an urgent need to improve the education system in government schools and to assess the tools and techniques used by teachers to provide education. Students attending government schools often lag behind their private school counterparts because the lack of

infrastructural facilities, teaching tools and techniques negatively affects the quality of education received in government schools.

It was against this background in 2011 that the Government of Madhya Pradesh designed this initiative explicitly to address the needs of government-run schools and to ensure improvement in education quality in primary and upper primary schools. Pratibha Parv draws upon the 'Gunotsav model' of Gujarat, which also assesses the performance of students in a similar manner. It seeks to introduce a comprehensive assessment approach to improve the overall education system across all state-run schools in Madhya Pradesh.



Image 1: Government school in Bhopal



Image 2: A board highlighting child rights

Objectives

The objective of Pratibha Parv is to assess the academic performance of students and ensure improvement in quality of education in primary and upper primary schools. It endeavours to assess the academic performance of students and track it at regular intervals at the elementary education level. It also works to create awareness in teachers and among the general public regarding the quality of education.

Apart from assessing the overall infrastructure, the initiative looks into the provision of additional hours of tuition classes for low achievers. Pratibha Parv is instrumental in verifying the availability and usage of school facilities, and strives to provide social audit opportunities and develop a sense of ownership of the community in the educational process and institutions.

Key Stakeholders

The key stakeholders of the programme include Rajya Shiksha Kendra (RSK), Bhopal which is the implementing agency, the National Informatics Centre (NIC) which provides technical support, the Directorate of Public Instructions and Tribal Development Directorate, and finally school students and teachers who are the beneficiaries.

Figure 1: Key stakeholders of Pratiba Parv

Implementing Agency

- ❖ The Pratibha Parv programme is implemented by the RSK, Bhopal and the Education Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Technical Support

- ❖ The technical support for this programme is provided by the NIC, Bhopal and has designed the Madhya Pradesh educational portal. In collaboration with NIC, a special web module has been developed and is loaded on the dynamic education portal. It provides substantial information related to students, teachers, schools and other school related areas for the decision maker at the block district and state level.

Beneficiaries

- ❖ The programme covers school students, and teachers who are concerned with the school education system.

Other Partners

- ❖ Directorate of Public Instructions and Tribal Development Directorate MP, Bhopal.

Implementation Strategy

The Pratibha Parv initiative seeks to evaluate students' capabilities while at the same time doing away with the fear of the formal examination system. It also involves assessment of teaching arrangements and facilities in the schools, other school activities such as the Mid-Day Meal scheme, as well as progress on the syllabus. Attendance of students is also assessed along with the maintenance of school records. Additionally, the general knowledge of

students and their personal hygiene are also assessed, their homework is monitored, and identification of students suitable for different grade categories is undertaken.

The Pratibha Parva assessment is carried out in two phases spread over two days. The first phase is a self-appraisal based evaluation involving primary and middle school students. This is undertaken in the presence of officials from a number of government departments at the district level.

The second phase of Pratibha Parva relates to the evaluation of various aspects including the schools' academic achievements and teaching arrangements, school management and amenities as well as community participation. This phase takes place in the presence of Class I and Class II officers from all departments in the district.



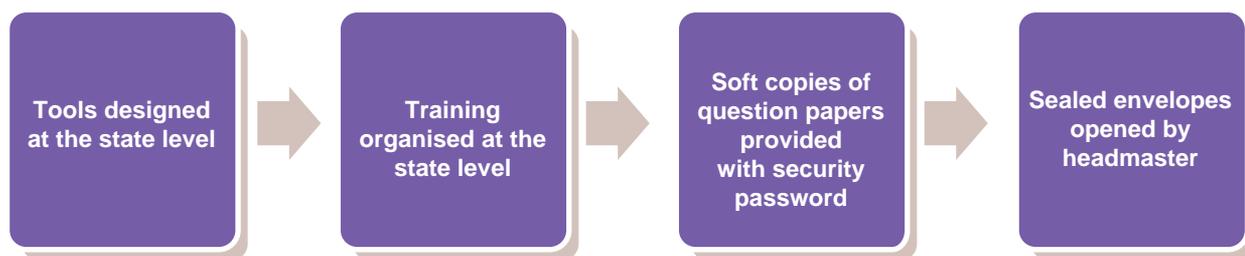
Image 3: Students participate in various activities

Source: Rajya Shiksha Kendra, Madhya Pradesh

The initiative is monitored at the state level from the RSK, which is the implementing agency. Guidelines are circulated to all relevant officers at the district level and all stakeholders are sensitised about the details and requirements for the initiative, to encourage their participation and support.

The initiative is organised in a campaign mode with attention to its advocacy, conducting meetings with the panchayats, teachers and other staff and through the use of Information Communication and Technology (ICT) tools. RSK is responsible for preparing and designing questionnaires. A district officers' training is organised at the state level, where these officers are trained on conducting, preparing and designing the evaluations, so that they can monitor and supervise implementation. District Collectors are the nodal officers in each district.

The question paper is designed and prepared in the presence of senior officers at the district level and once

Figure 2: Process flow of the initiative

Source: OneWorld Foundation India, 2014 and Rajya Shiksha Kendra, Madhya Pradesh

prepared, copies of the question papers are provided to the Block Resource Persons in sealed envelopes. The sealed envelopes containing examination question papers are opened by the headmasters of different schools on the day of the examination in the presence of the chairperson of the school.

Students appear for the test and the evaluation of the answer sheets is undertaken school-wise by the teachers, after which answer sheets are attested by district level officials, principals and higher faculty authorities. Once the evaluation process is over, school-wise data is compiled at the level of the Block Resource Centre for further analysis by school authorities and teachers before the report is uploaded on the state education portal to be accessed by all stakeholders.

The results of the Pratibha Parv create the foundation for developing school improvement plans attending to areas of academic and curriculum activities that require special attention. The initiative provides feedback on different aspects such as school infrastructure, teaching and learning processes, achievement levels of students in different subjects, identification of weak students, teacher training and meeting other needs and requirements.

Information on weak schools, blocks, districts, state-wide rankings and identified areas of school improvement (specific to each school) are made available to decision-makers to further enhance the process for improving the performance of schools and students, by looking into factors that are negatively impacting performance. Information generated by the evaluation is online and is available for public access, thereby enhancing transparency. Pratibha Parv is regarded as a unique model of system reengineering in schools.

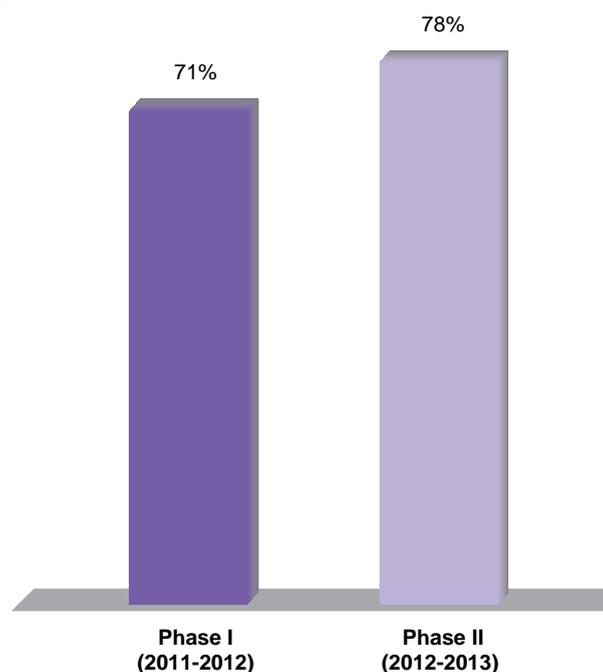
Resources Utilised

For the implementation of Pratibha Parv for one crore students, more than three lakh teachers, 35,145 external assessors, block and district level field officers and officers working in the state project office were engaged.

The existing infrastructure of the School Education Department was used in the implementation of the initiative and at certain times, the transport was outsourced to a third party. A total amount of Rs 8 crore has been invested in the project including printing of paper, travel allowance/daily allowance, conveyance and training of personnel by RSK, Bhopal and the Education Department of the Government of Madhya Pradesh.

Impact

Better quality of education and improved attendance: Pratibha Parv is reaching out to many students and teachers in under-resourced schools and providing them with an opportunity for better quality of education. It has reduced the fear of examination among students by making the assessment procedure more student-friendly

Figure 3: Students attendance in government primary schools in Madhya Pradesh

Source: Rajya Shiksha Kendra, Madhya Pradesh

and has been able to boost the motivation of students and teachers. Between Phase I in 2011-2012 and Phase II in 2012-2013, the initiative has improved the attendance of students at the primary level from 71% to 78% while at the middle level it has gone up from 79.1% to 84%.

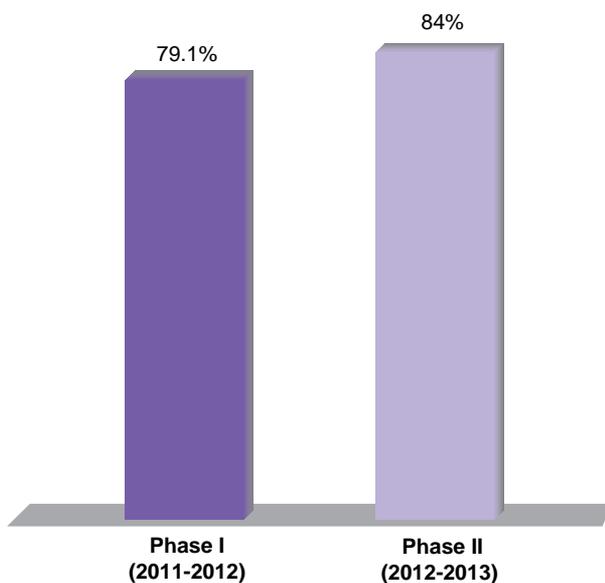
Identification of areas for improvement: This comprehensive assessment programme by the Government of Madhya Pradesh has been able to achieve several short term goals including identification of weak students, finding out gaps in the teaching-learning processes, improving the health of the students and reducing student and teacher absenteeism.

Improvements in infrastructure and facilities: Some of the other goals achieved are greater cleanliness, creation of school libraries and a culture of sports, implementation of school calendar presenting an annual time table of students' daily activities, conducting cultural events and ensuring basic amenities like drinking water, toilets etc.

Strengthened monitoring of schools: The creation of a web-based model has been one of the biggest achievements of Pratibha Parv as it helps in monitoring the performance of weak schools and students by identifying school-specific needs. It covers all government schools in the state, and has developed a database for the overall ranking of the districts according to results of the evaluation. It has successfully sensitised the community towards the importance of quality education.

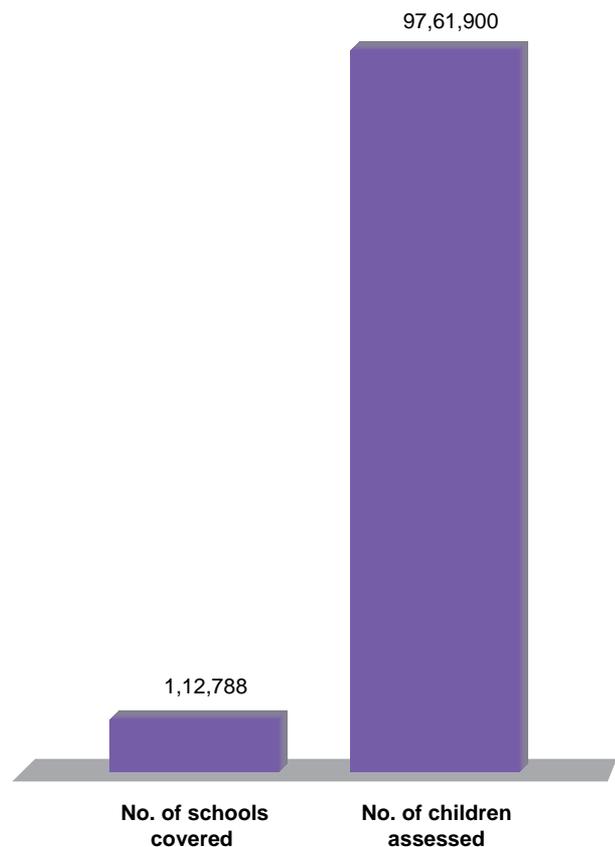
Wide coverage and recognition: As of March 2014, the initiative has been able to cover approximately one crore students and 47,650 assessors, and monitored 1,12,788 schools. The initiative has been awarded the gold

Figure 4: Students attendance in government middle schools in Madhya Pradesh



Source: Rajya Shiksha Kendra, Madhya Pradesh

Figure 5: Performance of the initiative (schools covered and number of children assessed) in Madhya Pradesh, from 2011 to 2014



Source: Rajya Shiksha Kendra, Madhya Pradesh

icon in the National e-Governance Awards-2010, CSI Nihilent e-Governance Award 2008-09; the Manthan South Asia Award-2009; and the MP State Government e-Governance Award 2009.

Key Challenges

Like many other initiatives focussing on improving the education scenario in the country, especially in government schools, Pratibha Parv initially struggled to bring about changes in existing system and convincing teachers and students about the new assessment programme. A teachers' protest on the issue of their salaries in 2012 brought to the fore front how the initiative could be held hostage to non-cooperation from teachers. Long-drawn negotiations with the teachers' union were undertaken to resolve the issue.

Another challenge the initiative faced pertained to the differential abilities of students within the same class. This came to light during the inspection of school performance, where it was observed that while some students could read and understand a particular subject,

many others in the same classroom were not well-versed with the basics. The challenge was to work out a strategy to benefit the weakest students, schools or districts and iron out disparities by improving teaching performance and learning achievement.

Since the initiative is implemented across the state, challenges with respect to capacity related issues in adapting to the new practice were encountered. The government undertook building the capacities of existing teachers and staff in government schools by providing them training that would help enhance their skills.

Further problems were also faced in standardising the data entry format and the online updation of other relevant information. As the initiative is implemented in all government schools across the state, it involved reaching out to schools in remote locations as well, which raised problems of accessibility. Also, many schools in remote areas were found to be without teachers or students due to lack of resources and poor access.

Replicability and Sustainability

The use of localised and available resources makes Pratibha Parv a self-sustainable initiative. The development and implementation of Pratibha Parv did not require any additional resources. The programme leverages existing resources, both financial and human, in a cost and time-bound manner. The funds required for printing of question papers, and tools needed for the collection of data are provided by the department.

The Department also has well established offices in all the blocks and has trained human resources to upload

the data online. It also provides important inputs to the departmental officers. Even the gaps identified in data are taken care of by the school.

The initiative holds immense potential to be replicated all over the country and bring greater improvements in the quality of education. The inspiration to conduct an assessment of the students came from the Gunotsav model of Gujarat. The Gunotsav model was studied by the Madhya Pradesh Government and was further enhanced according to the needs of the state.

The strength of this initiative lies in the development of a web-based model which makes it highly replicable for others states as well. For any state to replicate this model, it is important to train the staff, develop state-specific tools and develop the web-based module for transparency and accessibility.

These factors make the initiative economically viable and sustainable. Further, the initiative is proving its social relevance by providing an opportunity for government schools to rise to be at par with private schools in the quality of education.

Conclusion

Pratibha Parv presents an excellent example of taking a step towards improving the quality of school education. This model has been appreciated by parents, the community as well as by other states. Self-appraisals and departmental and third party appraisals have helped identify the lacunae in the educational system and the comprehensive assessment programme has helped academic and administrative decision-making.

Fact Sheet

Theme	Education
Nodal Implementing Agency	Rajya Shiksha Kendra, School Education Department, Government of MP
Geographical Coverage	All districts of Madhya Pradesh State
Target Groups	Government school students and teachers
Year of Implementation	2011 - Present

