Alternative Learning / Special Training in India
Policy Framework

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The Indian Context

1. India has made a considerable progress in the expansion of primary education. Increase in enrollment of children from 188 to 193 million from 2009-10 to 2010-11.
   a. Progress has not been sufficiently adequate to achieve gender parity
   b. Minority groups, children from disadvantage group remain largely excluded from full participation in education.

2. Census 2001 estimated 32 million children in the age of 6-14 years are out of school.

3. Recent study estimated about 8 million out of school children (2010).

4. 2009 Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act (RTE)
   a. fundamental right
   b. implementation vehicle Sarva Shiksha Abhiya (SSA) - framework revised to align with the provisions of RTE Act 2009.
   c. Section 4 of RTE Act 2009 provide a mechanism for implementation of Special Training for out of school children.
1. Special Training is defined as accelerated learning package for Out Of School Children (OOSC) to ensure:
   a. they are enrolled into age-appropriate class in schools.
   b. provide enabling environment to a child.
   c. learn at a faster pace covering several grades in a short span of 3 to 24 months.

2. Efforts are being made to incorporate flexible approaches which are more responsive to the learning needs of children from socially disadvantaged groups within the public education system itself.
1. Education Guarantee Scheme (EGS) Centres was started in 1997 to cater to the need of children residing in areas having no schools.
   
   a. Later on EGS Centres involved into a National Scheme under SSA.
   
   b. 1.28 lakh EGS Centres have so far been upgraded into regular schools.

2. A multi-pronged approach has been adopted to ensure universal enrolment, reduce dropout rates and bring the OOSC into mainstream of schooling.

3. Depending upon the situation various State governments undertook the schemes with different name to meet the educational need of OOSC in un-served habitation.

4. Children continued to get schooling even beyond 14 years of age to complete Elementary Education.
Local Authority based on local context (residential or non residential) determines the nature of Special Training for the child preferably in the premises of the school.

1. Identification of OOSC through school mapping exercise; enrolled by State Government, Local Authority and School Management Committee.
2. Special Training provided by teacher working in school or specially engaged teacher; flexible duration and timing for special training
3. Duration of Special Training minimum of 3 months which may extended based on periodical evaluation of learning process.
4. Well structured teaching learning material for special training.
5. Actual admission of the child in the age appropriate class on completion of special training. Continued support into regular schooling.
   a. School Readiness is an essential part of ST.
   b. Additional support to the school for providing ST based on feasibility.
   c. Residential options for 10 yrs above never enrolled, home environment not conducive.
   d. Seasonal option for children of migrating families.
   e. Convergence with tribal and other government flagship programmes to provide the care for destitute children as required.
Understanding Rajasthan’s Scenario - Special Training

• Child Tracking Survey Conducted in 2010-11, which is maintained as a decentralized live update system in the public domain.

• Around 12,00,000 children are out of school in which 42% are dropouts.

• Around 60% of OOSC are girls.

• Majority of them are first generation learners and might be a significant number of working children.

• Around 7,25,755 OOSC were enrolled for learning in Special Training Centre’s.

• Preparation of Special Training Material and KRP / Teacher training modules.

• Conducted state level KRP trainings on special training.
Approach for Developing “Special Training Material”

• Broad framework was derived from NCF-2005 & NCERT syllabi.
• Older children can achieve comparable competencies /skills and learning autonomy in a lesser duration.
• Fundamental skills of literacy and numeracy need emphasis in the beginning.
• Integration and contextualization of subjects and their content is essential to the condensing process.
• Task and activity oriented where the complexity and range mainly depends upon the age of the learner.
• Condensing does not imply dilution.
• Only text-books are not sufficient for the process and objectives of accelerated learning.
Continuous and Comprehensive Assessment Design

• Aspects of comprehensiveness in terms of curricular comprehensiveness and in terms of cognitive competencies focused.
• Establishing direct link between assessment, planning / review and classroom processes.
• Use of many tools for objectivity and specificity of the purpose of assessment (checklist, worksheet, portfolio, child–register, open ended comments and observations etc.)
• Baseline assessment.
• Ongoing and periodic assessments (checklist, formative & summative).
• Involvement of community and children in assessment at various levels – sharing with parents.
Bottlenecks – Historical and Systemic

- Historical attitudes towards teaching – learning processes and systemic adoption of non-exclusionary assessment processes lead to mere certification and neglect of quality instead of continuous formative assessment for quality.
- Biases in terms of conflict between exclusive meritocracy vs. Ideals of inclusive democracy.
- Utilitarian perspective towards aim of education and the consequent bias in the futileness of the endeavor of alternative teaching learning practices.
- Distrust of communities willingness and deep seated belief of exclusion by choice.
- Historical neglect of the voices of community and direct stake-holders.
Challenges in the post RTE Scenario

- The proposed time framework and its feasibility.
- Issues concerning mutual pedagogic alignment with the mainstream schooling.
- Issues of role of Local Self Governing Bodies and evolving mechanisms of community based monitoring and support.
- Issues pertaining to evolving broader curricular framework and appropriate materials.
- Issues of academic capacity of the academic support groups and group of educators.
- Reorganizing the older regime of (one year - one grade), through uniform and whole class instruction and assessment.
Challenges Cont.

- Incongruence between existing systemic reality and the proposed framework of beginning with integration.

- Absence of clear implementation vision translating the proposed basic principles for ‘special training’ in RTE into a strategy for implementation.

  - Danger of functionally relapsing into bridge course category (inconsistent with the spirit of RTE)

  - Fractured accountability at the ground level is compounded with lack of community participation making it difficult to ensure the quality of practices.

- Issues pertaining to potentials and capacity of duty bearers imparting special training in terms of resources and capacity.
Prerequisites for Quality:
Considerations for the Policy Framework

• Quality has to be emphasized in all respects recognizing the greater complexity of the task over the mainstream schooling process.
• Evolving dedicated structures for academic support adopting research based practices for evolving context specific processes.
• Ensuring greater participation of the community and other direct and indirect stake-holder’s by evolving community based monitoring and support systems.
• Ensuring appropriate preparatory training (not less than for one month), continuous academic support, periodic review and planning.
• Evolving CTS as a live and continuous community/habitation based tracking system which ensures effective planning and monitoring. (In terms of habitation based child registers).
• Directly addressing the issues of school readiness, ownership, pedagogic alignment/consistency in the transition phase.
Way Forward

- Development of the process guidance for the states as an advisory- highlighting the development of relevant content and key role of teachers.
- Establish Steering Committee at State Level with NGOs to provide process guidance and support for Special Training.
- Develop a standard, common definition for OOSC and a tracking system for each child.
- Organize state level workshops to develop age appropriate content for ST and demonstrate the methodology.
- Technical support for the states to develop the process and methodology for ST building on earlier experiences.
- A system of continues evaluation should be put in place to enable children to enter the mainstream school at an appropriate juncture.
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