

Report of the

Consultation on Early Literacy

with some partners of Sir Ratan Tata Trust and
Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust



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By

Keerti Jayaram

Secretary

Organisation for Early Literacy Promotion (OELP)

C1/4 SDA, New Delhi 110016

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OELP



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Hold fast to your dreams, for without them life is a broken winged bird that cannot fly ~ Langston Hughes

Introduction

Based on discussions with Amrita Patwardhan from SRTT in the earlier part of 2010, a four day Consultation on Early Literacy was organized by the Organisation for Early Literacy Promotion (OELP) from the 25 to 28 April, 2011 for a select group of partner organizations of Sir Ratan Tata Trust and Navajbai Ratan Tata Trust. The venue of the Consultation was the Sanskriti Kendra, New Delhi. The idea behind this Consultation was to provide an opportunity for the Trust to benefit from the expertise available with its experienced partners, towards building a conceptual framework in the area of Early Literacy. The Consultation was supported by sessions on different themes related to early literacy, which were presented by external resource persons. It aimed at facilitating consistency in the perspectives of SRTT- NRTT partner organizations that are working in the area of Early Literacy, and develop a broad shared understanding and vision. This collective visioning exercise also aimed at identifying some crucial aspects of sound reflective and innovative pedagogical practice within Early Literacy programmes in the Indian contexts. See Appendix 1 for the concept note.

Objectives

- To build an understanding of the Indian context, so as to be able to engage effectively with programmes for early literacy
- To define a broad framework for work in early literacy based on a common understanding
- To define some non negotiables within programmes for early literacy
- To identify important aspects of classroom based practice / approaches which equip young children to build strong foundations for reading and writing.

The planning process

Planning for the Consultation began in December 2010. The Consultation sessions were planned to build informed understanding of Early Literacy through the following lenses:

1. The marco level policy discourse within the Indian context
2. Historical and theoretical perspectives which included the shifting perspectives on early literacy, as well as, on constructions of childhood
3. Developmental perspectives – an overview of the children’s natural literacy learning processes and the different stages that these go through
4. Social perspectives – including issues of home- school transition
5. School and classroom based issues and practices
6. Role of children's literature and environmental print in the process of developing literacy skills

The final programme, including the themes and the actual sessions were evolved through participatory interactions and online discussions with resource persons and with SRTT representatives over a period of three to four months. In addition to this, feedback was obtained from each partner organisations on the different aspects of their early literacy programmes. This feedback helped to tailor the sessions to the needs and expectations of the participants. Each partner organisation also made a presentation of different aspects of their early literacy programme. This provided useful background information about the underlying thinking; the content; concerns, and possible future directions of each programme and helped to ensure that discussions on theoretical perspectives during the Consultation are located within the ground realities within existing programmes of SRTT- NRTT partners. See Appendix 2 for the Consultation programme schedule

Underlying theoretical and pedagogical perspectives

It was challenging to address approaches to early literacy within Indian languages against a backdrop of non availability of indigenous research in this area. This meant learning from the experience and research within the western world and within other contexts outside India; and using these insights for addressing early literacy programmes in our country. The Consultation provided opportunities to engage with various dimensions of early literacy within the Indian context, and juxtapose these against recent historical and theoretical perspectives on early literacy. It was also seen as an opportunity to engage with the range of experience and insights that were available within the participating SRTT- NRTT partner organizations. The sessions were planned with the intention that the discussions will generate some possible implications that existing theoretical perspectives have for approaches to early reading and writing within the diversity of the Indian multicultural and multilingual contexts.

A broad overview of some of current perspectives and approaches to early literacy that informed the structure of the Consultation are presented below.

Balanced reading approaches

While whole language, whole word and phonics approaches to early literacy have been around for some time now, experts and researches have now acknowledged that no single approach has been effective in developing independent readers and writers; instead a balanced programme which combines these approaches has been thought of as the most effective. The whole language approaches believe that children will learn to read and write naturally and actively in the same ways that they learn to speak. Children in whole language classrooms are provided authentic texts and writing opportunities that are meaningful and purposeful to each child individually. The phonics approaches on the other hand, believe that children need explicit instructions in the rules of letter –sound relationships, and word and sentence

formations, before they are able to read meaningful texts. Recent research has highlighted the need for a balance between these approaches. From this belief a new philosophy of teaching reading called the Balanced Reading Approach has emerged, which not only balances the reading philosophies but also the inherent classroom pedagogies.

Emergent literacies

During the 1980s and 1990s, Emergent Literacy became the dominant theoretical perspective in the field of early reading and writing. According to this social constructivist view, literacy acquisition has much in common with oral language development. A child begins learning about reading and writing at a very early age by observing, interacting and actively participating with adults and other children in a variety of everyday literacy activities, such as writing shopping lists, reading labels and signboards or in special literacy focused activities such as storybook reading. On the basis of these observations and activities these very young children construct their own concepts about print and then try these out in their play activities and also in real life situations. They test their beliefs about how written language works. Based on how others respond and the results they get, they modify these beliefs and construct more sophisticated systems of reading and writing. Their attempts at writing often evolve from scribbles, to drawing as writing, to creating letter like forms, to random streams of letters and finally, to increasingly elaborate systems of invented spellings. Eventually, through facilitated opportunities to engage in meaningful literacy activities, these children become conventional readers and writers.

Focus on skills

During this same period of the eighties and nineties, a parallel, but very different view was gaining momentum primarily in the fields of educational psychology and special education. This perspective, which was first introduced by Marilyn Adams¹, strongly supports the idea that children's natural literacy development needs to be supported with explicit instruction for skill development. The underlying belief was that that many skills, which are required for interacting meaningfully and independently with a written script, are not picked up naturally through exposure to spoken and written language. In this sense the processes of learning to read and write are not the same as learning to speak. Rigorous research has been undertaken to identify the skills and concepts that children need to become proficient readers and writers. Whereas the Emergent Literacy has relied primarily on qualitative forms of research, this perspective uses tightly controlled quantitative experiments. A valuable contribution of this movement is

¹ This perspective is known as the Scientifically Based Reading Research or SBRR was first introduced by Marilyn .J. Adams (1990) in her book, *Beginning to Read: Thinking and Learning about Print*. It subsequently led to an alternate perspective, and has influenced expansive and influential state sponsored research reviews in the USA, such as the National Reading Panel, 2000

that it has identified core knowledge and skills that young children must develop to become successful readers and writers.

Reading research done from within this perspective has focused on the link between phonemic awareness, phonics skills, decoding / encoding, comprehension and fluency in reading. Readers who initially lack the ability to hear the separate phonemes in the oral speech stream (phonemic awareness) are unable to master the sound/ symbol / system correspondence of alphabetic language (phonics), which in turn makes it difficult to progress or develop as independent readers who can read, understand, and learn from print (comprehension and fluency). Phonemic awareness and phonic skills are seen as crucial to subsequent reading development. Research shows that these abilities begin within homes and community practice.

Blending of emergent literacy and skill based approaches

Within current literature on Early Literacy, both the above perspectives are stated to have made significant contributions to a well rounded early literacy programme. Young children need meaningful engagement with books and home and school environments which facilitate active and natural engagement with of print, as suggested by the Emergent Literacy perspective. This is especially so for first generation learners for whom the literacy environment at home may be a constraint. At the same time such children also require explicit and meaningful instructions on aspects of phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary and print awareness. Thus there is need to blend both these perspectives

Need to address the context

A new set of debates have now brought a shift in thinking from viewing reading and writing as individualized cognitive processes to an acknowledgement that young children's early understandings about literacy occur within their social, cultural and linguistic communities. The specific forms of literacy may however change according to the purpose and the setting in which they are used. 'Literacy as a social practice' is more accurately described as the multiple literacies which occur within people's local, social and cultural contexts. Some experts have argued that this perspective has viewed the 'context' of a literacy practice as a relatively benign and neutral interactional setting, whereas in the real world this is not the case. They argue that within several social settings including school, the context is not a neutral space. Hidden within 'communities of practice' are issues of power and social identity. Therefore literacy practice cannot be viewed as the acquiring of a set of neutral, and de-contextualised cognitive skills.

Autonomous and ideological models

Historically, we can now identify two distinct models of literacy. These have been referred to by Brian Street as the Autonomous and the Ideological models. Autonomous models, conceptualize literacy as a set of neutral, technical cognitive skills that are acquired by individuals. This model looks upon literacy as a set of skills and strategies required for decoding and engaging with written texts. More or less the same

approaches could be used to teach children to read and write regardless of the contexts within which they are located. This has been the more prevalent model, especially within learning spaces such as schools.

During the course of his anthropological work in Iran, Street found that in the real world there was no singular, unified form of literacy practice. In fact, the contexts and purposes to a large extent determined the ways in which people engaged with reading and writing. These contexts and purposes could be as varied as the reading of religious texts, or the reading and writing related to commercial activity such as sale and distribution of fruit and vegetables. Within each of these literacy practices people were engaging with literacy but in very different ways. This led to the idea of multiple literacies. Street also claimed that literacy was not a neutral activity and that inherent within an act of reading are issues of power and social identity. In other words, at stake in any reading or writing event is, who can do what, in which social situation, with whom and with what consequence. To capture these ideas, Brain Street proposed the Ideological model which does not think of literacy as an individualized cognitive activity. Instead, literacy is viewed as sets of cultural and social practices which evolve and change over time, and that are adopted and adapted in different ways by different groups of people for different purposes. This model believes that particular versions of literacy are always located in a particular world view

Newer debates

The more recent perspectives, which have been briefly discussed in the above sections, have raised new debates within the arena of early literacy between individualized and social practices of literacy. They have highlighted the importance of providing space within the framework of the balanced reading programme for children's natural learning processes; their real world experiences and knowledge forms. These newer perspectives have brought to the foreground the importance of addressing issues of diversity and home to school transitions, particularly in the case of children from marginalized and oral traditions, who do not have access to literacy practices within the homes and social environments. Ways in which the Autonomous model can be integrated with the Ideological model are now being explored within more recent literature.

Challenges

A Challenge and Possible Pedagogical Principles²

How will we develop, adapt or integrate these ideas for literacy instruction in the Indian contexts?

- Principle 1: Don't need to pick between specific methods of literacy instruction (whole language, phonics and whole word): valuable insights from each can be incorporated.

² Raised by Dr. Shailaja Menon during her session on *Historical and Theoretical Perspectives* on Day 1 of the Consultation

- Principle 2: Focus on multiple social contexts in India: need to generate a model that integrates the best of autonomous and ideological approaches.
- Principle 3: Need to develop organic understanding of how reading /writing skills are acquired in different Indian language scripts which vary greatly from the Roman script of the English language.

In many ways the Consultation threw up challenges that are similar to those faced by schools and classrooms, especially within situations of diversity. In much the same way as in schools, the participants came from varied backgrounds and brought with them a range of expertise, experience and expectations. To make the Consultation meaningful it was important to draw upon this diversity in the discussions, in the same ways that classroom teaching / learning practices need to draw upon the diverse resources of the children. These parallels provided useful insights of the complexities within which early literacy interventions ought to be understood. They raised the need to address some of the following issues and concerns:

- 1. Issues of diversity** - the participants were from different backgrounds, with different expectations. They included a highly motivated group of practitioners, representatives of programme managements and academics. While this multiplicity within the group may be viewed as a strength, it also threw up the challenges of generating meaningful interactions between different levels of understanding, experience and perspectives within the area of Early Literacy. It was important to try and cater to the needs of this diverse group without either talking down to anyone or going beyond their grasp or interest levels.
- 2. Language** – While Hindi and English were the two languages that cut across all the participants, it was challenging to provide instant and meaningful translations, so as to try and include everyone in the discussions.
- 3. Content overload** – In order to build conceptual clarity and build a framework for Early Literacy programmes, it was important to look at a wide range of areas which included policy; theoretical perspectives; contextual issues; classroom pedagogies; and issues related to assessment. This was a lot of content to deal with, within the time period of four days, especially through an interactive process. It required flexibility in the planning and space for sudden modifications in the programme schedule, as and when required. Some sessions had to be cut short, and the plan to conduct a full day workshop on ‘assessment’ had to be postponed so as to allow time for more in depth and interactive discussions on the proposed conceptual framework for early literacy programmes.

Consultation Proceedings

Part 1

Consolidated summary of group discussions

1. Interactive group session on:

The Core Components of an Early Literacy Programme

Aim: Develop independent and engaged readers and writers

Introduction: An important aspect of Early Literacy Programmes is the emphasis given to “building the ground” for subsequent literacy development. For many children their first active engagement with the written forms of language occurs only when they step into school. Such children need to be gradually initiated into the world of reading and writing, in informal, meaningful and non threatening ways. As these new school goes observe, interact informally and participate freely and purposefully in drawing, scribbling, reading and writing activities in their classrooms, they begin to sort out and acquire knowledge and concepts about the written forms of language. For example, they begin to realize that there is a connection between the sounds of spoken and the symbols of written language. They “pick up” some writing conventions such as directionality and scribble pretend words from the left to the right side of a page. Gradually, as these children engage with stories, books and a range of informal language activities, they are motivated and begin to relate to reading and writing in meaningful and purposeful ways. When such opportunities are provided to beginning literacy learners they lay the foundations for the acquisition of efficient reading and writing skills. These opportunities need to be viewed as crucial facilitating factors and be consciously planned for. Some important facilitating factors that were identified through the interactive group discussions during this session are mentioned below:

A. Essential facilitating factors for an early literacy programme

1. Factors related to the child

- Opportunity to develop self confidence and a positive self image through experiences of acknowledgment and success which are provided through activities and experiences which are fulfilling and take into account the children’s interests, and existing skills and knowledge
- Opportunity to strengthen the efficacy of the child as a learner through planned activities which make success achievable for the child and at the same time strengthen the child’s skill base.

- Experiences which facilitates the active participation and inclusiveness of all children, especially those children who do not participate on their own, by drawing them out of ‘silence’ in sensitive and caring ways

2. Factors related to the teacher

The success of the programme depends on the teachers. Some essential qualities and traits that are crucial for an effective teacher within an early literacy programme were identified as follows:

- Able to build a climate of mutual respect and trust inside the classroom
- Able to sensitively create an inclusive and nurturing classroom by understanding cultural, emotional, social reasons for participation and non participation and working on those
- Able to bring awareness and understanding of children’s backgrounds, cultures and preferred modes of communication into classroom practices
- Able to recognize and respond to individual difference and special needs children
- Able to listen to and observe children and understand and encourage aspects of the child’s intentionality while engaging in activities
- Able to understand the stages and spectrum of early literacy and so accordingly understand the need for flexibility based on the individual needs of children
- Able to sensitively challenge children by neither talking down at children nor watering down learning opportunities
- Able to look critically at aspects of spoken and written language which are reflected within the programme
- Able to elicit creative responses from the children

3. Factors related to the classroom and the larger school environment

To be able to facilitate and enhance meaningful literacy and language learning the following environmental factors were considered important within a classroom or a school :

- Provides a caring and emotionally safe atmosphere
- Provides non threatening communicative spaces for dialogue, openness and sharing based on mutual respect, both in the form of teacher – child and child – child communications
- Offers sensitivity to social differences – background, caste, class, community, literacies at home by providing acceptance and space for the children’s home languages and real world experiences
- Provides opportunity for shared learning through various kinds of peer groupings (pairs, small groups, mixed ability grouping), as well as opportunity for individual work by the child

- Provides a stimulating print rich environment through planned displays of written texts and pictures, created by the children , as well as those that are put up by the teacher
- Provides a welcome space for parents and community members in classrooms

4. Factors related to the texts and other resources

Some aspects of texts and materials that facilitate literacy learning were spelt out as follows:

- Are stimulating for children
- Offer sensitivity to diversity in interests and social backgrounds
- Provide openness to linguistic diversity - multiple languages (standard-non standard)
- Build on home – school linkages – by offering opportunity and space for sharing a variety of children’s real world and home experiences in the classroom – such as their culture (eg food, festivals and dress), language, daily life experiences
- Provide opportunity and space for various forms of engagement and expression – drawing, painting, music, drama, craft

B. Essential components of an effective early literacy programme

While designing a programme for Early Literacy it is important to bear in mind that young children need meaningful engagement with books and an environment which facilitates active and natural engagement with print, as has been suggested by the Emergent Literacy perspective. However, current literature has also clearly stated that along with a facilitative environment children also require some explicit and meaningful learning opportunities for building and strengthening skills and concepts related to print awareness, phonological awareness, alphabet knowledge, vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Processes of skill development which enhance aspects of phonological processing and of meaning construction need to be consciously incorporated into the programme. The discussions during this session were held with the above understanding in mind; and the following were identified as essential components and important focal areas within an effective Early Literacy Programme:

1. Planned opportunities / activities for meaning making

- Provision of planned opportunities for children to engage with meaning making in a variety of ways such as through talking, drawing, make believe play, story making; reading and writing
- Provision of planned opportunities for understanding words and text through personal association
- Provision of planned opportunities to use home language and real life experiences in the classroom so as to enhance understanding.
- Exposure to a meaningful print rich classroom environment which is generated over time through the active engagement of children and is used actively by the children and teacher.

- Exposure to selective and meaningful displayed texts (created by and for children), which are changed regularly from time to time
- Provision of planned opportunities to promote and use a variety of comprehension strategies for reading with understanding
- Opportunity for self correction
- Opportunity to engage meaningfully with a variety of information texts
- Opportunities for a range of purposeful reading and writing activities for the child

2. Planned opportunities for skill development

- Provision of planned opportunities for developing basic print concepts such as – title and cover of book, concept of “word”, spaces, directionality, orientation, functionality, meaningfulness etc
- Provision of planned opportunities for developing the concept of a word through phonemic awareness or the awareness of the sound units within spoken words
- Systematic teaching of sound – symbol correspondence, decoding – encoding
- Provision of planned opportunities for vocabulary development
- Support for developing fluency in reading and writing
- Provision of planned opportunities for developing comprehension
- Provision of a variety of planned opportunities for self expression
- Provision of space and time for development of both oral and written literacy skills

3. Exposure to literature, information texts and authentic texts

- Opportunities for being read to, through read aloud sessions which are engaging and interactive
- Opportunities to engage with and respond to literature - fiction and non fiction
- Opportunities to respond to literature in multiple ways
 - a) Aesthetic – that is responding to the text through expressions of feelings, imagination and relating to it in experiential ways
 - b) Efferent – that is responding to the information provided in the text by answering questions, locating facts, filling in gaps or summarizing etc
- Opportunity to use and understand different genres and text types such as a) Narratives, tell a story b) Recounts (personal, factual) tell what happened; c) Information reports, provide factual information; d) Instructions e) Explanations f) Expository texts, present or argue viewpoints.
- Exposure to authentic texts such as messages, letters, newspaper clippings and ads, invitations, posters, bus tickets, labels etc. These can be displayed and used for different activities to sensitize children to the different forms of writing.

- Opportunity to develop the skills required for content area reading of subject area texts such as: identification of key words, identifying main ideas, making outlines, note taking; summarizing
- Support for critical, discerning and reflective reading through opportunities for critical engagement with text such as : read and respond; offer opinions on the content of text; opportunity to agree or disagree; opportunity to question, to debate and provide logical arguments

4. Sensitive and meaningful assessment procedures

- Sensitive assessment processes (summative and formative)
- Identify strengths and gap areas
- Inform both the learner and the teacher
- Challenging but not threatening
- Incorporate aspects of self evaluation towards building in critical reflection and supporting independent learning

C. Teacher training and capacity building

A trained teacher, who has an informed understanding and skills to foster literacy development, is the key to an effective early literacy programme. It is vital for a teacher to be sensitive to the children’s natural learning processes, their home backgrounds and their individual differences while fostering literacy skills in meaningful and purposeful ways. For this, teachers need to be equipped and sensitized to the following:

- To understand that a relationship of trust and mutual respect between children and teacher and with parents is a crucial component for any meaningful learning to take place
- To be sensitive to children and have the ability to reflect on their own behaviour towards children
- To be equipped with the skills required for modeling / demonstrating different literacy practices. This is important because children need to experience and learn from the teacher’s ways of engaging with a variety of reading and writing practices
- To be equipped with deeper theoretical and larger understanding of children, and language and literacy learning, so as to be able to take initiative and be proactive; and not just mechanically implement what is given
- To be equipped to engage with diversity in the classroom and generate respect for individual differences within learners and their parents
- Teachers need to know how to engage with things that matter to the child (positive and negative, also seemingly trivial things).
- To be equipped with the skills of managing young children in effective, nurturing and yet firm ways

2. Interactive group session on: Stages of Early Literacy

The genesis of literacy is encapsulated within the fact of being born into a human community which ‘communicates’, and represents experience in many ways i.e. through gestures, play, drawings, scribbles, spoken and written language. Vygotsky has put forth the idea that gesture, play, work, talk, picture making and writing are all essentially part of a single, unified process of learning to make meaning and to communicate. The earliest roots of literacy therefore have their beginnings within the very first acts of communication

Based on the above understanding the participants identified four broad developmental stages within the processes of literacy acquisition of young children. This includes the entire process from the very initial forms of representation of experience through gestures or expressions of feeling (crying, smiling, pointing etc), to the stage at which a child is able to read and write independently and confidently. **It is important to avoid linking these stages to pre-fixed age groups, as these stages of literacy acquisition need not be age related.** For example, the reading behaviours of an older child can demonstrate aspects of emergent or early literacies, especially in the case of older children who are beginners. On the other hand, some children may develop proficient reading and writing skills at a very young age.

Each stage of literacy acquisition is characterized by the manifestation of some specific literacy behaviours. These provide important landmarks in the process of literacy development, however they need to be viewed with flexibility, since an individual child may or may not provide evidence of all. Further, the stages do not appear in a linear and chronological manner. A child may move back and forth between and within a stage. It is important, therefore, that these stages are viewed with flexibility and not as a rigid and defined sequence within which literacy development occurs. The stages are however useful as they provide a broad framework for understanding the development of children’s literacy.

The four stages which were identified and discussed during this session are as follows:

- Emergent literacies
- Early literacies
- Transitional literacies
- Proficient literacies

Some attributes of emergent literacies

- Initial communication is based on facial expressions and gestures i.e. communication through non verbal communication
- At a slightly later stage communication is also based on oral sounds and the use of some spoken communication and babbling.

- At the initial stages there is a dominance of sensory experience and evidence of relating to nature
- Gradually the child begins to express his/ her experience on paper and later to *name the experience*
- The child's representations through scribbles, writing and drawings gradually begin to capture relationships and associations. This is the beginning of the story form
- The child begins to take interest in books and a variety of environmental print
- The child shows curiosity about print and evidence of some rudimentary concepts of print
- Literacy behaviours are demonstrated by the child through scribbling, drawing, pretend reading and other forms of imitating print based activities within play and other natural communications

Some attributes of early literacies

- The child shows a continued development of spoken language and communicative competence
- There is a continued dominance of sensory experiences and relating with nature, which precedes the child's engagement with pictorial forms
- There is evidence of picture reading
- Beginnings of the process of transition from concrete to abstract (contextual / de-contextual) become visible. The child begins to make associations between pictures, stories, words and earlier experiences.
- The child provides evidence of print awareness – understands that print is functional and meaningful; at times shows awareness of the distinction between scripts of different languages; shows meta linguistic awareness through awareness of self learning processes
- The child has awareness of rhyming words / phonological awareness and enjoys word play and play with sounds
- The child has some letter recognition and shows recognition of a few sight words within hoardings, TV or on labels
- The child has demonstrates an awareness of the story and narrative forms and participates actively in constructing these
- The child begins to draw stories
- The child expresses through the written form by drawing, scribbling, using some letter forms and through the use of invented spellings
- The child demonstrates distinct preferences for particular books, stories and pictures
- The child demonstrates understanding of some initial concepts and is able to make simple groupings and categorization based on some simple, common attributes of objects and people

Some attributes of transitional literacies

- The child begins to understand processes that are linked with formal aspects of literacy, such as directionality, word boundaries, spellings and some simple writing conventions
- The child has access to a richer spoken vocabulary
- The child begins to copy letters, words, sentences and texts
- The child begins to read simple words and sentences
- The child begins to understand, connect with, narrate and analyze, new experience and link it with his/ her own personal experiences
- The child begins to articulate experience and thought and then capture these in the written, pictorial or other forms
- The child shows evidence of monitoring his/her reading through self correction and of thinking and reflecting about his/ her own process of writing and reading (meta skills)
- The child shows an understanding of the difference between oral and written language structures
- The child is able to freely express personal experience through a variety of forms which include some form of writing
- The child shows some evidence of making a transition from invented to conventional spellings

Some attributes of proficient literacies

A child who is a proficient reader and writer has the ability to:

- Manipulate the sounds that make up spoken language
- Understand the relationship between letters and sounds
- Automatically and rapidly recognize and read letters, words and sentences (automaticity)
- Use vocabulary knowledge while reading and writing
- Read and write fluently with accuracy, speed, and expression
- Use prior knowledge to construct meaning
- Use the context as an aid in comprehension
- Use comprehension strategies to enhance understanding and enjoyment of what is read (predict, clarify, pose questions, make connections, summarize, etc.)
- Monitor his reading for understanding and flexibly use strategies according to text, task, and situation
- Access a repertoire of reading strategies, organizational patterns, and genres.
- Engage with a variety of reading and writing activities independently and in meaningful ways
- Demonstrate mastery of writing conventions and the mechanics of writing
- Read for enjoyment

Part 2

Summary of sessions presented by resource persons

Day 1: April 25, 2011

Key Note Address - Prof. Krishna Kumar

The key-note address focused on the contexts and major influences which impact literacy practice within our country:

Four contexts which were discussed include the following:

- a. Culture (*sanskriti*)
- b. Market (*bazaar*)
- c. Education (*shiksha*)
- d. Institution (*sanstha*)

Culture: Our country has a history of strong oral cultural traditions within which much more emphasis has been given to the spoken word as compared to the written word. Within such oral cultures the practice of rote memorization of written scriptures is common, with a greater emphasis being laid on the intonation and articulation of the words, rather than on their meanings. This is reinforced through every day practices inside many households where children observe scriptures and religious texts being recited daily, with a greater emphasis being laid on their articulation rather than on their meanings. Through the processes of growing up within this cultural context children gradually imbibe a greater importance being given the spoken word as compared to the written word. They also grow up with an acceptance of non engagement with word meanings. Therefore, we have instances where despite instructions being clearly written, people don't follow them. An important reason why people don't follow instructions is because they are often unable to establish the relationship between the written word and their conveyed meanings. These influences on our schools have created situations in which there is often a gap between written words and their meanings. They have also generated a culture of meaningless rote learning. While, we desire a "Sakshar Sanskriti", the goal is not for a transformation from the oral to the written, but for a co-existence of the two together. It is important to recognize this cultural backdrop and conditioning within which schools function while making a shift to a greater focus on the processes of "meaning making".

Market: The market signifies availability of reading material. It is important therefore to understand how children's literature has entered our market. Since reading as an activity is dependent on the availability of literature, it is important that books are also available at rates where each person is able to buy them.

Attention was brought to the role of National Book Trust and Children Book Trust towards dissemination of children's literature. While on the one hand these institutions have been responsible for bringing out a range of children's literature; on the other hand, since they don't operate on the basis of competition, they do not make an effort for effective dissemination. So even though their books are affordable they do not make efforts to reach them to each and every person. Thus, pricing as well as reaching the potential reader, are both crucial aspects of the market. For growth of children's literature as an industry which will ensure wide reach of diverse books, a healthy competition between the players is needed.

Looking at the history of children's literature in this country, in the 1950s the Progressive Publishers, Moscow printed and sold books at cheap rates at which the indigenous publishers could not afford to publish their books. These books were accessible to a large number of children. This history highlights the fact that it is important for publishers of children's literature to be concerned that their books reach every child. We cannot be totally dependent on the government for this. At present we have several publishers, such as Tulika, whose books are reasonably priced. There is now a healthy competition between various publishers of children's books.

Another determinant of the market of books is the invisible attributes such as the layout, illustrations and design of children's books. The importance of creating stable career spaces to bring about professionalism within these invisible attributes was highlighted. There is a lacuna of academic courses on design and production of children's literature. These are important aspects which will strengthen the demand for children's literature and so have an impact on the pricing of these books as well. At present, well brought out children's book are often highly priced, since high costs are incurred if all aspects of production are taken into account. Keeping in mind our vision that good children's literature should reach each and every child, there is a need to nurture organizations through which many authors, designers and artists are given space and support to work professionally on children's literature.

Education: Within any culture, it is the purpose of education and the expectations of the society towards education that determine the importance given to reading. Usually the expectation from children is that once schooling is over, the activities of studying or reading need not continue. Therefore sustained and involved engagement with reading is not nurtured within our classrooms. Reading as an activity requires 'solitude', however, in our culture solitude is not an accepted state of being. This fact has a role to play in the fostering of reading as a habit. Most schools do not provide facilitating environments for reading. In fact books are not considered an essential part of life by those who are literate. People don't really have the expectation that a literate person should develop the capacity to relish reading as a sustained activity.

Therefore, reading as an activity which has the potential to be enjoyed is not consciously encouraged in our education system.

Institution: The role of institutions for promoting reading was discussed. The development of the Reading Cell within NCERT was one example. There had been dilemma while naming the Reading Cell, since finding a name akin to “reading” in Hindi was difficult. This difficulty of finding the name in Hindi also points to a culture in which the word “*padhna*” in Hindi is equated with studying, and suggests an activity which requires hard work and is not a leisure time activity. Ultimately, the name “Reading Cell” remained, but they came up with the bi-line “*padhna hai samjhna*” in an attempt to promote the idea that reading leads to enhanced understanding.

An important contribution of the Reading Cell has been the production of *Barkha* –which is a graded series of 40 books. A child is exposed to interesting and familiar stories through these child friendly picture books. As children go through the books they gradually learn to read. This series, has however met with a fair degree of resistance. In fact at the time when the *Barkha* series was being developed, there were two factions, one supporting the production of the graded series and the other against it. This example was used to illustrate the fact that when any new idea enters an institution it generates varied responses, before it is accepted. Similarly, when any NGO brings new books into a school setting, it is likely to encounter initial resistance or conflict.

Some views on Early Literacy

Prof. Kumar briefly highlighted the fact that in our country, literacy is often equated with *Prod Shiksha* or Adult Literacy and considered a transforming agent. Within this context it becomes essential to think about, and have clarity on, the areas that early literacy should focus on. Reading is a foundation skill on which every other component of the curriculum is dependent. The link between reading and writing also needs to be understood. It is important to realize that if we want to change a system, we need to understand what it is that we need to change, in order to sustain the change. At present most school time tables are so restricted that there is practically no time available to promote the activity of reading or story-telling. It is important that these interventions are sustained for 3-5 years, so that they have a long lasting impact.

Session 1: Policy Framework for Early Literacy Programmes

Dr. Anita Rampal

This session primarily discussed select policies in India which have focused on education and on the teaching of language in schools. Attention was drawn to the earlier education policies within the Indian context which focused on promoting plurality, diversity and social and emotional integration. These policies had reflected concerns related to issues of equity and empowerment, and provided a special focus on the needs of first generation school learners. They aimed at provision of quality in the provision of opportunities, as well as, quality in the learning outcomes for all children, with the aim that a child's performance after a few years will not reflect the child's background. After the 1990s however the aims of education have witnessed a change, with the earlier transformative roles of education being compromised for a "fitting in" role, and a shift in focus on efficiency as against the earlier focus on egalitarianism. Within programmes like *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan*, while school enrolments have increased, the children's 'learning' has become questionable. The methods that are used for assessing these learning levels are also questionable. The objectives of learning have also become minimalist especially in the case of children from poor backgrounds.

Since the 1970s there has also been a disconnect between the National Curriculum Frameworks and the Education Policies. The focus of policy has been on engaging with diversity and inclusiveness. The National Language Policy also aimed at integration and emphasized the role of spoken languages such as Hindustani, and use of regional languages as against an unfamiliar dominant standard language. On the other hand, the National Curriculum Frameworks have emphasized uniformity through the use of a standard language and common textbooks which aim to establish common standards. This has defeated the objective of inclusive education and instead served to establish a rigid framework. Thus, the policy and the curriculum framework have been on different tangents.

The ways in which the teaching of Hindi has undergone a change over the years were highlighted. Through Gandhi's *Nai Taleem* simpler versions of spoken Hindi were introduced to children. This was based on the understanding that children don't learn language only by listening to others but they also actively construct their own words by participating in language. A child exposed to multiple-languages therefore tends to use words from different languages to convey meanings and in the process also creates new words. Over the years however, the Hindi that has been introduced through textbooks has become sanskritised and contrived. Dr. Rampal stressed the fact that a language cannot be artificially constructed. The language being taught in schools needs to be linked to the language that is in use in the children's

daily lives. There is a great need to revisit the Language policy and look at the problems with using the dominant forms of a standard language. Educationists need to understand the importance of multi-lingualism within the Indian context and address ways in which this can be translated into classroom practice. Instead the curriculum framework is often being relegated to addressing four components of language learning i.e. speaking; listening; reading and writing. Other competencies such as thinking, observing others, relating to others, comprehension, which are mostly not a part of language teaching, are also important and need to be focused on. Dr. Rampal was concerned to note that there has been very little change in the approaches to teaching language to children in this country over the past 100 years.

Education needs to focus on developing curricula for first generation learners with mixed ability groupings which look upon learner diversity as a resource. This however requires sensitivity in teachers and therefore the need for adequate teacher training. The example of Kerala was cited, where the day to day spoken language has been included in the curriculum. Initially this move had met with lot of resistance from the middle class who viewed it as a move towards dilution and lowering of standards. Other constructive changes have also been introduced within the education system in Kerala, such as in the areas of textbook and curriculum reform and in the introduction of creative assessment techniques. These have set in motion a chain of positive action. On account of these reforms, students of class IV have now started to read newspapers. This in turn has motivated the newspapers to develop a special children's page which includes contributions by children. Parents have also started shifting their children from private to government schools.

Medium of instruction

Within our multi lingual society an important focal area of policy has been on the language to be promoted as the medium of instruction. As of today there is no clear language policy, especially with regard to the medium of instruction in schools, and these decisions are often randomly made by state governments. Earlier, the three language formula had been adopted which stated that the third language to be taught to the child in North India would be a South Indian language and vice versa. However, this was not adopted by most schools particularly in North India. While the Right to Education Act was being drafted it laid emphasis on the teaching in mother tongue of the child. However, towards the finalization of the RTE, the emphasis was diluted to state that "as far as possible" the child's education should begin in mother tongue. Considering the importance of initiating education in the mother tongue there is a need to have a clear language policy based on considerations of children's natural language learning processes.

The example of Papua New Guinea was cited, where primary school textbooks are written in 400 existing languages. The children start schooling in their mother tongue and there is a clearly planned transition to other languages by the third or fourth year of Elementary School. This includes the transition to English. Dr. Rampal emphasized the need to understand the demand for learning English. Kerala has demonstrated ways in which English as a second language can be introduced creatively once the children's' first language has been well-developed. Within the Indian context however, even the NCF 2005 doesn't clearly specify that initial instruction has to be in the child's mother tongue.

What is important is not the number of years that are spent in learning the language but "how" the language has been learnt. There is a need to develop a policy on how to teach language based on a clear understanding of how children learn. This session concluded with the acknowledgement that while the RTE Act has provided us with a powerful tool for inclusion, it is important for teachers to be trained for the effective implementation of many aspects of this piece of legislation.

Session 2: Educating children on the margins - Constructions of childhood and their implications for early literacy programmes

Dr. Sarada Balagopalan

Some of the key aspects and discussions around the idea of childhood, which were taken up during this session, are as follows:

- The ways in which we understand childhood is determined culturally as well as historically. A study by Philip Arias (1962) was referred to, in which he analyzed the 16th and 17th century paintings. He found that in 16th century the idea of childhood didn't exist and instead children were considered miniature adults. However, post the 16th century the depiction of childhood emerged in the paintings with specific roles becoming visible for children.
- In the present scenario the dominant view reinforces the belief that there exists a universal understanding of childhood characterized by biological immaturity and dependency.
- The universal understanding of childhood has been the premise of Convention of Child Rights which was declared in 1989. The CRC reflects an adult understanding of childhood.
- Children's perspective /child's agency needs to be taken into consideration while looking at child's issues.
- The CRC focuses on what childhood should be, however in the real world multiple childhoods coexist. Therefore, there is tension between the dominant perspective of what childhood should be and the idea of multiple childhoods.

- The ideas of universal childhood and multiple childhoods and the tensions between them were depicted through a few stories taken from the western world, along with some stories from within the colonial Indian context.
- The first story is based on research on childhood in the late 19th and early 20th century. It focused on Catholic children of single mothers in America, who were poor, and were handed over to nuns for their upbringing, since it was felt that these mothers were incapable of looking after their children. Over a period of time there was an increase in the number of these orphans (which is what these children were called). The Catholic nuns therefore, sent these children in orphan trains from New York to other parts of US. The children who were sent to Arizona were Irish (whites), while the Catholics in Arizona were Mexicans (browns). Protestants in Arizona who were white kidnapped these children, as they did not want them to be raised by the brown Mexicans. When the case for the custody of these children was fought, the white Protestants who were powerful won the case. This case illustrates the fact that the best “interest of the child” has been historically determined to favor the powerful and that the rights of children often get determined through relationships of power.
- Dr. Balagopalan shared some of her archival work. This work is based on the analysis of writings which have looked at children in poverty; juvenile delinquents and work that looks at children who work in factories/as coolies/ in plantations in India during colonial times. She discussed how the basis of policy construction of the colonial state was the belief in the inability of the parents to take care of their children. This was also the premise for sending juveniles delinquents to jail. In one case a nine year old was sentenced to jail till the age of 16 on the premise that an early release would put the child back into evil ways, and on the other hand the jail would train the child to be an industrious person.
- During this time only, laws in England on child protection showed sensitivity to the child’s age, thus the lower the age of the child, the lower was the punishment that was meted out. However, this was not reflected in the laws enacted within the colonies, since the Indian parent was thought of as uncaring, unreliable, not responsible and unskilled.
- Under the colonial rule the education of children of factory owners and agricultural labourers in India was also determined by the British government in an unconventional manner. Children of factory workers were sent to a factory school where they were trained on the same machines on which their parents worked. They were taught a limited amount of English, which was just enough to equip them to work on the machines. Education was limited to ensure that the child was not able to imagine a future beyond being a mill worker. Similarly, children of agricultural workers were educated on object based learning. Interestingly, ‘history’ was not taught to them

as was taught to Brahmins. The emphasis of education, at the time, was limited to developing skilled labour.

- Looking at Education post independence policies and practices, Dr. Balagopalan emphasized the fact that policies, such as National Policy on Education 1986, had legitimized non-formal education for those children who undertook work responsibilities. However, with India signing on the International Programme on Elimination of Child Labour in 1992, the focus of education shifted to younger children. As a consequence older street children were left in the lurch. The IPEC programme's success was dependent on the performance of younger children. These children had limited experience on the street and also their learning was stronger as compared to the older children, who in fact had a much greater need for education.
- Dr. Balagopalan concluded that the creativity of non-formal education is being minimized at present on account of the Right to Education Act.
- Through the discussion of the KGBVs, Dr. Balagopalan illustrated the manner in which the State re-invents the same policies from time to time. Within the KGBV Evaluation Report of 2007, the construction of a child is one of a poor child whose quality of life needs to be improved. This improvement in the quality of life is addressed through skill based training and by providing training in hygiene to the KGBV inmates. The emphasis is not on education for improving the overall quality of their lives. Dr. Balagopalan pointed out that this identification of the educational needs of children from marginalized contexts, within the present day policy framework, is similar to the manner in which the educational needs of children from marginalized context were determined in the colonial period.
- Based on the above examples, Dr. Balagopalan concluded that the colonial mind set persists within the constructions of children and childhood that are determining the current education policies in India, especially in the case of children from marginalized and tribal communities

Session 3: Historical and theoretical approaches to early literacy

Dr. Shailaja Menon

This presentation outlined the evolution of early literacy instruction in the context of the western world. Dr. Menon explained that it was because there is a vacuum of research and literature available on early literacy instruction in the Indian context that western approaches to Early literacy were being discussed, with the hope that in the near future work on early literacy acquisition in the Indian context will become available.

The session focused on the following:



- The participants were introduced to two distinct perspectives of understanding literacy, referred to as the Autonomous and Ideological Models.
- The Autonomous Models conceptualize literacy as a set of technical skills that are acquired or accumulated by individuals “in-their-heads”, so to speak.
- The Ideological Models, view literacy is a set of cultural and social practices that evolve and change over time, and that are adopted and adapted in different ways by different groups of people. In other words, literacy is not just about the relationship between an individual and the text, but is influenced by the social contexts in which it occurs.
- Most of the history of literacy acquisition in the western world has focused on the Autonomous model with a focus on individual cognitive and linguistic processes.
- Three dominant approaches for enhancing reading skills i.e. the Phonics Approach; the Whole Language Approach and the Whole Word Approach were introduced to the participants, through samples of texts from within each perspective.
- The arena of approaches to reading during the eighties and early nineties has witnessed bitterly fought debates which were dominated by strong opposing views on Phonics Vs. Whole Language. These are known as the “great debates” and have been likened to the Reading Wars.

A brief history of the Autonomous approaches to reading was shared as follows:

1967: A major landmark was the book called ‘Learning to Read: The Great Debate’ by Jeane Chall which subsequently catalyzed the **Phonics Movement**. Chall collected many published studies on teaching beginning reading. She categorized the reading programs used in these studies as either “code emphasis” or “meaning emphasis” approaches. She concluded that even though both meaning and code-emphasis were both important approaches, the code emphasis approaches tended to produce better readers.

1970s: Direct Instruction Approach by Doug Carnine: Complex skills like reading can be broken down into little pieces, each of which can be taught and learned to some level of mastery (**Behavioristic Model of Reading**)

1970s and 1980s: Whole Language Movement. Views from several disciplines such as psycholinguists, cognitive theorists, sociolinguists and literacy theorists started influencing approaches to teaching reading and lead to the Whole Language Movement. Children are viewed as active meaning makers. A major influence in this movement has been the work of Ken & Yetta Goodman, which proposed that human beings are “wired” to acquire the language of the community into which they are born. Reading is viewed as being akin to speaking and listening and does not need to be taught explicitly. Children pick it up through useage.

Michigan Definition of Reading (1985): *Reading is the process of constructing meaning through the dynamic interaction between the readers' existing knowledge, the information suggested by the written language and the context of the reading situation.*

Schema Theory and Readers' Response theory:

- The reader's prior knowledge comes into play in the process of constructing meaning. Meaning is arrived at through a transaction between the reader, the text and the context.
- Difference between acquiring information from text (efferent reading) and responding to text (aesthetic reading).
- Readers shift back-and-forth along a continuum of efferent and aesthetic responses

1990s: Pendulum Swings Away from Whole Language. This was on account of the following:

- Curricular casualties of whole language – skills instruction, strategy instruction, emphasis on text structure, and reading in the content areas.
- Misapplication of whole language principles.
- Return to experimental methods based on “reliable, replicable methods”: Scientifically Based Reading Research.
- Politicization of the reading research and policy agenda

Report of the National Reading Panel 2000 – influential synthesis of research have concluded that systematic phonics instruction does make a difference to reading instruction. Learning to read is not a natural process akin to learning to speak.

2000 + Comprehensive Approach or Balanced Approach to reading and writing

The Comprehensive **Model of reading writing instruction** was introduced. It focuses on 5 core key skill components of reading. These five skill components or the inner core of a reading programme are: Phonological awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary and Comprehension. The methodologies incorporated within this model for introducing these five components include read aloud; shared reading; guided reading, and independent reading.

During the discussions it was noted that while there is a comprehensive skills focus within the above model, aspects of emergent literacy, oral language development, free writing; creative expression, and appreciation and response to literature, are some important components which are missing from this model.

Newer perspectives

- Literacy as a Socially Situated Practice (1980s, 1990s)
- Focus should be on understanding the relationship between the distant and the local: how the practices imported from outside are adapted and understood within local contexts.

The session ended with a look at some possible ways in we can develop, adapt or integrate these ideas for literacy instruction to the Indian contexts. Some pedagogical principles were shared on the basis of which we may focus on adapting these ideas to the Indian contexts

Pedagogical Principles

- The many facets of literacy are complementary and interactive, not linear.
- We need to build an instructional model for literacy that is redundant and multilayered.
- We need to take a life-long view of literacy development (not just focus on early literacy).
- We need to view literacy as a social practice grounded in the relationship between what is imported from outside and what is produced locally.

Session 4: Reading within the context of the classroom

Dr. Shobha Sinha

This session focused on reading within the Indian classrooms. The need to focus on various aspects of theory and how they translate into the classroom pedagogies was highlighted. Dr. Sinha began her session by emphasizing that there isn't any one way of teaching literacy. Different disciplines have informed literacy research. These include the fields of cognitive psychology, developmental psychology; sociolinguistics; literary theories etc. All these fields have emphasized the idea of constructivism or the active role of the reader in the process of reading. While there has been an emphasis on the active role of reader, within the Indian context there has been a **general unifying theme of meaninglessness in our classrooms**. Comprehension has not really been an issue for the Indian classroom.

The following aspects of reading within the Indian context were discussed during the session:

- In every census there is an increase in the number of literates in our country, it is important to understand that people are counted as literates on a minimalist criterion, such as an ability to sign ones name. A person who has just completed 1-2 years of schooling is also defined as literate. This raises an important question as to who do we consider literate within the Indian context.

- Cross national studies have indicated that children in Indian children have performed poorly on reading comprehension tasks.
- Aspects of pedagogy have never been a serious concern in our country; instead we have continued to focus on statistics.
- Literacy in India is equated to adult literacy, with an omission of early literacy, which is marked by its absence within the policy discourse
- Studies have also shown that the incidence of drop-outs in our country is linked to a large extent to the lack of efficient reading and writing skills, and to the prevalence of inappropriate classroom pedagogies.
- There are two contradictory discourses on literacy within the Indian context :
 - Transformative: this focuses on the transformative role of literacy.
 - Functional: this includes a basic minimalist literacy discourse.

The dominant discourse in the Indian context is functional and this has had an influence on the strategies that are adopted while teaching.

Comprehension in the Indian classroom context

- It is disconcerting that studies within elite schools in this country have shown that children were not able to understand or relate to unfamiliar texts
- Interestingly the ASER report on the status of reading focuses more on ability to read and recognize words and ignores the issue of comprehension.
- It is important to lay stress on meaning right from the beginning literacy level. The fact is that even within early literacy programmes in the Indian context, comprehension is left to be acquired at a later stage.

The process of reading

Reading is viewed as engaging meaningfully with the text and not just decoding the code. The lacuna of classroom research in the Indian context is a serious concern. It is essential to observe and study children's learning processes and responses before making any decisions related to classroom pedagogies for reading.

Three components which contribute to make reading a meaningful or meaningless experience were highlighted. These are a) the text; b) the reader and c) the context i.e. both the setting where the reading activity happens and also the manner in which reading activity is transacted. Features of the classroom, such as expectations of the teacher, are also important aspects of the context since they determine to a

large extent how a reader will approach the text. Some ways in which these three components facilitate or block meaning making processes were discussed

a) Texts: Dr. Sinha shared her observations of a few Primers. She read out samples from them to the participants. She noted that texts are often developed to teach words based on similar sounds. In such texts the selection of words is purely based on sound, and they have no other connection with each other. Even though each word has an individual meaning the text on the whole is rendered meaningless through this selection of unrelated words. Instead of actually helping children to learn to read, such texts actually destroy the child's experience of meaningful reading. While reading a meaningful text a reader uses his/ her prior knowledge to make sense of the text. A fluent reader not only reads through the sounds but also uses the semantic knowledge which he / she has. This perspective is also supported by cognitive psychology through the Schema Theory, and Readers' Response theory proposed by Rosenblatt. Both these theoretical perspectives suggest that a reader uses earlier experiences during the process of meaning making.

The following points were discussed with regard to texts:

- The classroom pedagogy is often not impacted by a change in the text. For instance a change in NCERT/ SCERT textbooks has not contributed to a corresponding change in the methodology.
- The discussion also focused on what kind of a text is easy or difficult for a child. While there was a Readability Formula in the West, experience suggests that the level of difficulty of a text is not just based on the number of words in a sentence. In fact some two word sentences can be relatively more difficult to read because they leave out connectives.
- Another aspect of texts that requires attention is the structure of the text especially in the case of content area and expository texts. Observations about the Science textbooks were shared to illustrate that they are often written in a manner which makes them difficult to understand.

b) Context It is not just the fact of all sentences being constructed meaningfully that enables a reader to derive the meaning from a text; the context is also important. Dr. Sinha explained that no text can be totally explicit or complete; there are always gaps in the text, which are filled in by a reader. If these gaps were not there, then the texts would be very cumbersome, detailed and difficult to read. Therefore if Reader A and Reader B have different experiences, they will fill the gaps within the texts in different ways. These gaps are filled based on the background knowledge of the reader. This knowledge exists in

the reader's mind in the form of schemas or mental networks and the reader draws upon these schemas to construct meaning. Within the context of classroom, it is important to understand the relevance of this process of using background knowledge while reading meaningfully. Teachers need to use strategies which enable young readers to activate their schemas while reading.

c) Reader Expert readers use background knowledge to make sense of a text. The ways in which children can use their mental schemas was discussed briefly as follows:

- Children may have adequate schemas but may not be able to use them or bring them forward or make connections with them. The reader's schema needs to be activated by the teacher.
- These schemas can be activated or enhanced through comprehension exercises, which draw attention to certain facts in the text. Usually while testing comprehension the child is asked factual questions. These questions do not help the child to make any mental connections or draw inferences. Instead comprehension based activities need to create opportunities for the child to draw inferences by making connections between the text and their mental schemas.
- The awareness of his/ her own reading process is important in the process of helping a child comprehend (Meta cognition). A young reader needs to be equipped to develop this understanding. This aspect of reading is completely missing within the contexts of our classrooms.

Session 5: The Mathura Experience - NCERT

Dr. Manjula Mathur

This presentation focused on the journey of the NCERT Reading Cell for developing and implementing the Reading Project in the Government schools of Mathura District in Uttar Pradesh. . A training package has been developed to train the teachers to initiate Reading Corners in their classrooms and to implement activities which are associated with the reading corners. Further there is a Block Review Team which has undergone 4 trainings in 2 years. They monitor and support the teachers in schools. The *Barkha* graded reading series, which is an integral component of the Reading Cell, was developed through a process of numerous discussion sessions with a wide group of experts and teachers. This graded series consists of 40 books, at 4 different levels. It has been introduced in the Classroom Reading Corners, in all the schools which are a part of the Mathura Project, along with activities based on these books.

Initially teachers were resistant to these new ideas and it was difficult to convince them to initiate early literacy learning through these new methods. However, over a period of time, with training, they have started using these new techniques for involving the children with books and reading. Some of the practices which have been introduced include:

- A reading corner in every class, where in addition to the books for children to read, children's writings are also displayed
- Print rich classroom environments have been created
- Children are being encouraged to depict their ideas in whatever form they want to, i.e. through conversation, drawing, scribbling or writing etc.
- Teachers respond to the children's writings in different ways and thus a relationship between teachers and children based on reading and books is promoted
- To encourage reading, 30-40 minutes have been set aside everyday within the daily time table..
- Children are encouraged to explore books within smaller groups.

Teachers however did not implement these practices immediately. In the first one and a half year, the results were dismal. However, gradually as they started introducing the activities and the responses from the children became visible; the teachers began to get motivated

Some findings of the Mathura Project:

- Teachers have now started using the same strategies that they use for the reading corners, to teach the texts in the prescribed textbooks. For example, ways of introducing a text.
- Teachers have also started accepting the stories being developed by children, along with their spelling mistakes. Thus the teachers' focus has begun to shift to the children's ideas and is solely not on correcting their spellings and grammar.
- A change has been observed in the attitude of the teachers towards the children.

Dr. Mathur concluded the session by claiming that changing textbooks is not easy and it is a time consuming activity. The introduction of a reading corner in the classroom, as in the case of the Mathura Project, however, has been found to facilitate the development of literacy skills in children, especially in children from marginalized backgrounds.

Day 2: April 26, 2011

Session 1: Drawing a Story - Jane Sahi

This session began with exploring what stories are. In our journey of life we all have stories to tell. These stories are based on our experiences. However, out of the numerous experiences that we have had, we select a few significant ones around which we weave our stories. Thus, there is a process of selection which is involved while creating a story. Further, through this process of telling our personal stories, we continuously select other stories, poems, songs that have touched us. In addition to selection of stories, we also interpret stories. Based on our stories, we are continuously re-interpreting our experiences and so the stories that we create also lead to a transformation of our experiences. Stories are an integral part of the process of early literacy. This process is a very serious and significant process in which there is a component of selection, interpretation and transformation. Vygotsky has emphasized that gesture, play, work, talk; picture making and writing are all essentially part of a single, unified process, which is the process of learning to make meaning and to communicate. Story making has also been viewed as an aspect of play.

In his book “The Biology of Art”, Desmond Morris has discussed the painting process of chimpanzees, to show that they are able to consciously choose and use colour in effective ways while painting. In fact, they get so engrossed in the painting that they have been found to prefer painting over food. However, unlike humans they do not try to name their painting or capture any particular experiences through their paintings. They do not have the ability to represent an object or experience through their drawings, in the ways that humans are able to.

The drawing process of 6 year old Manoj was shared, to show his transition from random scribbling to the drawing of an experience that he was able to name. Some other children’s drawings were also shared. These included paintings through which children had shared a variety of experiences. There was a painting in which a child had shared a painful experience. Such paintings can be an important means for a child to come to terms with such experiences; however Jane Sahi cautioned that children may not be ready to talk about these experiences and we need to deal with such paintings and drawings with great sensitivity. We need to be careful that we do not compel children to talk about them if they don’t want to.

A child’s drawing can become a starting point for writing. Children can be encouraged to write what they feel about the drawing. Initially the teacher may write what the child has to say. Over a period of time the child can also be encouraged to write in whatever manner he or she can write. Children’s drawings reflect

aspects of their culture, as well. However, it is important to be aware that “culture” is ever changing and emerging and evolving. We break things in segments for children to learn; however the manner in which children think is holistic. They think in terms of relational inter-linkages and associations. Some drawings reflect the ways in which children express their imagination through drawings and use these to create imaginative stories. In this way drawing can also be a good medium to enhance the imaginative capacities of children.

Jane Sahi shared an experience in which she had asked a girl to draw about what she did on Sunday. When asked about her drawing the girl narrated a deeply emotional family experience. Jane then pointed out that even though all children are not ready to share such emotional experiences; the school can provide safe spaces for the child to feel secure enough to share such experiences if she wants to. The school environment largely determines the extent to which a child will share deeper experiences.

While discussing the availability of stories for children, Jane Sahi has found that many stories, especially those in textbooks are insipid and follow the general pattern of a beginning, middle and end. Stories, however do not necessarily unfold in this manner. She believes that traditional stories offer a rich resource for children.

The transitional aspect of the process of story writing was highlighted, through a child’s story which illustrated a shift from dealing with the known to dealing with the unknown. While looking at transitions the case of Basant was presented as an example. Over a period of time his drawings had become more detailed. In the initial stages he dictated his experiences to the teacher, but over a period of time he was able to write more intensely on his own. One of the aspects which supported Basant’s capacity to write intensely was the attention given to his experiences by the teacher. Jane Sahi also shared an example to show how two children interpret the same incident in different ways. This illustrated the fact that children are constantly selecting, rearranging and interpreting their experience in their own ways. Stories produced by children often represent universal themes which cut across age and time. A Collaborative Story was shared in which ten children aged 4-7 years had worked together to create their own illustrated story book.

The session was concluded by highlighting factors that help the child to grow in the art of story-telling and picture making. These include the following:

- Apprenticeship in listening: Children learn to develop stories by listening to each other. In addition to this it is important that teachers also listen to a child at play, and during informal activity, since this is a time when they are often telling stories.
- Experience of a receptive audience: The culture of the school creates an opportunity for the child to express herself to an interested audience.
- Sharing and collaboration: It is important to understand that sharing stories is an individual process which is located within a shared process
- Space and time: Enabling a child to share stories requires adequate time and space. It doesn't happen quickly.

Session 2: Supporting emergent literacy inside classrooms for children from neo literate backgrounds - Dr. Neelima Gokhle

This session was based on the premise that literacy doesn't only mean 'to read and write'. Within the context of early childhood, literacy has to be looked at within a wider context. When children come to primary school they have no orientation to formal schooling. That orientation needs to be built upon during the pre-primary years.

Based on this conceptual framework, the presentation focussed on the following three aspects:

- a. Early Beginnings: non-verbal communication
- b. Pre-School
- c. Inclusive Practices: Bringing children's home-culture and language into the classroom

a) Early Beginnings: Non-verbal communication

Infants start communicating without really talking. They are able to convey their needs non-verbally. To strengthen the non-verbal communication, social interaction is very important for infants. When adults respond to the non-verbal communication of children, it is likely to contribute towards building a positive self-image of children. Further, they learn to engage in communication with others, thereby promoting pro-social behaviours.

b) Pre-School

Dr. Gokhle explained that literacy learning begins very early in life. It develops through interactions with people and the environment. If the experiences of the child are supported by adults through interactions (words), then new vocabulary is learnt by the child. It is therefore valuable to verbalize what the child is experiencing. This helps the child to pick up new words. The actual learning to read and write requires hard-work and is also dependent on child's motivation. Therefore, when the child observes adult's

participating in literacy, it is easier for the child to develop a positive attitude towards literacy. Dr. Gokhle emphasized that the thrust of the programme in the pre-school needs to be on developing a positive attitude towards literacy in children rather than on just engaging them directly with print.

c) Inclusive Practices: Bringing Children's home-culture and language into the classroom

Some of the ways for developing a positive attitude towards literacy during the early childhood years were shared as follows:

- a. Exposing the child to the print needs to be an emotionally rich experience. This is very crucial since children start exploring when they feel secure.
- b. Reading to children during their infancy, stimulates their interest and provides a strong motivation to the child to interact with print.
- c. Through such activities children begin to understand what adults do, how they do it, and then they try and imitate them.
- d. Examples were shared to demonstrate that providing access to reading and writing tools such as pencils, crayons; paper etc gives infants opportunity to use these in their play activities. Such activities not only help them to build connections with the world of written words, but at times they also help children gain control over their emotions. For example, through their scribbles and drawings they are able to express their ideas, emotions and feelings.

Those children who don't get the above mentioned environment are disadvantaged. The limitation is not in their potentials but is the limitation of their environment. An important consideration for ensuring positive learning within formal set-ups is that children are able to gain control over their emotions. Children's actions are usually driven by reflexes. Unless they learn to control their emotions it becomes difficult for them to learn. Therefore pre-schools and the initial years of school are important spaces for building foundations for learning, especially for children who come from the disadvantaged home environments.

Session 3: Teaching early literacy –My conceptual journey

Dr. Maxine Berntsen

: The title of the session was changed by Dr. Berntsen to:

The teaching of beginning literacy in Indian Languages

Extracts from two films which have been produced by the Pragat Shikshan Sansthan (PSS) were shown and discussed during this session:

- a) The first film was called Immersion in Language



- b) The second film demonstrated the PSS Approach to teaching beginning reading and writing in Marathi called the *Pragat Vaachan Padati*

The first film has tried to capture the marvel of a child's natural language learning processes. It shows some natural ways in which a child acquires language through interactions with adults and other children in his social world. While introducing the film, Dr. Berntsen pointed out that right from the time of birth a child is immersed in language. This includes words, touch, gaze and gesture. The film shows some natural processes through which children "pick up" language from their surroundings. It focuses on a single child, Sanket, who lives in poor hamlet which is located in a drought prone area of western Maharashtra. The film draws linkages between this little child's outer world or the world of his experience and his inner world which is his world of language and thought.

While participating in play and other social activities the little boy Sanket, acquires the language which is required for the activities and play that he is that he is engaged in. It is through his active involvement and participation in these events that little he "picks up" the words, actions and expressions that he needs in order to be able to participate effectively. When he is playing a game of marbles or seven tiles or "lagor", he listens, he watches others playing, he participates and uses the words that he has heard others using. He learns the rules of the games by playing them. He learns that he has to take turns. No one teaches him these things. He just "picks them up". He learns to communicate with other children and adults through his interactions, whether it is helping to wheel a bicycle or fixing its chain or playing a game of cricket. He expresses great his satisfaction through a big smile when he hits a big shot in a game of cricket. He has picked up this sense of achievement incidentally through his observations and through his active involvement in his social world. He has also learned by listening to instructions given by other children. In conclusion, Dr. Berntsen pointed out that research has also shown that giving clear instructions supports a child's natural process of acquiring language.

Second Film: While introducing the second film Dr. Berntsen pointed out that the Devanagari script has a clear relationship between signs and sounds. The PSS approach known as the *Pragat Vaachan Padati* is based on the systematic teaching of this sound – character correspondence. The first extract of the film shows a Class 1 teacher initiating an animated conversation based on the recent experience of the rains, which is fresh in the children's' minds. Next the teacher writes a few of the children's sentences in the words of the children. These are then read aloud one by one. Since the children are familiar with these sentences they participate in the reading aloud process, even though they do not know how to read. An important aspect of the PSS approach is to capture children's verbally articulated experiences in written

sentences or the language experience approach. Dr. Bertsen emphasized that this approach motivates the children to make meaningful connections between spoken and written words and language.

The next extract from the film demonstrates the PSS approach for teaching beginning reading and writing in Marathi. It showed the ways in which children are systematically introduced to a select group of consonants, vowels and abbreviated vowel sounds and their corresponding shapes, in interesting ways which try and relate these sounds to objects and words within the children's spoken language experience. Emphasis is laid on phonemic awareness or the awareness that spoken words are made up of sound units. Once the children have mastered these sounds; they are introduced to the corresponding written characters for each selected sound.

The film also captures the sensitivity and creativity of the teachers who provide plenty of time and opportunity for each child to gain mastery over different aspects of sound - symbol relationships. It also captures the struggles of individual children to gain mastery over these sound symbol relationships. This learning is then used within the PSS approach for reading simple meaningful words and later for reading simple meaningful sentences which are developed by combining those words.

Session 4a: Home to School Transition - Keerti Jayaram

This session looked at the difficulties faced by children from marginalized communities when they transition to school. When such children start going to school they experience a different and unfamiliar environment at school as compared to that of the home. In the case of children from marginalized backgrounds and oral cultures, the school environment is not only unfamiliar; the controlled and more formal environment can also be threatening. It is therefore essential to address the special needs that arise in children on these accounts, and to sensitize teachers towards these.

A few important considerations for addressing issues based on of home –school transition, which are specific to an early literacy programme were shared, as follows:

a) Children do not have an awareness that spoken language is made up of separate word units. In her seminal work “Children’s Minds”, Margaret Donaldson has draws attention to the fact that while engaging with spoken language most preschoolers do not interpret separate words but in fact engage with the flow of speech. She explains that a child at this stage is concerned more with what people do and how they act rather than engaging with separate words. Children relate to whole situations to derive their meanings and make sense of any language based experience. They do not relate to the separate forms of speech. When they begin to engage with the written forms however, it becomes important for children to develop an awareness of the structures and forms of their spoken language, so as to enable them to capture these within written language. At this stage it is important that the child becomes aware of the

separate components of spoken language. In other words children now need to recognize the words and word boundaries within spoken language. This requires a special focus on the awareness of sound units within spoken language or phonemic awareness. Without this transition from the spoken to the written can be problematic and mechanical, especially in the case of children who are actively engaging with written forms for the first time only after entering school.

b) The findings of a longitudinal study conducted by Gordon Wells were shared to highlight the active role of a child in the process of constructing meaning, and the significant role that ‘talk’ has within this process of meaning making. In complete contrast, the child who enters school is asked not to talk in class, and to “keep quiet”. There are very few instances when the child is able to participate actively in the classroom. Thus, important channels of meaning making are actually blocked when a child moves from home to school. In the study mentioned above meaning making is shown to be an individualistic and highly complex activity. Therefore when the teacher gives uniform instructions for all children it can become confusing and difficult for a child to interpret it meaningfully as this process may have very little to do with child’s real world experience. These differences become heightened in the case of children from diverse cultural backgrounds and create opportunities for lack of understanding or misunderstanding.

c) Teachers have their own intuitive pedagogies based on their social conditionings. These reflect their beliefs about children and learning and tend to dominate their classroom practices. It is important to understand and build on these so that new ideas based on children and their natural learning processes can take root, and children can be helped to make a smooth transition from home to school..

Session 4b: Home to School Transition - Marginalized Communities

Nilesh Nimkar

This session was based on twelve years of in depth experience that Mr. Nimkar has had of working in a small alternative residential school (Ashramshala) in a tribal area in Maharashtra, with about 60 students in the age group of 8-14 years. He presented his analysis of issues related to the home to school transitions of the tribal children he had worked with. Children from three different tribal communities attend this school. Each of this group has a different language.

Three issues related to home to school transition were highlighted. These are:

- a. Coping with values and belief system of the school
- b. Coping with the routine schedule
- c. Coping with the language of the school

The need to have spaces for the values and beliefs of the children were discussed through several examples based on first hand experience. These highlighted the fact that in the residential schools teachers need to be compassionate, sensitive and willing to give space to the child's culture. Experiences and anecdotes were shared to show how through compassionate handling of issues over a period of time, some areas of conflict between the home and school cultures were resolved. Most of the children found it difficult to adhere to the routine of the school, since this was an alien concept which had not been a part of their life experience so far. However, over a period of time through some amount of negotiation and dialogue they gradually learnt to adhere to the same.

Another critical issue that was discussed was that of transition from the home language to school language. For most children the home language was completely different from school language. The three tribal languages in use do not have a script. Errors in the written language have commonly reflected an interference of the language structures of the child's spoken. The strategy that used by the teachers to counter such mistakes was to allowed children to make some mistakes, and learn spelling and grammar conventions gradually through usage. However, the errors which were difficult to correct were permitted. The students were also allowed to write answers to questions asked in Marathi in their home language.

Session 5: Programme Presentations by two resource agencies

a) Room to Read – presentation and sharing - Ramesh Chandra and

K. Narasimha Chary

b) Sharing of the Pratham experience - Saktibrata Sen

Both the above sessions provided a useful opportunity to share and learn from the wide experience of these two organizations, who are at present two key players in the field of Early Literacy and implementation of Reading Programmes within the Indian context. Both these sessions included a sharing of .the process of evolution of the literacy and reading programmes which are being implemented; this threw light on their approaches to early literacy and ways in which these have changed over the years. The challenges faced by both these organizations and their future visions were also shared.

Session 6a: The magical role of books in the life of a young child

Usha Mukunda

This session focused on how book reading can support the development of literacy. Early literacy is not only about acquiring the skill of reading but also includes the impressions which we develop in our mind

when we engage with printed words. The printed word has a strong impact on children's minds therefore the content of books for a young child is very important.

The session began by drawing our attention to a quote which was taken from an article by Prof. Krishna Kumar which appeared in the Hindu newspaper on January 20, 2011. The quote is as follows:

“The texts used for the teaching of reading should treat the child with dignity, showing respect for the child's inner drive to interpret and to relate. We need texts that make children excited about the social and cultural diversity they encounter in their ethos. We also need kind and affectionate teachers who are themselves habitual readers and can encourage each child to perceive reading as a means to pursue his or her own interest”

Discussion on the quote led to a sharing of the various means through which books enter the world of children. These include adults, classrooms, libraries, textbooks etc. Since adults play an important role in introducing books to children, as adults we need to be able to discern the attributes of a good book. It was pointed out that it is also important to make books easily accessible to children. In classroom libraries books can be hung on a rope in ways that make them accessible for children. The first step towards getting children to start reading books is to connect them with the books. Ms. Mukunda shared the experience of a role-play in which children become the enemies of books and were asked to develop connections between such children and books. Through such exercises and enactments children become aware of the importance of taking care of books and they actually begin to also take care of them.

The remaining session focused on various ways of engaging the children with books and reading. These were demonstrated through a presentation based on experiences of using a variety of interesting activities for engaging children with books. A few of these methods and activities were also demonstrated by involving the participants in some activities.

Some of the methods and activities for engaging children with books, which were shared are as follows:

- Provide plenty of interesting books
- Read aloud excerpts from books in ways that attract children to the book
- Organise book treasure hunts by giving clues on the basis of which children have to hunt for a related book
- Organise some craft activities related to a book / books
- Provide space for buddy reading or reading together with a friend
- Provide quiet spaces for reading, other than the classroom
- Arrange book talks
- Use poetry to entice children into reading
- Select books which provide simple role models that children can relate to

- Provide translations / adaptations to make the books accessible to children
- Get children to make books and become authors

We were reminded that time and space is very important when children are being engaged in these activities. Ms. Mukunda reminded us that these activities help children absorb and develop the understanding that reading is independent of classroom spaces and in fact can be done in any quiet place, thus enabling children to develop deeper relationships with books and texts.

Finally, while concluding the session the following tips were provided for running effective libraries:

1. Help children to read often and make it enjoyable. As soon as they seem to lose interest, stop! Pick up the reading again at a later time.
2. Read out aloud to children. They will hear more new words. Explain new words rather than replace them with familiar ones.
3. Make sure children name things they see in books or around them. Let them talk and not only listen!
4. Point to words as you read. Let the child turn the pages as the follow you.
5. You know you are on the right track when there is a comfortable, empathetic relationship between you the teacher, and the child.

Day 3 - April 27, 2011

Session 6b: What is a good book? - Anjali Noronha

The session started with the following background questions:

- Different people like different books. Why do we like certain books?
- What kind of books so children prefer?
- Why certain books are liked by all?

There are no definitive answers to these questions, however, through the session it was hoped that people would find some answers. The session focused on exploring some aspects of children's literature through the reading aloud and sharing of the texts of some books for children, both in English and in Hindi.

A book called '*Lalu and Peelu*' was given to the participants to read. This was followed by a discussion to identify elements within the text, the layout and the presentation that made this an appealing book for children (and adults). Some of the key features /elements of this book, which have made it an attractive book for children, were identified. These are as follows:

- The names of the characters and the pictures are attractive
- The text corresponds to the pictures, and so supports reading, even for beginning readers
- The theme is child friendly since children love animals

- The content is simple; there is no lecture.
- There is fun in the text, and yet at the same time it is meaningful
- The size of the font is big, making it child friendly
- Children also have similar experiences of affection, and being cared for by mother and siblings, so they can easily relate to the book
- While the story is short in length, it is still a complete story.
- Curiosity is created from the third page itself. This motivates the readers to read further.
- The pictures are also self-explanatory
- The book creates a lot of possibility for conversations
- Children are able to relate the experiences to their life experiences.
- The illustrations of the chicks are very alive and are able to convey their emotions

While selecting children’s books it is important to consider two aspects of children literature:

- Aspects of Quality which include the text, narratives – stories, biographies, travelogues, news, poems and the visuals
- Aspects of Taste which are influenced by context of the child, age, personality, socialization, exposure (to the world and to literature)

Aspects of quality were demonstrated through the sharing of a book “*Bhalu ne kheli football*”. Aspects of quality that help the reader to relate to the text include considerations such as whether the context of the story; the narrator and main character’s perspectives reflect a value and respect for the context and perspectives of the child. It is important to also consider whether the text responds to the cognitive level of the child and recognizes that literature responds to, as well as, shapes the world view of the child.

Through the story “*Bhalu ne kheli football*” some aspects of taste were also highlighted, such as the richness of the language that was used. It was pointed out that nowhere in the text does it mention that the story is set in winter. The rich, descriptive language leaves it open for children to relate the text to their personal experience and arrive at the fact that it is winter. The quality of the text is also reflected through the text narrative. This includes the manner in which images of the character, the setting of the context and the unfolding of the engaging plot have been drawn up.

After this, different books of the NCERT *Barkha* Series were distributed among the participants, for their views about these books. After flipping through the pages, most participants felt that these books look like textbooks. In contrast to the earlier book, the story element was found to be missing. While these books are accomplishing the objective of providing a graded series, the text was found to be insipid in

comparison to the texts that were shared earlier. The OELP group shared that they had held a similar opinion of the *Barkha* series, but when they actually used these books with children in rural Rajasthan, their experience was different. They found that children were able to relate to these books and engage with them meaningfully and with enjoyment. One reason for this may be that these books provide familiar settings and have Indian children as characters. They also open up the possibility of conversations, since children are able to easily identify with the themes and experiences presented in them.

Day 4 - April 28, 2011

Session 7: Assessment - Dr. Shailaja Menon

The session began with a brief introduction to formative and summative assessment.

1. Summative assessment is usually administered after learning has occurred and is used to measure the learning that has taken place. The student learning is assessed in relation to some defined standards or benchmarks. The feedback is typically reported to a third party

2. Formative assessment is administered during the learning process. It is used as feedback to improve the teaching and learning process and usually has a narrow focus on a particular learning goal. It is continuous, and provides the learner with feedback, as well as helps teachers to get a quick check on an instructional practice. After sharing the definitions of both approaches, it was pointed out that we can use formative assessment along with summative assessment and that these approaches are not mutually exclusive. Further, it was explained that assessment becomes formative or summative depending on how we use the assessment and intention of the assessment activity. This was explained through examples. It was observed that we have been mainly doing summative assessment within our education system. Summative assessment usually provides feedback to the educators on how they are teaching; children are not really helped. On the other hand, formative assessment focuses on assessing the child's processes and learning level, through assessment on a frequent basis, and ongoing feedback is provided to the child to support his/ her learning processes.

On being asked whether the CCE introduced by CBSE is formative or summative, it was pointed out that we need to see that how are the results being used? Are the tests being used only to tell the level of the child to the parents? (Summative) Does the mode of instruction get informed by the result? The latter case is called formative. In the case of formative assessment usually the child gets feedback and is involved in the process of assessment.

Shivani Taneja from Muskaan shared the concern that formative assessment is easier to do in pre-primary school; in the higher classes it becomes difficult to convince parents about the child's performance

without giving marks. Further, in the higher classes, while each child is monitored over a period of time, it is the performance and not the process that is shared with the parents, thus formative assessment is being presented in the form of summative assessment. It was pointed out that quantification is not bad but whenever required we need to support it with qualitative data.

The kind of data that is being collected was discussed. Many organizations are maintaining a portfolio for each child. The data from the portfolios can be used in different forms. For instance, we may use the same data in a quantitative form when we are sharing the data with a third party. When we use the data for planning or by teachers then we use the qualitative aspect of the data. Teachers need to be trained to observe, analyze children's work, and consolidate their findings and plan accordingly, so that they gain a better understanding about the ways to use data.

Each partner organization was given a reflective response sheet on assessment. They were asked to take it to their back to their respective programme teams and fill it jointly. These responses could be shared at a later stage at a follow workshop. The larger discussion focused on the tools of assessment / tasks being used. At the end of the sharing it was felt that there may be more questions which can be added to the form shared through e-mail. The group recommended that a workshop be taken up on assessment in the near future, with components of field trialing built into it.

Part 3

Presentations by SRTT partner organizations

Day 3 and 4 - 27th and 28th April

All the participating SRTT partners presented their programmes. These presentations covered the following points:

1. The broad understanding of children's language and literacy learning processes which are reflected within the programme
2. The specific context / contexts of the language and literacy programme
3. Key components of the language and literacy programme
4. Important features of the pedagogies / classroom practices within the programme
5. Learner tracking / assessment mechanisms
6. Challenges

These presentations were based on the feedback formats that had been circulated earlier. Each organisation made a power point presentation. A CD of each presentation has been made available to SRTT by the individual partner organisations. A list of the partner organisations who participated in the Consultation is available in Appendix 3

Way forward

Some ideas and suggestions were put forth by the participants for taking the Consultation discussions forward. These ideas have been grouped under different categories as follows:

Post Consultation follow up

- Follow up workshops: on assessment, comprehension, teacher preparation
- Set up a forum / egroup / interactive web portal for deepening our understanding on aspects of literacy, such as stages of literacy (based on readings)
- Compile the proceedings / learnings from the Consultation to share with a wider audience
- Capture and share changes brought about in our programme after 6-8 months
- Exposure visits to each others' work for peer learning
- Continue a dialogue on building a Comprehensive process and skill based Literacy Programme
- Focus on Assessment – through piloting of some methodologies / tools for building a deeper understanding of effective and meaningful ways of assessing learner progress and programme components

Networking

- Set up a forum with all key players on language and literacy education
- Set up a forum with partners
- Explore the possibility of bring out a newsletter for sharing existing early literacy practices and ideas

Research and knowledge building

- Need for research in the Indian languages, great need for systematizing and studying insights gained from field based work. Explore the possibility of supporting field level groups in planning and conducting meaningful research
- Continue dialogue on early literacy issues through the CLLC website forum www.cllicindia.org
- Study the implications of RTE on the work with out of school child

- Provide easy access to relevant reading material

Material and resource development

- Create material / resource material in regional languages
- Address aspects of children's literature: in terms of quality, variety, availability and usage of children's literature in the regional languages
- Strengthen both the supply side of children's books as well as their demand and use.

Feedback from the participants

The following is some feedback received from participants at the end of the Consultation

- The Consultation provided opportunity for the process of gaining clarity on the underlying theoretical frameworks of some of the work being undertaken in early literacy
- The Consultation provided several learning which will be taken back to the teachers and to other group members who were not able to attend
- There was opportunity to share each others work, and to appreciate some of the impressive work on early literacy which is being carried out in harsh conditions
- Will introduce some of the creative activities with children
- Will introduce early literacy work in *Anganwadis*
- Have gained more clarity on assessment and on the library programme
- Taking back several thoughts on how to strengthen work in the field

Appendix 1

A concept note for the Consultation on Early Literacy with the partners of SRTT – NRTT (April 25 to 28, 2011)

Keerti Jayaram

Introduction

The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE Act), which has come into effect from April 2010, makes schooling compulsory for children in the age group of 6 to 14 years. However, the underlying vision of this Act in terms of attainment of equal opportunity for all children, may be difficult to accomplish unless each child experiences school as a positive learning experience and is able to successfully complete schooling and not drop out somewhere along the way. Issues of effective participation and retention continue to be major challenges within a large number of existing formal schools in India. Some of the available documentation suggests that school access does not necessarily transform the school into an inclusive space.

Within the above scenario, strong foundations in reading and writing have a pivotal role towards adequately equipping the next generation of young learners to meet the expectations of the global world and of schooling. However the field of Early Literacy is ridden with complexities and contradictory perspectives. Within the Indian educational context there still isn't enough clarity and several conflicting approaches to beginning reading and writing, coexist within a fairly confused and 'free for all' situation. Approaches to beginning reading and writing are often not based on sound theory but are instead driven by issues of practicalities, or pedagogy management. Sixty odd years after attaining independence, we find that this diverse and complex field of Early Literacy in India remains highly under researched. At the same time, we find large numbers of children do not acquire efficient and meaningful reading and writing processes / strategies. The inefficient reading and writing competencies of such children become a major stumbling block to their process of self actualization; attainment of school success and to their participation as involved citizens in the contemporary world.

Clearly there isn't much room for complacency. Hidden within large scale school performance surveys and aggregate data are important issues of quality that often slip unnoticed through the net of quantitative data. One such important issue of concern is that a large number of school going children, especially children from neo-literate or oral backgrounds, are not able to read with understanding at the end of primary school. The ground reality suggests that there are several primary school children who read mechanically, and without any understanding, at end of Class 5 in both urban and rural schools.

Quantitative surveys based on learner achievement scores and other forms of aggregate data do not always catch this phenomenon, since a number of such children manage to somehow rote learn their way through exams or reading assessment surveys. For all practical purposes however these children are not independent readers and writers.

Current thinking in the field of early literacy

Research and study of children's natural processes of oral language acquisition has had a major impact on the thinking of early literacy and reading educators in the seventies and eighties. They began to look at the implications that the natural processes of acquiring oral language have for learning to read and write. (Smith,1994; Goodman,1997)). Within the thinking that emerged children are no longer seen to be passive recipients who need to be "taught reading" by an expert, but are thought to be naturally motivated to make sense of the written texts they encounter, provided that these have a meaningful purpose for them. This view believes that reading is a constructive process, in which the meaning of a text is not contained in the written words on a page instead; the meaning is constructed by readers through a process of integration of the written text with the prior background knowledge through which they view these texts. The background knowledge and experiences of readers thus came to be regarded as crucial elements in the process of understanding written texts and in giving them meaning. It is also becoming clearer through reading research that individual readers do not read in the same way. Recent work in the area of reading has elaborated on ways in which children can be taught different strategies for enhancing their word identification and comprehension skills towards helping them to become more efficient readers and writers.

A vast body of the more recent literature on Early Literacy has highlighted a profound correlation between social background and literacy levels and the consequent implication of learners from some social contexts, in having greater difficulty in learning to read and write than others. Being encultured into the practices of reading and writing through meaningful interactions with others has been found to greatly assist new learners. Research within the Emergent Literacy perspective confirms that that the foundations for meaningful reading and writing are laid in the first few years of a child's life. It is through exposure to a variety of informal reading and writing experiences at home that young children begin to experience different forms of reading and writing much before they enter school. As young preschoolers observe, interact informally and participate in print based activities in their homes and social groups, they begin to sort out and acquire knowledge about the print itself. For example, they begin to realize that there is a connection between the sounds of spoken and the symbols of written language. They "pick up" some writing conventions such as directionality and scribble pretend words from the left to the right side of a page. By the time they are three or four years old, many of these children become sensitive to the

difference between alphabets, words and sentences and therefore leave gaps in between a scribbled pretend message to suggest words or even sentences.

A very large number of young learners in this country, especially children from marginalized communities, come from rich oral traditions or “non literacy cultures”. Although they enter schools with rich language resources and life experiences, much of these resources are not adequately acknowledged within the spaces of the school and classroom. For these children their first active engagement with the written forms of language occurs only when they step into school. They do not have prior print exposure of the kind mentioned in the earlier paragraph. Such children who do not have a print based home environment in their early childhood years have been found to be at a major disadvantage when they enter school. They do not enter school with the same degree of preparedness as children who have already actively experienced various forms of reading and writing at home. This is compounded by the fact that many of these children come from social groups who are often viewed in disparaging terms and at times as being unfit for school learning .The situation gets further aggravated by the fact that most of these young children do not have any support for reading and writing at home. Many of them are in fact required to help with domestic chores; to look after younger siblings; to take the cows and goats to graze or work to supplement the family income; and so even if they do get to school, they do not get time for home work or for reading and writing practice at home. All these factors affect their school performance, and they soon they begin to fall behind school expectations.

The larger picture

Current literature on child labour and children in poverty has highlighted both the desire of marginalized populations for formal schooling and at the same time the school functioning as a space that is inherently disrespectful of their present life situations. Within this backdrop the contradictory compulsions that frame the current engagement to enroll all child labourers in school become apparent (Sarada Balagopalan 2008). Studies³ on issues related to school exclusion have pointed out the existing binary between child labor and formal schooling which functions with the assumption that once children have made the transition to school, their involvement in manual labor will quite naturally cease. Not only is this not true in the lives of the vast majority of students who are now being enrolled, but it also fails to interrogate the assumptions of a normative childhood which the school attempts to naturalizes. Inherent within the idea

³ See Balagopalan, S. (2008) Memories of tomorrow: Children, labor, and the panacea of formal schooling. *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* (v.1.2) The Johns Hopkins University Press

See also IDS Bulletin Vol 28(3) and IDS Bulletin Vol 34 (1) for research findings from studies on poverty and issues of inclusion and exclusion in mainstream schools in India

of school is a construction of childhood as period of dependency in which education and socialization are required to train passive, immature children into adulthood through guidance

Recent sociological and child development research and literature on children⁴ in poverty have found the above construction of childhood inappropriate, especially with regard to a large number of working children in the third world. Within the Indian pluralistic and diverse contexts different perspectives on children and childhood have in fact been found to coexist. The lens of ‘multiple childhoods’ is therefore considered to be more useful while trying to understand the “failed” experiences that children from marginalised social groups have with schooling

With the livelihoods of numerous families under threat, on account of natural calamities, environmental degradation or displacement due to neo-liberal state policies, an increasing number of impoverished families rely on short-term migrations to earn a subsistence wage. For example, in rural areas many of these families migrate during harvest time when their additional labor is required. Although these migrations are usually for a month’s duration, and even though children may not necessarily migrate, their attendance in school is drastically reduced during this period because they take up the domestic and agricultural chores of family members who have migrated. Within both the urban and rural settings, the inability of working children to devote the required time for schooling, combined with their desire to study until they earn some level of competency, often means that their experience of schooling is a struggle during which they gradually begin to experience rejection and so internalize their inability to learn in terms of an innate failure

Under the macro programmes like SSA, large scale initiatives have been taken up by various State governments for building foundations in reading and writing at the Class 1 and 2 levels. Many of these initiatives are being implemented as pre designed packages. These are being supplemented by large scale non governmental initiatives for supporting reading through the setting of reading rooms and libraries, and dissemination of reading material for children. Since the field is vast and diverse, some of these programmes may at times result in de-contextualised programmes which are mismatched to the particular needs of specific groups of learners. It is therefore important that academic reviews of these programmes be undertaken to assess what these educational experiences mean for the identity and self worth of different groups of learners, as well as, for their future life chances. Such an academic engagement gains

⁴ See James, A. and A. Prout Eds. (1997) *Constructing and reconstructing childhood: Contemporary Issues in the sociological study of childhood*, London, the Palmer Press

even greater primacy in the face of the diversity of child populations that are now being required to access school.

At the same time alternatives and innovative programmes / organisations offer a depth of insights and experiences which can be useful for more large scale and mainstream efforts in the field of early literacy. Some of these alternative approaches to early literacy have been developed by partner organisations of SRTT. The collective wisdom and experience of these SRTT partners offers the potential of developing a broad framework of pedagogically sound practice, which can be shared with wider network of organisations who are working in the domain of education. Bearing this in mind a consultation between a few select SRTT partners is proposed in partnership with the Early Literacy Project.

The idea

Based on the concerns outlined above, it is proposed to benefit from the expertise available with experienced partners of the Trust, for developing a suitable framework for building conceptual clarity on some of the issues of early literacy which have been outlined above. A consultation is being held with some SRTT partners for this purpose. This consultation will be supported by inputs provided by external resource persons. Such an exercise it is believed will facilitate consistency in the perspectives of different SRTT partners and help to bring clarity of vision within the Early Literacy / education programmes being supported by the Trust. This collective visioning exercise will help to identify some crucial aspects of sound reflective / innovative pedagogical practice of an Early Literacy programme

Objectives

- To build an understanding of the Indian context, so as to be able to engage effectively with programmes for early literacy
- To define a broad framework for work in early literacy based on common understanding
- To define some non negotiables within programmes for early literacy
- To identify important aspects of classroom based practice / approaches which equip young children to build strong foundations for reading and writing.

Appendix 2

Programme for the Consultation on Early Literacy

25th to 28th April 2011

Day 1 – 25th April, 2011

Pre lunch

- 10:30 am ***Registration**
- 11:15 to 11:30 * **Welcome** – Amrita Patwardhan
- * **Brief introduction to the consultation**– Keerti Jayaram
- 11:30 to 12:30 pm * **Keynote address** – Prof. Krishna Kumar

Session 1 – The Larger Canvas

- 12:30 to 1:15 * The policy framework and its implications for early literacy programmes – Dr. Anita Rampal

Post lunch

Session 1 - The Larger Canvas to continue

- 2:00 to 3:00 * Educating children on the margins - Constructions of childhood and their implications for early literacy programmes
Dr. Sarada Balagopalan
- 3:00 to 4:15 * Historical and theoretical approaches to early literacy
Dr. Shailaja Menon

Post tea

Session 2 – Inside the classroom

- 4:30 to 5:30 * Reading within the context of the classroom
Dr. Shobha Sinha
- 5:30 to 6:30 * The Mathura experience – NCERT
Dr. Manjula Mathur

Day 2 – 26th April, 2011

Pre lunch

Session 3 – Early literacy – Approaches and experiences

- 9:00 to 9:45am * Drawing a story - Jane Sahi
- 9:45 to 10:30 * Supporting emergent literacy inside classrooms for children from neo literate backgrounds - Dr. Neelima Gokhle
- 10:30 to 11:15 * Teaching early literacy – My conceptual journey
Dr. Maxine Berntsen
- 11:30 to 12:00 pm * Programme presentation by Pratham
- 12 :00 to 12:30 * Programme presentation by Room to Read

Session 4 – Issues of home – school transition

- 12:30 to 1:00 * From home to school – Keerti Jayaram

Post lunch

Session 4 – Issues of home – school transition to continue

- 1:45 to 2: 15 * From home to school - Experiences with marginalised communities - Nilesh Nimkar
- 2:15 to 5:00 **Session 5 - Building a framework for early literacy programmes**

Post tea

Session 6 - Children's' literature - Part 1

- 5:00 to 6:00 * The magical role of books in the life of a young child
Usha Mukunda

Day 3 – 27th April, 2011

Pre lunch

- 9:00 to 10:00 am * **Summing up day 1 and day 2**
Amrita Patwardhan
- 10:00 to 11:15 * **Programme presentations by SRTT partners**
(Group 1 - Ekalavya and Muskaan)
- 11:30 to 1: 15 pm * **Programme presentations by SRTT partners**
(Group 2 - Quest, PSS, ELP)



Day 3 – 27th April, 2011 - contd

Post lunch

Session 6 - Children's literature - Part 2

- 2:00 to 3:00 pm * What is a good book?
 Anjali Noronha
- 3:00 to 4:15 pm - * **Programme presentations by SRTT partners**
 (Group 3 - Door Steps School and Mumbai Mobile Crèches)

Post tea

- 4:30 to 5: 45 * **Programme presentation by SRTT partner**
 (Group 4 – BKS and KSU)

Day 4 – 28th April, 2011

Pre lunch

- 9:00 to 9: 45 am * **Programme presentations by SRTT partners**
 (Group 5 Samavesh)
- 9:45 to 10:30 * **Summing up and conclusions based on the programmes presentations**

Session 7 – Assessment workshop

- 10:30 to 1:15 ***Assessment workshop - Part 1**
 Dr. Shailaja Menon
- 11:15 to 1:15 ***Assessment workshop Part 1 to continue**

Post lunch

- 2:00 to 4:15 ***Assessment workshop - Part 2**

Post tea

- 4:30 to 5:30 ***The way forward**
- 5:30 * **Vote of thanks**

Appendix 3

Participants

Sr. No.	SRTT Partner Organizations	Name of Participants
1	Kalike Samruddhi Upakram (KSU), Karnataka	a) Ramesh Gongade b) Mounesh
2	QUEST Thane, Maharashtra	a) Nilesh Nimkar; b) Archana Kulkarni c) Nayana Yeole
3	Mumbai Mobile Creches , Mumbai	a) Pragna Maniar; b) Rekha Menon
4	Bharatiya Kisan Sangh, Ranchi Jharkhand	a) Dhananjay Kumar b) Ramesh Nayak
5	Pragat Shikshan Sansthan, Phaltan, Maharashtra ,	a) Maxine Berntsen b) Neelima Gokhle c) Jane Sahi d) Madhura Maner
6	Organisation for Early Literacy Promotion, Ajmer,	a) Kiran Dubey b) Arti Sawhny
7	Muskaan, Bhopal	a) Nisha Soni; b) Jyoti Shrivastava c) Shivani Taneja
8	Eklavya, Bhopal	a) Anjali Noronha b) Tultul Biswas c) Arvind Jain
9	Samavesh, Bhopal	a) Anwar Jafri b) Dhuleshwar Roat c) Rajesh Patel

10	The Society for Doorstep School, Mumbai	a) Arnavaz Kharas
	<p>SRTT team District education team</p> <p>Elementary education team</p>	<p>Mr. Shiv Kumar Mr. Umesh Rana</p> <p>Ms. Amrita Patwardhan Ms. Nisha Ramachandran Ms. Shweta Khanna</p>

Appendix 4

Resource persons

Dr. Anita Rampal is Head and Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Delhi. Her special interests include participatory curriculum development, cognition and communication of science and mathematics with a focus on indigenous knowledge, and policy analysis for equity in education. She has been a Nehru Fellow, (Hon.) Director of the National Literacy Resource Centre, and is associated with BGVS. She has been a part of several National Committees and was the Chairperson of the NCERT Textbooks for Primary School. She has published in English and Hindi, co-authored books such as the Public Report on Basic Education (PROBE, OUP), Numeracy Counts!, Sourcebook on the Assessment of Children's Learning in EVS etc. and produced films such as '*Mukhiya Hum Banbe*', on women's education and political participation.

Dr. Sarada Balagopalan is at the Centre for the Study of Developing Societies (CSDS), Delhi. Her research focuses on the politics of childhoods and schooling. She was Chief Adviser for the 'Social and Political Life' textbooks published by NCERT between the years 2006-09.

Dr. Shailaja Menon is currently working as an educational and research consultant in India, and as faculty at Jones International University, an online university based out of the US. She teaches literacy to practicing and prospective teachers in both these contexts. Previously, she worked as faculty at the University of Colorado at Boulder. Dr. Menon has worked for several major research centers for literacy and special education, including the Center for the Improvement for Early Reading Achievement (CIERA) at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor, and the Center on Personnel Studies in Special Education (COPSSE) at the University of Florida, Gainesville. Her research interests include the design and use of texts to support early reading development, and teaching teachers to effectively teach literacy to elementary grade children.

Dr. Shobha Sinha is Reader, Department of Education; University of Delhi. Her research interests include emergent literacy; response to literature; literacy in the classroom context and literacy development of children from low socio-economic status background. She has been on several National committees which include the Steering Committee and Advisory Board, of the Reading Cell, NCERT. She has published several academic articles in Hindi and English.

Dr Manjula Mathur is currently Professor and Coordinator of the Early Literacy, NCERT. She has 34 years of experience in the field of education including, training, research and development of educational material (audio video programmes, and text books). She has contributed significantly to the Reading Development Project which is being implemented in 500 schools of Mathura District and has been instrumental in developing a graded reading series, selected children's literature, and material for teacher training on pedagogy of reading as well as CDs on reading for this project. She has also been actively involved in setting up of reading Cells across states, and is associated with a project on developing reading habits among children being implemented by an NGO and the National Book Trust in various Primary schools of Delhi. She has conducted several evaluation projects

Jane Sahi has been working in a non-formal school near Bangalore since 1975. She has authored a number of books including *Education and Peace, Learning Through Art* and a series of books for children learning English called, *Everyday English*. She is presently working on a book called *In Our Own Words* which is about creative and independent writing in the primary school. She has been co-teaching the First Language Pedagogy course at TISS, Mumbai for the last five years and along with Dr Maxine Berntsen designed the course. She is also involved in the Centre for Language, Literacy and Communication in Phaltan, Maharashtra

Dr. Neelima Gokhale has received a PhD in early childhood education from University of South Australia. She is a very experienced early childhood teacher and a teacher educator. She has worked in India, Hong Kong and Singapore. Currently she works as a literacy consultant

Dr. Maxine Berntsen has an M.A. in English literature from Columbia University and a Ph.D. in linguistics from the University of Pennsylvania. In 1966 she came to Phaltan, a small town in Western Maharashtra to do research for her dissertation on social variation in the Marathi speech of Phaltan. With Jai Nimbkar she wrote a series of books, including readers, dictionary, grammar and conversation manual to teach Marathi to adult learners. From 1970 to 1999 she went to the U.S, every other year to teach a ten-week course in Marathi to students of the Associated Colleges of the Midwest India Studies Program. In 1978 she organized non-formal classes to teach out-of-school Dalit children to read and write. This program was formalized in 1984 when she founded the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha (PSS). For more than 20 years the PSS has conducted programs to improve the teaching of beginning reading, first in municipal schools and later in the government schools in the rural area around Phaltan. Maxine Berntsen is the Co-Director of the Pragat Shikshan Sanstha, and the Director of the PSS Centre for Language, Literacy and Communication. She is also one of the founders of the Marathi Abhyas Parishad. She has collaborated with Jane Sahi in developing the course in First Language Pedagogy in the M.A, in Elementary Education Programme at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, and they continue to teach it together.

Saktibrata Sen has been with the curriculum and training division of Pratham since 2004. His job has been mainly to pilot, research, and conduct trainings on the various pedagogical projects from time to time. His core area of interest has always been *Reading in Indian scripts* for the age group 5 to 14. He has worked extensively with various state governments of North India on designing of Reading (and Literacy) packages, evaluation of Reading (and literacy) interventions.

K. Narsimha Chary is presently working as a Program Manager – Literacy with Room to Read India at the Country level. Prior to this he worked with Naandi Foundation as a Senior Manager of the Education Resource Group for over 6 years. He has been working on content development with universities such as PS Telugu University, Osmania, and Central Institute of Indian Languages (CIIL), Govt of India. He has also worked with the Tribal Cultural Research and Training Institute (TCR&TI), Government of Andhra Pradesh and with organizations such as IL & FS Educational technological services for more than 15 years. Basically he is a linguist and is very committed to working with children.

Ramesh Chandra is working as a Program Officer in Room to Read India for literacy pilot for early grades since 2+ years. Initially, worked in a local NGO of Bihar on child development and education especially on quality improvement and reading skill enhancement with the support from Child Fund India (formerly known as Christian Children’s Fund). Ramesh has also, worked with Sarva Shiksha Abhiyaan in Kishanganj district in Bihar. The experience includes working on quality improvement

programs for schools, developing strategies and materials for early grades for reading enhancement and on child literature and child rights.

Keerti Jayaram is the Director of the Early Literacy project which is being currently implemented in rural Rajasthan. She taught Pedagogy of Language on the B. El. Ed Programme in Lady Shri Ram College from 2002 to 2006. She has had several years of experience in Elementary Education, Early Literacy and the teaching of English as a second language (ESL), both as a teacher and as a teacher educator. She is at present a member of the Advisory Board for the NCERT Reading cell. She has been involved in curriculum and material development. This includes a set of English readers for Orient Longman, a resource pack on environment education, a resource pack on Early Literacy and a portfolio of design ideas for using a Building as a Learning Aid

Nilesh Nimkar has been working in the field of elementary education and teacher education for the past sixteen years. He was involved in setting up Grammangal Mukat Shala, a small alternative school in Thane district of Maharashtra and has a vast experience of working with children from Warali tribe. He has worked as a training consultant for the District Primary Education Programme of Maharashtra where he was responsible for planning and execution of a series of Teleconference for ‘in-service teacher training’ programme. Early literacy, Pedagogy of mathematics, Educational Technology is his areas of interest. He has written books for children and has developed multimedia packages for teacher education He is one of the founder trustees of Quality Education Support Trust (QUEST), an organization working on the challenges of Quality of elementary education. He is presently working as honorary director of QUEST.

Usha Mukunda has happily worked with children and books for over 26 years. She is a founder-member of Centre for Learning in Bangalore where she set up an open library. She is a school librarian who regards this role as a crucial one in the reading growth and maturity of a child. In the last three years, she has been drawn to working with children in Government schools in Karnataka. She also spent a month, starting a library, and developing reading activities for young children, at a school in the Kumaon region. She is a member of the special committee for libraries and knowledge networking under the aegis of the Karnataka Knowledge Commission.

Anjali Noronha has a post graduation in Economics from Delhi School of Economics and has been working in Eklavya, Madhya Pradesh since 1982. She has been involved in the development of the Primary School education program including language and mathematics and the Social Science education program. Her work in Primary education included developing a program of classroom libraries for the development of language and reading abilities from nursery to middle schools, including editing an annotated catalogue of books for children aged 3 + and a library activity manual. She has also been involved in developing curriculum and textbooks with Government and other organizations at the Primary and Middle school levels, and research and evaluation of educational programs. Her current work includes development of a bilingual language and reading program, development and teaching of courses in the M.A. education program at TISS, school development and work in public education programs, policy and plans, and development of teacher education courses