Approaches to School Support and Improvement

BASED ON THE INDICATIVE GUIDELINES SUGGESTED TO THE MINISTRY OF HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT IN 2011

CURRENT SCENARIO

Wide variations in terms of tasks, profile and state support combined with an unrealistic range of expectations and an integration into overall vision of school improvement have led to ineffectiveness of block and cluster resource centers.

Several studies, including an independent study commissioned by MHRD to ascertain the effectiveness of BRCs and CRCs in discharging their designated functions and responsibilities have observed that these institutions are working sub-optimally and have limited or no impact in improving academic performance in primary and upper primary schools.

In a visit to 10 different states, and drawing upon the experience of 3 others, we found that the CRP and BRP job profiles in all states are ambitious lists of expectations. There seems to be either a lack of vision or too many expectations and aims for these institutions to achieve. In many states a high degree of ad-hocism pervades their work. Imbalance between administrative and academic work, low level to which the skills of CRPs are utilised and their low participation in decision making are common.

This has resulted in poor monitoring and supervision, especially in areas of teacher training and on-site-support. Further, the centres themselves lack infrastructure and resources.

APPROACHES TO EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

The school must be a provider of quality education for all children. There are four dimensions of school improvement and transformation which require support and supervisory activities.
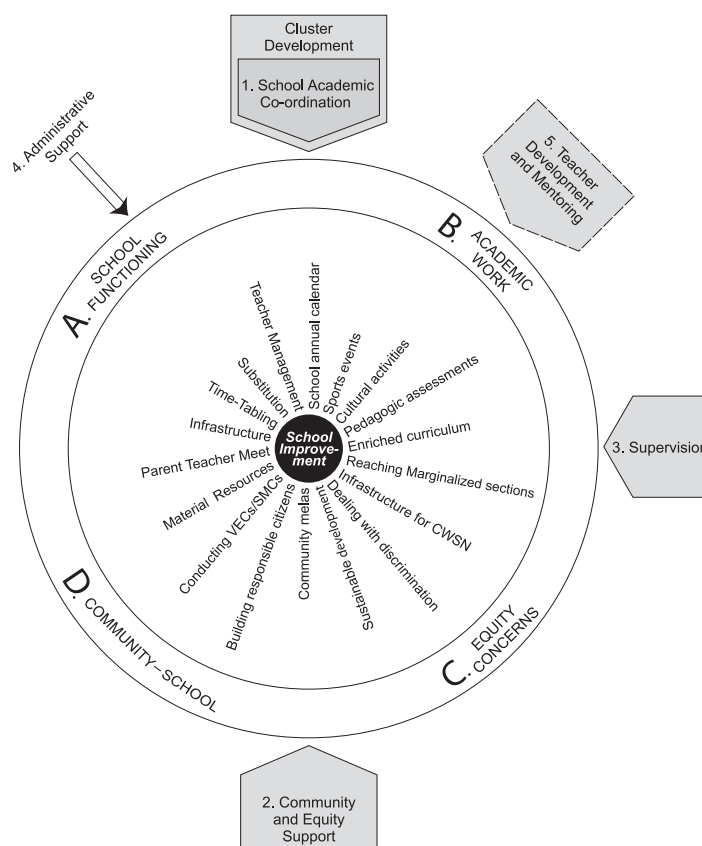
School Functioning refers to day-day functioning of the school.

Academic Work includes planning, preparation, classroom teaching and curricular activities.

Equity ensures the educational needs and achievement of ALL children.
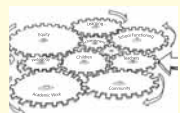
Community involves bringing the voice of parents and other members actively in the system.

School Improvement involves a positive shift in all the Four dimensions. This led us to conceptualize five approaches to imagine the work of the Cluster and the Block.

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Approaches for Cluster	Block
Approach 1: School Academic Coordination (enhanced to Cluster Development)	1. School Improvement coordination
Approach 2: Community and Equity Support	2. Knowledge Resource Repository
Approach 3: Supervision	3. Training & Professional Development
Approach 4: Administrative Support	4. Data Management
Approach 5: Teacher Development & Monitoring (Note: recommended only for small scale and focused work)	

Approach 1: School Academic Coordination

<u>Vision and Rationale:</u> Ensuring enriched and timely academic planning and activities; Working with schools to identify academic needs and co-ordinate efforts to fulfill them. Focus on individual school development and developing to 'cluster of schools' approach.

<u>Activities:</u> Institutional development plans, Developing Annual Calendar, Weekly / Monthly teaching plans, Co-coordinating assembly, Events within school, Review Meetings, for e.g Assessment, Promotions, Out of School children, etc; including meetings with SDMC, sharing best practices within and between schools.

The <u>skills and qualifications</u> needed for this role involve an understanding of School Planning and Management; Ability to analyse qualitative data Facilitation and Organization skills - managing school events.

Approach 2: Community and Equity Support

<u>Vision and Rationale:</u> Equity means creation of conditions in which the disadvantaged sections of the society can get quality education.

RP works with the community, especially marginalized sections, to improve social equity within and outside schools. The RP works with teachers to focus on marginalized children.

<u>Activities:</u> Follow up on individual children; emphasis on special training (design, conduct and outcomes), Co-ordinate SMC meetings, Organize melas, community clubs, life-skills training often with the help of NGOs and schools, Facilitate inter-group dialogue.

The <u>skills and qualifications</u> needed for this role include an understanding of rights based approaches to children and community, grasp of philosophy of education and sociological issues; Ability to speak in public and co-ordinate advocacy efforts.

Approach 3: Supervision

<u>Vision and Rationale:</u> Supervision of all school activities would lead to improvement. The RP acts as a supportive, vigilant, supervisor for all dimensions of school's work.

Relatively "thin" approach – RP works through checklists, pre-defined norms and information transfer in system. Possible in highly structured curricular processes.

<u>Activities :</u> Lesson Plan monitoring as per norms, Supervision of school registers, Identifies needs and informs appropriate authority for action, Checking minutes of Review Meetings, including SDMCs, Inspecting school efforts towards CWSN, Minority groups, disadvantaged groups.

The <u>skills and qualifications</u> needed would require attention to detail and probing. Teachers with little or no experience trained to use various monitoring formats and tools and supervised closely can work as effective supervisors.

Factors

Selecting the CRP

The CRP could be elected from amongst an existing pool of suitable candidates. Cluster applicants could present proposals of work/ideas that he/she would execute under the proposed approach to school improvement.

Tenure of the CRP

These approaches require a long term tenure of at least five years for the CRP. This is so that the system can benefit from the learning of the CRP once on the job. It is recommended that not more than 1/3rd of the CRPs should be replaced at a time, to maintain the memory of the system and the continuity of programs.

CRP Capacity Building

The entire workforce at present has some training in education and teaching. This may be continued but also further strengthened by more intense and in-depth study of specific capacity building as the approach demands and management skills and tools which will assist in the approach being considered.

Number of CRPs

The number of CRPs needs to be decided based on the nature of work expected of them, the regularity of visits to be carried out to school/teacher/community/joint cluster fora, the geographic spread, and the variations of the issues faced on the ground, and the actual number of days that a CRP is expected to be on the field.
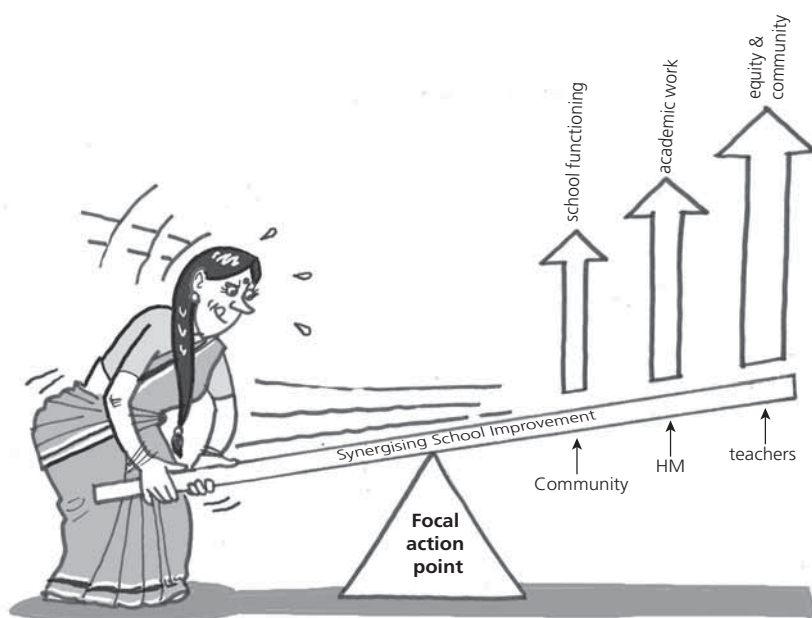
Use of CRC Space

Most of the approaches do not require space for the CRP at the cluster. CRPs would benefit from having a work station at the block.

CRP Appraisal

Must be closely linked to the expected outcome of the approach selected.

Approaches are levers to school improvement

Any one of these focal points of CRP work, if pursued consistently leads to overall school improvement, by enabling other parts of the system to work.

Approach 4: Administrative Support

Vision and Rationale: Ensures that schools spend minimal time on admin and data work and instead concentrate on effective teaching and learning. The RP takes responsibility for all admin and data work through regular visits.

Activities: Managing and updating Admin registers and records, Managing DISE requirement, Academic Support - eg. Teacher Mgt, Time-Tabling, Communications between departments and schools.

The skills and qualifications needed for this role involve a grasp of basic data management and secretarial skills. A short term tenure of 2 years would also work.

Approach 5: Teacher Development & Monitoring

A difficult approach and effective only on a small scale.

This approach is similar to the DPEP model. The approach aims to empower teachers to reflect on their practice, the curriculum choices, educational aims and contexts of learners. The RP works as a trainer and mentor and is supported by highly capable resource persons. She provides school based support to teachers, builds their capacity and helps create a community of teachers.

The Block Resource Center

BRC to become a guidance and support system to the CRP to achieve school improvement.

The BRC would, in addition support schools and teachers by conducting trainings and managing data.

Provides Coordination and Oversight The BRCC would supervise the performance of BRPs and CRPs and guide the specific approach(es) chosen for the block. The BRCC ensures that all approaches are on track. They would monitor and facilitate the CRPs, appraise them and ensure networking between DIETs, universities and NGOs.

Coordinates and Conducts Trainings A Training Coordination unit at the BRC would deliver effective trainings and coordinate efforts for capacity building of teachers and RPs. This unit could work with the DIET, teachers, CRPs and other agencies to help identify the training needs of the teachers and CRPs and schedule and conduct trainings. Split-level training with the same group of trainer-trainees would be helpful in ensuring sustained engagement. All the training information should be accessible in a Training Management System.

Manages Data within the block Equipping the BRC to become the hub of data and records would allow this function to be performed well and give the CRPs more time to focus on activities based on the chosen approach.

Repository of Knowledge Resources The BRC must develop as a repository of resources and would also assist in adapting curricula at local level. The BRC could contain a range of materials for teachers, teacher educators, students, Resource Persons and resource groups.

The ideal approach is not a sum of all approaches
There is value in prioritizing requirements.
Different regions of the state may require different approaches.

Guidelines ! Does this mean more work for us or... Will this streamline our work ?

Shouldn't a CRP do all these things?

It is not humanly possible

Each of these approaches has a different focus. Each approach has a different expectation of capabilities of a CRP

Any one focal point if pursued consistently would enable overall improvements by enabling other agents and parts to do their bit