

CFBT EDUCATION SERVICES

The Gyan Shala Programme

ASSESSMENT OF AHMEDABAD CENTRES

September 2013

An assessment report of 55 Gyan Shala centres in Ahmedabad that evaluated the effectiveness of the programme in providing quality education to the students from underprivileged background.



Contents

Section 1

1.1. Executive summary	3
1.2. Background	3
1.3. Purpose	3
1.4. Methodology	3
1.5. Limitations of the study	4
1.6. Findings	4

Section 2

2.1. The context	7
2.2. How good is the students' attainment and progress?	8
2.3. How good is the students' personal and social development?	11
2.4. How good is the teaching, learning and assessment?	12
2.5. How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?	13
2.6. How well does the facilities protect and support students?	14
2.7. How good is the partnership with the parents and community?	15
2.8. What is the quality of leadership?	16
2.9. What is the overall performance of the centres?	16
2.10. Conclusion	17
2.11. Recommendations	18

Tables –

Table 1- Overall performance	6
Table 2- Profile	7
Table 3- Sample assessed	8

Graphs –

Graph 1- Attainment and Progress in Science	8
Graph 2- Attainment and Progress in Mathematics	9
Graph 3- Attainment and Progress in Project work	10
Graph 4- Curriculum rating	14
Graph 5- Overall performance	18

1.1. **Executive Summary**

1.2. **Background**

This report is the evaluation of the unique Gyan Shala Program in Ahmedabad. This program is the cornerstone of the Gyan Shala teams' assistance to provide education to the students from low economic background in the slums of Ahmedabad in the five areas of Vasna, Vadaj, Amraiwadi, Meghaninagar and Behrampura. The GS program focused on improving learning outcomes and the quality and relevance of education in its centres provided to the students who could not get educated in other primary schools due to several factors. The GS methodology enhances teaching and learning to improve student performance, especially in key subjects such as math and science. GS is striving to assure the local community that it can provide more relevant experiences to the students that would help them acquire better life and work skills.

1.3. **Purpose**

The purpose of this evaluation is to give to the GS team an assessment of the impact of the methodology on the learning outcomes of Gyan Shala students. More specifically, the evaluation assessed how successful GS program was in achieving its aspiration of providing quality education to the masses at a subsidized rate in unique "single room" settings.

1.4. **Methodology**

The evaluation team used an evidence based approach to obtain findings including: analysis of attainment data, attendance and curriculum documents, interviews with teachers, parents and student and centre profile checklists and observation of facilities. The evaluation team interviewed about 55 teachers, 180 parents and about 300 students. About 8 assessors visited centres in five areas of Vasna, Vadaj, Amraiwadi, Behrampura and Meghaninagar. An internationally acclaimed framework customized for GS was used to assess the efficiency of the program that claims to have made a mark in the education sector. The framework used seven indicators to assess the impact of the program on the learning outcomes. They are:

1. How good is the students attainment and progress in the key subjects?
2. How good is the students' social and personal development?
3. How good is the teaching, learning and assessment?
4. How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students ?
5. How well do the facilities and resources in the centres protect and support the students?

6. How well does the partnership with the parents and the community support the students?
7. What is the quality of leadership and management?
8. How does Gyan Shala perform overall?

The above indicators were evaluated on a four point rating scale mentioned below-

4	Outstanding
3	Good
2	Acceptable
1	Unsatisfactory

1.5. Limitations of the evaluation

The following are the limitations of the study

- Holidays affected the schedule of the field investigators as it limited the observation of specific subjects
- Only three grades i.e. 3, 5, and 7 were observed
- Since no assessment test was conducted this year, rating on students' attainment and progress is based on lesson observations.

1.6. Findings

Overall, Gyan Shala made a strong contribution to the imparting of quality education in the slums of Ahmadabad despite limited facilities. The model brought uniqueness to a traditional system of schooling followed all over the country. Undoubtedly, it has proved that quality of provision lies not in the systems adopted, approved or implemented but in designing a model that caters to the needs of all learners, in this case particularly the down trodden. Many of the teaching techniques and training programs for the GS teachers adopted by GS designers made some contribution to the improved teaching learning practices in GS centres. The attainment and progress of the students in almost all the key subjects was at an acceptable level, a rating which is truly appreciated given the background of the students and the teachers. GS mainly enrolled students who were either first generation or deprived of any academic support at home. Defying all norms GS proved that its system can be tried to improve the quality of primary education in the neighboring schools.

Interestingly more than a majority of students enrolled in GS centres are keen to fulfill their educational desires, a need that is well capitalized by GS leadership in setting up many more GS centres. Almost all the students in GS centres are well behaved, smart learners, though not smartly dressed, had positive attitude towards studies and their “alma mater”. Their zeal was evident in their interaction with their teachers, peers and visitors. *However they need to take responsibility for their own learning and grow out of the shadow of their teachers in pursuing their education. There was over dependence on teachers for every activity.*

The learning training program for the teachers is well designed and appreciated by all teachers. Despite the apparent success of the training, within the centers visited for the evaluation, *the application of active learning methods was inconsistent and varied widely from enthusiastic adoption of all practice in every lesson to some traces of the programme being followed in some centres.* The majority of GS teachers used active learning methods partially in some classes, however with some teachers application was often lack-luster and fading. *Even when active learning methods were strongly evident in some centres, the best teachers showed limited mastery of the array of active learning methods possible mainly when they could not reach out to all learners.* Given these findings, it appears that the institutionalization of active learning methods requires several levels of follow-on training in sequence. In almost all the centres the teachers’ communication and creativity had hardly moved beyond the training inputs, their main guide being the teaching diary which they followed meticulously. *The adherence to the guide was so religious that in one or two centres the teachers refused to discuss the content planned for the next day when the questions were raised by the students.*

A sharper focus on simple interactive teaching methods that engages ALL students throughout the instructional time in a proper sequence can transform the centres into good learning environment. Essentially assessment an integral component of teaching and learning has to be seamlessly incorporated into teaching learning system to allow teachers to understand and assess learners to inform modified instruction. *Since the teachers were not equipped with this core skill of assessing learning they fell short in modifying the instruction in classes.*

The design team is adept in “borrowing” curriculum themes from across different boards. Apparently there is a lack of clarity in the rationale and aims of the curriculum. *Activities are planned for all grades however active learning from “listening to teachers’ instructions” was predominant. Focus on “doing” by students was limited.* In addition there is a limited development of skills of independence, application and critical thinking.

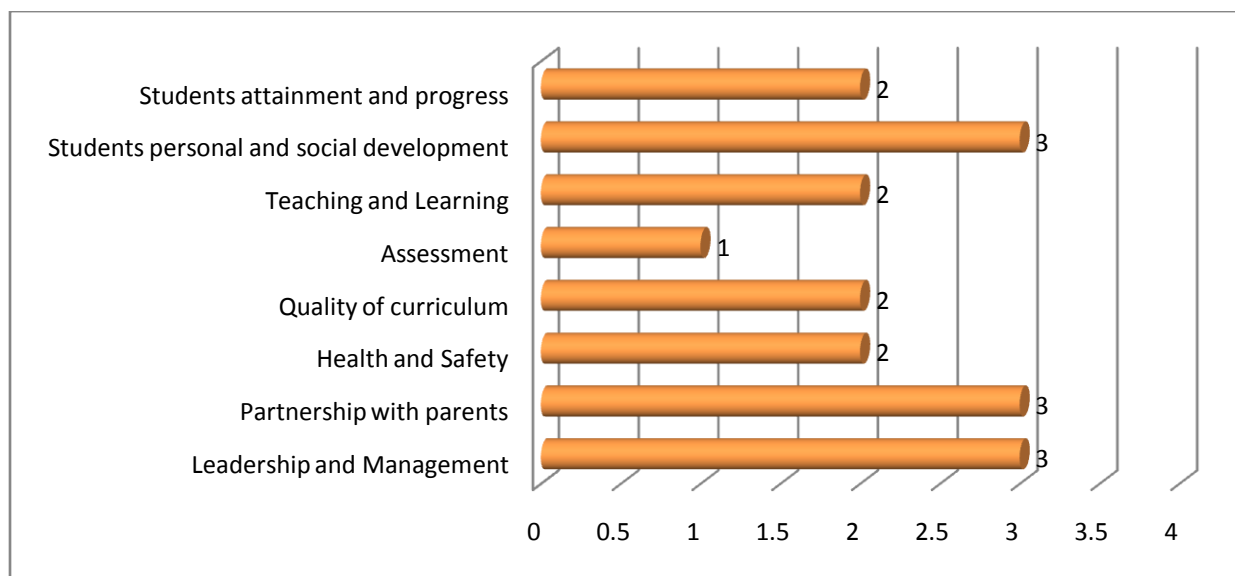
Breadth in the curriculum is restricted which is attributed mainly to the design of the program and the lack of facilities. *Curriculum is regularly reviewed by the core team but*

the review is narrowly limited to the content that has to be modified or changed and does not extend to reviewing the philosophy, rationale or aims. A range of activities are required for the development of 21st century skills among students. The GS program aims at academic enrichment of the students, social and psychological development too is imperative to survive in a society that is riddled with conflicting ideas and ideologies.

The leadership at the top most level of designing and execution is working to customize the curriculum to meet the needs of learners; however institutionalization of leadership is essential to enhance the capacity of every single centre as a learning institution. The design team made a strong contribution to the improved teaching learning processes in the centres. Many strategies that GS pioneered were eventually adopted and implemented in few public schools in Ahmedabad in primary schools.

The Box below provides a summary of the findings with the focus areas.

Overall performance of Gyan Shala centres in Ahmedabad is Acceptable



SECTION 2

2.1. The context

The name Gyan Shalas originates from two Sanskrit terms – ‘gyan’ which means **knowledge** or **wisdom** and ‘shala’ which means **school**. Located in urban slums, amidst crowded narrow lanes and by-lanes of Ahmedabad, Gyan Shala presents a unique model of mass education to low income group families at a moderate cost through centres known as ‘gyan shalas.’ Most Gyan Shalas are single room centres replete with all the resources typically found in a regular classroom environment and serve as classrooms for a particular age group of children from the local neighbourhood. Gyan Shala seeks to provide and promote quality education at an affordable cost through partnership with government and non-government agencies and transform the basic education system in the country.

Gyan Shalas are part of a larger school system with centres spread across several slums of Ahmedabad and centrally managed by a team of experts who form the core design team of the venture. Each centre is a classroom providing for a single grade. Two types of centres set up for meeting the educational needs of the masses are primary school centres for grades 1 to 3 and middle school centres for grades 4 to 7. Currently more than 15000 students are getting educated in these primary and middle school centres. These centres operate in two shifts – one shift operates from 9:30 am to 1:00 pm and another from 1:30 pm to 5:30 pm.

Table 2: Profile

Profile	Details
Name of the centres	<i>Gyan Shala learning centres</i>
Location	<i>Vasna, Vadaj, Amraiwadi, Behrampura and Meghaninagar</i>
Type of institutions	<i>Learning centres</i>
Medium of instruction	<i>Gujarati</i>
Curriculum	<i>Eclectic mix borrowed from different boards / countries</i>
Grades assessed	<i>3, 5 and 7</i>
No of lessons observed	<i>116</i>
Key subjects assessed	<i>Science, Math and Project work</i>
Period of assessment	<i>August and September 2013</i>

Table 3: Sample selected for assessment

Total Grades	Grade 3	Grade 5	Grade 7
55	27	18	10
Percentage represented	20%	100%	100%

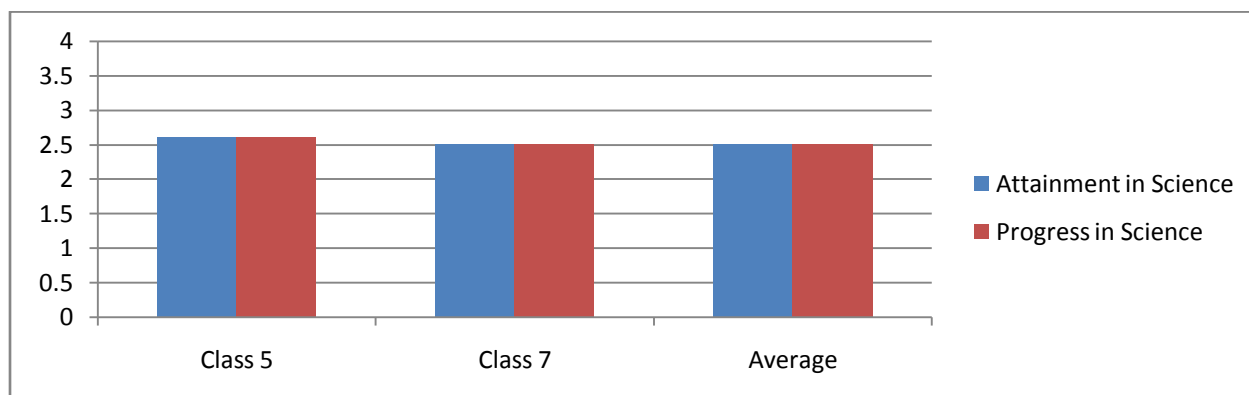
2.2. How good is the students' attainment and progress?

Attainment in all key subjects of Science, Math and Project Work in both primary and middle schools was judged as **Acceptable**. Attainment and progress in Gujarati in grade 3 was good.

Attainment in key subjects

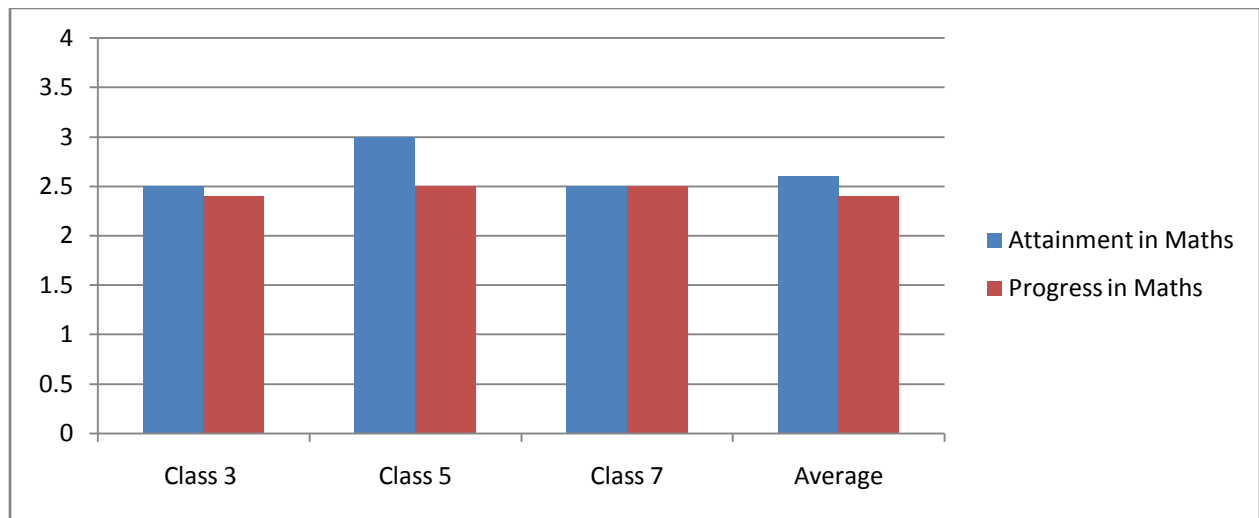
Subjects	Primary level	Middle level
Science	Acceptable	Acceptable
Mathematics	Acceptable	Acceptable
Project work	Acceptable	Acceptable

Graph 1: Attainment and Progress in Science



The above graph illustrates that in Science, the overall attainment and progress was at an acceptable level. Students in grade 3 were able to measure the objects drawn by the teacher. The majority of students gave examples of grass eating and flesh eating animals. The majority could identify simple trees and flowers that had medicinal properties. While giving examples on consumables and non consumables they could not provide examples from real life experience. Majority of grade 5 students had an idea of renewable and non renewable energies and few gave definition of hydel and wind energies. Students in grade 7 were aware of the phenomenon of magnetism and that engines run on different types of energies.

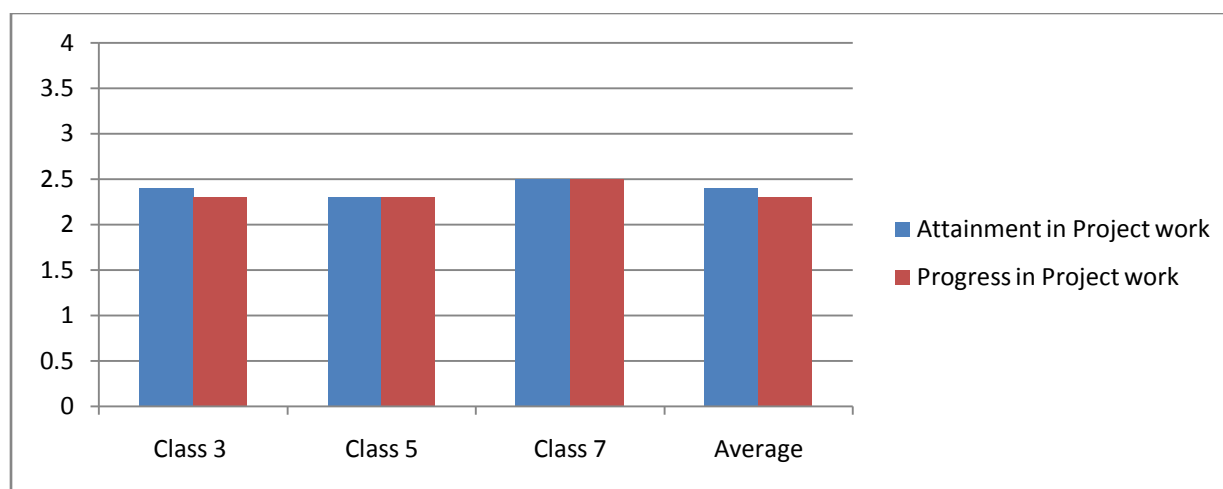
Graph 2 : Attainment and Progress in Mathematics



The graph illustrates that students' attainment and progress in Mathematics is acceptable. Attainment in grade 5 is highest in comparison with other subjects. Students are able to learn math numbers and number operations by associating the numbers and relationship between numbers with tangible objects.

In grade 3 majority were able to differentiate the units of measurement such as foot, inch, centimetre etc. More than a majority could convert centimetres into meters and vice versa. Grade 5 students had an appreciable knowledge of calculations and understanding of inequalities and computations. Majority of grade 7 students were good in multiplication and division and the exponents. They were familiar with the concept of multiplication and division of equations and the multiplication of powers.

Graph 3: Attainment and Progress in Project work



The above graph illustrates the rating of attainment and progress in Project Work as acceptable with grade 7 showing marginally better performance.

Majority of grade 3 students were able to classify different food items based on the taste. They were able to tell the day and date from the newspaper. In grade 5 few students had a general idea of letter writing. Majority were aware of what an electricity bill looks like, the reading on a meter and the precautions to be taken while dealing with electrical equipment. In grade 7 students were able to answer questions on simple banking procedures. They were aware of cash withdrawal procedures in a bank and were able to fill in details required in the cheque book.

Key strength

Majority had fairly good knowledge of factual concepts

Recommendations

*Ensure all students attain age related expectations in all subjects
Allow students to debate topics to ensure conceptual clarity.
Emphasize more on “WHY” questions.*

Progress in all key subjects of Science, Math and Project Work in both primary and middle schools was judged as Acceptable.

The majority of students could demonstrate mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills, in line with expectations. However, they were not confident when it came to solving problems which required higher order analysis skills. Primary phase students were strong on the use of number, but were less well developed in using and applying their knowledge. In science, and project work students’ knowledge and understanding of

scientific concepts were strong, but the expected practical and investigative skills were underdeveloped.

In grade 3, many were unable to differentiate between carnivores and herbivores from a list of animals. In grade 7 more than a majority were not aware of the uses of magnetism and none were able to define magnetic field or had the knowledge of the properties of magnet. Few were aware of the practical use of magnetic fields.

Progress in many instances was hindered due to lack of challenge in the assignments. In grade 3, majority were not confident with multiple counting and adding and subtracting large numbers. Majority in grade 5 were unable to calculate ratios of complex numbers. There were many students in grade 7 who had difficulty in recalling multiplication of powers while doing exponents.

Equivalent progress with attainment was not evident in most of the grades. Students in grade 7 were confused about the 'bearer' and 'account payee' cheques.

2.3.How good is the students' personal and social development?

Students' attitudes and behaviour were **Good** across all centres. Though more than a majority come from a low socio economic background students had positive attitudes and were generally self-reliant. They took responsibility for their learning and were keen to study despite the limitation of the GS centres. They were considerate towards their teachers and demonstrated kindness and friendship towards their classmates.

Key strength

All students listen to their teachers who are their "gurus" leading them to light and wisdom from darkness and ignorance. A sense of brotherhood pervades the centres.

Relationships with other students and staff were respectful and cordial. They actively participated in the day to day activities of the centre. They adhered to the centre's rules and regulations and followed healthy habits promoted by their teachers.

Most of the students arrived to lessons on time. They showed keen interest in their subjects and most of them did their homework. Most students were confident and greeted visitors with respect demonstrating that they have good values. They enjoyed doing project work which exposed them to real life experiential learning. They actively engaged in taking care of their classrooms, facilities and teaching learning material. They enjoyed participating in all the centre;s activities such as rendering songs in the morning assembly and sharing their day's aspirations. Few students identified and explained local traditions of Gujarat. All of them followed the centres' routine, behaved well and conducted themselves in a disciplined way. *Overall attendance of students across the grades was unsatisfactory with 69%.*

2.4. How good is the teaching and learning in the centres?

Key aspects	Primary phase	Middle phase
Teaching for effective learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Quality of students' learning	Acceptable	Acceptable
Assessment	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Teaching and Learning across all centres was judged as **Acceptable**. In almost all the lessons teachers understood how students learn and had age level expectations for them. The blackboard was used as a major teaching learning resource. Teachers followed a given routine for each subject. In few lessons teachers used techniques like collaborative learning and used charts and illustrations to make the lessons meaningful. In Gujarati lessons the teachers used local newspapers as resources. In English lessons they used rhymes while in math lessons teachers used measuring instruments and in project work there was ample use of pictures and posters. In few effective lessons the teachers used dialogues and learning was enhanced through targeted questioning. However, a majority of lessons were over reliant on teaching guides and notes. Most of the teachers had inadequate subject knowledge. Very few teachers differentiated their teaching to meet the needs of all learners.

Learning was acceptable across all centres. While most students enjoyed practical work and the opportunities to work in groups, the majority of elementary and middle school students were too dependent on the teachers. Most students acted on teachers' guidance to improve their work, but they did not have a clear awareness of their strengths and areas for improvement, or their next steps in learning. Almost all students had positive attitudes towards learning and were eager to learn. They applied their learning to the real world to make connections between areas of learning. In Gujarati they read the newspaper to acquire general information. They participated in role plays that enhanced their learning. In most lessons students' interaction was regimented. There was a limited development of critical thinking skills as students engaged in all activities based on teachers' instructions.

The assessment of learning was unsatisfactory across all centres. Teachers had some knowledge of their students' strengths and weaknesses. There was inconsistency in assessment of students' achievements and results were not analyzed in the centres to identify trends and adapt the curriculum. Assessment was not an integral part of the lessons. There was no systematic tracking of students' progress. Assessment information was not used by the teachers to inform planning and remediation methods. Students' progress was inconsistently monitored over time. Apparently teachers did not have a clear understanding of the assessment levels in the curriculum.

Key strengths

All teachers followed the guide meticulously.

Students enjoyed participating in group activities. They exhibited positive attitude towards learning.

Teachers tried to engage all students in the teaching learning process.

Recommendation

Apart from using the teaching guide the teachers can practice innovative teaching methods of their choice.

Allow students to develop their critical thinking skills by engaging them in challenging assignments.

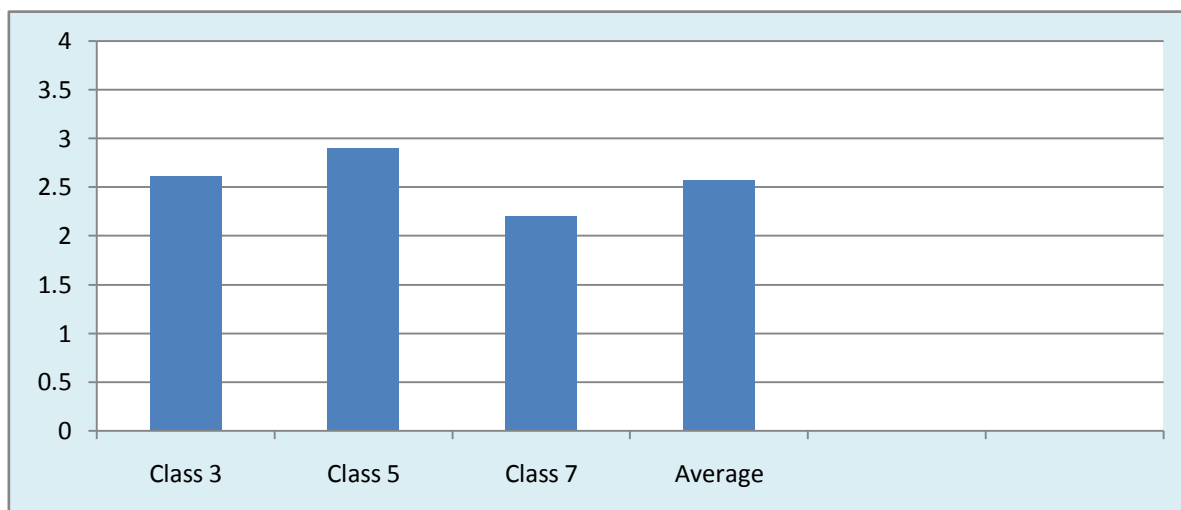
Improve the assessment of learning by using simple teacher friendly assessment strategies

2.5.How well does the curriculum meet the educational needs of all students?

Key aspect	Primary phase	Middle phase
Curriculum quality	Acceptable	Acceptable

The overall quality of the Gyan Shala curriculum was of acceptable quality and met the needs of a majority of learners. The curriculum for Grades 4 and 5 was better compared to that of the remaining grades, particularly grades 6 and 7. The blend of different core subjects such as Mathematics, Project Work, Science and English with mother tongue Gujarati covered the basic 3Rs as well as offered some scope for developing critical thinking and real life skills in students. However being short of a thematic focus, the curriculum missed opportunities to develop important cross-curricular links; links between subjects through which students' learning could be meaningfully connected within topics. The annual curricular review of curriculum did not focus on the development of enquiry and research skills. Progression was evident from one phase to another and transitions – both phase wise and grade wise – were smooth. The curriculum incorporated a minuscule amount of co-curricular programmes through school assemblies, activities on National days. Basic displays provided visual stimuli to students to some extent. Providing a platform for students to go beyond the textbooks through inter-school competitions and events such as, science exhibition was not evident. Physical education was also not part of the timetable.

Graph 4 : Curriculum rating



Key strengths

Internalization method of learning

Design of activities that promote hands on learning activities keeping in mind the short attention span of the students

Recommendations

Capitalize on the linkages and network with universities and business houses to enhance learning.

Introduce co curricular and extracurricular activities based on the facilities available

Develop enquiry and research skills to enable students to find out things for themselves using books and ICT

2.6. How well the facilities and resources in the centres protect and support the students?

Key aspects	Primary phase	Middle phase
Health and safety	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>
Quality of support	<i>Acceptable</i>	<i>Acceptable</i>

The quality of accommodation, resources, health and safety was **Acceptable**. Students were kept safe throughout the day in the centres. The range of materials available in the centres varied. Also, there was a variation in the maintenance of health and hygiene across the centres. GS centres run in single room classes which are rented shelters. These centres are identified with community help. Therefore the range of facilities available to the students varies from good to acceptable. There were few centres which

had no toilets for students, drinking water was either procured from the local municipal tap or the students carried their own water bottles.

Almost all the centres had fans but they were not functional in many centres. In such centres students and teachers had to bear the brunt of hot summers. The teachers and students were helped by support staff in every centre. Many centres were well ventilated and few had open space to conduct activities for students. Many centres were not equipped with first aid kits to deal with minor medical issues.

Each centre is manned by a single teacher. Most of the teachers' possess an intermediate qualification and are well experienced. GS imparts regular training for the teachers to implement its unique eclectic curriculum. Most of the centres have age appropriate furniture, tables and benches of three different colours and a carpet to facilitate collaborative learning. Each centre is provided with a green board, racks, fan, time piece and a box to store resources. Majority of the classrooms had colourful displays that are updated regularly. Almost all teachers and students were unaware of child protection policies.

Key Strength

All the teachers were sympathetic to the needs of students. They demonstrated high level of caring. They try to motivate and encourage the students to attend classes despite the limitation of facilities.

Recommendation

Maintain hygiene within the premises by involving students and parents.

Provide first aid kits to all the centres

2.7.How well does the partnership with the parents and the community support the students?

The quality of partnership with parents and the community were judged as **Good**. Parents expressed their satisfaction with the facilities and the quality of education provided to the students. Majority of the parents opined that teachers take personal care of individual students. Though they were not aware of the vision of GS, nonetheless they shared that the GS centers were set up with an aim to provide quality education to children who could not afford to go to schools. Though they could not assess the classroom practices they appreciated the same when they saw their children studying at home. They appreciated the teachers' attitudes and valued their inputs during meetings. They feel that the classroom activities improved the life skills of students. They stated that the teachers shared the progress of their children during the meetings. The parents play their role effectively in sending their children on time to centres.

The community plays a major role in identifying accommodation and a teacher for the centre and also in enrolling students. GS reciprocates the same by honouring the parents as guests of honour for all events conducted in the centres.

Key strength

The service provider, GS and the parents complement each other in enabling students to gain valuable education experiences in GS centres.

Recommendation

Engage with other community-based agencies in delivering an enriching curriculum to all the students.

2.8. What is the quality of leadership and management?

The quality of Leadership and management across centres was judged as **Good**. The top leadership of Gyan Shala, mainly consisting of the founder of the programme, has a clear sense of direction and purpose. The programme is well conceived and supported by a team of dynamic professionals from different sectors who design and modify the methodology, curriculum and standards based on the needs of the learners. There is a continuous strive to raise the standards.

Different teams work in tandem with each other for different subjects and levels. They identify and shortlist the areas required for the professional development of the teaching staff. All their endeavours focus on improving outcomes in all areas.

Leaders at all levels are striving to import, experiment and implement strategies for raising standards and strengthening the Gyan Shala methodology.

The hierarchy of leadership is well knit with supervisors and managers supporting teachers at different levels to improve the teaching learning processes in the centres. The leadership is therefore supportive enabling teachers to teach in single room classes to students from deprived backgrounds.

2.9. How well do the centres perform overall?

The overall performance of Gyan Shala is acceptable. The overall performance was judged on the basis of the rating of the three key quality indicators students' attainment and progress, teaching and learning (judged acceptable) and leadership and management (judged as good). Another significant indicator, assessment was judged as unsatisfactory.

Gyan Shala derives its strength from its dynamic workforce, innovative methodology and a creative “idea” of single room classes competing with huge schools in imparting quality education to the citizens of the state that are socially and economically deprived.

Briefly, on the performance of the indicators the students’ attainment and progress based on internal tests and lesson observations is acceptable in most subjects although it was significantly better in mathematics. In other subjects the students nevertheless made acceptable gains in their knowledge, skills and understanding but could not apply their knowledge in real contexts due to lack of adequate opportunities to showcase their learning.

Given the background of the students and their upbringing GS students surpass several other institutions in good behaviour and dignity in conducting themselves with their teachers and peers. They demonstrate attitudes that are compelling, positive and happy.

Teaching was acceptable accompanied with spells of passive student involvement with few opportunities to express their ideas using their experiences, knowledge and imagination. The repertoire of teaching styles was limited, mostly taken out of the teaching guide and did not necessarily address the needs of all the learners. Assessment was weak and rudimentary. The quality of curriculum was acceptable even though it was drawn from different sources. There is little emphasis on creative subjects and physical education. The infrastructural facilities and resources are acceptable and partnership with parents and community is good. Lastly, the leadership for designing and managing this innovative programme is good.

2.10. Conclusion

Undoubtedly, Gyan Shala as an innovative education model is unparalleled in its approach and design. It has proved that successful learning outcomes are not directly proportional to the infrastructure and teachers qualification. With a simple and efficient model it had made its mark on the education sector in the states of Gujarat, Bihar and West Bengal.

This educational innovation has faced innumerable challenges in its long cherished history of over a decade. With every passing year it is endeavoring to achieve its aim of addressing the issue of inequity and difficulty in accessing quality education by the underprivileged sections of society. However it did not remain immune to issues and challenges. Few of them are as follows:

- Inconsistency in students' attainment and progress within the subjects and across the grades.
- Lack of standardized tests and assessment data that does not allow for analysis of trends in attainment and progress.
- Teachers' total dependence on the central office impairs their ability to customize teaching strategies based on the centre's needs.
- The eclectic curriculum does not focus on the holistic development of students.
- Meagre facilities in the centres.

2.11. Recommendations

- ✓ Improve students' progress and attainment in all subjects in both elementary and middle schools
- ✓ Improve the quality of teaching by allowing the teachers to conduct simple tests that assess their own performance.
- ✓ Enhance the quality of learning by encouraging students to discuss and investigate more, and providing more challenging problems for them to tackle
- ✓ Train the teachers to assess the students in every concept taught
- ✓ Improve the assessment skills of teachers by allowing them to test the students using a range of tools such as multiple choice questions, fill in the blanks, match the following and other simple techniques
- ✓ Use evaluation / assessment reports by agencies to evaluate and improve weak areas
- ✓ Use external assessments and benchmarks to analyse the school's performance and target improvements.
- ✓ Orient the teachers and students to maintain neatness in their centres
- ✓ Orient the staff and the students on child protection policies and procedures
- ✓ Provide first aid kits in all centres