

REVIEW OF THE WORK OF GYAN SHALA

A REPORT PREPARED FOR  
EDUCATION SUPPORT ORGANISATION  
AHMEDABAD

BY  
HK DEWAN, UDAIPUR  
SJ PHANSALKAR, NAGPUR

AHMEDABAD, APRIL 2002

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HK DEWAN  
SJ PHANSALKAR

## 1. Introduction, general observations and overall comments

1.1 Gyan Shala is a project started by Education Support Organisation, a Public Trust registered in Ahmedabad. The stated aim of the project promoters is to evolve and test-demonstrate a system of primary education that would provide good quality basic education to children from poor slum and rural families at a socially affordable cost. Gyan Shala will provide education for the first three primary years and expects to graduate the students to mainstream school system in the fourth grade at the end of its module. Annex-I gives promoters' own perception of the program and strategy.

1.2 Gyan Shala runs 55 "feeder classes" to attract and retain children from poor families. The work is currently done in slums in Ahmedabad and villages in Dhragandhra and Patadi talukas of Surendranagar district. (See Annex-II for details). The children are taught mathematics and Gujarati language and also provided opportunity to learn about their surroundings by undertaking creative project work. They are proposed to be retained in Gyan Shala classes for three years and it is expected that they will join the mainstream primary education system thereafter.

1.2 The team comprising of HK Dewan and SJ Phansalkar was invited to assess and review the work of Gyan Shala in the last three years and to provide inputs for the second phase of its work due to begin in June 2003. The body of the report is structured so as to answer the questions stated in the terms of reference given to the team. (See Annex III for the ToR). The team visited five classes in different slums of Ahmedabad and four rural classes in Patadi tehsil. The team also discussed the work and the strategy of Gyan Shala with the core team and with Prof. Pankaj Jain, Chairman of ESO. Finally the team met two other members of the Governing Council of ESO. The report is based on the above work carried out during April 1-4 2002. We will first present the summary of Gyan Shala work, overall comments and general observations in this section. We summarise the Team's views on each of the questions in the ToR in a section devoted them thereafter.

1.3 Gyan Shala started its preparatory work in September, 1999. Aside from Pankaj Jain, the members of the Core Team participated in the process of development of the curriculum and the materials for the classes. They visited and discussed the issues pertaining to the task with a range of organisations engaged in primary education, studied the work of several reputed thinkers and educationists and evolved their own methodology. The project document states that Gyan Shala also draws upon the model and examples of some successful NGO education programs in Bangladesh. It is good to summarise some of our observations below for easy appreciation of what follows.

1.4 Gyan Shala starts any class after ascertaining the number of children in the vicinity who do not go to existing “mainstream school”. The classes are started by first canvassing with potential user households and convincing them about the need for sending their children to classes and of effective/ quality education. The classes are held in a house rented from one of the residents. Gyan Shala provides tables, benches and fans aside from teaching materials etc. to each class on a full grant basis. Children from urban slums are charged a fee of Rs. 30 per month though no child is asked to discontinue for failure to pay the fees. Rural children are not charged any fees. Efforts are made to attract and train a person resident in the vicinity to work as a teacher. S/he has studied at least up to 10th standard. S/he is given training and is supported by regular visits from the Supervisor who acts as a colleague and a supportive resource. The topics to be covered on each of the days and activities to be done are scheduled in periodic teachers’ meetings held at the cluster location. Necessary teaching aids and materials are given/replenished at this meeting.

1.5 Gyan Shala believes that the conventional method of starting with alphabets and making the pupils in learning about the “matras” for them generally results in uninteresting and repetitive work. Similarly, writing things like “sulekh” on a slate or tracing them on paper are deemed to be discouraging. It prefers that students learn to associate written symbols with common words the pupils use in every day life and then go into the internalisation of the alphabets etc. A similar principle is followed in math learning. Rather than making them learn numbers by heart, pupils are encouraged to associate them with objects and perform activities that help them internalise the concepts. Gyan Shala believes that if children are given interesting and simple tasks to do, they feel engaged and excited and hence like to come to the classes. Gyan Shala also believes that attention span of children is short and hence the tasks and concepts dealt with should change quickly so as to avoid unproductively stretching this span. The class room time of 2 hours and 40 minutes each day is structured to ensure this and to also ensure that there are opportunities for the engagement for the children to learn in the whole group of 30 children, with a smaller group, with the teacher individually and on their own. Gyan Shala provides children with abundant worksheets and paper and pencils so that their shortage does not cause a gap in learning. Toys and other educational materials allow the children to learn at their pace. Gyan Shala has a rigorous teachers training programme and helps the teacher her/his engagement in the class so that the time is used effectively and functionally.

1.6 We found from the attendance register that the attendance in the classes was high when adjusted for drop outs. The incidence of school drop out can be attributed to factors like parental mobility for work, illness etc. In one or two instances, the location of the class room seemed to have caused the drop out. The absence of “freebies” such as school uniform, mid-day meal etc. often given from the primary schools also may tend to wean children away though they often return. Occasionally, inability to pay the fees and embarrassment about it makes a family withdraw a child.

1.7 Though all our visits were unannounced for any specific class, we found that each of the nine classes visited were in progress when we visited them and the children were engaged in doing what was scheduled for the day.

1.8 Considering the fear and insecurity induced by the communal trouble in the city and the state at the time of the fieldwork, the regularity of conduct of the classes and attendance both seemed remarkable. It was very gratifying to see young Muslim girl children chirping in one class in Patadi. Quite a few classes had children from Hindu as well as Muslim community. Gyan Shala is in reality extending a hand of friendship across religious barriers and though its purpose is well focussed, this incidental contribution in itself is significant.

1.9 We were impressed with the facility demonstrated by children from socially disadvantaged and poor families in language and number skills. We were also impressed with the diligence shown by them in completing the worksheets. Barring one class, in most others, after greeting us the children ignored us and returned to their work. The exceptional class was in Patadi taluka and the children in that class appeared young, weak and listless.

1.10 We could see that the methodology explained to us in their presentation was followed with reasonable fidelity in the classes.

1.11 Gyan Shala expects classes to run for 230 days in a year. When asked how close to this target actual performance was, we were told that perhaps upward of 96%. Prima facie, this is a credible answer and indicates high level of performance.

1.12 Gyan Shala core team members appeared to be enthusiastic and engaged in their work. They are interested in following the chosen philosophy of education faithfully and take efforts in learning from others and studying from library etc. Their focus is clearly in demonstrating the effectiveness of their technology. Efficiency related issues are handled by Pankaj Jain and it seems that his constant attention in operational issues is needed.

## 2. ToR Question 1

“Do the learning model, learning materials, teacher-staff training and supervisory support work at the existing scale conform to the requirements of providing good quality education at mass scale?”

2.1 We think that the Gyan Shala team has devised and developed a very effective methodology of education at the primary level. This methodology answers the following issues:

- Attracting and retaining the students: this is done by knowing the classes close to their home by involving the community and by allowing the children to enjoy learning through constant, meaningful and supervised activities.
- improving learning levels by improved pedagogy of teaching language and mathematics and understanding the surrounding world
- providing reasonably adequate learning materials to students,
- training teachers and designing their task well to achieve high productivity of their engagement with children,
- ensuring constant guidance and support to teachers through regular supervisor visits
- Using the manpower likely to be available in the vicinity of villages/ slums, willing to work for this task and willing to do so at the wage of Rs. 700 pm for one class.

This system is likely to work for providing good quality education at a mass scale at affordable cost.

2.2 We believe that fine-tuning is needed in some respects. In the first place, some roles (e.g. Senior Supervisor) are not fully defined and hence how the system would stand improved with their induction is a matter of conjecture. Secondly, supervisory training needs to be perfected. The supervisor is not an inspector, but more in the nature of a senior colleague to the teacher. Ensuring that their interaction is on these lines and not on hierarchical “fault-finding and defending lines” in the deeply hierarchical society may not be too easy. Hence the supervisory training is important. Thirdly, feedback system needs to be improved. The core team or whoever is responsible ought to know that children in a class are young, weak and perhaps listless and should even know the reasons for that. The team needs to know that when a handicapped teacher is appointed in a class, then the methodology of children working in four groups, (three on three tables and one on the ground) tends to break down and may find solutions to that situation. There can be other instances of class realities that need to be checked in time. In fact the Gyan Shala design provisions for regular supervisory visits, the presence of senior supervisor and field officer in the field, and concurrent monitoring. These provisions are meant to be the instruments for this, and all these need to be faithfully implemented and strengthened over time. Gyan Shala’s resources permitting, this should happen over the next few months.

The emphasis on teachers training is appropriate. But the core team members appear to be in need of being supported by Pankaj Jain in highlighting the importance, the philosophy and the criticality of the steps in teaching method to the recruits. Hence his presence is of key value and must continue in teachers’ training. The others are young and hopefully will acquire the same authority and credibility over a period of time.

### Quality of Education

The task of enhancing quality of primary education is unending. The quality that may be achieved in any effort is clearly a function of the resources one has, the environment in which learning is to take place, the extent and quality post-school support and home environment that the children get etc. Two things pertaining to quality appear significant in the current context of Gyan Shala. In the first place, is there an evident concern for quality among those who run the project and is the concern demonstrated by their action? Secondly, is the quality comparable to the general standards of education at this level currently available for children from a similar stratum of society? We believe that given the resources available with Gyan Shala, both these questions are answered adequately in design and implementation of the project.

*2.3 We feel that the task of the teacher is structured for reliable delivery of the technology. This is good considering the expected average manpower that will be used for teaching. Yet some scope for very good and interested teachers to fulfil their own ways of doing things could add significant value. Gyan Shala may consider providing one day in a fortnight to teachers for them to decide what to do. They could take the children out to see a farm or shops or factory, they could play games, they could just repeat some lesson the children have not followed or do something else to suit local needs. Chances are that value addition will occur when interested teachers use the time creatively.*

### 3. Education technology and scaling up

#### ToR question 2

“Is the organisation capacity and performance in terms of developing and upgrading suitable education technology and contents for the programme consistent with the its programme needs? Which gaps does it need to fill and which areas need to be strengthened?”

3.1 We think that the technology developed by Gyan Shala is sound. We have seen evidence that there is an ongoing effort to upgrade it and constantly review it. This is a very good sign.

3.2 As noted above, the feedback system needs to be improved. Absence of a Senior supervisor in charge of monitoring is perhaps a cause for current weak feedback system. This post may be filled on a priority to begin the work.

3.3 Suitable measures to ensure that the tempo and enthusiasm for constant review is maintained may perhaps be thought of. As yet there is no sign of complacency in the core team but success on ground could bring complacency and one may like to be forewarned about it. Though highly contrived, a norm that a proportion of the activities/modules/classes must be changed every year may be a good mechanism but Gyan Shala may consider alternatives to it.

*3.4 Elements of a sound and cost effective system of procuring goods and services for meeting the rigorous needs of the work in classes exist. There is insufficient evidence that*

*these systems are formalised and even less have become institutionalised. Efforts at consolidation, delegation of tasks and institutionalisation may be considered. Gyan Shala has already started working on preparation of the necessary formal policy/procedure statements and will adopt them over a period of time after due process.*

*3.5 Gyan Shala wishes to ensure that all its graduates have the opportunity of joining mainstream education system at grade 4. Considering that inadvertently, its methodology of education and even its success constitutes a critique of the extant methodology of the mainstream primary education, a degree of antipathy and perhaps unstated hostility can not be ruled out. It is therefore necessary that specific requirements of admittance to the fourth grade be negotiated with appropriate authorities to avoid unpleasant surprise. This may involve building alliances at all levels in the mainstream system in Ahmedabad municipality as well as district panchayat and other authority structures. Having ascertained the specific entry requirements, if necessary, third grade curriculum may provide for focused efforts to ensure that children will clear the tests and be admitted. Considering that this need is one year away and that the whole credibility of Gyan Shala depends on it, priority may be accorded to this task.*

#### 4. Design and staff

##### ToR question 3

“Would the organisation design of Gyan Shala enable it to recruit, induct and sustain the staff that would be able to deliver desired quality performance within the project cost parameters? Review the policies in this regard to assess the sustainability at all the four levels of staff.”

##### 4.1 The teachers to be hired

- must have passed tenth
- should be within the vicinity of the class location
- should be willing and able to work with the children

Gyan Shala has learnt that women teachers do better in that role and would prefer to hire women. Applications of the Potential recruits are screened. The applicants are required to visit existing classes for one-two days. They are required to undergo the teachers training module. The judgement regarding their suitability and willingness is exercised based on observation of the core team members on individuals during all these stages.

The candidates for the post of supervisor need to be graduates. They go through a similar procedure. They also need to be willing to travel every day for the purpose of visiting the classes. Recruits at the remaining two levels need to be post graduates and interested in working in the field of primary education.

While the system of recruitment is already an improvement over the usual system of seeing the mark-sheets or test performance and interviewing, the system can conceivably be improved by

- Developing mechanisms for ensuring that a wider pool of possible recruits come to know of the recruitment,
- Formalising the parameters on which judgement about suitability is made,
- Formalising the overall recruitment policy so that it becomes de-personalised.

4.2 In the past focused and high level of efforts were made to ensure that core team members are prepared for the task of developing course materials etc. A number of exposure visits, training programmes, interactions with experts etc. were used for this purpose. Such efforts could possibly slow down as the initial development work is completed. This needs to be guarded against to the extent budget permits.

4.3 So far the attrition rates are quite acceptable. Attrition is inevitable even in the existing system if and as the disparity between Gyan Shala salaries and market wage rates widens. While this can not be controlled, attrition on account of burn out and disenchantment needs to be avoided. Mechanisms therefore need to be thought of to minimise incidence of such things. Much greater thought is needed on this subject than the team is able to devote in its limited engagement for this report. We can only say that non-monetary rewards and opportunities need to be thought of and created to make the membership of Gyan Shala fulfilling for the individuals on a continuing basis.

4.4 The scope for vertical and lateral mobility within the Gyan Shala structure will depend on the pace of expansion. Sustainability of staff over a longer time horizon therefore is a matter of conjecture at this juncture. However, if one remembers that as the staff capacity becomes deeper and more enriched, they can only contribute more substantially to the cause of primary education when the anxiety on attrition front may be blunted.

5. Progress and the coming phase:

ToR Question 4

“Does the progress over the last two years indicate building of organisation strength that could deliver planned results for Phase II? What are the specific areas in which programme needs to be expedited and consolidated?”

5.1 The progress made so far is ahead of schedule and very heartening. Motivational levels of core team are high. Receptivity among the communities seems to be quite gratifying. The end result of a happy child learning in the classes is satisfactory. There are indications that significant efforts have been made to develop cost effective systems for expansion. As mentioned above, there is a need for consolidation, formalisation and institutionalisation of the system. It needs to be remembered that the way the world views a small system is quite different from the way a significant system is seen. When Gyan



Shala reaches 15000 children, it will no longer be a hobby workshop but a serious stake holder in the education business. At that time, those who feel threatened by it will seek to find ways of debunking its achievements. Gyan Shala hence must protect itself from its own success. Several collateral issues could come into picture. Some of them could be:

- absence of things like supplementary feeding etc in Gyan Shala classes,
- absence of games and physical training in its system,
- neutrality or neglect of “value education” etc.
- Gyan Shala’s aloofness in things like immunisation drives
- Gyan Shala’s stand on Reservation for teachers etc.
- Content in the usual schools and the need to continue Gyan Shala for subsequent classes.

We wish to make it clear that we are not advocating that Gyan Shala take a stand on any of these matters other than what it is doing. The point is these are possible points for berating Gyan Shala for people who wish to run it down. And if they get at other issues that hurt Gyan Shala, then the situation is worrisome. Five hundred classes make Gyan Shala a significant entity involved in reaching education to the poor and the expansion will perhaps give rise to new challenges that need to be met. Hence consolidation, formalisation and institutionalisation is important. So is the alliance building with significant players: bureaucrats, vocal politicians, social workers etc.

## 6. Documentation and records on learning and on costs

### ToR Question 5

“Comment on the capacity of the programme to generate credible record and evidence about its performance, both in terms of children’s learning and in terms of financial costs? Where does it need to strengthen the documentation and analysis?”

6.1 We think Gyan Shala is weak in this regard. Every one is very busy doing things and hence has little time to document. Only the courseware is well documented. Elements of systems exist: attendance record is gathered and apparently processed at head office, informal but effective and frequent checks on learning level are done. Six monthly tests have been conducted to check back on learning. An NGO working on educational testing has been contacted to ascertain the level of learning of the children .But documentation is weak in many areas.

6.2 As Senior Supervisors join, this will become more feasible and doable. Hence they must be hired fast if the resources permit. If the resources do not permit this, then recourse may be taken to work from “low cost-high quality” manpower such as trainees from IRMA or Social Work schools. Two exercises need to be done right away.

- In the first place, pattern of drop out needs to be studied for a formal and rigorous statement on drop out rates of Gyan Shala, perhaps across all the three grades and

across slums and rural areas. This will involve systematic analysis of attendance records as well as visits to parents whose children have dropped out etc..

- Secondly, one exercise each for the three subjects is needed for analysing the worksheets to systematically document the rate of completion, the quality of work, the patterns of non-completion, relating performance to socio-economic variables of families etc.

Other studies may be about identifying the attributes of high performing teachers and supervisors and seeing how they can feed into training.

6.3 So far as cost analysis is concerned, it may be worthwhile to use the past experience to build “models” for cost of educating one child, compare the model results with the target figure, seeing the components which contribute the maximum cost, conducting sensitivity analysis on them etc.

6.4 It may be worthwhile conducting a small low profile dissemination workshop on the results of these studies once they are over. Significant individuals in education field as well as relevant State policy makers etc. need to be informed about these results through such dissemination exercises.

## 7. Strategic Perspective

### ToR question 6

“What are the specific areas in which Gyan Shala need to learn from other relevant experiences both in education technology and organisation management of development programmes? What additional elements need to be considered in the overall strategy and programme design and implementation plan that would help the programme to meet its strategic and operational goals? The review may comment on the strategic perspective of Gyan Shala to deliver good quality education at a mass scale at a socially acceptable cost.”

As noted earlier, prior to crystallising its technology and methods, Gyan Shala undertook serious exercise to understand what others are doing. It has made efforts to be informed by most of the efforts in the field of primary education in the sub-continent. It has evolved its approach after sifting through their good elements.

7.1 This section is to be viewed as a mere statement of fact devoid of any evaluative content. In the first place, Gyan Shala is addressing what it considers the “right objectives of education” outside the government system. It has not raised nor articulated any “fundamental” question about education nor has it deliberately and purposefully challenged any established orthodoxy. Another view could be that the emphasis of Gyan Shala to deliver good quality at significantly low cost is, in fact, a very fundamental aspect. Similarly, ensuring good quality with a low education teachers and primacy assigned to supervision, hierarchy, and management etc. in the context of education

system could also be considered fundamental challenges to orthodoxy of current design of mainstream primary. It views itself as a feeder to the main system without raising the question about whether the main system is good and whether becoming a feeder to it is worthwhile doing. Should it do so? Should it subscribe to the “utilitarian” view of education? We do not think it is our place to say any thing conclusively. Perhaps these questions are beyond the scope of this report.

7.2 Gyan Shala’s perspective on delivering good quality education may be said to comprise of four elements:

*How a child learns:* When reconstructed, Gyan Shala’s answer to this that a child learns when guided by a teacher, when provided with an opportunity to engage in meaningful (and yet free of stress) activities, when he is motivated and when “blind rote and copy” are replaced with scope for creativity and relating it to interesting facets of life. Finally, for teaching at primary level, Gyan Shala believes that due consideration to small attention and retention span of children needs to be given. Gyan Shala has sought answers to these issues within the constraints of resources as well as social conditions under which they must operate.

*Teacher’s role:* Gyan Shala believes that the teacher must have opportunities to facilitate learning in all the four situations: when the children are in a big group, when they are in smaller groups, when they interact with him individually and when they are left to themselves. Teachers need to be trained. Their tasks need to be fully structured so that there are no “blank patches” when she scratches her head about what to do. The teacher must prepare for every module in advance. Again, the design of the task of teachers and the pedagogy adopted by Gyan Shala is, as it should be, informed by the realistic assumption about what society at large is willing to support and afford.

*Language and Math Learning:* A child learns a formal language when the association between written symbols and the phonetic sound are reinforced by meaning and context. That is why in Gyan Shala they start with a meaningful context in which the smallest of communication is in words and then go into alphabets and “matra” and representation of sound in symbols. Children learn math when the numbers and relationship between numbers can be associated with tangible objects. Hence Gyan Shala starts with the tangible before entering into abstract concepts. They also emphasise meaning here and develop a sense of shape and space. On all fronts, the group is thinking and may need regular support and consultation to keep the movement in this direction meaningful and to meet the newer challenges as they arise.

*Materials and curriculum:* Gyan Shala believes that there must be abundant teaching materials and supplies for children, that the materials must relate to their context and must be seen as worth engaging in to the child. Curriculum and materials need to be revisited continuously so that their contextual and social proximity to the teacher and the taught is maintained. “Once and for all” materials become ossified and hence not owned

by either the teacher or the taught. That is how there is an emphasis on constant upgrading of materials. More effective ways of doing this, sharing ideas of individual teachers and involving them in designing materials are needed. This whole process needs to be institutionalised particularly when the number of classes becomes large. Freedom to teachers to design the class once a fortnight may also be found to be useful in keeping the whole system alive and alert to these issues.

Finally, Gyan Shala has developed and defined expectations that are meaningful and relevant to the socio-economic context of the children.

### 7.3 Role of the parents' Committees

The idea of creating Parents Committees for every class is a good idea. In the first instance it appears as an innovative way of involving the community in creating the class for its children and hence giving it a stake. But a close look at the memorandum says some thing else again. The way it is construed, the proposed memorandum of understanding between the parents committees and Gyan Shala makes the former as mere instruments of avoiding employer responsibilities for Gyan Shala. While this is a useful managerial tool for this purpose, it is bound to be viewed as manipulative over a period of time when the parents committees realise that there is very little real role for them. It is conceivable that a more meaningful engagement with the committees may result in enriched education experience for the children, a greater sense of ownership for the community and also the managerial advantage for Gyan Shala. We recommend a re-look at the concept as it stands now. It may be possible to encourage the community, particularly in villages, to supplement Gyan Shala efforts by looking at inputs like nutrition, health education etc.. Parents may also be encouraged to get involved turn by turn in telling children stories or designing small events for children. This will involve the engagement and commitment of the community to the classes and also help children include their own environment and culture in the classroom.

7.4 We would like to suggest that there may be a need to look at the whole question of the process for deciding where a class should be started. Numbers of children likely to participate, supportive role of community, class density for more efficient supervision etc are the current inputs used. Are more inputs needed? What is the "hit rate" of classes? In what areas has Gyan Shala learnt in this respect?

### 8. Summary and Recommendations:

We find the Gyan Shala approach of evolving a cost-effective education delivery technology worth expanding. The work done so far is of a satisfactory nature given the well-focused objectives. Indeed, quality education at affordable cost seems to have been approximated very well. The staff morale and attitudes appear to be right for the work. Great efforts have been undertaken at evolving materials for the children to learn. It is heartening to see how children from slums and villages are able to overcome the

disadvantages of their social and spatial backgrounds to learn at rates commendable in their more fortunate brethren. Gyan Shala will now have to focus on three things:

- consolidation of systems in every field of its work so that expansion to ten times the current number of classes is smooth.
- documentation and analysis of children's performance in the classes so far for learning lessons as well as for disseminating the results of this technology with a view to achieve its own place in the sun and
- alliance building with significant players to ensure that its graduates are admitted to mainstream schools without a hitch and thus its credibility is maintained.

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**Some thoughts/ pointers of the strategy for long term sustainability of Gyan Shala**

India has had many programs such as Hoshangabad Science Teaching Program (Eklavya) and Pratham, that have tried to work with and improve the mainstream government primary system through supplementary inputs. There also exist a large number of innovative attempts, too numerous to mention, that demonstrate the efficacy of 'good practices' at an experimental small scale.

Our analysis suggests that there are basic design weaknesses in the mainstream system that would not permit it to be significantly improved in near future. The limited impact of demonstration good practices or supplementary effort is therefore not surprising. We have reasons to believe that the well funded program, DPEP, to improve government system is also likely to go the way of past such attempts like APPEP, Bihar Education Project, Operation Black Board etc. that failed to rejuvenate government primary system. We therefore have decided to evolve and set up a total education delivery system which would work independently and deliver good quality basic education, and feed its output to higher mainstream primary system.

The core objective of Gyan Shala is to set up a project/organization to provide good quality primary education to children from poor rural and urban families, and also develops/ demonstrates a new primary approach that would work and retain quality of education while operating at a mass scale and at a socially affordable total cost of around or less than Rs. 1500/- per child per year. Gyan Shala is proceeding to evolve a self-contained total education design and delivery system/unit that can address the basic education needs of around 15000 children. Mass application of this approach would mean setting up multiple numbers of such units that would compete with each other to ensure continuous evolution, innovation and competitive excellence. This new model approach would have two dimensions. First, it would adopt appropriate learning methods/ material that conform to the best recognized education theory and that ensures good quality outcome even with the limited skill human resource that is available to work with poor children at socially affordable cost. Second, it adopts an organization/ management design that would ensure the program success even at large scale, within the human and financial resource constraint under which a mass primary system in India has to work.

Gyan Shala, over its first phase (2000-2003), would evolve and test- demonstrate to a satisfactory level the first of the above two features. During this, it would have evolved the pedagogy, curriculum, learning material, class processes, teacher recruitment and training, and the system of supervisory support so that satisfactory level of educational attainment are made by the children. The second phase, 2003-2006, will then be devoted to evolve and test-demonstrate the organization-management model. By the end of this phase Gyan Shala should operate at least/ around 500 classes. During this phase, the process of ongoing revision and adaptation of educational content initiated during the first phase would be institutionalized and organization design and management policies would

be stabilized. This phase would also evolve and standardize policies to align the career/ job expectations of all level of functionaries to what Gyan Shala can offer, the process of recruitment/ training and induction, and of management that does not require very high level of skill or competence. Many features of the management-organization design would have been test-evolved during the first phase while some refinements in education content design would follow in the second phase.

Only when the full model is fully developed and test-demonstrated, would Gyan Shala acquire credibility to demand and claim Government resources to run the primary system on Gyan Shala pattern.

### **Strategic trajectory**

Gyan Shala is striving to achieve a margin of around 16 times over the current mass primary system. First, Gyan Shala plans to keep the total unit cost of primary system, including the cost of material development, supply of learning material, renewal charges of class furniture and facilities, and management cost at around Rs. 1500/- per child per year which is less than 1/4<sup>th</sup> of the current government spending on these counts. Second, Gyan Shala would strive to acquire a four times quality margin, in terms of percentage of children scoring 75% or more marks in a qualifying test. Having evolved and test-demonstrated a system of primary education that ensures good quality basic education to children, particularly to those from poor rural and urban families, at a mass scale and socially affordable cost, Gyan Shala would strive to impact on mass primary system in the country.

In the long term, the primary education at a mass scale has to and would be funded by the Government. All over the world, including the market/ western countries, this is taken as normal. In fact, the primary education is considered politically so sensitive and socially so critical that Government would acquire control over it even if it is not funded by the Government, as for example, has been now happening in Pakistan about religiously funded schools.

Gyan Shala is hoping that by the end of 2003, it would have around 100 classes operating in both the rural areas and urban slums. It plans to have around 500 classes by the end of 2005-2006. The funding till this level would come from private local and international sources, including the individuals and Foundations/ Trusts.

Around 2004-2005, Gyan Shala would start active policy lobbying to convince the Government that it should use non-government organizations to deliver education as long as they meet/exceed the required quality standard and reach the target children. It hopes that in the third and later phases, beyond 2006, the financial resources for Gyan Shala pattern education would come mainly from the Government.

After phase-II, Gyan Shala hopes to work with selected city or state governments to implement Gyan Shala design based classes in specific geographical regions that would

be funded by multi-lateral or bilateral donors, on a demonstration basis. This would be done in a manner that Gyan Shala becomes a feeder system for the municipal and government schools where children would join in the 4<sup>th</sup> grade, after completing three years of Gyan Shala module of basic education.

The success of strategy beyond 2006 is subject to macro issue and policy environment that can not be fully predicted. In the event of failure on this count, Gyan Shala would hope to emerge as a demonstration education delivery program that is at the forefront of design innovations in this sector. The overall annual cost of this, at 2002 prices, would be around Rs. 20 million. The challenge for the Gyan Shala management would then be to build such a reputation and credibility that this level of expenses could be met on a perpetual basis through earning of corpus or sustainable level of grants.



## Location of Gyan Shala classes

### List of slums and villages

Slums in Ahmedabad	Villages in Dhrangdhra	Villages in Patdi
Ramdev Nagar - I	Satapar –old	Odu
Ramdev Nagar II	Satapar-new	Chikasar
Bhilwas	Vrajpar	Savlas –I
Rajiv Nagar	Chuli	Savlas-II
Shravanshi Nagar	Virenda Garh-I	Ambala –I
Someshwar	Virendra Garh –II	Ambala –II
Yogeshwar Nagar	Vavdi	Jainabad –I
Nava Vadej I	Rajarh	Jinabad –II
Nava Vadej II	Haripar	Nagwada
Gordhan Ki Chali	Isadara	Savda –I
Chatri Sordini Chali	Bavdi-I	Savda –II
Judge Saheb ni Chali	Bavdi-II	
Lali Pura Chapra	Khambda	
Pandit Nagar	Jaghdva	
	Bhai Saheb Gadh	
	Kuda-old	
	Kuda-new	
	Narali	

### **Terms of Review of Gyan Shala Performance and Potential**

The enclosed note (Annex-I) provides a strategic perspective of Gyan Shala's role and aims. This requires Gyan Shala to develop a program design and model that would provide good quality primary education at a mass scale, particularly to children from poor rural and urban families, at a socially affordable cost. The review, in main, is meant to assess the progress made under the phase-I till date in developing this model. The review would highlight the specific areas where progress appears satisfactory and where the current-planned actions and policies need to be modified to move towards Gyan Shala's strategic goals. The Review Team would decide the list of issues that it would like to analyze and comment upon, but may like to cover the following:

1. Do the learning model, learning material, teacher-staff training and supervisory support work at the existing scale and conform to the requirements of providing the good quality education at a mass scale?
2. Is the organization's capacity and performance, in terms of developing and upgrading suitable education technology and contents for the program, consistent with its program needs? Which specific gaps it needs to fill out and which areas need to be strengthened further?
3. Would the organization design of Gyan Shala enable it to recruit, induct and sustain the staff who would be able to deliver desired quality performance within the project cost parameters? Review the program's policy and actions regarding the staff recruitment, training, development and grooming to assess suitability at all the four levels of teachers, supervisors, senior supervisors and core team members?
4. Does the progress over the two years indicate building of organizational strength that could deliver the planned results for both phase-I and II, by the end of which the total program and organizational model for around 500 classes would be established? What are the specific areas where the progress needs to be expedited and consolidated during the remaining period of phase-I and phase-II?
5. Comment on the capacity of the program to generate credible record and evidence about its performance, both in terms of children's learning and financial cost? Where does it need to strengthen the documentation and analysis?
6. What are the specific issues on which Gyan Shala need to learn from other relevant examples, both in terms of education technology and organization-management of development programs? What additional elements need to be considered in the overall strategy and program design and the implementation plan that would help the program to meet its strategic and operational goals? The review may comment on the suitability of strategic perspective of Gyan Shala to deliver good quality basic primary education to children at a mass scale, both in rural and urban slum areas, at a socially acceptable cost?