

QCI-DIEMR CONFERENCE –

SHARING BEST PRACTICES IN EDUCATION

ORGANIZED BY:

Quality Council of India (QCI) in collaboration with Dayanand Institute of Education Management & Research (DIEMR) on July 18-19, 2009 at Taj Land's End, Bandra, Mumbai.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY REPORT

Input support: **EDUCONCEPTS**

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PREFACE, CONTEXT AND OBJECTIVES OF THE CONFERENCE

Global scenarios on the economic, business, social and culture fronts are changing and educators need to pause for a while to question the relevance of existing practices and quality assumptions in education. DIEMR has felt that the tumultuous world of today requires individuals and communities to be able to continually develop and utilize different kinds of knowledge frameworks, value systems, intelligence structures and skills in order to make sense of, adapt to and contribute to change in their social and physical environment in constructive and sustainable ways. Emerging quality orientations must include education imparted informally, family based education, community based education and that imparted through curricular and co-curricular activities.

The Quality Council of India (QCI) has been at the forefront in giving shape to former President Dr.Abdul Kalam's vision of creating a quality nation. Since education is the most potent tool through which the nation can develop quality human resources, this conference on "Sharing Best Practices in Education" was conceived, designed, planned and organized at Hotel Taj Land's End, Mumbai on July 18-19, 2009. The objectives of the conference were:

- To map the emerging scenarios that will form the context against which education will need to be reinvented.
- To share best practices in governance, teaching-learning, curriculum management, assessment and evaluation, strategic and academic planning, admission, student support and progression, health and hygiene, infrastructure and other elements of quality in education

- To document the discussions, deliberations and recommendations of the conference to enable all stakeholders in education plan reactive and proactive actions to be taken to shape the future quality of education in their sphere of influence.

Schools continue to be the primary fountain-heads for disseminating knowledge and therefore the basis of nations' development. Schools are expected to generate a positive climate of innovation, experimentation and creativity in all activities. High standards for personal, moral, and spiritual development need to be nurtured and sustained by institutions. An overall attitude and outlook that values establishing and pursuing high standards must prevail throughout the school. This is not yet happening.

Following the advice given by former President Dr. Abdul Kalam QCI has developed accreditation standard for quality school governance. The standard focuses on establishing systems to enable learning, self development and improved performance. It encourages schools to pursue continual excellence. This will surely place the compliant schools on par with the best-performing institutions in a global context. It was felt that unless a forum for sharing best practices is created at a national level, such practices will remain exceptions rather than the rule.

This was another reason why the conference was organized and aptly titled as it is.

OVERVIEW OF CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS AND OUTCOMES

The conference clarified issues and concepts related to governance of education, leadership in education, quality in education, teacher empowerment, destressing educational processes, innovations in educational processes, using drama for effective teaching-learning, life skills in education. The conference also discussed best practices in various processes of education being actually followed in innovative institutions. Sh. Avik Mitra, Advisor, QCI reinforced the key elements of the QCI standard for school accreditation and governance. Setting a new trend, the conference invited school students to share their feelings, thoughts and suggestions on what they consider ought to be an ideal system of education. Traditionally, conferences have been discussing education but rarely have they involved the epicenter of the activity- the learner- in the discussion process. At the end of each session, experts from various fields summarized the presentations together with their own perspectives and inputs on the speakers' discussions. Diversity of participation, discussion and dialogue was the key differentiator of this conference. Almost the complete segment of stakeholders and interested parties in the education sector ranging from Quality Council of India to private institutions, public schools, government schools, former heads of regulatory bodies, vice chancellors, independent consultants to representatives of tribal schools, NGOs, researchers and students was adequately represented and participated in equal measure. It was not a conference of educationists based in Mumbai or Maharashtra, speakers and participants had been invited from Bangalore, Hyderabad, Vishakapatnam, Sangamner, Delhi, Bhuj, Pune, Malleshwaram, Chennai, Gurgaon too. Yet another highlight of this conference was the hierarchical heterogeneity of the educationists who participated either as speakers, or as delegates and respondents. There was a good mix of Directors, Principals,

promoters, teachers, administrators of schools. A conference of this magnitude and diversity would have been incomplete without focus on the current scenarios and proposed reforms by policy makers. The reforms being discussed and proposed by the HRD ministry were deliberated upon in a special late-evening session conceived for this very purpose.

INAUGURATION

The conference began with the traditional lighting of lamp and prayers seeking enlightenment from Almighty. Dr.K.B.Kushal, Chairman, Education Committee, NBQP delivered the welcome address. Hailing the conference as a path-breaking initiative (shiksha-utsav), Dr.Kushal was confident that the outcomes of the discussions will empower the delegates to initiate incremental and architectural changes in terms of care, curricular aspects, evaluation and assessment, learner-centredness, competencies of teachers and all other processes of education. Such practices need to emanate from our culture for them to be effective in our context. Sh.Girdhar Gyani, Secretary General, QCI, referred to former President Abdul Kalam's exhortation to make India a quality nation. Sh.Vijay Thadani, Chairman, NABET emphasized the need to use our heritage and value system to our advantage to become a world benchmark in education while at the same time take all the precautions to ensure that the hapless student does not become victim of all our experiments with the system. Sh.K.K.Nohria, Chairman, NBQP advised the delegates to develop attitudes and cultures of quality in their institutions. Sh.Vipin Sahni, Director, NABET lauded the initiatives and efforts of DIEMR and QCI in bringing together educationists representing a diversity of organizations, regions and institutions.

CONFERENCE STRUCTURE

Five sessions were held- two on day-1 and three on day-2. Each session was chaired by a panel of experts comprising representatives from diverse segments of the education industry.

Session-1 (after the inaugural session) was chaired by Sh.Vijay Thadani, Chairman, NABET with Prof.Bhoomitra Dev, Vice Chancellor, Mangalayatan University and Prof.B.P.Khandelwal, former Director, NIEPA. This session featured the following speakers and papers:

Mrs.Kalpana Mohan, Principal Vidyashilp Academy, Bangalore	Generations Evolve So Must Education
Dr.(Mrs) Vandana Lulla, Director / Principal Podar World School, Mumbai	Effective School Governance
Mrs.Ramadevi, Principal Bharati Vidya Bhavan, Hyderabad	Effective School Governance
Venu N, Founder Centre for Learning, Bangalore	Schooling for Life Rethinking Educational Practices and Priorities
Mrs.Sheela Malliya, Principal Childrens' Academy, Mumbai	Teacher Empowerment
Dr.Vijayam Ravi, CMD,Global Education, Mumbai	School Governance – A Trait for Educational Leadership
Mrs.Bhanumathi Samatha Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and	Innovative and Quality Education for Adivasi Children

Children Vishakapatnam	
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Session-2 was chaired by Sh.K.K.Nohria, Chairman, NBQP; Sh.M.M.Joshi, Dy Commissioner, Kendriya Vidyalayas and Ms.Lata Shenava, Social worker and Counsellor. The speakers and their papers were:

Mr.Anil Kumar, Principal Pratibha School, Delhi	Principal's Rolling Trophy for Effective School Governance and Empowerment
Mrs Alka Vaidya, Principal Dhruv Academy, Sangamner	Stress Free Evaluation – A Step Ahead
Mrs.Madhuri Deshpande, Managing Director Ankur Vidya Mandir, Pune	One School for All
Mr.Rashmikant Makwana, Principal Adani DAV Public School,, Mundra	Empowering Teachers and Students
Mrs.V.Meenakshi, Principal Kendriya Vidyalaya, Malleshwaram	Discovering Synergic Integration for Innovative Teaching and Learning Strategies
Dr.Raghu Raman, Founder Amrita Learning, Bangalore	Improving Teaching Learning Process Through Computer Based Adaptive Assessments and Interventions
Dr.Malini Goyal, Director Lokhandwala Foundation, Mumbai	Accelerating Analytical Mind

Session-3 (on day-2) was chaired by Sh.Girdhar Gyani, Secretary General, QCI with Prof.Bhoomitra Dev, Vice Chancellor, Mangalayatan University and Sh.Tushar Guha, MD, Nriyjanali Trust. Speakers invited during this session were:

Mr.Bejon Misra, Consumer Expert and Ex-Chairman Consumer Co-ordination Council, Noida	Consumer's Perspective
Avnita Bir, Principal R.N.Poddar School, Mumbai	Innovative Teaching Learning Strategies
Dr.Shaila Naik, Ex Director Universal College Mumbai	Measurement of Quality in Education and School Governance
Mrs.Valli Arunachalam, Principal PSBB Nungaambakkam, Chennai	Innovative Teaching and Learning Strategies and Teacher Empowerment
Ms. Devika Nadig Founder Director and Mr.Vijay K.Gupta Director, Shikshangan, Pune	Sharing 3 Best Practices
Shri Avik Mitra, Advisor - QCI	QCI Initiative In School Education

Session-4 was chaired by Sh.Bejon Mishra, Dr.A.G.Bhalwankar, Director, Society for Pedagogical Science and Sh.M.M.Joshi. The speakers and papers of this session were:

Mrs.Kamini Bhasin, Principal Delhi Public School, Greater Noida	Ever Evolving School
Mrs.Anita Makkar, Regional Director/ Principal DAV Public School, Gurgaon	Sharing Best Practices in School Governance
Dr.Rajani Konantambigi, Associate Professor, School of Social Sciences, Mumbai	Best Practice for Class I: A Case of a Private Marathi Medium School in Mumbai
Rekha Vijaykar, Principal Guruharisingh School Mumbai	Scope of Performing Arts in Teaching Methods
Dr.Swaroop Rawal, Freelancer Educationist	Drama Camp at Sadra – A Memoir

Mumbai	
Dr.S.P.Thakur, Principal Kendriya Vidyalaya, Delhi	Classroom Teaching

Session-5 featured the following speakers and papers:

Dr. Sonal Shukla, Research Officer TISS Mumbai	Importance of Inclusion of Life Skills in School Curriculum and Formal Management
Mrs.Savita , Principal, Bombay Cambridge School Mumbai	Principal’s Role in Guiding the School through the Process of Education by Helping Build Relationship between Teachers and Students
Vijayeta Singh, Student, TISS, Mumbai	My Education My Voice – Student Perspective

GROUP DISCUSSION ON EDUCATIONAL REFORMS OF H.R.D MINISTER

The salient feature of day-1 was a post conference group discussion held late evening from 7-9 p.m. The theme of the discussion was “Reforms in Education.” With particular reference to the recent statements and suggestions of the H.R.D minister Sh.Kapil Sibbal. Dr.A.K.Sengupta, noted economist and educationist who is currently Director of SIES College of Management Studies (SIESCOMS) was invited to deliver the opening address commenting on the current and proposed reforms. Dr.Sengupta expressed serious concern at the huge skill gap in our human resources informing that a large chunk of our graduates are really not productive assets. The entire system from school to post-graduate education has become a knowledge transmission system with the result that what is happening in the name of innovation is just plain copy-cutting. Our graduates lack miserably in practical application, creativity, belief and confidence. Sh.B.P.Khandelwal, former Director, NIEPA recommended an approach wherein clusters of institutions should be authorized to conduct major examinations like the Board examinations. This can be one good alternative to Board exams. Sh.Khandelwal suggested that instead of bureaucrats governing the educational bodies like education Boards, professionals from mainstream education must be at the helm. Prof. Bhoomitra Dev, Vice Chancellor, Mangalayatan University cautioned against the over-emphasis on western fads like customer-friendliness in education predicting that it could become counter-productive as it has become there. Commenting on the bureaucratization of our system, Prof Dev indicated that we can feed the entire world if we can make our red-tape nutritive. Dr.Usha Nayar, Dy Director, TISS disagreed with the western models of development which we have become prone to adapting. She supported a developmental model which took the country’s specific needs and aspirations into consideration rather than go by the benchmarks established in developed countries. Citing the initiatives of TISS, Dr.Usha indicated how we can design and customize curriculum and degrees to our specific requirements. Sh.K.K.Nohria, Chairman, NBQP suggested conducting a root cause analysis of the malaise in education. As in industry where people quit bad managers, students quit bad teachers and schools. If the system cannot ensure joy of learning, it needs to be revamped in totality. Sh.Nohria favored deregulation, decontrol and generation of profits in education.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND LEARNING

Though many of the recommendations and learning culled from the presentations of the key speakers including those from QCI are embedded within all paragraphs of the report, the significant ones from the other presentations which do not figure elsewhere are:

1. Schools need to pay adequate attention to:

- Identification of different students' needs
- Adjusting pace and level of teaching, schedules of testing according to individual needs of students
- Subject options offered as per aptitude of different students
- In-House Publications & Question Banks for facilitating learning
- Emotional support for special needs
- Sensitive handling of individual students

2. The performance measurement matrix for teachers in one of the institutions is a good guide for others:

Sr	Criterion	Percentage weightage
1	Regularity	10%
2	Punctuality	10%
3	Class room teaching	10%
4	Use of teaching aids & innovative techniques	10%
5	Use of technology in teaching	10%
6	Research work undertaken	10%
7	Initiative in co curricular activities	10%
8	Relation with parents	10%
9	Relation with colleagues	10%
10	Conformity to school norms and subordination	10%

3. Each and every human being is an unique individual having his/her own characteristics (multiple intelligence) and such group of individuals cannot be driven through arbitrarily developed lessons from dull and drab sources and also constantly repeating same piece of information, which tested the very existence of the child. Schools must get into the mode of dynamic, evolving, flexible and contemporary curriculum delivered through indigenously developed lesson plans and activities. The stumbling blocks are usually the basic tools that are text books and reinforcing measures like homework and testifying events like the test and the examination.

4. The adivasi people who form eight percent of India's population live in interior forests and hills subsisting through agriculture and forest produce, based on the fundamental wisdom of nature that diversity of life on earth be maintained through sustainable utilization of natural resources. Adivasis live in close harmony with nature and have a deep-rooted understanding of earth and its elements. They impart to their children traditional knowledge and skills that are symbiotic with their ecology. Only, the lessons are not in a class-room. Science, language, medicine, calculations, geography, philosophy, politics-they are all taught orally, spiritually, culturally and experientially.

Mainstream education is unable to live up to the depth and diversity of adivasi life. Globalization and neo-liberal forms of education are creating genocide of languages, cultures and knowledge. The greatest challenge of education in the adivasi context is in bringing a balance between imparting literacy skills which enable them to deal with the mainstream society, to help them gain competence to enter into mainstream professions and occupations while strengthening their cultural identities, knowledge and life skills which are so strongly linked to land and nature.

5. Over the years, it often happens that teacher's fall into a groove and their work becomes routine. This leads to low energy levels and lack of enthusiasm. To motivate teachers, who after all are responsible for molding the minds of little toddlers in the Pre-Primary section, it was decided to assign a Free Play Day to each class, once a week . The teachers were permitted to chalk out their own activities, games and experiences for the children to learn and enjoy.

These sessions have proved to be a great success, both for the teachers and the students. It was hard to believe how many news ideas cropped up. Each and every teacher took it as a challenge. Students are motivated to learn more effectively as they have opportunities to learn by doing, making discovering and experimenting for themselves. Channeling their energies into creative and active learning improved their awareness, social interaction and was pleasurable. Those who are shy, came out of their cocoons and interacted freely while the energy of the over-active ones was channelized effectively. It proved to be a great morale booster for the teachers too

6. The best practices in classroom must include:

- A deep understanding of the objectives of the curriculum
- An understanding of the learning environment of the learners
- Awareness of the resource inputs available for transaction
- A transaction strategy
- Preparation of the tools for transaction
- Evaluation of the transaction

7. The people who govern schools, those who should be thinking about improving the quality of governance spend their time meddling in day to day operational matters. Principals do not develop decision making skills. Governance implies that we mitigate the burn-out of teachers caused by studied factors. Salary comes last on the list of such factors. The top management should create challenge for teachers. Lack of excitement and opportunities to innovate their processes is creating static teachers. Vision makers need to address these issues, rather than divest Heads of their routine power, authority and decision making flexibility.

KEY LEARNING FROM INAUGURAL SESSION

Accreditation is one of the pathways towards excellence in school education. It is an irony that our country has had accreditation for higher education before school accreditation was even considered. It should have actually been the other way round. Accreditation is about capability, competence, systems, processes and outcomes. It involves assessment of governance, community links, staff development, curriculum, evaluation, infrastructure, safety , hygiene and a host of other elements. Whatever be the route one takes to achieve excellence, the primary focus should be on making India a quality nation. We need not be overly concerned with the idea of a single education Board, but what is more important to us at this point of time is the need to create one accreditation system irrespective of the state, Board or curriculum. (*Girdhar Gyani, Secretary General, QCI*).

Today we have the opportunity to create an education system that can be a world benchmark. Budgetary allocation has increased five-fold compared to what it used to be earlier- this shows we are on the path of change. However, the victim of all our experimentation is the learner. The child is a huge box of energy waiting to explode but the education system prevents that explosion. It is as if education has become the single largest barrier to learning. Education needs to be holistic implying body, mind, soul, knowledge, skills, values. We can become benchmarks by using our heritage to our advantage. When we refer to outcome based education, let us remember that we have to make our learners globally competitive, but locally relevant. Schools should be a place of learning for the entire community, yet for 12 hours and more, the school infrastructure lies unutilized. A learning community is one where all segments- students, teachers, parents, adults- all are learning.

The first year of college education is generally a repetition of what has already been learnt in senior secondary. Schools don't interact with colleges and colleges don't interact with industry, so there are gaps in the system. Education needs to be integrated and made seamless. When it comes to adopting best practices, schools must adopt the efficiency-focus of industry. Likewise there are other entities whose best practices need to be adopted by schools. (*Vijay Thadani, Chairman, NABET*).

Quality in education boils down to the following:

Quality of teachers

Quality of systems and processes
Quality of infrastructure and facilities

And finally an attitude which thinks about quality, respects quality, implements quality, monitors quality and improves quality. *(K.K.Nohria, Chairman, NBQP).*

EPILOGUE

DIEMR feels that we need to improve the current ways of functioning- striving to be as good as the best in our category in our existing systems and processes. Simultaneously, we also should be creating a preferred future- anticipating future scenarios, preparing for impending changes and creating breakthrough transformations so that the future does not come as a shock to us. There is no denying the fact that mediocrity in schools is rampant, excellence is rare. With this skewed situation, can we be sure that we are on the path of becoming the jagadguru of the world? Never before in its history has education faced such formidable challenges as it is facing today in terms of aspirations of learners, feelings of inadequacies by the education providers and their seeming inability to manage and cope with the ever expanding knowledge base. Schools are expected to generate a positive climate of innovation, experimentation and creativity in all activities. High standards for personal, moral, and spiritual development, need to be nurtured and sustained by institutions. An overall attitude and outlook that values establishing and pursuing high standards must prevail throughout the school. This is not yet happening. Life-long competitiveness of the individual is the need of the hour and this cannot come from the conventional approach of performance-orientation. Technology supplemented learning, teaching and evaluation need to be the core competence of a smart institution which has its eyes on the horizon. Institutions also need to have a strong orientation towards continuous strengthening of heritage education through a series of initiatives.

For long the country has had to live amidst mediocrity because either the awareness of practices leading to excellence was absent, or the will to adopt such practices was weak. Sharing of good practices and strategies was rare because institutions worked like inwardly focused silos- keeping their systems and strategies to themselves. Such inward approach has done immense harm to the country as a whole. QCI and

DIEMR collaborated to create a national platform where the sharing of best practices was not only facilitated, but also encouraged and applauded. 5 sessions featuring around 25 presentations from institutions acclaimed to be the torch-bearers of quality and excellence in various educational processes is a great feat over a two day period. In the normal course, such knowledge sharing would have taken a lifetime for an institution or individual. This conference has thus brought us many milestones further towards the goal of creating a quality nation by empowering institutions to become quality learning centres.

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