

TELOS (Targeted Enhancement of Learning Outcomes through Supportive Supervision) as a Model for Enabling and Sustaining Change

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Introduction

India's commitment to Education for All resulted in central led schemes for teacher development including pedagogical interventions and system restructuring to enable improvement in children's learning. Recommendations of the National Policy on Education 1986 led to establishment of in-service teacher training institutes (DIETs, CTEs and IASEs). District Primary Education Programme instituted the Block and Cluster Resource Centres (BRC and CRC) for enabling continuity of the pedagogical renewal. Several projects in 1990s (like Lok Jumbish, Uttar Pradesh-Basic Education Project, Andhra Pradesh Primary Education Project, Bihar Education Project, and Kerala Shastra Sahitya Parishad) showed an increased commitment to teacher needs, their involvement in teacher training process including material development and follow-up support. Reports (Ramachandran et. al. 2008; Rampal 2001) quoted visible improvement in learning levels of the children due to inclusion of teachers and provision of supportive supervision in the process.

After the enactment of the RTE Act 2009, enrolment increased. So did the diversity of learners in the classroom. Now children from the most deprived backgrounds started attending schools that expected all children to 'fit into' the school system. From the school lens these children- deprived of cultural capital, had the million-word gap and lacked the parental educational status that were taken for granted before. Teacher training needs changed. Alongside, there was a shift from decentralised teacher training to centralised teacher training programmes institutionalised by the SSA. Modules on activity based teaching, multi-grade classroom, multi-level classroom, child-centred pedagogy were developed at national (by NCERT and NEUPA) and state (SCERT) levels. Trainings, however, remained lecture-based! (NCF 2005)

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Follow-up support to teachers diluted as academic and administrative roles of BRC and CRC were merged or even removed (like CRCs in Rajasthan).

Assessment surveys showed a continually deepening 'learning-crisis' with children performing abysmally in 'basic literacy and numeracy' (ASER 2015) underscoring that the learning needs of children were not being met.

Considering that the children's learning is concomitant on teacher performance supported by the education system, the Targeted Enhancement of Learning Outcomes through Supportive Supervision (TELOS) approach was developed to improve children's learning systemically. Here socially constructed knowledge (Bruner 1961) is critical to envisage, plan and affect improvement in children's learning through improvement at each systemic level.

This paper discusses the TELOS approach implemented by Ignus Pahal under the Learning enhancement Programme- *Padhe Bharat Badhe Bharat* in the year 2018-19 supported by the State Project Office, SSA, UP and UNICEF. It covered all the primary schools (8234) in five districts of UP i.e., Agra, Bareilly, Gautam Buddha Nagar, Prayagraj, and Varanasi.

Brief about the implementation of the TELOS approach

Piloted from June 2017-December 2017 in 20 schools in 1 block of each of the 5 districts (Agra, Bareilly, GB Nagar, Prayagraj and Varanasi) this was expanded to all schools (8234) in the same 5 districts in year 2 i.e., 2018-2019.

The programme was designed with the assumption that in order to ensure that children learn, it is important that teachers display the expected level of performance. For teachers to improve *their* performance, it is necessary that teacher support institutions (NPRCC and ABRCC) bring about the required improvement in their own performance. The project design to target enhanced learning outcomes was based on identifying outcomes at multiple levels – for students, teachers, NPRCCs, ABRCCs,

BRTs and DRTs³.

This was the first project of its kind in the country to have undertaken an assessment of performance at these levels, at such scale, focused on agreed upon higher order learning outcomes, to achieve the following objectives:

1. *‘At least 25% NPRCCs and ABRCCs covered under the project will move from Level D to Level B of performance indicators⁴ for supportive supervision in relation to targeted teacher performance indicators for student learning outcomes’.*
2. *‘Students of Class 3 and 5 will improve more than 3% in specific higher order learning outcomes⁵, in Hindi and Mathematics’.*

Based on these objectives, the performance indicators for teachers, NPRCCs, ABRCCs, BRTs and DRTs were identified.

³The project was implemented through Block Resource Teams (BRTs) and District Resource Teams (DRTs) identified by the district and block authorities at the behest of SSA. The DRT comprised of District Coordinator, Training (1), Basic Shiksha Adhikari (1), DIET Mentor (1), ABRCC (4 each from different Block), NPRCC (2- each from a different Block), HT (1) and Teacher (1) Of 11 members, at least 4 should be women. The BRT comprised of BEO (1), ABRCC (2), NPRCC (2), HT/Teacher (1) and DIET Mentor (1).

⁴ The word performance means what we want to see the teacher (or supportive supervisor) to be doing while indicator means specific expectations of the more broadly stated principles or standards. A sample performance indicator for an NPRCC is given:

Understands own academic responsibility and executes it.			
A	B	C	D
Have complete understanding of ones academic responsibility. Make teacher support plan based on observation and provide academic support to teachers in differentiated ways.	Have understanding of ones academic responsibility. Discuss about school improvement with the teachers. They give suggestions to teachers during school visits and help them.	Have understanding of ones academic responsibility and monitor schools sometimes. But they do not have a specific plan for improvement.	Do not have academic understanding or understanding of academic responsibility. Consider seeking and giving information as their main task. They do not discuss about educational improvement of schools.

⁵ Three higher order learning outcomes were developed for each- language and mathematics from the existing SCERT-UP learning outcomes. The assumption guiding the development of higher order learning outcomes was to ensure continuity and growth from class 3 to class 5, to nest the lower order outcomes within the higher order ones as attaining a higher order learning outcome would ensure attaining nested outcomes contained within and most importantly, to have high expectations from children. These high expectations are engagement in reflective aspects rather than limiting to mechanistic aspects of language and mathematics learning.

A Preliminary Situational Analysis was undertaken in order to assess the initial level of performance of each level. Various tools and formats were developed towards this, including:

- Observation formats and interview schedules to assess performance of teachers, NPRCCs, ABRCCs, BRTs and DRTs.

In order to verify that the improvement in Supportive Supervision was actually leading to improvement in learning levels, student learning levels were assessed on specific higher order learning outcomes targeted in the project. Tools for these included:

- Oral and written test papers to assess learning levels of students from class 3 and 5, in language and mathematics in relation to the identified higher order learning outcomes

Towards the end of the programme, a terminal performance assessment was conducted in five districts (Agra, Bareilly, G B Nagar, Prayagraj and Varanasi), covering 63 District Resource Team (DRT) members, 222 ABRCCs/BRTs, 245 NPRCCs, 1400 teachers, and 19000 students.

TELOS as a Model for Change: envisaging change

The need for the TELOS approach emerged in 2006 when the then Secretary of Education set out the task of assessment of in-service teaching in India. The team (led by Subir Shukla) realised this was impossible unless performance standards of ‘good teaching’ are developed. The performance standards of teachers, the teacher support system including BRCs, CRCs and DIETs were developed under Advancement of Teacher Performance through Teacher Support (ADEPTS). This was a consultative process⁶ involving practitioners⁷ to address two core issues,

- Improvement of teacher performance based on what they actually do in the class and

⁶ The process involved “working in a participatory and consultative manner with the state teams on all aspects including the current prevailing status...grounding the project in field realities and practitioner orientation (Shukla 2007, p.3).”

⁷ The state core team and field teams comprised of those with teaching background, block and district level trainers, state level training/quality coordinators and DIET and SCERT representatives.

- Improvement in performance of CRCs-BRCs-DIETs to enable improvement in teacher performance (Shukla 2007).

The model of pedagogy underlying these standards was informed by notions of ‘active learning’ prevalent from DPEP and ‘constructivism’ articulated by NCF 2005. The standards developed were based on teacher performance (what teacher does in the class) rather than teacher competence (what teacher knows) or teacher effectiveness (effect of teacher’s performance on students) (Medley, D.M 1982).

This meant that having qualified/competent teachers is not enough. Creating enabling conditions (such as availability of infrastructure, reasonable PTR) where teachers make use of their competence is critical. So are the supportive conditions (such as institutional support, supervision and recognition) that ensure that teacher performance leads to improvement in student learning.

This stems from the understanding that education ecosystem comprises of a set of relationships (across stakeholders) and processes (especially related to learning across stakeholders) designed to achieve desired learning. Teacher performance is associated with identity recognition. The mental models that teachers hold about children, the supervisors hold about teachers and the system holds about the administrators have a bearing on performance at each level. High expectations, at each stage therefore, are critical (Senge 2012).

Guiding Principles

The chief guiding principle of the approach is to build on work already being done by the system to improve the quality of education. The aim is to ‘teach to the level’, i.e. **start from where the students, teachers and supportive supervisors are, and build with them.** This is to respect the learning and intellect of the group and to ensure a seamless integration within the framework of the existing system.

The second guiding principle is ‘**small wins**’, i.e., the teacher should be able to first aspire, then bring about and finally witness a measurable change in her performance with the help of the performance indicators. Working this way not only streamlines growth process but also helps maintain high morale. The same principle applied to

NPRCs, BRCs/ABRCs, BRTs and DRTs.

This correlates to the third guiding principle i.e., maintaining ‘**effectiveness**’.

Effectiveness of the process was maintained by periodic collection of performance data online. This is analysed and specific interventions are planned in collaboration by the district, block and later, cluster level teams.

In short, the process of change is planned by,

- Setting a vision of what the children are expected to learn,
- What the teachers are expected to plan and do,
- Support she should get from the supportive supervisor,
- Inputs that the supportive supervisor should receive
- Institutional support that should be generated for this to happen and
- A reliable method of monitoring progress at each level to assist in planning improvement in children’s learning.

Planning Systemic Change

The systemic change was planned in consultation with stakeholders (during three workshops and subsequent monthly meetings) by,

1. Fixing Outcomes (i.e. the degree of improvement desired in the outcomes agreed upon) The DRTs was involved in,

- Identifying higher order focal learning outcomes for Hindi and Mathematics for class 3 and 5
- Identifying classroom processes required for these outcomes to be achieved and concomitant supportive supervisor performance and therefore the descriptors for supportive supervisors and
- Development of performance indicators for teachers, NPRCCs and ABRCCs

This was done for three terms (baseline, supervision and end-line).

2. Varying Inputs For the DRT-BRT-ABRCC-teachers and NPRCCs at a later stage through,

- Three quarterly workshops that had a responsive frame with agenda set on basis of the needs emerging from the supportive supervisors.
- Using the data on performance indicators to make implementation plans in each district. These varied as per context and requirement of the district. The data was uploaded every fortnight and sent back (by Ignus) to make decisions on basis of the data at the monthly meetings at the district, block and (later) cluster levels and
- Developing fortnight plans for integrating activities with textbooks for classroom teaching and regular follow-up.

3. Setting Enablers The network of stakeholders was strengthened by conducting,

- Monthly meetings of DRT-BRT and later NPRCC that led to team support and effective planning and
- Constituting online chat groups of district and block levels to exchange information and ideas.
- Online chat groups of teachers at the block level led by DRTs and BRTs for exchange of activity ideas and putting up queries.
- Creation of helpline (towards the last phase) to resolve queries from the field.

What Changed?

The most noticeable affect of the process was the change in attitudes of the DRT and BRT of all districts as well as the resource persons from all the BRCs and CRCs involved. Their outlook towards their role changed from acting as an administrator before to becoming an integrated member of the support system. The reason this change came about was that they had an understanding of their academic responsibilities owing to development of well-defined and descriptive performance indicators.

Since these observation formats/tools were generated during the workshops, due regard was given to the inputs received from the district teams – this was a key reason for the project’s success as the implementers felt a sense of ownership over the project. The same applied to the teachers too. Their capacity building workshops gave

them a platform to engage with the teaching of language and mathematics for primary classes specifically, class 3 and class 5. Based on these, they created activities and lesson plans on their own. Added to this were the proactive engagement of the supportive supervisors (NPRCC and ABRCC) in their own and the teacher's academic improvement. In this way, they became partners in the process.

From the feedback received from the field, students seemed to enjoy activity-based teaching more than conventional methods and were reported to have often asked their teachers what they were going to learn the following day. This had benefits for class 4 though it was not part of the programme as the teachers reported that they started using activities to teach class 4 as these made the class more engaged and the quality of discussion improved.

Due to the increased interaction with students, teachers reported an improvement in relations with them leading to an improvement in the confidence and response of the students. This change clearly reflected in the end-line assessment, as there was a visible shift in trend from the baseline. The 0-1-2 trend from before transformed into a 2-1-0 one, i.e., most number of students were in the top grade (2) with a decreasing trend thereafter. The percentage of students in the lowest grade (0) also decreased dramatically.

Systemic Components for Planning the Change

At the level of the teacher, this meant making the teacher training contextualised, personalised and hence, differentiated to address the classroom needs. At the level of the education system, the training was linked to each level of supportive supervision i.e., CRC, ABRC and the DRT.

The approach involved understanding context, understanding effectiveness of performance, setting achievable targets and revisiting targets using technology. The critical component of each of these was linking the efforts at each level, analysing targets achieved and taking collectivist decision for improvement.

Targets identified were inter-dependent and transparent. Inter-dependency was achieved by identifying learning outcomes at student level and performance indicators at each level (i.e., teachers, CRCs, BRCs and DRTs). Transparency was achieved by

recording and analysing data and making data-assisted decisions that were differentiated rather than centralised decisions based on own understanding.

Challenges Faced

While many aspects worked (the DRT from the earlier pilot, the performance indicators and the tools being available in semi-developed forms), we faced some major challenges. These are,

Lack of Coordination

Engagement in multiple activities and projects presented difficulties for the supportive supervisors. Very often supportive supervisors found themselves laden with far too many activities, including other projects being implemented in their area, which left them unable to prioritise or manage their time effectively. In districts such as GB Nagar, there were many other CSR projects that made it difficult for teachers to devote time to much-needed improvement areas.

Discussions to promote coordinated inputs can be held at the state and district levels.

Stakeholder Involvement and Capacity Building

Districts that involved NPRCC from the beginning of the project showed more improvement in performance indicators of teachers and learning outcomes of students than districts that did not.

Stakeholder involvement from the very beginning is critical.

The regular meetings of NPRCCs at block level every month can include academic improvement of schools and planning as an agenda point apart from the administrative points. This will bring effectiveness in NPRCC and teacher performance and affect students learning outcomes.

Data-mindedness of the Stakeholder

The teacher performance indicators showed a steady progression till the supervision phase and a marked improvement in end-line assessment showing an optimism bias. This is critical for it does not reflect actual situation on ground. As most of the

personnel are not used to the data they fill in coming back to them, they are in the 'habit' of showing 'good performance'. Often this leads to optimism bias where they end up showcasing their area as better than it actually is. However, when fed the data back, they point out that 'it is wrong!'

Data-mindedness therefore, has to be enabled more strongly.

Conclusion: Is there anything for Teacher Professional Development?

Teacher's professional development is critical to children's learning. However, considering teacher's performance as an outcome of her own will and competence is fairly limited.

Teacher's performance results from a chain of connected processes including recognition, training, support and continuous development in a network of relationships and process that lead to desired outcomes.

These processes, critical to informing teacher professional development, need a relook. Based on the TELOS approach, below are some suggestions for informing the teacher professional development,

To begin with, needs analysis should focus on effectiveness i.e., how to translate what teacher knows to what teacher does in order to improve performance of students.

This can happen if the teacher and supportive supervisors own their professional development. Setting own agenda leading from what is expected from the children and therefore from teachers, supportive supervisors and the institution is important.

This is done by setting achievable targets informed by sequence of learning of children, teachers and supportive supervisors. These are stated as focal learning outcomes for children and as performance indicators with valid descriptors that can be clearly observed and indicated for teachers and supportive supervisors. This is to give a reliable measure of improvement over the phases of monitoring.

This data filled by supervisors should be referred to for planning, at regular intervals. During the project, the DRTs and BRTs ensured that data was filled. This was aggregated (by Ignus Pahal) and sent back to plan relevant next steps. The objective was to establish a desire for establishing ownership of data filled and to seek data-based approach to educational interventions. This was achieved by giving a reason for collecting data, process of collection and getting aggregated data to draw inference and make plans based on it.

The training was co-created and had a responsive design. It was sequenced in stages. The participants collaborated in visioning, beliefs and assumptions, approaches to subjects and review of quality in each stage as per the needs of the trainees. The training employed cascade approach (as numbers were huge) and demonstrated principles and tools for ‘transmission gain’. This is critical as retaining the traditional systemic layers of the cascade cause transmission loss. This was done to enable ownership and contextualisation. For example, teachers focused on creating an enabling ethos for all children to participate (principle) and used frameworks for developing activities across subjects rather than scripted material for ready use (tool). This allowed them flexibility to apply principles of learning assurance and use tools as per resources needed in their context.

Overall the approach worked on collectivisation of teachers and supportive supervisors to identify verifiable targets for each level and plan to achieve the common goal of improving children’s learning that led to their own professional development.

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