

QUEST Annual Report

April -2008 to March 2009

This was the second year of functioning for the organization. The work has expanded both in terms of Projects as well as the outreach, compared to the last year. The Balbhavan Model to support Rural Education has started showing some tangible results at the end of the second year. Development of survey tools to establish the baseline of children's achievement levels & the input provided to 13 Ashram schools in Dhadagaon has added the dimension of system intervention to QUEST's work and helped the organization to emerge as a resource agency in the field of elementary education. With beginning of the construction of Saraswati Sadhan Kendra at Sonale, Quest will soon have its own establishment on the field. Here are the projects at a glance.

Sr. No	Name of the Project	Sponsored by	Brief Nature of the work
1	Sonale Balbhavan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Ratan Tata Trust • Sponsor a child programme 	Provide support to the children going to the rural government schools to improve their school performance through child friendly constructive pedagogy with the help of a specially trained village youth BALMITRA.
2	Anganwadi Strengthening Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SPA Education Foundation 	Provide onsite support to Anganwadi Workers to strengthen the early childhood education in Anganwadies through BALMITRA
3	Development of baseline tests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Ratan Tata Trust 	Developing tests to assess the achievement level of children in language and mathematics at the end of grade 2 & 4
4	Strengthening Language instructions in Ashram Schools in Dhadagaon	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sir Ratan Tata Trust 	Provide training and other resource support to the Teachers in the Ashram Schools to improve their knowledge & skills of language pedagogy with special emphasis on teaching of beginning reading.
5	Teacher Study Circle at Sonale	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Self supported programme 	Help motivated teachers from the rural elementary schools to pursue their professional development through monthly meetings
6	Construction of Saraswati Sadhan Kendra & development of other infrastructure for the same.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Smt. Vijaya Muley & her family • Smt. Anuya Mhaiskar 	Setting up a resource and training center for teachers , trainee teachers, teacher educators and researchers in the field of elementary education
7	Expansion of Balbhavans a preparatory phase.	Sir Ratan Tata Trust	

Grameen Balbhavan Sonale

Outreach of the programme: 7 villages, 319 students,

Team: 6 balmitra, 2 supervisors, 1 coordinator

Grameen Balbhavan programme is a project to support learning process of children in rural and tribal area. The project is located in 7 villages in the eastern part of Wada block of Thane district of Maharashtra. The project was supported by SRTT under its small grants programme for the period of 1 year (Dec 2007 to Nov 2008) The programme tried to give input on language and mathematics to the children from grade 1 to 4 , before and after the school timing through Balmitras , specially trained village youths.

The grade wise enrolment of children in year 08-09 was as follows.

Grade	No. of students enrolled in Balbhavans
1	92
2	90
3	76
4	61

The Maze Pustak programme was the major input related to teaching of language. A test was administered at the end of one year of input to children in grade 1 to assess the impact. The test was of sixty marks and was conducted on two consecutive days. A matching control Group was identified from the Zilla Parishad schools (*here after referred to as children from ZP school*), where Balbhavan programme is not offered, for comparison. The difference was analysed using t-test.

Statistically, scores of students of Balbhavan (test group) were found to be significantly more than that of students of ZP school (control group).

The following table gives details of the distribution of children based on their marks of the test conducted in April 2008.

category	No. of children (Balbhavan)	No. of children (ZP children)
0 to 25 %	11	41
26 to 50 %	25	19
51 to 75 %	27	7
76 to 100 %	7	0

Total	70	67
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The table clearly shows that around 61 % of the students, not covered under the programme fall in the category of achievement below 25 %, whereas against this, the percentage has reduced to around 15 % where the programme was offered.

It's also clear that the number of children crossing 50 % where the programme was not offered is as low as around 10 % which has gone up to around 48 % for the children covered under the programme.

The Project was reviewed externally by Dr. Sunita Kulakarni.

Anganwadi strengthening programme

Outreach of the programme: 6 villages, 101 students,

Team: 6 balmitra, 2 supervisors, one coordinator

Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) is a nationwide program for the children below the age of 6 providing services like immunization, health monitoring, providing supplementary nutrition etc. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is one of the important services offered under the programme. It's a common observation that the ECE service of the program remains weak because Anganwadi workers do not have adequate training to conduct ECE activities. As a result children enter into the primary schools without required readiness. Strengthening ECE in Anganwadis thus becomes an urgent need.

This project received Support from SPA Education Foundation for the period of April 2008 to March 2009. The purpose of the project was to provide onsite support to Anganwadi Workers to strengthen the early childhood education in Anganwadies. The project covered **6 Anganwadies** in the eastern part of Wada block and covered **around 101 children** in the age group of 3 to 6. Special training **input of 12 days** spread over one academic year in 4 workshops was arranged for Balmitra, who started supporting Anganwadies in June 2008. They work in Anganwadis for two and a half hours every day after the morning session of Balbhavan programme is over.

The programme aims to implement the developmentally appropriate Early Childhood Education Programme in the Anganwadies. A set of useful & age appropriate teaching learning material was provided to Anganwadies under the programme.

The programme also had a component of imparting Training to Anganwadi workers but it did not take off as the district administration of ICDS could not decide if such a training fits in their norms or not.

Strengthening language instruction in Ashram Schools

Outreach: 13 ashram schools, around 1000 students from grade 1& 2, 20 teachers from the selected Ashram schools

Team: 1 project coordinator, 2 supervisors from local implementation agency, 4 Expert resource persons

Ashram Schools are the residential schools for tribal children. The tribal development department runs these schools in the tribal dominated areas as a part of integrated tribal development project. Sir Rata Trust invited QUEST to provide resource support to Ashram schools in Nandurbar District as a part of their District Initiative. Tribal languages are different than the state language (Marathi) which is the medium of instruction. The program focuses on smooth transition from tribal language to the medium of instruction by developing bridge learning material and ensures early literacy through appropriate pedagogy of beginning reading. Maze Pustak is being used in all the 13 Ashram schools.

QUEST started its Resource Support for Language Strengthening Programme in 14 Ashram schools in Dhadgaon block of Nandurbar district from July 2008. Quest is working with North Maharashtra University, Jalgaon as local implementation agency.

Here is the status report of activities carried out under the project as in March 2009.

Activities Planned	Progress of the activity
Language education Programme (Maze Pustak)	Programme started in 13 schools in August 2008
Distribution of Maze Pustak	
Workshop on development of bridge learning material	A two day workshop was conducted with 8 teachers knowing Pavari language (local tribal language). Through this workshop we have developed 65 locally relevant reading passages for tribal children.
Classroom organizers for effective management of Multilevel teaching in the classroom.	The organizers are ready and they will be distributed in June 2009
Quest will be providing specially designed Pustak Petis to the ashram schools to provide sufficient reading material to beginner readers that is scarce in the rural areas.	Model Pustak Peti was designed by the resource person & other Pustak petis have been purchased as per the model. The Pustak Peties will be distributed to the schools in June 2009
Quest has developed 10 Poem Posters to create print-rich environment for the students in ashram schools	Soft copies of the Poem Posters are ready and they will be distributed to the schools in June

	2009
Teacher Development	
Training for the teachers to implement Maze Pustak programme in grade 1 & 2.	A series of 3 Training workshops were conducted till March 2009. These workshops helped teachers to start the program in the class rooms
Follow up visit round	7 follow up rounds were completed till March 2009. The team demonstrated multilevel teaching to the teachers from the Ashram school
Articles for teachers on language pedagogy	6 articles are ready for distribution with Pustak peti in June
Input session for Capacity building of Project team is conducted for the persons working on various projects under the district initiative. Input includes reading assignments, presentations, and demonstrations on various aspects of Elementary Education.	7 input sessions were conducted till March 2009

A comprehensive Evaluation of the project is being done by Dr. Jayashree Shinde and her team from the department of educational technology SNDT University. The evaluation involves desk review of the learning material, assessment of the training programmes & training material & assessment of children's achievement level.

Development of Baseline tests

Outreach: around 3000 students from the Ashram schools.

Team: Project coordinator and a team of internal and external resource persons

On the request from Sir Ratan Tata Trust Quest accepted this responsibility. Tests were developed to assess the achievement levels in language and Mathematics of the students from Grade 2 and 4. External experts from Homi Bhabha Centre for Science and Math Education and Srijan Anand Vidyalay were part of the test development exercise.

The actual survey was conducted by Hedgevar Seva Samiti, one of the local implementation agencies in the district initiative project, and has done the actual data collection. The report for the same is being prepared.

The Teacher Study Circle

Outreach: 12 Teachers from the government Ashram Schools, 6 balmitra, supervisors, project coordinators

This activity is for the motivated teachers from the rural elementary schools to pursue their professional development through monthly meetings. Input provided to the teachers includes reading assignments, writing book reviews, presentations, demonstrations on various aspects of Elementary Education, planning small action research.

In this year 8 meetings of the circle were conducted. All the participants contribute Rs. 50 every time they meet. The group recently bought 30 books worth Rs 4000 approximately, from this contribution.

Construction of Saraswati Sadhan Kendra

A permanent resource & training centre is being constructed at Sonale. The center will cater to the teachers in elementary schools, D.Ed colleges and NGOs working in the field of Education. The proposed center will have a Training hall, small library of pertinent reference books, collection of teaching learning material, Audio Visual and Multimedia facility.

The building is being constructed in the name of Sarswati Bai Ranade, mother well known educator Vijaya Muley.

Balbhavan expansion programme

Because of the encouraging results of Balbhavan Model, QUEST has decided to try out the same on a little larger sample in Thane and Nandurbar District. Balbhavans in Sonale will be expanded to 14 and 16 more balbhavans will be established in Dhadagaon & Nandurbar block.

An intensive training of 25 days duration for new Balmitra from Wada, Dhadgaon and Nandurbar began on the 22 of March 2009 with support from Sir Ratan Tata Trust under a small grants programme. The project will continue in the next year.
