



Medhakshar

ENGAGE. INSPIRE. TRANSFORM.

A Legacy of Two Decades in Educational Quality Improvement



Medhakshar Foundation



1. Introduction

Driving excellence in the quality of school education, especially in the public education system has been the cornerstone of all educational initiatives of Shantilal Muttha since 2002. He has successfully established this remarkable legacy through the work of Medhakshar's predecessor organizations – Bharatiya Jain Sanghatana and Shantilal Muttha Foundation. Both of them achieved significant milestones in their respective journeys backed by the visionary leadership of their founder. They demonstrated innovative, replicable solutions to address critical needs in the areas of child-friendly curriculum, learner-centred pedagogy and system-strengthening for teacher support, all with a strong lens of values-based education.

Here is an overview of the flagship programmes and significant achievements that went into the making of the great legacy of Medhakshar Foundation in the domain of educational quality improvement:

2. School Assessment and Accreditation

At a time when the concept of assessment and accreditation was associated mostly with higher educational institutes, Shantilal Muttha was one of the very few in India to have conceptualized the same for schools as the means to strengthen the school ecosystem through quality measures of process improvement.

The school assessment and accreditation programme evolved through three distinct phases:

Phase-I (2002-2011): School Assessment and Support Programme (SASP)

Launched in 2002, SASP was a framework for self-evaluation and third-party assessment to assess school quality through the standards put forth by CBSE and various State Boards. SASP was implemented in 4,374 schools across the country primarily to understand the government system and stakeholders.

Table-1: SASP Nation-wide Coverage in Schools (2002-2011)

Year	States	Nodal Authority	Number of Schools
2002 - 2011	Pan India	Federation of Jain Educational Institutes	480
2005 - 2008	A&N Islands	Government	366
2007 - 2010	Goa	Goa	1,678
2008 - 2011	Pan India	Central Government (Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti)	555
2009 - 2010	Maharashtra	Navi Mumbai & Jalgaon Municipal Corporations	57
2009 - 2011	Gujarat	Gujarat	1,238
Total			4,374

Phase-II (2012-2015): School Assessment and Accreditation (SAA)

Based on extensive stakeholder interactions following the SASP implementation, research and consultations with domain experts, academicians and educationists, a need emerged to redesign SASP as a developmental tool for schools. An important recommendation was to have a two-tiered approach to gradation of schools such that the school profile comprising infrastructure and physical resources would be treated distinctly from the process assessment, i.e., school profile would not be deemed a limiting factor in the school improvement journey. This was done to ensure due acknowledgement of lesser endowed schools showing promise of quality.



The change led to the design of the School Assessment and Accreditation (SAA) programme with following key features:

- a. Designed not just as an assessment tool, but a developmental tool for every school with prioritized action points for all stakeholders from school to the state level.
- b. Framework governed by quality management principles, Deming Cycle (PDCA/PDSA), Total Quality Management, ISO, and Process Maturity Models; and vetted by a panel of experts from apex bodies like NUEPA.
- c. Assessment standards derived from nationally and globally recognized educational norms, guidelines, and RTE.
- d. A combination of self and external assessments with a robust software for furnishing system-generated reports and action roadmaps.

Between 2012 and 2015, SAA was successfully implemented in 102 schools (government, private, aided, and affiliated to different Boards) with authorization from state governments.

Table 2: SAA Coverage in Government Schools (2012-2015)

Year	States	Nodal Authority	Number of Schools
2012	Madhya Pradesh	State Government	50
2012	Chhattisgarh	School Education Department	25
2012	Meghalaya	State Government	8
2012 - 2015	Maharashtra	Zilla Parishad	16
2012 - 2013	Delhi	Private and Aided Schools	3
Total			102

SAA Highlights

- State governments accepted state-level reports of SAA, thereby endorsing the programme and acknowledging the value it held for school systems.
- Experts from top ranked national academic institutions such as NAAC, Tata Institute of Social Sciences have endorsed the worth of SAA, its philosophy, methodology and the role it can play in improving the quality of education.
- Capability of SAA was acknowledged by CBSE, the leading national board of education. Empanelled by CBSE and invited to co-create the CBSE accreditation model for affiliated schools in 2012.
- Evaluated in 2012 as the top-ranking organization among several national and international accreditation agencies in the technical evaluation conducted by KPMG at the behest of the Government of Gujarat in its efforts to design a school accreditation system for the state.

Phase-III (2015-2020): System for Enrichment of School Quality (SESQ)

This is the current form of school assessment and accreditation programme. It borrows heavily from SAA with feature upgrades to make the system more assessor-friendly. It is purely a third part assessment mechanism providing enhanced assessor support and training for greater objectivity in assessment. The standards have been updated to include expectations of the latest educational policies and goals at national and international levels. It has been successfully implemented in 174 schools across India. It can be seamlessly adapted for a peer/external



assessment by large school bodies seeking to institutionalize SESQ within their network. A striking feature of SESQ is that it is customizable as per contextual requirements of any state. The assessment model is available in multiple languages, with dedicated support provided by a technology platform for generating reports and action roadmaps at all levels.

Table-3: SESQ Coverage in Government Schools (2015-2020)

Year	States	Nodal Authority	Number of Schools
2015 - 2016	Rajasthan, Orissa, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Jharkhand, Delhi, Assam, Goa	Vidya Bharati	147*
2018	Andhra Pradesh	Andhra Pradesh Social Welfare Residential Education Institutions Society (APSWERIS)	10
2018 - 2020	Rajasthan, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh	Federation of Jain Educational Institutes	17
	Total		174

SESQ Highlights

The scalability of SESQ was demonstrated when Vidya Bharati, the pan-India network of 13,000 schools, institutionalized their school assessment with the help of SESQ as a means of external assessment. From 147 schools assessed in 2016 with the help of trained assessors to 11,000 schools assessed by 2020 through the assessor pool created by Vidya Bharati master trainers, signifies the adaptability of the SESQ model. Shantilal extended support in training of Vidya Bharati's assessors and in the handing over of SESQ software for automation of reports and actionable roadmaps.

Key Learnings

The NAAC accreditation system is in place for higher education in India based on which academic progress is assessed. However, no such universal accreditation system was available to school education when Shantilal began his journey two decades ago. Therefore, he decided to work with the government system and stakeholders to take on the challenge of designing and developing a robust school assessment and accreditation system that can be adopted by all states. The focus was assessment and accreditation of government schools to help enhance their performance, accountability and quality. The challenge was to develop a comprehensive, research-based, technology-integrated, scalable, replicable, adaptable and adoptable school assessment and accreditation system for government schools that will be accepted by all stakeholders across 1.4 million schools in the country.

It took twenty years' work in four distinct phases to gain a 360-degree understanding of the complex system of school education in the country to be able to design and develop this robust assessment and accreditation system that has now been recognized by both central and state governments and the CBSE. This journey has been such a tremendous learning experience.

3. Educational Quality Improvement Programme (EDUQIP)

Shantilal's journey since 2002 evolved through wide-spread implementation of his educational programmes in government and private schools in rural, urban and tribal areas across the length



and breadth of the country. He ventured into educational rehabilitation in 1993 and began implementing school quality improvement programmes in 2002. Using SASP as a diagnostic tool, it developed a basket of programmes – the “Educational Quality Improvement Programme (EDUQIP)” to build capacities of various stakeholders in school. Programmes like student assessment, teacher training, measurement of teachers’ effectiveness, trustee empowerment, principal empowerment, values education etc. were designed and implemented at no cost to the state governments.

The following table gives an implementation summary of EDUQIP covering more than 5,000 schools and thousands of beneficiaries viz. students, teachers, school trustees and principals across India.

Table-4: EDUQIP Nation-wide Coverage in Schools (2002-2011)

Year	States	Nodal Authority	No. of Schools
2002 - 2011	Pan India	Federation of Jain Educational Institutes	450
2005 - 2008	Andaman & Nicobar	Government	402
2007 - 2010	Goa	Government and Private	1,790
2008 - 2011	Pan India	Central Government (Navodaya Vidyalaya Samiti)	563
2009 - 2011	Gujarat (Bharuch & Narmada)	Government	2,005
2009 - 2010	Maharashtra	Navi Mumbai & Jalgaon Municipal Corporations	20
Total			5,330

Key Learnings

It is important to engage and empower all stakeholders like students, teachers, school trustees, principals, government officials at all levels, etc. to be able to improve quality in school education. This was such an incredible opportunity to work closely with all stakeholders in the education space, share experiences with them and assimilate learnings.

Through this intensive process of engagement with stakeholders, Shantilal realized the need for and importance of substantially increasing values-based education in India. Over a period, there has been a steady erosion of values in the society because of which the value-foundation of our country’s next generation has been hit hard. The Mulyavardhan programme was conceptualized to provide impetus to values-based education in our country.

4. Mulyavardhan (MV)

Mulyavardhan is a values-based education platform employed at scale in the public education system, enabling teachers and students to develop values, attitudes and competencies necessary for democratic citizenship. MV has been enriched with learnings and recommendations from national and international experts through a six-year pilot (2009-2014, with 35,000 students) in government schools.

The key features of MV are:

- a. **Alignment with fundamental policies in education:** The MV framework is aligned to all the key national and international education policies related to the development of



social-emotional competencies and 21st century skills viz. NEP-2020, SDG-4.7, NCERT’s Education for Values Framework (2012), RTE-2009, NCF-2005 as well as the state curricula.

- b. **Whole School Approach:** MV adopts a Whole School Approach, where all school processes are guided by values pertaining to the Constitution of India. Under this approach, values are not ‘taught’ by teachers but “experienced and learnt” by students from school ethos, processes and practices. It is implemented through a three-step process comprising (i) structured learning age-appropriate classroom activities, (ii) school-wide activities, and (iii) integration of MV principles and pedagogy to all other subjects
- c. **Contextual Relevance:** MV is flexible and implementable across all school contexts, according to the needs, priorities and resources of schools and their managing bodies (Government/Private). The entire coursework is available in multiple languages, Hindi, English, Marathi, Konkani, Urdu, and Gujarati.
- d. **Supported by Technology:** The MV technology platform enables self-learning for teacher professional development through crisp and self-explanatory audio-visual training and e-learning modules. It also facilitates programme management, reporting and information exchange across all stakeholders.
- e. **Sustainable Operational Model:** MV’s implementation model establishes strong resource groups aka ‘Preraks/Champions’ in every cluster/district for teacher support. Further, a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches within the government hierarchy ensures involvement and engagement at every level.

MV is the only programme scaled-up in public schools in India that assumes a “values-based whole school approach” while simultaneously enhancing the quality and democratizing the classroom and school with child-friendly, child-centred pedagogy. MV has been accepted by all stakeholders, state authorities and students alike. It is successfully being implemented in Maharashtra and Goa since 2015, with latest initiation in Gujarat.

Table-5: MV Coverage (2015-2020)

State	School Body	Schools	Teachers	Students	Languages
Maharashtra	Government	67,000	1,95,000	44,00,000	Marathi, Urdu, Hindi, English
Goa	Government	781	1,711	22,056	Marathi, Konkani
	Private (Vidya Bharati)	20	70	1,500	Marathi
	Private (Archbishop Diocesan Board of Education (ABE))	80	578	21,400	English
Gujarat	Government	78	78	7,254	Gujarati
Total		67,959	1,97,437	44,52,210	

Key Learnings

Mulyavardhan is the first successful values-based education programme in independent India that has been aligned with government school education curriculum based on constitutional



values, and has been implemented with nearly 45,00,000 students. All participating teachers, students, parents, and government officials have voluntarily accepted this programme and taken ownership. This programme has successfully broken the cascade model by empowering village ZP school teachers to become master trainers, imparting training to teachers and helping to implement the programme at scale. A strong cadre of 8,000 such master trainers has been developed that has trained more than 2,00,000 teachers successfully in Maharashtra. The impact of this programme is also visible to all stakeholders. More than 20,000 schools have contributed audio-visually demonstrating the percolation of this programme and how it is being run successfully in their schools. As a result of this endeavour, the system has been empowered and change is visible in government teachers and students. The system has accepted this change and teachers across three states have unanimously accepted ownership of the programme.

The learning has been that school accreditation, quality education, child-centric pedagogy and values improvement have resulted in a 360-degree transformation of the school system, also resulting in a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the school system transformation process based on values.

5. Mulyavardhan-Enhancing Civic Engagement (MV-ECE)

MV-ECE is an educational programme championed by Government of Goa (GoG) to nurture democratic citizenship among school students with emphasis on three thematic areas namely Sanitation and Hygiene, Waste Management, and Traffic Awareness & Road Safety. It has been developed in coordination with the Directorate of Education, State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERT), the Goa Education Development Corporation (GEDC), and numerous domain expert groups designated by the Government of Goa especially the Goa Traffic Cell, the Goa Waste Management Corporation, and the Centre for Environment Education.

MV-ECE is administered through theme-based capsules that offer age-appropriate activities for grades III to IX. The class, school, and community-level activities included in MV-ECE aim to help students understand the themes conceptually and apply them in day-to-day life through practical, enjoyable experiences. Many of these activities can be easily integrated with regular classroom subjects like Science and Social Studies. A programme that believes in action, MV-ECE helps students to understand the issue at hand scientifically, come up with practical solutions, and undertake efforts to roll out identified solutions. It offers an engaging assortment of participatory tools like awareness rallies, role plays, school audits, and Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA).

MV-ECE seeks opportunities to bring about convergence among government departments directly or indirectly involved with the issues, in an attempt to steer effective change. The programme is in alignment with the objectives of the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan (Swachh Bharat Mission-Grameen).

The programme has been piloted for two years in Goa in government and private aided schools (Marathi and English Medium), benefitting 26,350 students across the state.



Table-6: MV-ECE Pilot Programme (June 2018 - March 2020)

Type of School	No. of Schools	Total Students
Government Primary	52	2,425
Government Secondary	27	8,668
Private Secondary Aided	29	15,257
Total	108	26,350

Key Learnings

The framework and activities of this programme were designed in alignment with curriculum and after discussions with all stakeholders. The programme was handed over to the Government of Goa after successful pilots, and customizing it to state-specific needs. Taking ownership, the Government of Goa currently implements the programme as part of its system.

Each state needs contextually-tailored framework, curriculum, activities, training modules and capacity-building in different subjects. States also need support in piloting, implementation and institutionalization.

6. Aksharsetu

Aksharsetu was developed in response to a request made by the Government of Maharashtra in 2017, to support the learning needs of children in Dharni block of Amravati district. Aksharsetu was developed for the Anganwadis and Primary Schools in Dharni as a sustainable and replicable model of early childhood education. It adopts a multi-lingual education (MLE) approach to foundational literacy, in alignment with NEP 2020 in order to improve language learning outcomes of children aged 3-8 years.

The programme has successfully demonstrated convergence between the Integrated Child Development Scheme (ICDS) under the Department of Women and Child Development and the Samagra Shiksha Abhiyaan (SSA) under the Department of School Education.

Aksharsetu has been piloted for a year in 30 Primary Schools benefitting 1,021 children and 50 Anganwadis reaching 1,760 children. Its design is aligned to the suggestions of NEP 2020 around the need for a child's home language for learning and encompasses a holistic approach through following principles:

- a. *Bridging Anganwadis and primary schools through foundational literacy approach:* Key programmatic linkages are established between Anganwadis and primary schools to support smooth transition of children and stronger support in Grades I and II for children learning in two languages.
- b. *Using a multilingual education [MLE] approach:* Under the MLE approach adopted by Aksharsetu, children's home language is treated as a resource that helps them develop reading and writing skills and acquire knowledge in their mother tongue (Korku) along with the school language (Marathi). This approach includes building the teachers' understanding of language learning, supporting teachers to adopt MLE pedagogical practices in classrooms, and support through bilingual and multi-language materials aligned to the state's curricula for pre-school and primary school education.



- c. *Development of context-specific multilingual education [MLE] and emergent literacy inputs for primary school:* The project has developed context-specific MLE inputs, and supported their adoption and use by teachers, through orientation and training of teachers of Grades I and II in these schools. Shantilal collaborated with a technical resource agency, QUEST, with expertise in MLE in tribal areas, to evolve this multilingual programme strategy for the context of Dharni. As feasible, the programme has also used audio-visual inputs.
- d. *Building capacity within the government system:* The project is implemented through existing staff and teachers in Anganwadis and schools, by providing them continuous training and on-site mentoring, creating a resource pool of trainers among Anganwadi workers, Anganwadi supervisors and primary-school teachers competent in ECE and early literacy pedagogy. The project also seeks to improve teacher-support systems at the cluster, block and district levels by strengthening Cluster Resource Centre (CRCs), Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and the DIET.
- e. *Working with local educated youth:* A key component of the project is engagement of local youth at various levels. By building a strong partnership with local, educated Korku youth who have a strong desire to contribute to their own community, the project has gained direct and easy access to the Korku community.

Key Learnings

The National Education Policy 2020 has focused on Early Childhood Care and Education in different languages, and Balwadis have now been integrated with primary schools to strengthen the focus on ECCE. NEP has also focused on adopting MLE pedagogical practices with literacy inputs in child's mother tongue and school language for primary school education. Aksharsetu provided a significant focus on this crucial aspect.

7. Sahayogi Shikshan Abhiyaan (SSA)

Sahayogi Shikshan Abhiyaan is a community-based initiative aimed to ensure continuity in education for primary school children, especially in resource-limited rural settings due to the school closure during the times of COVID-19. Under SSA, parents and the village community together take the responsibility for the continued engagement of primary school children in learning activities by establishing a Samaj Vidya Kendra in their village. The Sarpanch, with the help of the village community identifies one/two volunteers from the village who are designated by the programme as Shikshan Sarathis. They are trained by the programme on content and pedagogy to build their capacity for conducting learning activities with children at a specified place and time as decided by the community. SSA encourages active involvement of parents in their children's education.

The content for the SSA programme was developed as a simple, user-friendly teaching learning module that can be used with children by persons with minimum training. Content for the SSA programme is aligned to the academic curriculum and includes:

- a. Audio songs, stories and conversations.
- b. Selected learning activities from the Mulyavardhan programme.
- c. Simple learning activities to promote listening and speaking.
- d. Guidance booklets.



The SSA programme is a proven model that has demonstrated its impact in 40 blocks across 17 districts and 94 villages of Maharashtra through 185 Samaj Vidya Kendras in 2020. More than 3,200 primary school children from rural backgrounds have benefitted from the SSA programme.

Key Learnings

Apart from the loss of loved ones and caregivers, disaster-affected children experience trauma and loss of education that upset their lives during the post-disaster period. India being such a large country, often faces disasters like earthquakes, droughts, floods and pandemics. The Sahayogi Shikshan Abhiyan programme aims to bridge the gap in education of disaster-affected primary school children. Since 1993, Shantilal worked to bring relief to thousands of children in every major disaster in the country, gaining tremendous experience and learnings from such interventions.

Conclusion

Shantilal gained end-to-end experience in school education, learning from the journey of two decades, successfully implementing and institutionalizing a wide range of programmes in different states with different stakeholders. Right from start, the objective of his 20-year journey has been to accomplish school transformation through a whole-school approach, supporting and empowering the government system. All programme activities have been aligned with government policies, taking all stakeholders along, and not leaving any room for contradictions from any quarters.

After so many years of hard work, he gained a comprehensive and deep understanding of the overall school education transformation domain. Although maximum focus in schools is given to learning outcomes, today India needs a combination of cognitive and non-cognitive focus, with skills for employability and self-employment for its citizens to move forward with values. The competency of Shantilal's organizations to create such a package of programmes increased manifold with an in-depth understanding of all relevant issues, and with the experience of aligning such issue-based inputs with curriculum, learning outcomes, values, and personality development.

Way Forward

India has received a new National Education Policy after so many years with specific tasks and target dates identified for each stakeholder. This is certainly the most opportune moment for States to revitalize and strengthen the school education ecosystem by adopting innovative strategies. Sharing its precious legacy in the education space, Medhakshar is ready for strategic partnership with State Governments and counterpart organizations to help design and develop policies, frameworks and programmes to strengthen various initiatives in educational quality improvement across the country.



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