



PSIPSE India Regional Convening

November 11-12, 2013 | The Lemon Tree Premier | Jaipur, India

Convening Synthesis

The aim of the Partnership to Strengthen Innovation and Practice in Secondary Education (PSIPSE) is to accelerate innovation in secondary education programming, research, and development in East Africa, India, and Nigeria. Results for Development Institute (R4D) serves as learning partner to the PSIPSE donor collaborative and acts as a high-level evaluator and synthesizer of learnings from PSIPSE-supported projects. In addition to R4D serving as learning partner, each region supported by the collaborative has a local learning partner that provides on-the-ground monitoring and evaluation support, technical guidance, and peer-to-peer networking.

On November 11-12, 2013, R4D and Catalyst Management Services (CMS), the India local learning partner for PSIPSE, brought together stakeholders to discuss strengthening support and setting the agenda for secondary education in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan.

Overview

The convening had three stated goals:

- i. Share information, results, and lessons in innovation in secondary education in the states of Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Rajasthan
- ii. Explore possible solutions for addressing challenges and constraints in this space, particularly surrounding the retention of girls in secondary education

- iii. Identify areas of collaboration among PSIPSE projects in India, and support peer-to-peer networking

The first day was designed for a wider audience of PSIPSE-supported projects, shortlisted applicants for PSIPSE funding, donors, representatives from local civil society organizations, research institutions, and government officials. Funders, as well as participants from both the state and non-state sectors connected and shared their approaches and insight on transforming secondary education. The second day provided a more intimate space for only the PSIPSE-supported projects and donors to share the progress and challenges of their projects to date, as well as identify areas for collaboration and support.

The two-day event included three panel sessions and two breakout discussion sessions. During Day 1's breakout session, participants had a chance to work together in small groups to discuss solutions to the biggest issues facing secondary education in India. On Day 2, small groups discussed how best to measure the impact of common approaches in education programs.

Overarching Themes

Over the course of the event, some overarching themes emerged. There was robust discussion on key issues affecting the access, quality and relevant of secondary education and ideas on what is needed to strengthen this sector in India.

1. Because the Rashtriya Madhyamik Shiksha Abhiyan (RMSA) is relatively young, there is ample opportunity for non-state actors and innovators to influence and shape the government's policies and practices in the provision of quality, relevant secondary education.

- There is a low level of awareness of what RMSA schemes and policies apply to secondary schools. The conference discussed the need to bridge the gap between the ministries making policies and those who more fully implement the policies on the ground.
- Currently, the organization of the RMSA is disjointed and not effective for creating change within secondary education. For example, teacher postings and infrastructure development are not done at the same level. Now is the right time to intervene and help shape the direction, purpose, and innovation of the RMSA.

2. Achieving parent and community buy-in is essential to ensuring the success and sustainability of education programs, but can be limited by available educational opportunities.

- State and non-state programs must listen and respond to the needs of the community. Education schemes, policies, and programs can be well-intentioned and cover whole states, but without community awareness and buy-in from these policies, they are ineffective.
- In some cases, lack of parent and community ownership and awareness results in high dropout rates and poor learning outcomes. However, parents should not be faulted when there is limited access to secondary education.
- Where schools exist, school management committees (SMCs) can function as the base of accountability in communities.

3. Attaining gender parity in secondary education will require strategic planning at national, state, school, and community levels.

- State governments are currently providing gender specific resources in addition to RMSA resources (e.g. bicycles and hostels for girls), but there are not enough mechanisms to reach a majority of girls. Many hostels are not full because parents are not aware that they exist. Additionally, those living in rural areas largely do not benefit of these programs.
- Rather than promoting separate schools for girls at the secondary level, many organizations, including the International Center for Research on Women, stressed that it was more important to incorporate gender-responsive curriculum and sensitivity training into coeducational schools and classrooms.
- Reducing the barriers to females teaching at the secondary level (which include complicated application process, recruitment delays, and additional unwanted managerial duties) could in turn encourage more girls to attend secondary school. ERU Consultants is currently conducting research in this area.
- Girls are often prevented from going to secondary school because of the distance from school (or lack of a secondary school altogether), seasonal migration with their families, exam failure, religious traditions, and economic conditions at home. When secondary schools are accessible, girls have an alternative to work or marriage and early marriage can be delayed.

4. Public-private partnerships can bridge the divide between fragmented education providers at the secondary level.

- While the public sector is the prominent actor in education at the primary level, much of the education at the secondary level is provided by the private sector. Working solely within the public sector to build capacity is a noble idea, but it does not reflect the reality of secondary education provision in India.
- Schools have limited budgets for land acquisition and infrastructure. In many cities, there is an excess of infrastructure available. The private sector has an opportunity to provide funding for land and infrastructure of schools for which the government does not have funding.
- Most public and private schools do not have the resources to provide a quality, comprehensive education. Combining the strengths of the public and private sectors can be one way to increase access to resources. However, the Ministry of Education and NGOs need to find ways to constructively engage one another.

5. Lack of competent teachers at the secondary level, especially in rural areas, is a major issue in the provision of secondary education.

- Many teachers at the secondary level have the necessary degrees and are qualified, but do not have the ability to teach lessons and lead classrooms. Those that are either qualified and/or competent are unwilling to relocate to rural areas, leaving students living in rural areas at a further disadvantage. The lack of teachers is exacerbated by hiring freezes at the state level. The quality of teachers can be partially remedied by relevant, effective teacher trainings.
- Teacher trainings should be holistic in nature, rather than subject-specific, and should allow teachers time to practice new skills being taught. Existing trainings are often highly theoretical, leaving teachers with few skills and practices to take back to their classrooms.
- School leaders play a critical role in quality of teachers and teacher training and should be more wholly engaged to ensure change at both the system level and classroom level.

6. Given the dearth of learning assessments at the secondary level, there is pressing need to find quality, low-cost means of assessment to be applied across both the public and private sector.

- The education sector in India has made significant gains in learning assessments at the primary level. To effectively measure learning at the secondary level, assessments should build on these gains.
- Those conducting learning assessments at the secondary level should generate more awareness of their work. Many actors collecting data from learning assessments are not connected with one another or the larger education space.
- Assessments that are level-based, continuous, and low stakes (like the Central Board of Education's comprehensive and continuous evaluation) are the most appropriate for secondary education.

Day 2 Themes

On Day 2 of the convening, 2012 PSIPSE-supported organizations (Akanksha's India School Leadership Institute, Educational Initiatives, ERU Consultants, Population Council, and Pratham Open Schools) presented on the progress and challenges of their projects to date. Both current PSIPSE grantees and prospective PSIPSE grantees identified areas within other programs that hold opportunities for collaboration or learning. Many of the learnings from the presentation are incorporated in the overarching themes mentioned above. In addition to presentations on PSIPSE, Day 2 included a group discussion on developing M&E indicators and scale-up.

M&E Frameworks

Many of the projects supported by PSIPSE are working under similar themes, as seen below. To understand the effectiveness of projects working on similar themes, the learning partners hope to develop a common M&E framework that can compare the results of projects.

During the M&E exercise, participants were assigned to one of the four themes to contribute to the thinking about comparable indicators. Highlights from these small group discussions are captured below:

- Instructional technologies
 - Participants suggested that standardized test scores, literacy rates, cost per beneficiary, uptake, and attendance and transition to higher levels could be comparable output indicators.

- Because of its effectiveness, technology can be one way for programs to reduce their cost per beneficiary.
- Technology can increase uptake of students and help mainstream studies with learning disabilities.
- Education and engagement of stakeholders
 - The outcome indicators suggested by participants included enhanced access to education, number of tested models that are ready to be adapted, and number of industry and government bodies keen to adapt such models.
 - Projects that educate and engage stakeholders are successful when the government, the private sector, and donors view the model as viable for scale up.
 - Using the example of open and distance learning, the group suggested that a strong model must be viable, cost-effective, efficient, and responsive to its stakeholders.
- Reforms to teaching
 - For both evidence-based and activity-based teacher training, participants suggested measuring student learning outcomes in a longitudinal cycle, and the content and pedagogy of teaching before and after training.
 - Additionally, for activity-based teacher training, projects should measure teachers' ability to teach a concept through newly-designed activities similar to those introduced in training.
 - One way to measure the effect of teacher training on student learning outcomes could be to compare the performance of students taught by teachers who have gone through activity-based training to a group of students whose teacher has not been trained or has undergone a different type of training.
- Mentorship and/or hands-on experiential learning
 - Participants noted that desired outcomes include wider knowledge and adoption of best practices, improved or enhanced quality consciousness across stakeholders, and a better understanding of concepts.
 - These outcomes could be measured via improved or increased attendance, participation, results, pass rates, and retention. It is also important to measure the awareness of the issue being addressed, the incidence of M&E frameworks, and scale of adoption of best practices.

Across themes, a common refrain was the importance of scalability and improved learning outcomes. As a learning partner, R4D and CMS will be thinking about how to accurately and

robustly measure the outcomes of secondary education projects, so that best practices can be effectively drawn out.

Managing Scaling Up

Bijit Roy of the Population Foundation of India (PFI) presented a framework and strategies for managing scaling-up. PFI and Management Systems International have developed a framework and strategies for scale-up management across the health and nutrition sectors in India, though the framework is equally applicable to education programs.

In his presentation, Bijit explored how to develop, establish preconditions, and implement the scale up process. With this framework in place, projects can determine realistic prospects, parameters, and strategy for sustainable provision of services at scale. The following is a basic framework for scale-up management:

1. Developing a scale up plan
 - a. Identifying the model
 - b. Setting goals
 - c. Assessing scalability and filling in gaps
 - d. Preparing a scaling up plan
2. Establishing the preconditions
 - a. Legitimizing change
 - b. Building a constituency
 - c. Realigning and mobilizing resources
3. Implementing the process
 - a. Modifying and strengthening organizations
 - b. Coordinating action
 - c. Tracking performance and maintaining momentum

It is important to note that the piloting organization may lack the capacity to take a project to scale, so the organization taking a pilot to scale must assess both the project's ability to scale as well as system readiness. However, scaling up requires extensive planning and is a messy, iterative process. It goes beyond technical planning and evidence – projects deal with extensive contestation, negotiation, and consultation before and during adoption. Implementers must prepare for persistent advocacy required for adoption and sustained interest in the work being scaled up.

For a copy of Bijit Roy's presentation on scale-up, please contact Jordan Worthington at jworthington@r4d.org.

Next Steps

Following the convening, R4D and CMS will take the following next steps.

- All information from the convening (presentations, contact information, photos) will be shared on the PSIPSE community of practice, which is an online platform located on www.educationinnovations.org and is a resource for members of the PSIPSE community.
- CMS will facilitate connections and peer-to-peer learning between PSIPSE-supported projects. They will also provide any technical assistance to PSIPSE-supported projects as needed, on an ongoing basis.
- R4D and CMS will continue the conversation of engaging government officials working in secondary education through smaller, targeted events.

Contact

For more information on R4D's work as learning partner for the PSIPSE collaborative, please visit <http://r4d.org/focus-areas/partnership-strengthen-innovation-and-practice-secondary-education>. For further questions on R4D's work within PSIPSE, please contact Shubha Jayaram at sjayaram@r4d.org or Jordan Worthington at jworthington@r4d.org. For questions on CMS's work withing PSIPSE, please contact Vasundhara Kaul at vasundhara@cms-india.org.