

The Torchbearers

Stories of an educational reform and of those at its helm



HUMANA
PEOPLE TO PEOPLE INDIA

Introduction

The quality of an education system, as reflected in the learning outcomes of its students, is centrally pegged to the quality of teachers, who form an integral part of such a system. Over the years, India has come a long way in providing universal access to primary school education to its children through various legislative and policy-based interventions. Quality of teacher education, however, has remained a challenge, as has often been confirmed by repeated surveys on students' learning outcomes.

With a view to enhance the quality of Primary School teachers joining the workforce, Humana People to People India (HPPI), working in close cooperation with the State Governments, launched the Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT) in the year 2009. The NeTT Programme is designed around a PPP model, with an objective of long-term, sustainable improvement in learning outcomes in Elementary School students through targeted, programme-based training of pre-service student-teachers at the District Institutes of Education and Training (DIETs), and promoting activity based and child-centric teaching. Key inherent elements of community focused engagements and promotion of women as change agents, ensures sustainable and systemic impact of the programme, achieving a holistic development of students and teachers alike.

Since the inception of the programme in 2009, nearly 5,500 teachers have graduated under the NeTT Programme. At present, the Programme reaches out to nearly 4,500 student-teachers in 22 DIETs and Government Elementary Teacher Training Institutes (GETTIs) across four states. HPPI aims to contribute to development of 100,000 professionally trained teachers by scaling up the NeTT model and processes to 10 States over the next 10 years.

The compendium of nine case studies curated here illustrates the manner in which the NeTT Programme has influenced the quality of teacher training in the state of Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. These case studies cover a diverse set of stakeholders from nine villages in six districts of the two states, and exemplify their challenges and accomplishments since the launch of the programme in these states in the year 2012, till 2016.



Slum dweller to school teacher: A story of triumph

First impressions on meeting Saroj debunk most conventional prejudices surrounding school teachers. The quiet, calm demeanor of this 21-year-old, teaching primary level students at Sanskar Vidya Mandir Public School, Faridabad, is far removed from the authoritative and boisterous image one mostly encounters in such teachers. A deeper look at her life further reveals a touching story of inspiration quite beyond one's imagination.

"I wanted to become a teacher since my school days. My surroundings further bolstered my resolve of teaching being the only option for changing the society we live in," says Saroj.

Growing up in a neighborhood plagued with issues of excessive drinking and drug addiction, in an urban slum not far from the school, Saroj fought insurmountable odds to finish school and secure admission in DIET, Faridabad.

"While my parents and older sister were a constant source of inspiration as I was growing up, at the DIET my admission coincided with the launch of the Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT), for which I consider myself very fortunate. What I learnt from the NeTT trainers during those two years helped me evolve not just as a teacher but as a human being," recalls Saroj.

Following her training, Saroj joined the school as a primary level teacher in year 2015. Just a year in, and the school has already witnessed startling improvements in student attendance and grades. This is vastly attributed to the interest generated through activity-based teaching methods introduced by Saroj in the school.

"Most students in our school are children of migrant workers

and it results in above average dropout rate. After Saroj joined the school, however, the attendance has improved significantly. This is mostly because her methods keep children involved in activities rather than being a passive receptor of knowledge,” says Ms Brajesh Kashyap, the school Principal.

“Her use of play-way method of teaching and a class environment that promotes discussions, helps build on the natural learning instincts of the students and keeps augmenting their thirst for knowledge. This is evident in the excitement with which they come to the school and participate in morning assembly activities day after day.”

For Saroj, however, as community leaders, the responsibility of teachers extends beyond the confines of the school and into the society they operate in. With this motivation, and utilizing skills harnessed while organizing community events as a part of her NeTT training, she regularly holds sensitization drives in the surrounding community about the ill-effects of narcotics and excessive drinking. Just as during her training years, holding rallies and conducting plays involving school children remains her favorite method of bringing constructive change in people’s attitudes.

“The NeTT Programme taught me that willingness to learn is the foremost prerequisite for being a good teacher. If we do as much as observe, children can teach us the most efficient ways of correcting the ills of our society,” she declares with a gentle smile.

True to the spirit of a teacher, Saroj’s life continues to exemplify how persistent hard work, patience and an inherent will to learn – guided by the right kind of training – can end the despondent cycle of poverty and unemployment. Treading her own path, this NeTT graduate continues to inspire and invigorate generations to come, with a calm smile perpetually etched on her face.



“*She’s the first teacher I met who learns from her students as much as she teaches them. This symbiotic relationship is a result of sensitivity, love and sense of discipline that Saroj displays as a teacher, and I observe it every day in our school. She is also a great example of someone extending the role of a teacher beyond the walls of the classroom and into the society, and for all these qualities we’re very proud that Saroj is a part of our school.*”

Brajesh Kashyap

Principal, Sanskar Vidya Mandir Public School
Faridabad, Haryana



Of a poet and a pedagogue

To get responses to basic questions in grammatically correct English from a six-year-old girl in a remote part of rural India may well be commonplace today. But when – amidst a gathering of a few dozen villagers – she responds to questions such as the distance between the earth and the moon, time taken for sunlight to travel to the earth, and reason for solar and lunar eclipses, with as much ease as, say, answering “How old are you?”, people around sit up to take note.

When Sangita Sonti of village Devhoda in Shajapur, Madhya Pradesh, answers questions posed to her, her replies are instant, emphatic and at times delivered with a force that hits one like a tornado. Sangita is a 1st grade student at the Government Primary School, Devhoda, Batwadi, and her transformation, from a shy girl, utterly uninterested in joining school merely a year back to a confident, rapid-fire one today, is a testimony of the energy her teacher, Radheshyam Karada, has infused in the village.

An aspiring regional poet, 37-year-old Radheshyam graduated from DIET Shajapur in year 2015 after completing a two-year training in Humana People to People India’s Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT).

“On my first day of joining the school last year, the classes were empty. This was a school with seven enrolled students and two teachers, but none of the students ever attended classes,” recalls Radheshyam.

“On my very first day I went into the village to enquire about the students and found that parents were least concerned with their children’s education. I told them to send their children to the school for a year, and if there was no improvement, I’ll personally get them admitted to a private school and pay their tuition fee. Since that day, rarely, if at all, any student has skipped classes.”

Radheshyam attributes all the success he has achieved as a teacher to the NeTT Programme training he received at the DIET.

“The components of activity-based teaching that the NeTT Programme emphasizes helped me a lot in retaining these students. I ensure that they enjoy their time at the school and to achieve this, most of the teaching is conducted through flash cards, art activities and outdoor games,” says Radheshyam.

“Further, we ensure that students help each other in their tasks, thereby learning from each other with minimal teacher intervention. The impact has been beyond all my expectations.”

The impact is such that it has travelled beyond the village boundaries and parents of children attending private schools in neighbouring villages have vowed to enroll them into his school from next academic year.

“Previous teachers were least interested in teaching and hardly ever came to the school. So we preferred our children to stay at home. But we’ve seen him teach. He’s a teacher at heart and we can clearly see how our children are transforming under his guidance. All the parents, even from the neighboring villages, now want their child to study under him,” says Bhanwar Lal, a member of the School Management Committee, referring to Radheshyam’s teaching methodology.

It is estimated that from academic year commencing July 2016, the enrollment in his school is poised to touch 25 students.

And how does he balance his life as a poet with that of a teacher?

“As a poet I like writing about social ills, and all my motivation and inspiration comes from these children who I spend most of my day with. They deserve to live in a better world and I intend to help make one with them,” he says with a smile.



“*Previous teachers were least interested in teaching and hardly ever came to the school. So we preferred our children to stay at home. But we’ve seen Radheshyam teach. He’s a teacher at heart and we can clearly see how our children are transforming under his guidance. All the parents, even from the neighboring villages, now want their child to study under him.*”

Bhanwar Lal

Member, School Management Committee, Devhoda, Batwadi
Shajapur, Madhya Pradesh



Helping students experience the joy of learning

Located in a nondescript by-lane of Tejli in Yamuna Nagar, Haryana, is Shakti Vidya Mandir, a private school that is gradually gaining cognizance amongst the residents of the town. Over the past few months, the school has witnessed an unprecedented number of visits from parents seeking to secure admissions for their children. The line of enquiry almost always starts with the teacher in-charge of the morning assembly.

“Information mostly spreads through word-of-mouth of the excited students and their parents about the new teaching methodology and the lively morning assembly sessions,” says the school Principal, Shiv Kumari Behen. “Kailash’s presence here has a lot to do with it.”

Kailash Yadav, 23, joined the school as a teacher merely 10 months ago. A former student of DIET, Yamuna Nagar, Kailash graduated from the institute in the year 2015 following a two-year training under Humana People to People India’s innovative Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT).

“Since the days of my training, I was always interested in helping students discover and develop their own potential. The NeTT programme helped me develop into a teacher who lets students drive their own learning process. They learn most efficiently when they learn together amongst themselves,” says Kailash.

Building on his training under the NeTT programme, Kailash observed that children like to play as they get to spend time with others in the same age group. In most schools, however, students learn in isolation and hence are robbed of the joy that is learning.

“As we did in the NeTT programme, I divided the class into smaller groups and encouraged group discussions and presentations. This way students learn from each other and also enjoy the learning process.”

And what is it that makes the morning assembly so special?

“I introduced a few physical training exercises, components of thoughts of the day and regional and national news, which I presented myself. Gradually, I introduced some interested students into the routine and today, week after week, students plan and execute the morning assembly programme themselves, while I merely facilitate the process,” says a proud Kailash.

The impact of his innovative teaching methodology is palpable. The school attendance has improved while grades and learning outcomes are also on an upswing.

Incorporating key elements of activity-based teaching and student-driven learning from his training under the NeTT programme into his everyday classes, Kailash today reaches out to nearly 40 students at the school, and is one of the many NeTT graduates efficiently transforming the classroom transaction system in the country, slowly, but surely.



“Since Kailash joined the school after his training, a new vitality has been infused in the morning assembly programme. Students are very excited to present thoughts for the day, news, etc. and work amongst themselves to constantly improve the quality of morning assembly programmes.

Kailash involves all the students of the class through group discussions and presentations, so they learn from each other. I’ve observed that their learning outcome has significantly improved with this method, as is evident in their grades.”

Shiv Kumari Behen

Principal, Shakti Vidya Mandir, Vishwakarma Mohalla, Tejli, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana



“Kailash sir has a unique style of teaching that we haven’t experienced in other teachers. Firstly, in his classes, the distance between the students and teachers is minimal, so we get to learn in a stress-free environment. Secondly, by studying in smaller groups, we have the freedom to explore and discuss the study material and learn at our pace. This has helped me and most of my classmates immensely in understanding studied topics rather than cramming them up.”

Rohit Yadav

Class X student



“Student participation, the key to turn the tide”

While the state of the physical infrastructure is a vital indicator of a school’s functioning, the appearance, in the case of Narayan Modern High School, belies the high levels of productivity and learning outcomes students here have achieved.

Located besides one of the ubiquitous insipid alleys of Sisana village in Sonipat district of Haryana, the school is approached through an equally undistinguished, unmarked doorway.

The school, being run here since 1982, bears a forlorn look with a rundown structure and classes being run under tree shades in the large compound, with students segregated according to their classes.

The perception, however, quickly transforms as one begins to interact with the students.

“I joined this school five years ago. Back then I had to force myself to come to the school every day. Today, I find school time the most interesting part of the day,” says Rohit, a class 10th student at the school.

According to the senior school administration, these achievements in quality of education delivery can mostly be attributed to the dedicated hard work of the newly appointed teacher, Neeraj Dahiya.

“Things have changed remarkably since Neeraj joined our school around a year back. She has been able to generate and retain students’ interest in all the subjects she teaches,” says the school Principal, Inder Singh Tomar.

“Her teaching methodology involves activities, group discussions and presentations which the students find quite interesting.”

Neeraj, a 2013-15 batch student of DIET Sonipat, graduated from HPPI’s Necessary Teacher Training Programme

(NeTT) and joined the school as a teacher for Science, English and Mathematics for students of classes 7-10. Today she reaches 55 students through these classes.

“Most children in this school come from financially poor section of the society. Due to continued history of illiteracy in the family, their interest in studies was minimal. My NeTT Programme training in activity-based teaching methods and involving them in group games rekindled their interest and today results speak for themselves,” says Neeraj with a proud smile.

All the students in the four classes Neeraj teaches passed the final examinations and were promoted to the next class. Further, this is the first time in the history of the school that no student failed in the English subject.

“Under the NeTT Programme, we were trained in using flashcards to promote language learning. I mixed it up with games and group discussions, and students started showing significant improvement in subsequent assessments,” says Neeraj.

Her plans for the school, however, extend beyond enhancing learning outcomes of children.

“With the existing state of physical infrastructure, many parents are reluctant to send their children here. I’m confident that our plans to conduct community sensitization drives on pestering social issues will yield positive results,” says a confident Neeraj.



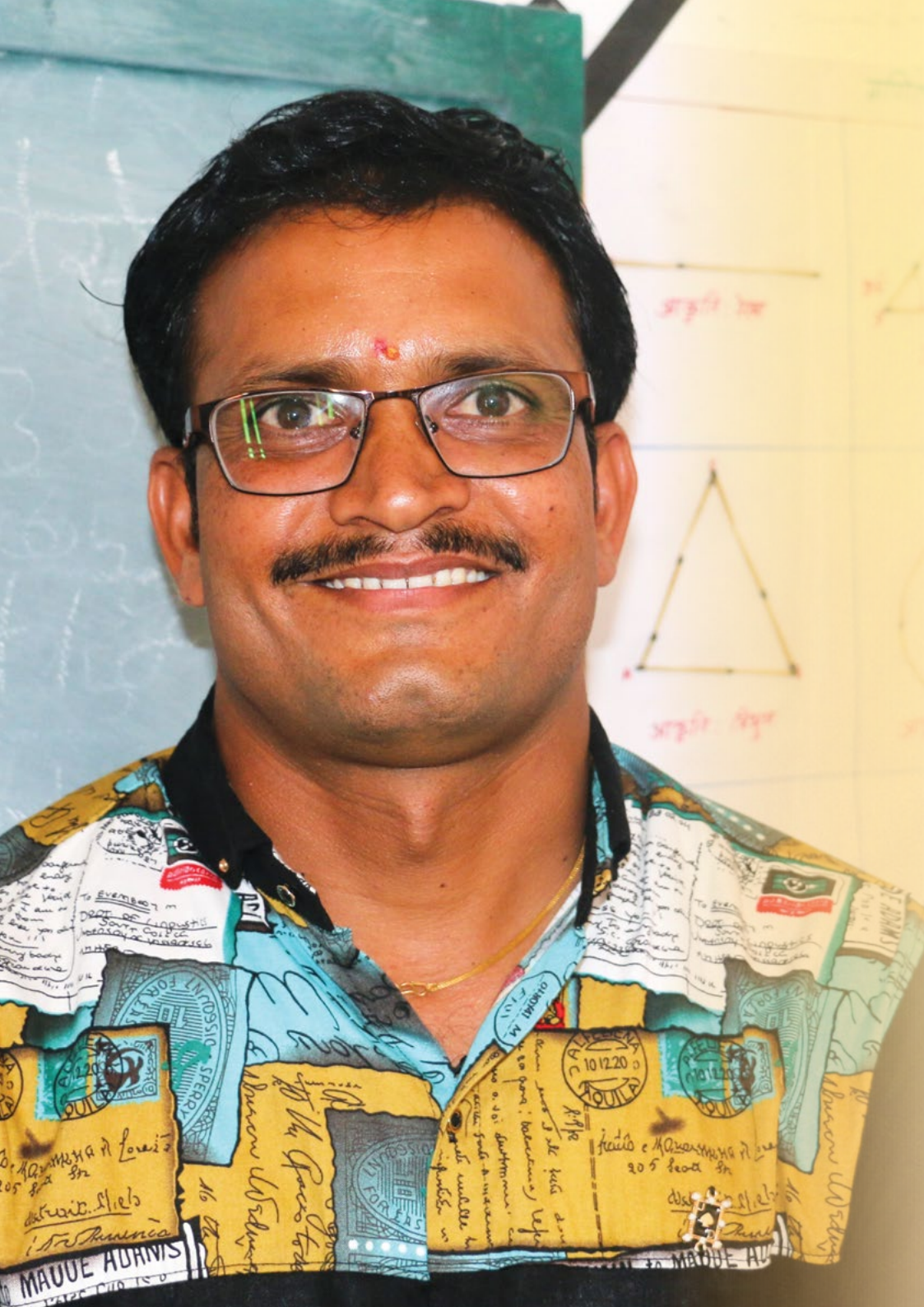
“Compared to other teachers, Neeraj madam’s classes tend to be more interesting as she encourages a lot of interaction amongst the students. Before she joined the school we were used the blackboard-method of teaching and learning seemed very passive. In her classes we get to present our thoughts, which makes them very interesting.”

Rohit
Class X student



“Neeraj’s teaching methodology involves activities, group discussions and presentations which the students find quite interesting. Due to her presence here, for the first time in the history of our school, no student in the three classes she teaches failed the English subject exam. The confidence, maturity and sensitivity she displays while handling students of such varied socio-economic backgrounds, coupled with the remarkable results she’s achieved in a short span of time, is itself a testimony of her successful training as a teacher.”

Inder Singh Tomar
Principal, Narayan Modern High School, Village Sisana,
Sonipat, Haryana



“Discipline yourself before disciplining students”

Cleanliness, order and classrooms resembling veritable rainbows greet anyone visiting Government Primary School, Amla, in Barnagar block of Ujjain, Madhya Pradesh. Each part of the interior of this school building displays an insignia offering an insight into its tradition of discipline and reflects the attention and hard work that has gone into establishing it.

“We take pride in the level of cleanliness and orderliness that we’ve achieved at our school and several state officials have formally acknowledged it. It is simply because we discipline ourselves before trying to discipline the students,” says Ajay Kumar Dodiya, school teacher and headmaster in-charge.

In 2015, Ajay graduated from the Humana People to People India’s two-year Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT) being implemented at DIET Ujjain.

Like several other schools of the region, majority of students here come from weaker economic section of the society with their parents mostly working as landless farmers. This posed a specific problem of securing student retention in the school, as most students were prone to never attending classes owing to prolonged lack of parental supervision.

“We knew that we had to retain their interest in studies if we had to bring them back to the school. My training in play-way method of teaching under the NeTT Programme has been particularly useful in order to achieve this,” says Ajay.

When he joined the school as a teacher, on an average merely 6-7 students attended classes regularly, even as the total enrollment stood at 41 students.

“We decided that since they skipped school to play with their

friends, we'll provide them a better environment to play within the school premises. Further, we used technological interventions, such as the use of radio as a classroom transaction tool which further piqued their interest in coming to the school regularly. Ours is the only school in the region using radio to conduct classes," says Ajay with a feeling of pride.

Today, all the 41 students regularly attend classes and the school has witnessed significant improvements in grades as well.

Under Ajay's supervision, the school building received an overhaul, with a refurbished staffroom – rarely found in Government Primary schools in this part of the district – and classrooms bedecked with numerous Teaching and Learning Materials, developed by students themselves.

"I attended a nearby private school till grade 3. When I learnt about the teaching methods used in this school through my friends, I asked my parents to get me enrolled here. Here we're constantly kept involved in activities and have our photographs displayed on the school notice board every month. The environment here is much more exciting than my older school," says Vikas Parmar, a Grade 5 student at the school, who also holds the position of the School Education Minister in the Students' Cabinet of Ministers.

With constant improvement in results and attendance, Ajay today receives active support from the village community, and his indomitable spirit of self-discipline and excellence continues to influence those around him.



“ Learning Mathematics through games has been the best way to learn complex topics such as tables, multiplications, etc. With the use of play-way method and instructive charts and models, studies here are much more interesting than in my old private school. ”

Vikas Parmar
Class V student



“ Such well-maintained physical infrastructure, quality of teachers and effective teaching methodology as found in this school is not to be found in the Government Primary schools anywhere else in the Block. Before Ajay joined the school, only local language was used in communication, but now students can comfortably communicate in both Hindi and English. Their excitement and sense of responsibility and discipline has increased exponentially since Ajay joined the school. ”

Vijay Singh, Panch (Ward) and Member,
School Management Committee



Experience, the best teacher

As we enter Deen Dayal Senior Secondary School in Sonipat, Haryana, the far end of the school boundary hosts an inquisitive and animated class of young students surrounding a bright, young teacher who matches their excitement with every question he answers.

In a tree shade, 21-year-old Pankaj Kaushik is explaining to students the benefits and crucial need of planting more trees. The coolness of the shade is palpable, the fruits weighing the tree are tangible, and the birds that call the tree home are clearly visible. The students, under Pankaj Kaushik, are learning through experience.

“Most of my learning under the NeTT Programme at the DIET took place through experience. Today, I’m convinced, there’s no better teacher than experience,” says Pankaj with conviction and a smile.

A former student at DIET Sonipat, Pankaj graduated from the institution in 2014 after being trained under Humana People to People India’s two-year Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT).

“As a part of the Programme, all of us participated in month-long National Travel wherein we travelled to different parts of the country. For many of my classmates, it was the first time they had stepped out of the state boundary. Many of us experienced train travel for the first time. We may not remember most of what we studied in the class, but what we experienced during that travel will remain with us for the rest of our lives,” he says.

The school environment and the school management’s maturity to improvise in face of mounting educational challenges plays a key role in the ability of teachers such Pankaj to create a positive change inside and outside the classroom. He has been fortunate enough to receive the same at his school.

“Since he joined our school, we could see that Pankaj possesses an unmatched passion to teach and a set of unique skills that

can have a long-term impact, not only on students he teaches but also on the culture of knowledge transaction,” says Sanjay Khareta, the school Manager.

“Beyond making knowledge generation exciting for students, Pankaj’s presence in the school has also positively influenced how other teachers perceive teaching as a discipline.”

While the clamorous enthusiasm of students surrounding him itself is an affirmation of the joy his students experience in attending school regularly, the data reflecting improvement in grades further consolidates the effectiveness of practicing student-centered teaching methods.

“Primary school students are very impressionable and are quick at grasping concepts. At the upper end of the grades they can also extend their understanding of concepts to its logical end. While I’ve learnt a lot during the two years of my teaching experience, I owe a lot to the previous two years of training under the NeTT Programme,” admits Pankaj.

“It was the NeTT training that made me receptive to the needs of young students, and the responsibility of a teacher to deliver.”

And Pankaj – along with several other teachers like him trained under the NeTT Programme – continues to impart lessons and dispensing his services as a teacher, while leaving indelible impressions on the young minds of his students. Impressions, rendered permanent, through experience.



“*Pankaj sir teaches using games and activities which makes his classes very interesting. From Math to Science, he uses charts and models to explain the subjects and at times all of us participate in creating our own models for the topics we study. None of us ever want to miss his class as it is the most exciting part of the day in the school.*”

Rohit
Class V student



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Sanjay Khareta

School Manager, Deen Dayal Senior Secondary School, Sonipat, Haryana



NeTT Programme: For a much-needed head start

In 2015, six-year-old Lakshay, secured admission in the Nursery grade in Holy Mother Public School, located in Yamuna Nagar district of Haryana. Ideally, in line with his age, he should have been admitted to Grade 1, but his learning and retention levels did not allow admission in the requisite class. The school Principal took cognizance of the case by assigning Lakshay's class teacher, Shweta Sharma, the responsibility to bring his learning levels up to the mark.

A year on, Lakshay not only secured admission in Grade 2, but today he actively leads the class sessions and is at the forefront of all the activities being conducted in his class.

"Over time it has become evident that it's her training that gives Shweta an edge over other teachers at the school. All students in her class display optimum learning outcomes and enhanced retention abilities," says school Principal Monika Kashyap, while recalling Lakshay's story.

Shweta graduated from the DIET Yamuna Nagar in 2015 after completing two-year training in Humana People to People India's Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT). Since then, she's been reaching out to 36 students of Grade 1 at the school while instructing them in Math and Hindi subjects.

"The training has had a multiplier effect on my skills as a teacher and most of it has become evident only after I commenced teaching on a full-time basis," says Shweta.

"While studying for Diploma in Education (D.ED.) at the DIET, some of us felt that the NeTT Programme will be an added burden. By the end of the first year at the institute, however, it was clear that activity-focused NeTT Programme only complements and consolidates what we learnt through the

D.Ed. classes. Practical experience gathered during the course of the Programme has helped me hit the ground running since I joined the school.”

Beyond the main elements of child-centered and activity-based teaching methodology, Shweta attributes her enhanced skills as a teacher to the components of lesson planning and group presentations inherent in the Programme.

“These elements are often downplayed in conventional trainings and, frankly, time spent on the same during Teaching Practice while at the institute was minuscule to have any long-term impact on my skills as a teacher. Under the NeTT Programme, lesson planning was a monthly activity and we made presentations almost daily. This gave me a lot of confidence and it was common to find more experienced teachers come to me for developing their lesson plans,” quips Shweta.

As a teacher, would she suggest any changes to the content or delivery of the NeTT Programme?

“The programme is a holistic approach to primary school teacher training and helps equip future teachers with much more than just efficient teaching skills. I attribute most of my success as a teacher to my NeTT training and can’t imagine it to be any different from how it already is, in structure and delivery. It is an ideal Programme and helps provide much-needed confidence and head start to new primary school teachers,” says Shweta.



“*Shweta’s control over guiding the class and the excitement she generates among the students makes her stand apart from other teachers at the school. I’ve often observed her conducting activities with student participation and her efficiency as a teacher also reflects in the excellent results she is able to achieve.*

Over time it has become evident that it’s her training that gives her an edge over other teachers at the school. All students in her class display optimum learning outcomes and enhanced retention abilities.”

Monika Kashyap

Principal, Holy Mother Public School, Tejli, Yamuna Nagar, Haryana



Teacher as an agent of progressive Social Change

When it came to Arjun Singh Patel rejoining his school in Harnavada village, located in Dewas district of Madhya Pradesh, as a teacher, he knew the challenges lined up for him well enough. After all, prior to his two-year training at DIET Dewas, Arjun was a teacher for primary level students at the same school.

“The village was notorious for thieves stealing property from Government offices and establishments. It was not uncommon to enter the school gate on a morning to find all the ceiling fans and tube lights missing,” says school Principal Samandar Singh Golawatia.

“This had a direct impact on students’ attendance. Who likes to sit in a dark classroom, sweating incessantly in the high summer heat?”

While in the two years as a teacher at the school preceding his training at the DIET, Arjun had experienced these incidents of theft a few times, his training under the NeTT Programme had equipped him with additional skills of a teacher as a community leader. While in the school he commenced conducting classes in activity-based teaching methodology, outside, he began to actively sensitize the community to deter any thefts from taking place.

“I knew that I had my task cut out beyond ensuring student retention, optimizing learning outcomes and providing conducive study environment for the students. The problem of thefts was a big issue as it disturbed classes almost regularly and impacted learning outcomes and exam results of several students in the school. Besides, repeated police complaints yielded little results,” says Arjun.

“Our training under the NeTT Programme included several components of community mobilization and ways of

conducting efficient sensitizing exercises. Our efforts here in the village are already beginning to yield results among the community members.”

Since he joined the school in 2014, Arjun has been holding regular community events with the local village community, involving the school students. The events managed to gain the attention of village council heads, who have come out in support of the school administration’s efforts. Further, the students, individually, have been able to generate a lot of support from their family members and close relatives, highlighting the immense adverse impacts of such petty thievery on their entire year’s hard work.

When asked if his involvement outside the school has in anyway compromised his duties inside it, Arjun can’t help but smile.

“My primary duty as a teacher is to help retain students in the class and progressively improve their learning outcomes. But my training under the NeTT Programme has also made me believe that if factors from outside the school impact these two indicators, I need to prioritize my duties in line with the needs. As for my performance, I let results speaks for themselves,” he says.

And true enough, attendance and grades in the three classes Arjun teaches have shown consistent improvement in the two years he has been back at the school.

“Arjun’s teaching methodology contains a lot of energy and involves students at every level; be it for getting good grades or as an agent of social change. While in the class he involves them in group discussions and presentations, outside, he conducts cleaning activities, tree plantation drives, and community events. His role as a facilitator has garnered him students’ respect while also letting them learn in a liberated environment,” says Samandar Singh Golawatia.

Arjun’s experiences exemplify the holistic role a teacher plays in the society and how persistent efforts, guided by efficient training, can bring about positive social transformations against most pressing odds.



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Samandar Singh Golawatia

Principal, Government Middle School, Harnavada
Dewas district, Madhya Pradesh



Spreading knowledge beyond theory

On the first day of his joining Government Primary School, Majra Kheda as a teacher, Gopal Sharma was greeted with empty, rundown classrooms. Initial visits to the parents residing in Tarana block of Ujjain in Madhya Pradesh yielded little results. Continued subsequent visits managed to motivate three of the total 13 enrolled students to come to the school. On the third day of continuously coming to the class, one of the three students couldn't hold himself back. "Why do you come to the class every day? The last teacher hardly ever came to the school," said the 2nd Grader.

This state of affairs is not uncommon in most schools located in remote regions of rural India. However, in this case, the student's honest enquiry was contagious enough to infect Gopal with a determination to ensure that all students of his school will receive the best possible education.

Gopal graduated from the two-year Necessary Teacher Training Programme (NeTT), conducted as a part of the Diploma in Education course at DIET Ujjain, in year 2014. As a student under the programme, he found the activity-based teaching methodology the most interesting part of the training.

"Children either don't want to get enrolled in the school or they drop out, as they don't see schools as a place to have fun. Why would they come to a school where they see an uptight teacher trying to control their behavior? I knew involving them in activities and games will be the best way to get them interested in coming to the school," recalls Gopal.

After the initial struggle, and subsequently involving students in games and activities during the class, the three students were instrumental in spreading the word and the school has had full attendance ever since.

With teaching techniques involving flashcards, games and group discussions, Gopal keeps students' interests up in subjects of English, Hindi and Math. The change in their knowledge extends beyond mere theoretical understanding to practical matters involving agriculture and trade.

"I try to give them real examples by conducting outing in the nearby fields. The students can relate to this practical approach to teaching and understand key concepts of the subjects, particularly Math, much better," says Gopal.

The effectiveness of his teaching method has spread and the impact is such that other parents of the village have now vowed to enroll their children in Gopal's school from next academic year.

"Quality education is a right of every child and as a teacher I'll ensure that it reaches the last child I come in contact with. No student should be left to feel that their teacher has abandoned them," says Gopal with a firm conviction.

It is with such determination that NeTT Programme-trained teachers approach their duty as a beacon of hope for millions of students across the country.



"Gopal sir has very entertaining ways of teaching which makes us interested in coming to the school every day. He often involves us in games and takes us on outings to nearby fields to conduct classes. He teaches us using examples of crops and fruits from the fields and we also participate in outdoor games during these visits. These kinds of activities are rarely conducted in other schools and makes studies really interesting."

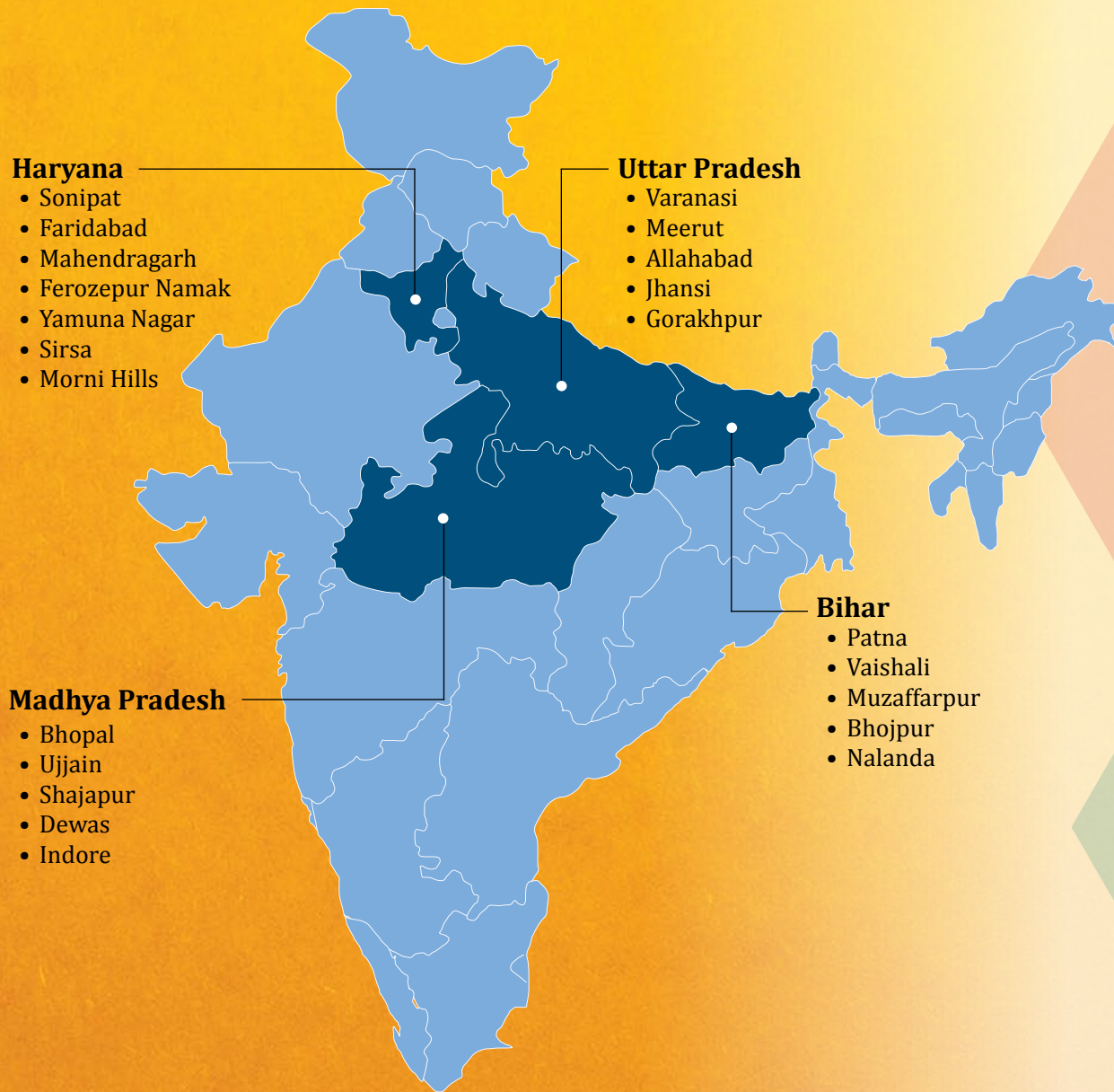
Tanvi Kumawat

Class V student

Government Primary School, Majra Kheda

Ujjain district, Madhya Pradesh

Outreach of the NeTT Programme





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