

A REVIEW
OF
THE SHIKSHA SAMARTHAN PROJECT

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Digantar (<http://www.digantar.org>), a voluntary non-profit organization, visualizes a pluralistic democratic society that safeguards justice, equity, freedom and dignity to all its members. Digantar works towards realizing this vision through education that develops independence of mind and courage to act. Apart from running a widely acclaimed education program with this vision for the disadvantaged communities in a semi-rural area in Jaipur, Digantar also partners with Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS) in their M.A Education program, works on developing curriculum and textbooks, engages in education research activities and conducts a Foundation course in Education for teachers and educationists. Digantar has also worked to improve quality of education in the government schools in different districts in Rajasthan. The work with the government schools in Phagi block of Jaipur district was such an initiative.*

Wipro Applying Thought in Schools (<http://wiproapplyingthoughtinschools.com/>) is a social initiative of Wipro. It works on building capacities in school education reform in India. Wipro believes in a social vision of democracy where each citizen is not only capable in an individual sense but also sees the ethic of equity, the essentiality of diversity, the ethos of justice, and is thus driven by social sensitivity. Schools have to be spaces that nurture these principles, capabilities & values and this means a dramatically different kind of school and a significantly revamped education system. Wipro believes that a sustained effort is required for this and it attempts to bring about this change through its partnerships and projects. The partnership with Digantar in Phagi block was to work for bringing a change in the teaching methodology, the teacher's perspective and the school environment in government schools in this area.

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FOREWORD

Government schools provide basic education for 80% of children in India. The educational system that delivers this is, unfortunately, more a reflection of our colonial heritage than a fitting response to the needs of our vastly heterogeneous society. In many crucial areas, change is desperately needed: curricular content, teacher training, assessment and student enrolment. Understandably, the government system evokes deep distress in many of us. But it also inspires the desire to get in there and do something, which several organizations have been doing since the 1940s. Dr Krishna Kumar calls these ‘bold and beautiful attempts by remarkable people... to intrude (*sic*) into the system of school education’.¹ These interventions have focused on different areas: specific subjects (such as Eklavya’s science and social science work), special areas (such as Vigyan Ashram’s introducing rural technology into school curricula), language and literacy (such as Pratham’s reading instruction modules), accountability (such as Azim Premji Foundation’s ‘learning guarantee’ programme), and finally, the school as a whole (such as Rishi Valley’s REC). Thus, the focus has been largely on improvement of the curriculum and pedagogy in the government school system.

Digantar’s Shiksha Samarthan Project (SSP) was an initiative where Samarthaks worked directly with the teachers, students and the community for over five years, in some of the government schools of Phagi district in Rajasthan. The project was unique as it worked directly in the schools, with the intention of bringing change through giving attention to the relationship between teachers and students, and improving the physical and psychological environment of the school. It also touched upon the teaching methods employed in teaching the curriculum set by the government.

This is a report of the SSP, which was conducted between 2006 and 2012. The SSP was supported by Wipro Applying Thought In Schools. This document, prepared in the period August 2011 to April 2012, provides an ‘outsider’s’ understanding of the vision, work and sustainability of the SSP.

¹ Improving Government Schools. Mandira Kumar and Padma Sarangapani, *Books for Change*, 2005

REPORT ON SSP

Objectives

The objectives of this report on the Shiksha Samarthan Project are as follows:

1. To describe the intervention and responses to it at several levels: children, teachers, community members and government officials
2. To review the project based on its objectives
3. To assess the potential for any changes to be sustained.

Our attempt is to understand the process of change in interaction with a school as a whole, and to share this understanding with the educational community at large.

Methodology

Ten government schools which participated in SSP (2 from each cluster), were selected by the Programme Coordinator. These were a mix of those where results, according to him, seemed to have been good (5), moderate (2) and poor (3). Six schools from these were ones where SSP had begun in 2006, and four where it had begun in 2009. As we had not observed the quality of education in these schools before SSP, we visited two schools where SSP had not been implemented at all. These schools served as the baseline for our study. One of these was a primary school and the other, upper primary. These were chosen at random, again, by the Programme Coordinator.

A full day was spent in each school, observing the general school environment, assemblies and classes, and interviewing small groups of students and some teachers. Visits were made to the village community to speak with men and women whose children attended (or in a few cases did not attend) the school.

The atmosphere of interviews was informal, allowing people to speak as much as they wished, while their responses were recorded. To enable the children to speak freely, there was a lot of warming up and ice breaking. The teachers were informed of the purpose of the visit beforehand. The questions asked to each group (students, teachers and community members) are included in Appendix 1.

All interviews were conducted in Hindi, and were first transcribed into Hindi. Later the main points were translated into English, and from these points, summaries were written for each school. Appendix 2 contains the summaries for each school in English.

In-depth discussions were held with the Samarthaks present in late 2011 (individually and as a group), on many aspects of the programme. Notes from these talks are in Appendix 3.

During the same period, the Samarthaks and the Programme Coordinator filled out a survey sheet with specific questions on all 100 schools, to generate some quantitative data that could be summarized, and seen at a glance. Ratings were made by the SSP team on seven criteria:

- i. Change in teacher's attitude in general manner of working with children (discipline, relationship)
- ii. Change in teacher's teaching methods
- iii. Ability and willingness to make monthly plans
- iv. Cleanliness of school
- v. Teachers' punctuality
- vi. Children's level of learning
- vii. Community involvement

Ratings were '1' if results seem good, '2' if results seem average and '3' if results seem poor. Thus an average closer to 1 indicates good results overall, and an average closer to 3 indicates poor results overall, in the SSP team's perception.

The results of the survey are in Appendix 4, and summary statistics are to be found in the 'Intervention and Impact Observed' section. We also summarized the data separately for the 75 schools where SSP ran for five years, and the remaining 25 schools. These results are in Appendix 5.

Limitations

1. All observations and interviews for this report took place while the programme was being tapered off, and not while it was in full force.

2. We visited 10 schools out of 100, and those 10 were not a random selection but a representative selection in certain categories (evaluation of response to the programme, location in cluster, number of years SSP working with the school).
3. Due to time and location limitations, the authors could only visit six of the ten schools and one of the control schools. The remaining were visited by a member of Taru, the research arm of Digantar.
4. The teachers and students were expecting our visit and our presence might have influenced their behaviour. The two control schools also were expecting our visit and we know that one did try to present a different appearance than the regular situation.
5. The data analysis we are presenting in later sections is based on all 100 schools. In 75 of these, SSP ran for five years, and in the remaining 25, it ran for two years. This difference was not taken into account in the analysis of all 100 schools together.
6. Our suggestions and recommendations, beyond the descriptive parts of this report, are based on our experience in running a school which is not engaged in the government school system.

INTRODUCTION TO SHIKSHA SAMARTHAK PROJECT (SSP)

The Context

Rajasthan government conducted a survey in 2002 to find out how many children were not in school. The results in Jaipur alone showed that 25,000 girls were not going to a school. The government then asked Digantar to create a bridge course for such girls, and the *Pehchan* project was started in the same year. By 2006, the results of this project indicated that changes in classroom and school environment as well as children's learning were possible in the government school system.

Encouraged by the results of the *Pehchan* project, Digantar surveyed some schools and came up with a list of areas for change. For a month, they taught one class in 11 schools.

The pre and post tests conducted saw an improvement in academic learning. The next step was to go once a week to a school, teach for half a day and work with the teacher for half a day. This model was developed further, and became the Shiksha Samarthan Project (SSP).

The SSP was started in July 2006, in line with Digantar's philosophy of working with the existing systems functioning in the government schools.

Objective & Methodology of SSP

The objective of the SSP was to transform a large number of government schools into units providing quality education over a period of 5 years². In the words of the SSP annual report from 2009-10:

"In real terms, this means to have schools where teachers arrive on time, they are engaged in teaching with improved methods, have an encouraging and affectionate relationship with children, the general environment is positive and, of course, the children will have reached a level of learning which is much better than what it is now. And that the schools are proactive both in reaching the children and in solving ground level problems be they academic or otherwise."

The method was to intensively train a small group of dedicated Samarthaks, to work with 75 schools in three clusters of Phagi district (53 were primary schools, 20 were upper-primary, and 2 were secondary). Each Samarthak was responsible for between 5 and 8 schools, and would spend a day a week at each school; thus a total of 13 Samarthaks could cover all the schools.

While addressing several aspects of the teacher's and the school's functioning, the programme also sought sustainability in three different ways. First, the Samarthaks were to work on the teachers' confidence levels and ease with which they used any new methods and ideas, so that these would become internalized as a part of their being. Second, Samarthaks were to interact with community members to increase their involvement with

²It was extended by a year to complete documentation and for the project to continue briefly under the new nodal system, which was implemented in April 2011.

the local schools. Third, Samarthaks were to work with cluster level government offices and staff in academic work, monthly meetings, training and workshops. All these three attempts were expected to help sustain the positive changes brought in by the 5 year programme.

The following changes were made to this plan along the way, affecting the continuity of the programme to some extent:

1. In 2009, 25 more schools were added, bringing the total to 100, and increasing the load of each Samarthak.
2. In 2009, two more clusters were added to receive support of various kinds.
3. There was some attrition of Samarthaks, and new Samarthaks had to be inducted along the way.
4. In some schools the teacher changed during the five year period.
5. In April 2011, the structure of government school system changed in Rajasthan. Seven to eight schools formed a node with one school being the 'nodal school'. Government was to work directly with only the nodal school, which in turn would work with the remaining schools falling within its jurisdiction. The Samarthaks then shifted their work only to the nodal schools for the year 2011-12.

Structure ofSSP

The distribution of schools worked with from 2006-2011 was as follows:

Cluster	2006-2009	2009-2011
Nimera	20	20
Bhojpura	28	21
Kishorepura	27	22
Peepla	--	19
Dosra	--	18
TOTAL	75	100

The organisational structure and job responsibilities for the project from 2006-2009 is given below.

Programme Co-ordinator: 1

- *Provide advice, direction and guidance to run the project
- *Make educational and pedagogical plans
- *Training and documentation
- *Maintain a dialogue with other stakeholders including DEO, BEEO, and CRCF

Academic Co-ordinator: 1

- *Provide academic support
- *Work with children and teachers
- *Make teaching-learning plans

Shiksha Samarthak: 13

- *Provide academic support in 5-6 schools
- *Prepare teaching-learning plans
- *Participate in review and academic meetings
- *Work actively with the community

Accountant cum computer Operator: 1

Office Assistant: 1

In 2009-2011, one Academic Coordinator was added to the team.

Making of the Samarthaks

Samarthaks were selected and trained very rigorously. They were young, energetic and passionate about education. Nine workers who were earlier working in 'Pehchan' were

selected for SSP, the criteria being their performance. For the rest, the following procedure was used:

Advertisement: Around 77 persons applied out of which 33 were short-listed for interview.

Selection: The selection process consisted of a written test, solving puzzles, making teaching plan on a given topic and a personal interview. Twelve were selected for the training programme followed by a probation period of 6 months.

Training Programme: An intensive, one-month residential training programme was organized at Digantar's campus, and the following topics were focused on:

- To understand the project including the nature of academic support
- Education, society and man
- Knowledge and forms of knowledge
- What is learning? How do we learn?
- Form of school
- What should be the nature and method of academic support in government schools?
- Pedagogy of Language, Maths, EVS, English
- To reflect and think on what changes would be there in government schools through our efforts and what activities will bring about these changes
- Field observation of schools (government, private and alternative) and reflection on teaching methodologies
- Working directly with school children in Digantar's alternative schools.³

This entire process resulted in the formation of a small team of thirteen Samarthaks. In a meeting with a few of them in November 2011, we tried to uncover some of the necessary

³Extracted from Digantar's Annual Review Report on SSP, 2006-07

qualities of a Samarthak. They were very hesitant to claim anything special about themselves, but after a lot of discussion, came up with these descriptions of a Samarthak.

- A person who can look at a failure and say – what was my mistake, what can I do differently? Also, the attitude that tries to research a situation to find out why things are or are not working.
- A person with perseverance. This may come through the work, through the experience with children. It is a continuous learning process.
- A person who realizes that a teacher’s actions come from lack of understanding, which can be remedied.
- A person who realizes that change is a slow process, and takes different forms in each school and each teacher, and who never gives up.
- A person who contributes to team feeling, is non-divisive, shares ideas, problems and solutions, never harbours a feeling that ‘my work is better than yours’.

The Samarthaks met very frequently (daily, weekly and monthly) among themselves and with the Programme Coordinator. These meetings were felt to be an essential part of motivating them and bringing a sense of teamwork. In the words of one of the Samarthaks we met, “All meetings are very important to increase our motivation, and for listening to each other.” And as another put it, “All the meetings we had were very important to discuss problems, take help from each other. The sense of togetherness gave a lot of energy. There was no sense of separatedness among us.” The democratic, cooperative mode in which they worked among each other would have extended to the teachers and children they interacted with.

Choice and Description of Schools

Digantar chose schools in remote areas, which are more difficult to access. It was consciously decided to work with schools which are quite far away from the main road. The schools were systematically selected from the various clusters.

Here is a brief schematic description of the schools before SSP began (as noted by the Samarthaks):

- | Teachers |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Late, absent, or would close school early (after mid-day meal).• Did not plan lessons• Made minimal use of teaching aids• Did not attend assembly |

- | Environment |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relationship between teachers and students – fear, students hesitate to talk• Caste an issue (eg. for cleaning toilets) |

SCHOOL

- | Student |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Some children not going to any school• Not attending school regularly• Fearful of teachers• No sense of ownership of school |

- | Community |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Not aware of SMC, RTE• Did not take responsibilities• Low level of involvement• Women rarely attended school meetings |

For us to get a first hand idea of how the schools might have been before SSP, we studied two schools where SSP had not been implemented. These were our control schools.

In the first, we learned that cleaning is done by the same woman who cooks the midday meal, and while children may help at times, the teacher is not involved. The doors to the toilets were broken and therefore the children used the open field. There was no assembly in the morning. There was no teaching-learning material (TLM) apart from a single globe. This is despite the fact that each teacher receives Rs 500 for TLM per year. In the interview the teacher said that not all children learn at the same speed and he addresses this in the classroom. This was not apparent during our classroom observation: many students were not paying attention, and the teacher seemed to call upon only those who were responding

to the lesson. Some children were attending to a younger sibling who had also come to the school. The teacher mentioned that he does not beat the children, and does not punish them. However, during observation we sensed a degree of fear and discomfort among the students, and a general atmosphere of heaviness.

When the Samarthak spoke directly (and separately) to the teacher, he was told that actually there are only 15 students attending, as against the 33 who were present during our visit. In one child's bag there were 6th std. books (this was a primary school)! The teacher also mentioned that parents just say, "Give attendance," and then take their children to the field. One child told the Samarthak that they are beaten at times. This comment was also made in the second control school.

INTERVENTIONS and IMPACT OBSERVED

In this section, text in regular font refers to interventions carried out, and text in italicized font refers to the impact we observed.

The SSP team observed these various aspects of government schools, and planned their interventions accordingly. A typical day for a Samarthak began with a brief meeting with other Samarthaks working in the same cluster, sometimes on the road! This enabled them to discuss minor challenges of the day ahead. On reaching the school, the Samarthaks engaged the children in school cleaning, followed by a participative assembly. The first half of the day, the Samarthak would work directly with students and teachers in the classroom. The afternoon was spent in reviewing the work done, discussing challenges faced by the teacher, and planning for the following week. After school, often they would visit members of the community to maintain a constant dialogue with them. Each day of the week, this procedure was followed in a different school. A weekly review was done every Saturday with all Samarthaks and the Project Coordinator. Once in three months, the Samarthaks would meet with the local government officials to review the ongoing work. The Programme Coordinator also maintained regular contact with the government officials.

School Environment

Samarthaks wished to demonstrate the importance of “an atmosphere where there is freedom of expression, empathy and cooperation as well as affectionate teacher-students relationship”⁴. This they did by involving themselves in activities with the children, by their interactions with them, teaching poems, telling stories, playing games and slowly building a trust and affection. This was with the expectation that the teachers would see the benefit of such a relationship and would then work at maintaining this aspect.

In all interviews, this is one aspect that came across very strongly. All children’s faces would light up at the memory of their Samarthak (or Phagi Sir). Several students mentioned that they could ‘talk about anything’ with the Samarthak. One teacher clearly stated that students would stay after school if the Samarthak worked and would leave only with him.

The Samarthaks worked at creating an environment of shared ownership for the school. Charts were prepared where all students were assigned work required for keeping the school premises clean. These duties rotated after a certain period of time. Samarthaks also worked with the children in their assigned area.

This was very much evident in all the schools we visited. All students mentioned the shared cleaning responsibilities at the start of the day. In one school, the cleaning programme has taught an interesting and valuable lesson. Since everyone cleans toilets, the activity has blurred the caste distinctions at least within school! Some schools were cleaner than others, of course. However, in our observations we did not see teachers taking part in the cleaning activities, except to instruct or monitor. This was confirmed a few times by what the students reported. The SSP team’s evaluation of results in this area is also moderate, average 1.8.

When the project began, the assembly was largely a mechanical event with a few drills, and some religious/nationalistic songs. The Samarthaks read stories, taught new songs and poems to the students and teachers. They worked on having the students and teachers actively participate in assembly. Digantar reports say that Samarthaks were to create an

⁴From Digantar’s Annual Review Report of SSP, 2009-10

atmosphere of “democratic self expression where children get a chance to discuss, share and solve their problems” through the assemblies.

It was observed that students of any age were called upon to ‘lead’ a particular song, and they did this with great confidence and energy. For example, a first standard child led a group of eighty others in singing or reciting! We saw a moral story being told in one assembly by the teacher.

We did not see the students discussing or problem solving in any of the ten assemblies we attended. What we did note is the care and self-discipline with which students conducted themselves in assembly, and the love for the songs taught by Samarthaks. In one school, the teachers were a bit late in arriving, and the students (who knew about our visit) began assembly as soon as we entered the school premises, in perfect order—an impressive and moving sight!

Teachers

Digantar’s annual report of 2006-07 describes in a nutshell the situation with a typical government school teacher as they see it: “... an average teacher uses the style of teaching that (s)he himself is schooled with...The training and orientation programmes provide one with descriptions of alternative classroom scenarios, but...most teachers have neither images nor experiences to put substance into those alternative descriptions (teachers as facilitators, active learning, learning related to the child’s experience, activities in small groups, etc.) The pressure of managing a class and teaching to cover the syllabus forces her to fall back on her own lived experiences. Thus, there is a need to create alternative experiences to connect the alternative descriptions of classrooms to reality.”

Based on these observations, it became clear to the Samarthaks that any change to be made in the existing system can best be made through the teachers. They had to gain the trust and respect of the teachers, and demonstrate that their suggested methods are ‘do-able’. They entered the schools carrying a letter from a government official indicating that they had the permission to visit and work with the school.

When they entered the schools, the Samarthaks realized the teachers were suspicious of their motives. It took them many weeks, in some cases, the whole year to demonstrate that their actions were in the interests of the school. In one school, the teacher appeared indifferent and in fact, would sleep through the whole morning while the Samarthak worked with the students. Finally one day the Samarthak himself lay down on another cot and pretended to sleep! The teacher got agitated and questioned the Samarthak as to who was going to teach the children. After this day, the teacher involved himself in the teaching and day to day running of the school.

It was also clear that there existed an environment of fear between the teachers and students. There was not much contact between them outside the classroom. The Samarthaks' interactions with students aimed to demonstrate to the teachers the importance of an affectionate relationship. Teachers could see that effective teaching and disciplining students without the use of fear or harsh authority is possible! The Samarthaks also interacted with the students during school cleaning and in their games, and they did speak with students about non-school-related topics. They would sometimes stay beyond school closing time to have such conversations. The purpose of these interventions was to set an example that the teachers might follow if they found the results valuable.

According to the ratings made by SSP team members, in the areas of discipline and teacher-student relationship, the schools showed some improvement (average rating 1.8). Teachers told us they would explain concepts repeatedly if a student did not understand. Most teachers also told us they bring about discipline with love and understanding. Our school visits did not reveal any great stress or fear in the children toward their teachers. We also observed that, in all the schools we visited, there was an affectionate, empathetic relationship between teachers and students. One teacher said to us, "Children are more open now. Earlier they were quiet, but not now, and therefore their learning is better. I am more patient about their noise. Earlier we used to threaten them, but SS explained that learning should happen by developing a relationship with student, and I agree." Another said, "School atmosphere has changed – children are not hesitant, they used to come fearful but now come happily... They come on their own, not forced."

At the same time, some teachers felt differently. One expressed that “such children (village children) only respond to fear and some amount of hitting.” Another could articulate his position quite clearly: “If you let children loose, the impact is opposite. They don’t have respect for the teacher and make a lot of noise...but there has to be a gap and some fear. Not so much that they don’t come to school at all, but neither so free that they don’t listen to you.”

A common complaint in many government schools is that teachers do not arrive at school on time. The government schools covered under SSP were no exception to this. The Samarthaks found that teachers were often late in arriving to the school, absenteeism was at a high level, or in some cases, the school closed after the mid-day meal as the single teacher there had to leave the school. The Samarthaks were very punctual in reaching the assigned school. This again served as an example to the teachers, conveying the message clearly to them.

The teacher’s punctuality did improve in the opinion of the SS team (average 1.9). Only in 17% of the schools did they see no improvement. In fact in one school, the teacher had been arriving late because she commuted from Jaipur. The Samarthak was able to help address her difficulty by making suitable arrangements.

In the area of teaching in the classrooms, Samarthaks noted that teaching was mechanical, without using teaching aids to help children understand what was being taught. Also, the teachers did not plan the lessons they were to teach in a specific week. So each Samarthak first reviewed the syllabus and textbooks for the classes they were to teach. They prepared several teaching-learning materials, TLM (flash cards, abacus and wall posters) to assist the teacher and students, and demonstrated the use of these in their own teaching. They also spent time each week discussing with the teacher the previous week’s lessons, and making a plan for the coming week’s lessons. They hoped this habit would become a relatively effortless part of the teacher’s regular work, and that tangible benefits would motivate them to keep up such planning even on their own. Samarthaks also guided teachers in how to manage a multi-grade class effectively.

In these two areas, of actual pedagogy and planning, the SSP team's evaluation of the results are not very positive: averages are 2.5 for teaching methods and 2.7 for ability and willingness to make lesson plans. In over 50% of the schools, they felt that teaching methods had not changed significantly for the better. Nearly 75% of teachers did not, in the team's opinion, have the ability or willingness to make lesson plans.

In contrast to this, our observations of the ten schools did reveal several instances of the use of TLM provided by the Samarthaks, and teachers in the interviews often mentioned TLM and lesson planning guidance as a part of what they gained from the weekly visits of the Samarthak. Some examples of good pedagogical practice that were observed are described below:

- *Teachers took simple steps to organize two or three classes in one room. For example, some gave copying or practice work to one class while working with the other; some assigned older students to help younger ones and taught a third group themselves.*
- *Teachers did use TLMs such as flash cards and abacus in the class, and students were obviously familiar with these materials.*
- *One teacher used a bucket of small stones gathered from just outside the school to demonstrate the concept of 'average'.*
- *Most teachers we saw taught without recourse to a textbook for at least the first ten minutes, and several teachers were explaining concepts on the blackboard without reference to a book.*

Several teachers also commented on the TLM and the joint review and planning processes as helpful to them. One teacher mentioned that what he learned from the Samarthak one never learns in a B Ed course, such as how to manage when one teacher is absent. Another said, "Earlier the emphasis was on completing portions and send them up to next class, but now it is, let them learn to read and write." And another, "Samarthak showed how to teach very young children, getting their interest through songs initially. We have to understand the state of the child, because unless there is motivation they won't learn anything new."

Taru of Digantar and DPEP organized 5 day workshops every year with the government school teachers. The details of these workshops are presented in Appendix 6. The purpose of these workshops was to discuss the aims of education, and also to draw attention to the link between the nature of subjects, their content and methodology with the curriculum. The importance of planning and the actual development of lesson plans were discussed in these workshops. Teaching packages were also prepared at this time. A lot of time was set aside for discussions related to academic and other issues pertaining to the schools.

When Taru started these workshops, attendance was very poor. The first one organized before SSP had no participants! There has been a shift in this. In 2006-07, 58 schools were represented. This went up to 87 in 2009-10. Teachers express that they look forward to having these. They value the discussions and feel they learn a lot from listening to other teachers and sharing their own experiences. Several teachers also mentioned learning things of value from workshops in general conducted by DPEP and Digantar. Thus it is difficult to separate how much of their good practice came specifically from the SSP intervention and how much came from these workshops.

In the interviews, the teachers had varied responses to the question of what benefits they have derived from Samarthaks' presence. Their responses fell roughly into three categories:

- 1. Acknowledging significant help from the Samarthak. Most responses were of this category.*

Here are some examples:

- a. Teachers enjoyed planning and discussing lessons together with Samarthaks*
- b. Samarthaks helped in providing and making TLM, and training in the use of such materials*
- c. Samarthak taught teachers things not addressed in a typical B Ed course, such as what to do when the other teacher is absent.*
- d. Samarthak helped reduce fear in the students toward math, and as a result their interest in studying in general increased.*

- e. *Earlier the students were afraid to speak, and now after SSP they are more free.*
2. *Samarthak was of help as an 'extra pair of hands', not much else. For example, "Samarthak is a help, of course a second person helps since we have 5 classes and only two teachers."*
3. *What Samarthak offered was neither new nor significant. Very few fell in this category. For example, "I have not learned much from SS, I knew quite a lot before itself."*

Community

Samarthaks made visits to members of the community, and it was planned that the schoolteacher would accompany them. Samarthaks, on starting their work in the schools, noted that many children of the community were not going to school. One of the main reasons was that the parents of these children took them off to the fields to work, or they often looked after the younger sibling. Hence Samarthaks main purpose initially was to encourage the parent to send their child/children to school and communicate the importance of education to them.

Next the Samarthaks wished to mobilize community members to take responsibility and feel ownership of the village school, to be more participative in some of the activities, and to help the teacher increase his/her engagement with the community. Efforts were also made to arrange regular SMC meetings, and to ensure that all parents recognized their rights and responsibilities in this regard.

On looking at the data pertaining to the number of students enrolled in the school before and after the implementation of SSP, the average change is not significant (+2%). However, SSP team's evaluation of overall improvement in community involvement was moderate (average 2.1).

The community men and women we met and interviewed were well aware of the weekly visits of the Samarthaks. They spoke highly of the Samarthak, but did not seem to know the

real purpose of the SSP. When the interviewers explained in brief terms, their response was almost always that indeed the children are learning well now. For example one parent said: "there is improvement in the children, teachers come on time and school starts on time, and studies are more serious." In one village, the impact of this involvement was very high: "...the main problem is teacher shortage, and the village morale goes down because of this...when Samarthak worked with us to put pressure on government, the second teacher came."

In many cases community members reported the Samarthak visiting their homes on and off. However it was rare that they mentioned the teacher making similar visits. One conversation was interesting in this regard: a father of the school said, the teacher has come here to teach, not to waste time here in our homes!

Teachers saw that community members appreciated the visits of the Samarthaks. One teacher said, "Earlier the mothers would come to drop their children but were shy to talk. Now that Samarthak has visited them at home, they come for meetings and share what they feel." A nodal school teacher said, "Samarthak helps me by visiting other schools in my area and telling me their problems. He also visits communities. These people will be more open in sharing with him than with a government official... they see SS as different, more qualified, and his motive is seen as more dedicated."

In talking to members of the community, we were informed that some were involved in issues pertaining to the school. These varied from talking to the government officials regarding the need of a compound wall, toilets or hand pump, or the need of an additional teacher. Some members also took certain responsibilities in the 'BalMela' and exhibitions. These members clearly saw the importance of their role in the school.

Another point that emerged was that a significant proportion of parents (especially mothers) had not heard of the existence of a School Management Committee. They did not attend anything more than the Republic and Independence Day gatherings, and definitely did not know that they all had the right and responsibility to be a member of the SMC. "We are made to sign to agree to come for SMC. It happens off and on, and on 15th Aug and 25th Jan we go to school. But SMC does no work. We know nothing about the meetings and what is written in the register." And another group of mothers: "SS did not visit, even the teachers

did not visit. We've had no meetings, SMC or other. Not heard of any such committee. We have no information about these, you are saying so we realize such a thing exists."

Students

The benefits of the SSP for students can be noted from the above mentioned points. The impact of SSP on the students overlaps with the work done with teachers and with the school environment in general. This was apparent in what the students shared with us during our visits to the various schools, from which we quote below.

"We prefer our school to the private, because we play more, we clean, we learn and listen to stories."

"Even in the holidays we think about school and want to come."

"We like school because we have good guruji (Samarthak) and good studies. They explain properly, ask us questions, and don't hit us, except if we behave very badly."

"Our friends tell us that in the other [private] school they don't play. They get beaten. Here, we play, study and eat. We do the cleaning in turns, girls and boys together."

"We come [to school] because we learn and play. If we stay at home we have to graze the cattle. We don't like that. If we study, we will become a teacher, earn money etc. Yes, we can earn also by farming in the field. But we don't like being in the sun! We will employ someone to do that work with the money we earn!"

These interventions and the impact observed are presented in concise tabular form in Appendix 7. The data in that table are based on our observations, our discussions with Samarthaks and their responses to our survey questions.

MAJOR FINDINGS

As we stated in the foreword to this report, the uniqueness of the SSP lay in its emphasis on working directly in schools. It attempted to change attitudes through building relationships among teachers and students. While improving the teachers' pedagogical practices, attention was also given to the physical and psychological environment of the school. As most interventions carried out in schools are limited to curriculum and pedagogy, the SSP represents a pioneering effort in bringing change in intangible areas.

Another striking feature of the programme was the team's sincerity and commitment in the implementation of the project. They worked very closely under the leadership of the Project Coordinator, who also made regular visits to the schools to get a direct understanding of the working of the project. The Samarthaks were motivated to put in tremendous energy in this project, without a sense of division between one another. Even though they did not get the support initially from the teachers, they patiently worked with the children for a year or more in some cases, to win the trust of the teachers.

On going through all the primary and secondary data gathered by us to study the SSP, it is clear that tremendous attention was given to the conceptualization, planning and execution of the programme. This is apparent by:

- *the criteria by which the schools where the SSP was to be executed were chosen (The schools were in remote areas, which are more difficult to access. It was consciously decided to work with schools which are quite far away from the main road.)

- *the systematic selection of schools from various clusters

- *the clearly stated structure and job descriptions of each individual involved in the project

- *the rigorous training programme of the Samarthaks

- *the conscious effort made to create a cohesive, cooperative team of Samarthaks and the emphasis given to nurturing each of them

*the feedback mechanisms (daily, weekly, monthly meetings) created to ensure clear communication and execution of the project

*the regular workshops held for the teachers over the duration of the project

The quantitative data gathered through the survey given to the SSP team (details of this are given on page 3) revealed that results were better for schools where the SSP ran for two years, as opposed to five years. In other words, the SSP team making the evaluations rated the two-year schools overall higher according to all criteria, *except* children's level of learning. Even the more objective measure of school enrolment showed a greater average increase in the 25 two-year schools (+17%) compared with the 75 five-year schools (-2%). Does this finding indicate that there is an optimum time period for such an intervention, and when it is either too short or too long, effectiveness decreases? While the reasons are unclear, and any guesses on our part would be purely speculative, we feel that this aspect needs to be considered seriously for any future work done in similar areas.

While a lot of attention was given to the manner in which the project was run for the period of five years, it was noted that the same care was not given to the final stage of the SSP. The withdrawal of SSP appears to have been quite abrupt and sudden, despite the fact that the period for which it was to run was known in 2006. A clear plan to enable the teachers to adjust to the situation where the Samarthak would not be working with the school is not apparent. Several teachers did comment on this aspect in the interviews:

'School has benefited from the project, but it cannot end here. They have shown us how to teach using the government texts, they have made flash cards. It has to go on like a tradition, but we don't know if the new teachers who come will accept this. Another challenge we will face is if the headmaster changes. The new one may not give us the freedom.'

'Without the Samarthak, we will miss the experience of collaboratively working together on planning and consulting.'

'Samarthak taught us to teach reading by alphabets and then combining. But now he has left I do not continue this since it is more work and we are short of teachers.'

‘Without the Samarthak around, it is not possible to do the same thing. There is a difference. Singing etc. is reduced. And manpower is reduced. He would talk with the students also, that is not there now. But we will try our best.’

LOOKING AHEAD

The aim of the SSP was to improve the quality of education in government schools. Naturally the hope would be that these improvements sustain themselves in the long run. How can the learning from such efforts be sustained over a longer period?

We feel that to ensure the continuity of such a project, which has the potential to bring about fundamental change in the quality of education, two ideas can be looked at: a consciously-planned exit strategy, and a focus on elements of the system that remain more constant. These two ideas are described in some detail below.

A strategy should be developed for a slow exit. The objective of such a strategy would be to ‘wean off’ the support and consolidate the work done. In this case, a gradual and planned withdrawal would have helped the teachers gain confidence to take the work done by the Samarthaks further. The Samarthaks could have, for example, moved out of the schools in a phased manner. The frequency of their visits to schools could have been reduced over a period of time. Toward the end, they could have reduced their role from being directly involved with the children and in the classroom, to being observers, giving feedback to the teachers. A few months before moving out, they could also have encouraged the teachers to communicate with other teachers in their school to increase the reach and strength of the programme.

Looking at the typical scenario in a government school, teachers are often transferred to another location. In case of the SSP, for the work to go on after the Samarthaks leave, one is totally dependent on the teachers to take it forward. New teachers coming into a school where SSP was implemented may find it difficult to continue the systems and methods introduced by the Samarthaks, or not see the value of it. Similarly, an SSP-trained teacher

may find it difficult to carry the systems and methods learned into a new school, due to many factors. This would mean an end to the changes made by the project during the course of its duration.

The government machinery is a constant factor during and even after the implementation of a project such as SSP. However, the specific individuals occupying certain positions of decision making are often transferred, as happened with the SSP. To work closely with each new person appointed within a brief period of time may pose to be a major challenge. The structures within the government pertaining to education, for example, are also liable to be changed unexpectedly, as also happened in the course of the SSP.

In this changing scenario, it became clear to us that the only constant factor over a longer period of time is the community in which the government school runs. Therefore, perhaps SSP could have invested more focused time and energy in working with the community. It is important to increase the community's participation in the school, even beyond what was accomplished by SSP. We found that in some schools, the women were not involved in or aware of even the SMC meetings. An 'action group' formed by the community itself could be the representative for communicating to the school its areas of concern. It is important that the roles and responsibilities of the 'action group' are clearly stated and the members are aware of these.

During our interactions with various community members it became apparent that they were motivated to be involved in matters pertaining to the school. Women in particular were very vocal and interested in the questions we asked. Many people said that the progress of their children and the village itself would be affected by the education offered in their village. For example, in villages without an upper primary school, they were very keen that the government should start one, and they kept asking us if we could help in this matter! None of the communities we met gave an impression of indifference toward the government school.

A strong community could work closely with the school to help bring about and maintain changes. The community needs to be educated about the ways in which they can take responsibility and play an important role in improving the schools. We feel that their concerns need to go beyond the basic (and important) issues of boundary walls, water supply and teacher punctuality, to extend to pedagogical matters as well. This would enable the community to demand the continuity of those pedagogical methods with which the quality of education had improved in their school during SSP.

BEYOND SSP

The SSP has been discontinued since March 15, 2012. The question that we are faced with now is: can SSP still be sustained in the schools where the Samarthaks had worked? We would like to offer a few suggestions in this regard.

One idea is to designate a resource person whom the teachers can contact if they have any doubts and questions, or if they need advice, suggestions and even resource material. A specific day of the week or days of the month can be set aside for teachers to contact this person when needed. This would help give confidence to the teachers to carry forward the work done by the Samarthaks.

A second suggestion is that Digantar/Taru could continue to hold periodic workshops for these teachers, perhaps annually. We recommend this as we were told that the teachers were very enthusiastic to attend these workshops and teachers from almost all schools participated in these. They felt that they had been exposed to theories in education and innovative methods of teaching, which they implemented in their day-to-day working in the school. Conducting these workshops would help the teachers and would enhance the chances of the work done during SSP to be taken further.

Another possibility would be that the Samarthaks maintain some minimal contact with the schools they had worked in. For example, one day in the week could be assigned for this

contact, and on a rotational basis each school could be visited by them. This would probably amount to a quarterly visit to a particular school. In this manner, the teachers would have some regular contact with the Samarthaks where their doubts could be cleared and they would feel more confident.

We feel that another way of sustaining the work done in the last five to six years is for the Samarthaks to work with the community in the manner suggested . A start has been made by them, and most communities have appreciated and supported the Samarthaks' work. The momentum thus gained will help create the foundation for empowering the community to work with the schools in the future.

Apart from sustaining the work done in the current schools, one could look at extending certain features of the SSP to other schools. This we feel is possible especially under the nodal system. Through a few workshops with the teachers of nodal schools where the SSP was implemented, teachers could be encouraged to share the work done with the schools under their node. The chances of other teachers trusting the programme are quite high, as they would actually see how ideas operate in the nodal school. In this manner, one could attempt to bring changes indirectly to a greater number of schools.

CONCLUSION

For any project undertaken, we feel it is imperative that attention be given not only to efficient and effective implementation, but also to sustainability. Support can be given by outside agencies for a specific project for a limited period of time. The benefits of such support should extend beyond this period for projects like the SSP to have a meaningful impact.

We strongly feel that a strategy needs to be formulated to sustain the excellent work done by Digantar and the team at Phagi over the last six years. A tremendous amount of resources (time, energy and manpower) have been dedicated to the objectives of SSP, and during our field visits we could clearly see the benefits derived by the various groups

involved in this project. We feel it would be a pity if a new project is not undertaken which could start where the SSP ended. If the work is not taken further, it is possible that the benefits we have seen will slowly dwindle. Though one cannot predict with certainty, we are concerned that the quality of education we have witnessed will regress to the way things were in 2006, in the schools where SSP was implemented.

One question remains with us: considering the long term picture of our education system, what is the role of specific efforts such as the SSP? The scope of such a project need not be limited only to the few who benefit directly, and only for the period of its duration. We must look at projects like the SSP as 'pilot projects' that try out new and innovative ideas. If at the end of the project, the tangible and intangible benefits gained have been well worth the costs involved (as we believe is true for the SSP), the project should be extended further. The manner in which it is taken forward could be modified based on an evaluation made at the end of the term of the project. This is, in short, what we are suggesting for the Shiksha Samarthak Project.

APPENDIX 1: Questions Asked In Interviews With Various Groups

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	PARENTS
General attitude	What is the purpose of education?	Do you look forward to coming to school?	Why do you send your child to school?
	What do you feel children should learn at school?	What do you miss (if you do) in the holidays?	Do you ensure that your child goes regularly to school?
	Who holds more responsibility in the learning, teacher or student?	Do you enjoy what you do in school?	What do you expect the school to do for your child?
	Do you enjoy being a teacher? What is your relationship with your teaching work?	If you feel a teacher is not helping you learn, what do you do?	Do you get involved in school activities? If yes please give details or examples.
	What aspects of the school do you give attention to? The whole school? Your class only? Class & assembly?	If an area in school is not clean, what will you do?	If your child complains about something at school, what do you do?
			Do you go to school sometimes? If yes, for what purpose?
			Do you feel you should look after the School?
Attitude to learning	If a child does not understand a concept, what do you do?	Can you tell me about anything you learnt recently? Did you find it fun to learn it?	Do you participate in your child's learning? If yes, please give examples.

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	PARENTS
	If a child/some children are inattentive in class, what is your response?	Give an example of what you have found difficult to learn? Why is it difficult?	If your child tells you that he/she is having difficulty in learning something, what do you do?
	Can you describe some teaching methods you use? To teach fractions? Hindi writing?	What do you expect to learn at school other than the subjects which you study?	
Relationship with students/parents	How do you see your relationship with the students?	How do you see your relationship with your teachers?	Do you have any contact with teachers of the school?
	What is the place of fear, authority, discipline, trust, love in this relationship?	When you had difficulty understanding a concept, what did you do?	If your child has a complaint, what do you do?
	Do you interact with students outside class?	Do you interact with teachers outside class?	
	In which ways do you interact with the parents?	What according to you is the role of a teacher?	
	Do the members of the community help in any way?		
Work with SSP	For how long have you been at this school?	What have the Samarthaks been doing at the school and why?	Do you think SSP has helped you, the school and your child? If yes, please give examples.

	TEACHERS	STUDENTS	PARENTS
	In what ways (if any) do you feel SSP has helped you, your approach to teaching, your teaching methods, relationship with students?	Have there been any benefits for you and /or the school?	
	What were some of the changes brought about by SSP? In what ways do you feel the SSP has supported your work at school?	What aspects of manner the school's working do you wish would continue?	
	What has been the purpose of SSP?		
Future	Do you feel confident to continue teaching or looking after the school in the same manner in the future without the Samarthaks' regular support?	If the Samarthaks were to stop coming to school, do you feel that the changes made by them will continue?	Do you feel that the community will continue to support the school as they have in they have in the past few years?
	What are some of the difficulties you feel you may face?	How do you think you can help continue the changes made in the last few years?	What are some of your fears for the future functioning of the school/your child's learning?
	How do you think you can help sustain the changes made in the last few years?		How do you think you can help sustain the changes made in the last few years?
	What do you feel are the necessary conditions to sustain the changes made?		
	If you were transferred to another school in future, do you feel confident to bring about changes in that school as well?		

Questions for the Samarthaks.

1. What was a typical week, in terms of how your time was divided between teachers, parents, students and project team members?
2. How frequently was coordination done with the government, and what exactly was done?
3. Comparing before and after the project, what were the changes you saw in students or teachers with respect to their attitudes/motivation, responsibility, and teaching methods?
4. How was feedback from Samarthak to cluster coordinator to academic coordinator to project coordinator, and in the reverse direction, given and used? Describe how reviews were done. In other words, how did the whole project team function?
5. Did you have autonomy in some areas of your work, and how did you go about the task then? Please give an example.
6. Please share with me the various interventions you had in the schools, year by year.
7. What was the kind of relationship you shared with the teachers? Was there freedom of expression, cooperation and open feedback between you?
8. What were some of the challenges you faced? Digantar and WATIS would like to know how to sustain and better such a programme, as well as to know if it can be replicated elsewhere. So please share your suggestions and ideas.

Questions for the Project Coordinator.

1. How much of a problem was teacher transfer? Especially in single teacher schools?
2. What was the impact of Samarthaks' absences and turnover?
3. What was your involvement with the schools directly? What was the nature of your involvement and contact with the Academic coordinator, the cluster coordinators and Samarthaks?
4. In single teacher schools, how did Samarthaks manage to spend time with the teacher away from students?

APPENDIX 2: Summaries of Schools Observed

School One

This school recently changed from primary to upper primary. The main teacher who has been there many years seems unusually passionate about his work, and open to learning (perhaps even before SSP started). For instance, he wants his students to become serious citizens, no matter what their job to they make a name for themselves wherever they are. He also believes that the aim of education is to increase understanding and independent thinking. This is in stark contrast to most other adults and children alike in many of the schools who could only say that the aim of education was to 'get a job'.

He took to the project enthusiastically, befriending the Samarthak and adopting all his ideas and suggestions to augment his already conscientious work. He acknowledges the role of the Samarthak in transforming the school readily.

Prior to the SSP, it appears the school was stretched for teacher time. There were five classes and two teachers and a lot of time went in arranging for the midday meal, administering pulse polio etc. When Samarthak first came, there was the relief of an extra hand, but much more besides. Samarthak sat with the teacher for lesson planning and provided TLM.

The students trust and have affection for both Samarthak and this teacher, and this has increased their motivation. For example, they don't fear math anymore. They are coming now in greater numbers, preferring this to the private school, because word of good teaching and no corporal punishment has spread. Also, there is the incentive of a small cupboard library, introduced by SS. The students seem to treasure books, and the library is the one thing they stated that their school *must* have! They have also loved the drawing activity that Samarthak seems to have introduced. They feel that in school apart from other things they also learn how to live together. They also tell their friends who are going to the private school how good the government school has become. And when they leave school they say they will miss, apart from their friends, books and teachers.

The teacher mentioned that what Samarthak taught him, no B Ed programme will teach. Something about how to handle situations 'on the ground' such as: what to do if a co-teacher doesn't come? The school cleaning programme put in place by Samarthak has taught an interesting and valuable lesson. Since *everyone* cleans toilets, this activity has blurred the caste distinctions at least within school.

The school has spoken with the community about the dangers of casteism. Parents and community members are, like the teacher, very appreciative of Samarthak's work. Attendance at the SMCs has improved, and now about 60% (by the teacher's estimate) have a serious interest in their child's studies. These parents would come to school even without the occasion of the SMC, just to clarify a problem for example.

School Two

This is a school where the SSP has not had sufficient time to make impact. One Samarthak was going there once a week. At that time, the school had only a single teacher who felt her attempts at improvement were fruitless. Then the school became a nodal school! With the increased paperwork it became impossible to think of improving learning etc. One could just about complete portions and send to the next class. Students used to be careless with their books. They did not feel free to speak with adults. Then Samarthak came, and he and the teachers went door to door canvassing for the school. They said, try it and see. In a brief time, couple of months, there seems to have been a dramatic change in attendance (from 27 to 51 students).

In this short time, the changes are that now the students are learning, and in vertical groups according to their levels. Activities are done with students before going to the books. There is no hitting of the students, and fear is not noted. Many posters are in place, the assembly has participation from a lot of children.

The community of this school (five members including one woman who were met with) is unusually articulate and thoughtful. They have a relatively liberal attitude, for example, to educating their daughters. And since the last 5 to 7 years girls are going on even to BA in many cases (Rotary club has helped with their transport for higher education). They had earlier set up their own committee to try and improve the government school but faced

teacher shortage about which they could do nothing. Their point is that the government support is low, so the school is weak – for example despite there being a need the single teacher situation continued for a long period of time. Given the new rules of not failing students, they are passed without knowing anything.

The changes in the past two months are striking. The teacher used to come late since she came from very far. Now her transport has been solved. When Samarthak came, he worked with the community to put pressure on the government to assign a second teacher here. This finally happened (a nearby school with no enrollment was closed down and that teacher brought here). The students have a nice relationship with Samarthak and are very happy with him. Many students stayed after school so that they could spend more time with him.

When he leaves, the community believes they will do their best to keep the good changes in the school, and that they will take more responsibility.

School Three

This school seems not to have undergone much transformation, from the teacher's own report. Interestingly, the majority of children in this village go to the private school. The teacher has been in this school since inception, and the SSP came in 2009. He believes in discipline enforced through some amount of fear and threats though not actually beating, particularly for children who don't respond to explanations. As a result his report is that the children do behave well, obeying him even when they disobey their parents. While activities are done, he gives more emphasis to academic studies. He does not give much credit to Samarthak for giving him any insights into teaching or learning. He acknowledges his help only for being a third teacher when there are five classes and only two teachers, and calls it 'whatever little help'.

Some members of the community have opted for the private school. They have a negative image of the government school and its teachers, and prefer to put their children in the private school because 'when one pays fees, one gets better service'. The government school according to them is bad because of careless attitudes, and because teachers know if they do not perform well they will simply be transferred, nothing worse. These community

members, not having the time to invest in improving and monitoring the school, preferred to switch to the private one. They do however note that the teacher used to come late before SS's arrival on the scene, then began coming on time. They are aware there is use of TLM in the school now. They feel that with SSP presence, children are learning well because of the way Samarthak interacted with them.

Meanwhile, those parents who have remained with the government school defend its positive points vigourously! They feel that things have really improved after SSP came. They say they are involved in the learning of the children, looking at their work, visiting school. They claim that they go each day to check if teacher has come, to check on the midday meal. The facility and free meal and free books are good, and studies more serious now. The other parents, who have not come and seen this firsthand, don't know, and that is why they are choosing private school. Another reason to choose a private school is the 'name', but these parents value the school belonging to the village. But finally they feel that it depends on a child, if he is interested he can do well in either system, and if he is not then he will fail in either system.

The children meanwhile are all praise for Samarthak, the songs, stories and drawing. They describe themselves as enjoying school, playing games, boys and girls together. They also point out what was noticed, that the teacher guides while the students clean. They also mention that the teacher scolds and beats them if homework is not done; this is in contrast to what the teacher said about not beating.

Samarthak himself says that he had a hard time getting over initial suspicions of the teacher. That took two years, and academic support could begin only in year three! In his opinion the impact of SSP was not much because of teacher transfer in the middle. Among the achievements he noted were that more girls are now enrolled, and attendance has improved overall of both students and teachers. Classes are now multi-level. Also, preparation for class is now more accepted as being useful.

School Four

Here is a school where SSP seems to have had minimal impact. The teacher spoken to has only been in this school for 6 months, although he is not an inexperienced teacher. He has

taught initially in a private school, then for eight years in government schools. This current posting means a big commute for him and he feels it is both tiring and time-consuming. He seems to have fairly strong ideas about what a good teacher is. Where Samarthak has contradicted his ideas, he quietly retains his own ideas. Where there is agreement, he feels he 'anyway knew this', so hasn't learned anything new. He has had earlier training in workshops by DPEP, Digantar.

An example of contradiction: whether children should fear teacher or not. He does feel there is an optimum level of fear for students to respect teacher, not so much that it prevents the child from coming to school, but yet provides the necessary gap so that they won't make a lot of noise and become unruly. He is clear that corporal punishment should not be giving the teacher pleasure, but is only for the child's own good. He recalls that in Digantar workshops he has heard that hitting children is undesirable.

He somewhat reluctantly acknowledges that Samarthak conducted assemblies with discussions, stories, songs and poems which are good to convey certain ideas (he occasionally uses these even now to give messages about cleanliness and good habits). But now that is gone, he seems to have reverted to prayer and national songs in assemblies. No discussions or student presentations, nor any mention of relating differently with students.

His general attitude did reveal itself in the morning cleaning time, where he was sitting and advising while the students cleaned (actually this is more the norm than the exception in the schools we've gathered data from). SMC meetings are not very regular (perhaps once in 2-3 months). He himself cannot visit any home in the village because of his long commute.

The discussion with mothers revealed that they are quite uninformed about school. They don't know that they could be members of SMC, they have never attended an SMC meeting. They do drop in to school to get water, or if grazing nearby to talk about the midday meal, or the children's work. But they say that since they are not educated, they are not in touch with their children's academic work (they say their husbands are). Curiously, Samarthak also has not visited the home of these women. But they have heard of his weekly visits, and that he used to play with the children. They feel their children like coming to school. There are some caste issues related to enrollment, but they do not blame the teachers for this.

They have a generally positive impression of the teachers, saying they are not casteist for example, and also that they give attention to the children and their studies. They prefer the government school to the private for these reasons; however, there are only 25 children in this school, many local children going to the private instead. Even the teacher says that once the child is older, or even if the family is doing well, the private school is preferred.

The students were a little more appreciative of SS, saying they could relate with him, and that he taught them basic math and language. He also sang and played with them, taught them songs and poems. Their teacher however did not join in, and since they don't recall the songs now, it seems that aspect is lost. They agree that they are happy coming to school, but the reason is that they prefer playing and learning in school to grazing cattle in the sun! Girls and boys clean together in the school, but play separately. They say they sometimes get beaten by the teacher, which matches what he said as well. But their overall description of their school is that they play and study here, whereas in the 'other school' (private) the students get beaten.

School Five

The Samarthak has stopped coming here. The teacher is a senior person, who has worked for 20 years, and comes from a nearby village. He cares about his reputation since he lives nearby. He feels that he and the community is satisfied with his work. He sees some evolution in himself, for example, he used to teach in 'old ways' but has now moved onto to new approaches to reading and writing. Even from Samarthak, he learned better methods of teaching that he agrees with and wants to continue with. Of course, he also learned stories, poems and songs from him. He feels Samarthak should have come three days a week rather than only once. He will miss SSP because of several reasons: he will lose a teacher, and a companion to plan and consult with.

He also shared interesting views on children: that they are all different from each other, and that he responds to this by teaching separately until they do understand. He does threaten to hit when there is misbehavior, but says he has stopped hitting now. He certainly feels loved by the children, who come early to school and greet him from the vehicle itself, and who, he says, don't want to leave at the end of the day. He also said he is willing to learn

from children and from his mistakes. He comes across as confident while appreciating what he has learned from others. For example, he prefers being a single teacher at times, since he can be more effective, and that he learned this in his initial training from DPIP, STC and Digantar.

He says he meets parents once a month to discuss the meal, the students' learning, and the mothers are participative.

In the morning, one teacher was there early, and several children were already cleaning (boys litter-picking, girls sweeping). The rest were sitting in lines, ready for assembly. The assembly was rather regimented and the children recited prayer. There was no sign of other activities such as singing, discussion, presentations. Students themselves confirmed this.

The children like school, because of their teacher and the learning. They say he explains to them, sometimes using concrete materials and demonstrations. He doesn't, however, play with them or clean with them. He doesn't hit (unless they really misbehave, such as disrupting assembly). Even in the holidays they think about school, they are quite attached. Of course the alternative (grazing) is not to their liking!

They remember Samarthak fondly, he used to tell stories and poems. They learned songs and origami with him. Their two teachers do still tell them stories, and the children themselves also tell these stories to others back home. But other than this, the children don't see any ways in which Samarthak's work is continued by the teachers after his departure. Surprisingly, they recall him actually hitting them, rarely though not without reason, according to them.

The community members who spoke did not sound either appreciative of the Samarthak or involved in SMC meetings at all. According to them, neither teacher nor Samarthak has visited their homes. They said that since the teacher was already good, the Samarthak did not make much difference other than being a substitute teacher. As the teacher had said, it is true that the community thinks highly of him! They say their children are smarter and get better marks than other children. Their children say their teachers are good, and the parents feel he is affectionate but also disciplinary, a combination they agree with. Others also tell them that their children are 'bright'. However, they feel that in spite of the

teacher's dedication, more teaching staff is needed to help out. They can and do help in some ways such as getting the hand pump fixed, and building a fence for the school.

School Six

This school is located in an interesting and very challenging community setting. In 2001, there were 144 children in the register, but now very few children attend school (maybe as low as 25). There is only a single, male teacher here.

The hamlet has two communities living slightly separated from each other – the Jaats and the Banjaras. They get along well, yet the students in the school are almost all only Jaat. One reason given by a Jaat is that Banjara homes are too far from the school. Earlier when it used to be in the Panchayat building, in a more convenient location, they would send their children. Another reason hinted at is that the Banjara parents are not interested in educating their children. The teacher also said that the Banjara children do not come because their parents are not interested, and either put them to work or in a private school.

Yet in conversation members of the Banjara community shared that they do want their children to attend school and be educated to improve quality of life. They send their sons, but do not know if they end up there or somewhere else! Sometimes they do go, but then do not learn anything. Even after finishing 5th std they cannot count to 20. Sometimes they go only for the lunch. And the teacher does not care either way, and does not inform parents about attendance. If at all the parents go to school to enquire, the teacher assumes they have come to fight. Anyway, they cannot send their girls alone that distance. An interesting aside was a conversation with the SMC adhyaksh, who said the teacher is not giving attention to the school, gets children to cheat on exams, is pursuing his own business in fact.

In contrast members of the Jaat community are satisfied with the government school, and feel the teaching is good. They feel education will benefit one no matter what one does, even farming. The earlier *Pehchaanshaala* had a very good teacher, this one is not as good, they say. They visit every two weeks or so, talk to the teachers about children's work, and are told to encourage their children. They are happy with the infrastructure and attribute this to the CRCF who is from here. However, SMC meetings are not regular or well attended.

They knew the Samarthak used to come once a week, play with the children and give them books. They do not recall meeting him or him visiting them. (The school has had SSP in place for 5 years).

Other than commenting on the Banjara community's reasons for not sending their children, the teacher spoke quite a bit on how much he learned from the Samarthak. He said the Samarthak would take him into the community to meet some people. He was good worker, went door to door, arranged for meetings, but the people did not respond. Samarthak taught the teacher methods for learning that worked, and used to help make plans. Now that he is gone, it is difficult to carry out things in the same way with the shortage of adults. He was around for too short a time, he said, to make a difference. The teacher also said he has gone to workshops and learned alternate methods. He focuses on the children's studies, not much on games. He tries to discipline using raised voice, threats, scaring the children, but does not like hitting them. He said it is very difficult to bring change in this hamlet, it will take a long time, especially the challenge of the Banjara community, but if even 10% change the others may follow. *Pehchaanshaala* should be attached to the school it will help with girl child education also.

School Seven

SSP began in 2009 but discontinued this academic year. In appearance the school is a little drab: there is no boundary wall, there are no trees. The building has two rooms and an office, and everything is very dusty. It is a little outside the village, with no proper road connecting it (apparently, in rainy seasons this can cause absenteeism). Members of the community want trees and boundary wall and a better road, but seem to be helpless in getting it done, and in fact asked us repeatedly if we could make it happen.

There are two teachers here, a woman from Jaipur who has done an MA education and then a B Ed plus a lot of training (including from Digantar), and the HM who is from the next hamlet in the same village, and seems not to have travelled much or benefited from the kind of experiences she has. He seemed uncomfortable with our visit, did not speak much, and did not come across as a confident teacher. In contrast, her tone with the children was

confident, affectionate and strict. We could not get a strong sense of the working relationship between the two teachers.

The Jaipur teacher said that her training and experience had given her a lot already, and the Samarthak added support in terms of TLM. She has had the insight that the teacher's personality has a direct influence on the students, and one must be aware of that. Samarthak also helped her see that one must teach very young children by first drawing them in with songs etc, to bring about the necessary motivation. We saw that her class included a lot of student contributions, though in an orderly manner. She called on specific children, and made frequent connections to experiences from their daily lives. When a student made a mistake, it was used as an opportunity to learn from. She shared that she gets older children to help in teaching younger ones, and also tells them not to use violence while teaching. Firmness, however, is a must. Since she commutes from Jaipur, she is really unable to meet with children outside class, or with their parents, unless they come to school for something.

The headmaster said that he always wanted to be a teacher, and had even started a school long ago. He has been here for 12 years, as a single teacher most of the time. He said he sees change for the better, with more students coming to school and improved learning. This change he does not connect with the SS, who he credits for being an 'extra hand'. He believes that proper behavior is an important goal of schooling, and gave an example of children talking with respect. He has attended a 5 day workshop at Digantar, where he learned about singing, drawing, play and learning. He said that SSP helped by coming once a week, drawing and singing. These are also important in learning, he said. He also said he plays with the children; however, during our brief observation we felt that students in his class responded in more limited and mechanical ways, and again, he appeared ill-at-ease though it was his own class in his own school.

Children were hesitant to speak, though not afraid. They like school and come of their own will, but other than playing cannot say what they like, or even what they do in school, without extensive prodding. About punishment and scolding, it appears these do happen, and one or two serious instances came to their minds. However, they seemed to accept this with no protest, and also said they are not afraid of teachers.

About the Samarthak, there was a hesitant memory only. He did one magic trick they all remember vividly, but then they lapsed into forgetfulness about anything else he did. They did mention songs, poems, drawing, but recounted these a bit blandly. He has discontinued since March, so he was here for just over a year.

The community does remember such a person coming in once a week. They are happy with the teaching and learning of their children and this does not seem strongly linked to Samarthak. In fact he is better known not by name but as 'sir from Phagi'. He did not visit the community homes, he did not take any steps that we can see to strengthen the SMC. A meeting was held in school to which a handful of members came, in fact maybe only one, the president. That the SMC exists, and for the good of the school, and that every parent is a member, are facts unknown to the community. Neither teacher has visited the village homes. HM seemed uncomfortable when we asked about SMC, as it is his responsibility to gather and hold these meetings, and it clearly has not happened. When he said it is because the people are not 'awakened', he was reminded that he himself is a local person and could thus do a lot. He seemed somewhat unmotivated, and SSP has not had enough time to significantly change these aspects of him.

The Samarthak who was with us for the day said that it takes a long time to change people, and 3 to 4 years is a minimum, so naturally in this short time a Samarthak would have been unable to make a change. The Project Coordinator said that change is not a black and white thing. Some schools have changed a little, and this is to be noted, as in this school. With more intervention it would change more.

School Eight

This school is upper primary, spacious, fenced, shaded by large neem trees. There are many classrooms and buildings, light and airy. There is a shelf or two of books, and a computer in one room. In assembly the children were lively and energetic, but what struck us was the camaraderie and friendship among the five teachers. This impression continued through the day, as they shared food, jokes and stories with each other and with us.

The youngest two classes sat together in a large circle, and their teacher gave the older ones some work to do while she taught the younger ones using an abacus. She called on various

students by name. She is a new teacher, but came across as accomplished and confident, and much supported by her older colleagues. An older English class was taken by another woman teacher who was similarly affectionate and attentive to individual children.

We watched one male teacher at work with two classes (he had to alternate his presence in the two rooms). In one he was introducing the idea of proper and common Hindi nouns, and in the other the concept of odd and even numbers. He used the blackboard well, called on students in turn, and was affectionate if a little loud. He had worked for five years with a Samarthak, and when later we spoke with him, his humility and openness to learning came across strongly. He used to beat children when they disobeyed or misbehaved, he said, but after Samarthak had come and shown that children can learn and perhaps better without it, he has stopped. Why would I not take up an idea that worked better for me and my students, he asked? While Samarthak has helped him with TLM and teaching ideas, in his view the greatest benefit has been to the environment of openness among students. Even though they are noisier, they are learning more. And as for fear, "Earlier we used to threaten them, but SS explained that learning should happen by developing relationship with student, and I agree..." In no one else did we hear so clear an endorsement for the principles embodied by the Samarthaks.

The headmaster, too, was appreciative of the SSP. He has been here for 18 years, HM in the last three. He told the Samarthak, focusing on the school environment is fine, but you should also help us with academic work. The environment has changed for the better; children are more open and not hesitant to talk, he said echoing the earlier teacher. He also appreciates the help that Samarthak gave in keeping in touch with the other schools, since he is a nodal teacher. In fact, according to him, people are more likely to be open to him since they see him as non-governmental, and in this way he has a better picture of the problems. Thanks to the visits to the community, now the parents have a positive attitude to the school, which earlier was not the case. They too see Samarthak as someone more qualified, more dedicated to their children's education than government employees. But how will these gains be kept up? He said, "Programs and people will come and go, but we have to keep up the work."

In our meetings with the community we got that very positive feeling for the school, especially among the women we spoke with. They said their children study well, they know this because they often go to school and even at home see them studying well. They can tell, they said, that their children are intelligent! Of course, they know how their children love the Samarthak and look forward to his weekly visits, but they good-humouredly shared that they didn't really agree with this 'no beating' policy. How would children learn if they weren't a little afraid of you?

School Nine

We arrived at this school before the teachers, who were both slightly late. As soon as we entered, we realized the children were already sitting in a large circle, just waiting for us. On some invisible signal, they began their assembly, conducted entirely by themselves! Later, two fathers told us that all the children regularly go half an hour early to school. The sense of ownership and order among the students was strikingly obvious to us.

The school has a male teacher, the HM, who was alone for some years, and a woman teacher who has joined in the last two years. SSP has worked with former only. They both arrived after some time, and assembly continued with the help of the HM, who walked around and led more songs.

Class five started an outdoor math class with HM, who told them to bring some stones from just outside the school gate. He used these to illustrate and teach the concept of averages. He called on individual students, made sure that each one participated, and used the blackboard well. Later he told us that he believes that TLM should be what is easily available around you, not something special that you buy. His involvement and interest in education was apparent, and while he spoke of ideas he had come across or developed on his own, he also acknowledged that he would miss the companionship of planning classes and discussions with Samarthak.

In stark contrast, the woman teacher's class was very drill oriented, and she did not seem aware of more than half the class, focusing all her attention on the handful of very young children to her left. She told us later that she had not worked with Samarthak, and did not know much about his contributions apart from the songs they had all learned in assemblies.

Later, her students told us that they get beatings from her from time to time, and some of them said they were scared of her while others said they were not.

In the same breath, they asserted that Samarthak never beats them. In fact, they said, when they do not do their work, he asks them why instead of scolding them. The parents are very aware of his visits and the love their children have for him. He has visited them often and they share a good rapport. The children told us they love the things he did with them—songs, poems, drawing, games—and will miss him when he leaves. They assured us they would take things forward after that, but felt that they needed to learn more from him.

The community women we met were very vocal and appreciative of their school. Earlier, they felt things were not so good in terms of attendance and teacher's punctuality. But now, the children are going to school happily, the teacher is on time, the studies are going well, and even the teacher of the upper primary school has told them their children are better off than the private school students! They go to school off and on, see how classes are going on, and they also see children doing the things they've learned from Samarthak at home. While they do go for meetings at school when called, they are unaware of anything called SMC, or that they are all rightfully members of it. Already they feel they have some say in how the school's money is to be spent. The mothers were very clear that education is for more than just getting a job: it is to learn how to talk, how to manage one's life, and knowledge has its own value.

The community men were unavailable that day; but the two we did get to speak with were very appreciative of their school. They were clearly well acquainted with Samarthak, but didn't expect the teachers to visit their homes; after all, 'they're busy at school aren't they?! Here too, as in several other schools, we heard the earnest plea for an upper primary school in the village so that it would be possible for their daughters to continue their education.

School Ten

There are two teachers in this 11-year-old school: one from the local village (whose two children also study in the school), and the other from further away. The SSP has been here for two years, working closely with the local teacher, who is generous with his appreciation

of the project. He took time to accept the Samarthak, he says, but the regular and long engagement paid off, and they worked very well together. All that he has learned from the Samarthak (teaching reading through whole-word methods, the use of flashcards, the cleaning rotas, the songs) he will continue, because it works; but if the Samarthak would stay on, he could learn a lot more.

Being from the same village as all his students has its advantages. He does not have to commute, so he is never late. The children meet him outside school as well and have a closer connection with him. He says he treats them as his own children. Sometimes when a student does not understand something, he is approached to explain it outside school. He is familiar with all their parents, and they can approach him if something is not going right at school. It does happen that if he scolds a child, the parents may come and question him about it that evening, which can be embarrassing; but after all, he says, it's only right, their future is in my hands. And fear is not good for learning, though if they are mischievous I do need to warn them at times.

On their part, the community members are happy with the school. Their children are learning, and no one fails. They believe that education is what makes life worth living; and with it, their children can even be better farmers, if that is what they choose to be. It would make us happy, they said, if our children became farmers like us, but with this schooling they will do a better job. They are certainly in touch with the local teacher, but have no idea about the existence of an SMC, or regular meetings. As in the other communities we visited, school visits seem restricted to national holidays and some festivals. Yet according to the teacher, the SMC does meet with around ten members from the community, and decisions have been made regarding the handpump for example.

The school premises is large but unfenced, with several plants and saplings the children have planted and protected with thorny guards. The students say they love and care for these plants, as well as cleaning the school and the gutter by turns according to the chart. They showed remarkable orderliness and self discipline on the day of the visit. As one teacher had not yet arrived, older children were telling stories to the younger ones and keeping their interest and attention without the presence of an adult! Interestingly, the stories and conversations were taking place in the local language.

The students remember their Samarthak fondly, and describe him as a lot of fun, never scolding them. He taught them *antakshari*, *namaste-namaste*, *kabbadi* and cricket, and the girls were also a part of the cricket playing. Of course, they remember his songs, poems and stories; but while they do still keep these going, “it would be nice if he was still here”.

APPENDIX 3: Discussions with Samarthaks and Programme Coordinator

First series – Individual Interviews

Samarthak 1

1. Initially teachers were suspicious, asked why we want to change anything. No cleanliness, assembly only prayer. We spent lot of time explaining to teachers the advantages of SSP.
2. They had the letter from the govt permitting their intervention. So it took 2 years before the teachers joined and gained confidence in the project.
3. We addressed cleanliness, assembly, teacher support and TLM.
4. One of my schools the impact was not much because the teacher transferred in the middle.
5. I worked with some primary, some upper primary.
6. We had 4-5 day workshop with teachers, 6mts after starting SSP. These helped because they would listen to one another. It motivated them to be a part of the programme.
7. All meetings are very important to increase our motivation also, listening to each other. Every Saturday we would meet to discuss plans for the next week, problems we were facing etc.
8. I could start academic support only in 3rd year. Till then tried relating with teacher.
9. Once in three months meeting with govt, but we contacted BEO if any trouble. Report we submitted every three months.
10. Balmela decisions made by teachers and SS, plans shared, then taken to the community.
11. We have brought in more girl students, attendance of kids and teachers, multi level classes. Initially teachers didn't see the point of preparation for class. Later they saw.
12. For women teachers in winter it is a problem for returning home late.
13. In July we evaluated kids in subjects, and once in March. To know what to address. Conducted by research arm of Digantar.

14. We should continue supporting the teachers in some way after SSP. And increase coverage of programme. Eventually to 31 nodal schools. Every 6 mts workshops for the teachers.

Samarthak 2

1. I now have the confidence to do anything, there are no impossible problems. I have learned a lot about how to work with teachers
2. Initially students hesitated a lot to talk. When teachers did not cooperate, I worked directly with the students. One to two years later, things moved, and the teachers also joined me. It took them that long to figure out that he is working in their interests. To better the school.
3. First area I tackled was assembly. I worked with the students, and then teachers joined.
4. Then I brought in planning and the teachers could see the impact of planning.
5. Community not involved when I first came, and headmaster not in contact with community. After 2 years, this improved and women's participation also. One way was Balmela, I went door to door with the teachers asking the community to take responsibilities in specific areas.
6. All the meetings we had were v important to discuss problems, take help from each other. Sense of togetherness gave a lot of energy. No sense of separatedness among us.
7. BEO was good with me but not with other SS – mixed response. Govt would check facilities and midday meal but not interested in academics.

Samarthak 3

1. Confidence level very high to work in these schools after this experience.
2. Attendance went up in 2 to 3 years in the school.
3. Suggestions: work at changing overall attitude. Continue in one school for a year, going every day, to a nodal school. See for a year and review how to go ahead. If we do this for 5 nodal schools we will see the effect on other schools. But after two years of working in one school, we should move to other schools. In this way finally all 31 nodals to be worked with. Have to work closely with the govt.

Samarthak 4

1. Initial problems of teacher accepting me. Took 2 to 3 months. I worked once in 8 to 10 days in each school. I took the community's help to gain acceptance.
2. I went to Sarpanch who spoke to parents who sent kids to school.
3. Workshops were very helpful, and SS workshops for 25 days were very helpful also in talking to the teachers about pedagogy.
4. Students would talk with me outside school hours about personal matters. I worked with them on academics, behavior, manner of talking, cleanliness.
5. I gave RtE info to the community.
6. Among SS and Project Coordinator there was democracy in decision making, forum available to share feelings, very good team that helped one another.
7. Challenges: getting motivated SS and who can motivate others who do not see education as important.
8. Suggestions: get more nodal schools involved, get other schools to see the work going on and that way extend.
9. Now we are participating at BEO level, we should interact with govt at a higher level in future to see what they think and do.

Programme Coordinator

1. Meetings with SS worked very well to bring them together. Sometimes they would meet on the way to school for 10 mins on the road and discuss briefly.
2. Govt support was low initially but gradually as they saw the benefits they gave more support. Arrangements for workshops for eg. And taking help from me in planning their own programmes, and to arrange the 15th Aug programmes etc.
3. In 2002 attendance at one of our workshops was poor but now it is good.
4. Problems were: teacher transfer, single teacher schools
5. I substituted for a SS when necessary.
6. Govt could not give academic support, only midday meal and infrastructure
7. It took about 1 ½ to 2 years for the CRCF to support us. Long term help will be needed from CRCF

Second series - Group Discussion

Question: How would you define a 'successful' SSP intervention?

- Firstly, does the teacher have a better understanding of three things: what is education, what is the nature of a subject, and how do (different) children learn (the use of TLM for eg). Further, can the teacher explain to another teacher who has not had the benefit of this programme. For eg if they see a teacher doing things differently, or as they used to, are they able to point it out? Or in the monthly cluster meetings, are our teachers able to explain to others? We have seen them accept these ideas, and we have seen this confidence to share with others also.
- The environment at school: are the children happy or scared, do they talk freely or sit silent? We have seen these changes too.
- Is the level of participation in meetings and workshops high? Eg CRCF meetings, are the teachers able to prepare, plan for these?
- Do the nearby schools also ask for Samarthak to visit them? One school which originally had said – no thank you – to us some years ago, came up and asked for Samarthak visits just two weeks ago! We have received requests of this kind.
- Do the govt officials treat Digantar with greater respect now that we have 'proved' our intention and integrity? We have seen this change, where earlier we were not given much attention, now we are given tea, immediate attention, and always invited for many Phagi occasions.
- Is the attendance high at Digantar's annual workshops? Earlier there would be poor attendance, now around 90 to 95% of teachers come. They also ask for more teachers to be allowed to come, from their school.

Question: What makes a Shiksha Samarthak?

- Of course, Digantar's training. It consists of a 40 day training period and then a 6 month probation period, after which some do drop out. Then there are many many repeated meetings, daily, weekly, monthly.

- A person who can look at a failure and say – what was my mistake, what can I do differently? Also, the attitude that tries to research a situation to find out why things are or are not working.
- A person with perseverance, or 'sahansheelta'. This may come through the work, through the experience with children. It is a continuous learning process.
- A person who realizes that change is a slow process, and takes different forms in each school and each teacher, and who never gives up.
- A person who contributes to team feeling, non-divisive, sharing of ideas, problems and solutions, never a feeling that 'my work is better than yours'. A sense of togetherness.
- A person who realizes that a teacher's actions come from lack of understanding, which can be remedied.

Question: What kind of teacher is more likely to internalize the SSP principles?

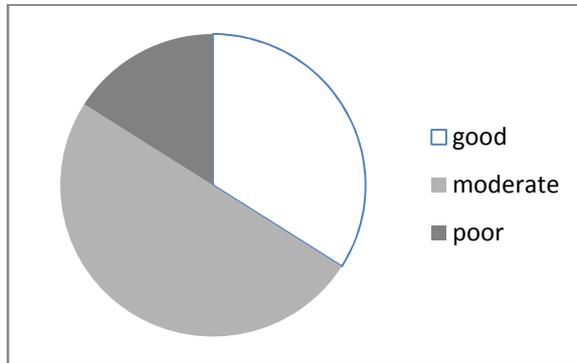
- Trust has to build or else it won't work.
- Each teacher comes from a different background, and has a different understanding. What the Samarthaksays has to click, and it does for some and not for others. Don't know why...
- Teacher should be willing to read a little, discuss ideas.
- Teacher has to feel confident and fearless to change something they have been doing for years perhaps.
- Any teacher might see the following: though I am here for 15 years, the children are so fond of this young chap who comes once a week and is here for just a year. Also, the children are learning well from him even though his methods are so different. Samarthak is telling me that even though the school is good, there is no limit to improvement, so we can also get better...

Question: How long should an SSP go on for and with what frequency of contact?

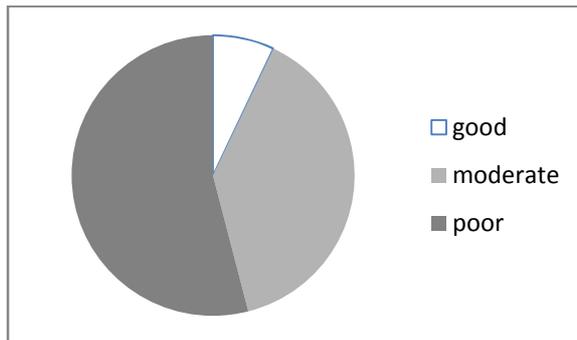
- One cannot put a time on change! It may be very very gradual. For eg. A teacher may be standing near the kids arms crossed while they sing, not sitting and singing with them. Or may be telling them what to clean, not cleaning along with them. Yet this may be a movement from an earlier stage of complete non-involvement.
- Once a week is good for a specific reason. If Samarthak were to go daily, he would be seen as an extra teacher. But if he is there only once a week then his influence can be something else.
- Three to four years of such interaction would be good, five has been best. Continuous one Samarthak for atleast three years. And no gap.

APPENDIX 4: Data Given by the SSP Team of 100 Schools

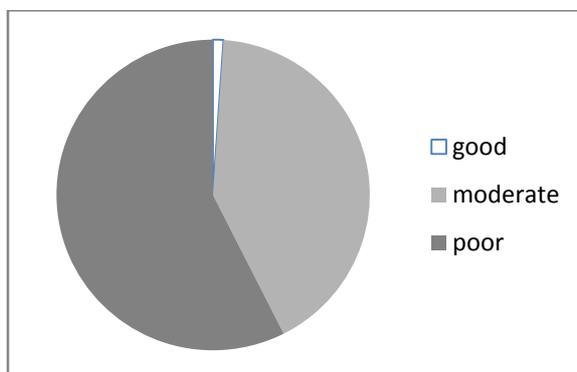
Change in teachers' general attitudes (discipline, relationship):



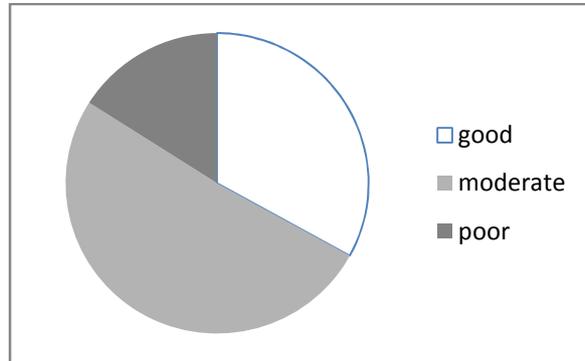
Change in teachers' teaching methods:



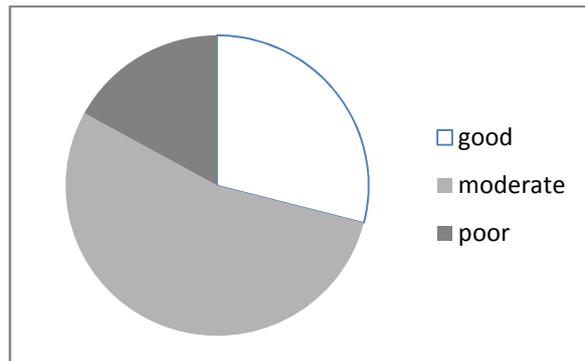
Ability and willingness to make monthly and weekly plans:



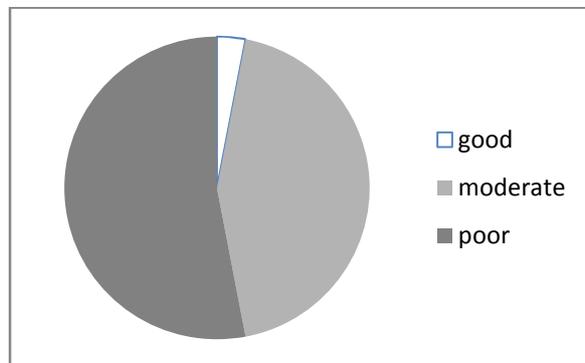
Cleanliness of school:



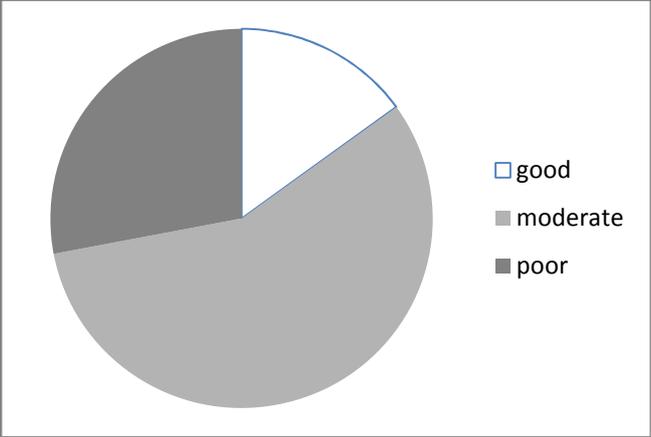
Teachers' punctuality:



Children's level of learning:



Community involvement:



APPENDIX 5: Data Summarized Separately for 5 and 2 Year Schools

	FIVE YEARS (75 SCHOOLS)	TWO YEARS (25 SCHOOLS)
Change in teachers' general attitudes (discipline, relationship)	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>
Change in teachers' teaching methods	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>
Ability and willingness to make monthly and weekly plans	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>

	FIVE YEARS (75 SCHOOLS)	TWO YEARS (25 SCHOOLS)
Cleanliness of school	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>
Teachers' punctuality	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>
Children's level of learning	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>
Community involvement	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>	<p> □ good ■ moderate ■ poor </p>

APPENDIX 6: Content of Workshops

ShikshaSamarthaks

Winter: 10 days

- capacity building
- discussion on academic issue
- teaching packages & teaching through TLM
- increase understanding

Summer: 1 month

- aims of education
- education perspectives
- nature and methods of teaching language, math and evs
- issues&problems which may come up while teaching

Teachers

5 days : 1 teacher per school 80-90 attended.

2 days : Dialogue on teaching perspectives & Aims of Education

2 days : Nature & methods of teaching language, Math, Environmental Science

1 day : Support from SSP and planning)

APPENDIX 7: Summary of Interventions and Impact Observed

SITUATION BEFORE SSP	INTERVENTIONS	RESULTS
*Teachers suspicious of the SS. Suspected in whose interest the changes were being suggested.	*SS met with the teachers and stated their intention of changing certain ways of the school. Worked for a long time (1-2 yrs.) to show the teachers that they are working in the interest of the school.	*Trust levels high, even if some did not acknowledge significant assistance
*Teachers were not taking responsibility. Sleeping in school, coming late, going for meetings called by the government officials and closing the school at 10 am after the mid day meal was served. Lot of absenteeism.	*SS demonstrated to the teachers importance of being punctual, being in school. Also SS worked with the community and showed the teachers the students enthusiasm to work.	*Punctuality and attendance definitely improved (1.9)
*Schools very untidy. No attention to cleanliness. * No attention to the physical environment.	*SS initiated cleaning the school (arranging shoes neatly, cleaning of toilets, paper picking, etc.) with students and teachers involvement. *Safai charts *Day begins with Assembly & Cleaning. * Posters put up on walls of the classroom.	*Cleanliness definitely improved (1.8)
*Assembly was only to say prayers. Sometimes the assembly did not take place.	*SS taught the students and teachers poems, helped in putting up skits. Greater participation by students and teachers. * Sometimes discuss issues/problems faced by students.	*Assemblies were a vibrant experience, with songs and poems, mostly led by individual or small groups of students
*Relationship between students and teachers based only on authority and fear.	*SS directly established a close and affectionate relationship with students. Teachers could see the students' response to the SS.	*Atmosphere of relationship significantly improved in many schools (1.8), teachers mention dealing with discipline issues using love and scolding or threat but not hitting.
*SDMC meeting only in paper.	*SS worked with the community to ensure that the community takes this seriously. Also got the teachers to see the importance of the meetings.	*Only in one school community members reported good meeting frequency and attendance. Most, esp mothers, said they did not know of such a meeting. Teachers also said these were not very regular.

SITUATION BEFORE SSP	INTERVENTIONS	RESULTS
*Children's learning levels not satisfactory	An assessment was done in July of the year and later again in March to see the results of the work done on academics by the SS.	Average improvement of children's learning levels 2.5. But parents reported that their children are learning well, and a few said that teachers from the middle school comment that these students are better than those from the local private school.
*Community not involved much. Many students going to private schools. * Often not sending their children regularly to school.	*SS maintained regular contact with the community (door to door visits and also calling meetings of the community in the school). *Exhibitions held to share the work done by the children. Community was invited and often the community helped (had specific responsibilities), with the exhibition. *SS urged the community to send the children regularly at least for some specified period of time. After this time the parents would be able to see the impact of work done in the school and would on their own send the children regularly.	*Community members all said they do drop into school off and on, to see how the children are learning, and to check on midday meals. Overall improvement in community involvement from SS ratings was 2.1. *Community members all had heard of the SS, and that their children looked forward to these weekly visits. They were not aware of the TLM and pedagogic inputs received. *Enrolment increased in half the schools and decreased in the other half! Overall change was +2% only.
*Lessons plan were not made by the teachers.	*SS worked with the teachers every week to develop lesson plans. Monthly plans were also developed. Review meetings.	*Teachers did not become very willing or able to do weekly planning on their own (2.7)
*Teaching only through books and use of blackboard.	*TLM developed, mainly charts and posters by the teachers and SS. Also some TLM given to the schools.	*Though SS ratings do not show significant improvement (2.5), observations did reveal good use of TLMs, simple good pedagogic practices, charts and posters were on the walls .