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Quality Education in Chamarajanagar District
District Quality Education Project (DQEP) / Vidyankura

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chamarajanagar district in South Karnataka is characterized by its low literacy levels and large populations of Schedule Castes and Schedule Tribes. Government programmes and policies affecting the area have increased access to and infrastructure of primary schools, but have not as yet improved quality of education. Still, the schools built by the government face numerous obstacles including basic needs like insufficient drinking water and toilet facilities.

The Social Anthropology and Sociology Unit of the National Institute of Advanced Studies commenced the District Quality Education Project (DQEP) or *Vidyankura* in 2002 to address the problems with the quality of elementary education in this district. The emphasis was to be on child-centered education, and integrating the sociological and anthropological perspectives to address issues in education. DQEP was to achieve this by providing capacity building training to all stakeholders involved in elementary education: teachers, HMs, parents and administrators at the district level.

The main programmes involved with the two schools selected for this case study were the School-Community Contact Programme (SCCP) and the Language Development Programme (LDP). SCCP’s main thrust was to strengthen the linkages between the school and the community, and get the community to involve itself in the functioning of the school. The LDP was to enhance learning levels in Kannada and contribute to teachers’ capabilities in multi-grade classrooms. We chose one tribal residential school, Kolipalya Ashramshala, and one government school, Hegdehundi Lower Primary School to study these programmes.

On the whole, the Ashramshalas have been more receptive to DQEP’s inputs than government schools. Ashramshala teachers, falling under the jurisdiction of the Tribal Welfare Department as opposed to the Education Department, do not have access to trainings, workshops, and other perks enjoyed by government school teachers. The training received by the teachers through LDP and SCCP have been very useful as it is the first such training for many of them. The Language training specifically has helped the teachers communicate lessons better to the children. Most importantly, teachers have become aware of the importance of education and have begun to take an interest in learning levels as well as how to become better teachers. It is expected that the support and training provided by DQEP will enable the schools to enhance the social and cognitive development as well as learning levels of children, most of who are from economically and socially disadvantaged backgrounds. The major roadblock for Kolipalya has been the community, who do not have an interest in involving themselves in the functioning of the school, for various reasons.

Since DQEP started working with Hegdehundi LPS, awareness of learning levels has increased and school functioning is more regular and punctual. It is
however, one of the more problematic schools involved in the intervention. The SDMC has not been reconstituted, and politics within its membership has stifled progress. The relationship between the HM and teacher has deteriorated partly because of rivalry for DQEP’s trainings. The implementation itself is not carried out ideally, as inputs given by the field researcher tend not to apply to specific problems of the school. The major external factor impeding the process however has been caste bias, as the fieldworker belongs to a lower caste than the HM.

The major successes of SCCP and LDP in general are increased levels of awareness of the importance of education, involving parents and community in the functioning of the school, providing useful training and workshops for teachers, and motivating and encouraging teachers to design new methods of teaching to make classes more interesting. Challenges for the intervention now and in the future are improving programme implementation by fieldworkers, changing the community’s mindset, and creating ownership among stakeholders.

There are many barriers to face in achieving quality of education, many that can be observed through the lens of these two schools in the Chamarajanagar district. On the whole, DQEP must be congratulated for its efforts at capacity building and monitoring. The strategies and processes initiated by DQEP to enhance the quality of elementary education among poor and disadvantaged communities may provide lessons for initiatives in other regions with similar conditions.
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The contents of this case study do not necessarily reflect the policies or the views of UNICEF and/or the National Institute of Advanced Studies, Bangalore.
INTRODUCTION

In this case study we look at the DQEP intervention in Chamarajanagar district of Karnataka. This intervention is aimed at improving the quality of elementary education in government schools and Ashramshalas (government residential schools) by building the capacities of all the stakeholders involved.

Through this case study we hope to gain insights about what goes into providing quality elementary education to poor and marginalized groups and what hurdles have to be overcome to achieve this. We explain the DQEP intervention, its objectives and the different programmes it has initiated to achieve these objectives. We also analyze the progress the intervention has made in reaching its goals and the different factors affecting the process.

METHODOLOGY

The case study started with an initial field visit to ten schools. This included both government schools and Ashramshalas part of the DQEP intervention, and other government schools not involved. This was followed by a review of primary and secondary data concerning elementary education in Chamarajanagar district, the government policies concerning elementary education and the program descriptions, field reports and other DQEP documents. We then selected one government school and one Ashramshala, to study how the intervention has affected the quality of education in these schools. Based on the literature review and the initial field visits, we prepared questionnaires for the stakeholders in both the schools. Our second school visit concentrated on these schools. This time, we collected data about the schools and DQEP through our questionnaires, semi structured and informal interviews, observing the school functioning and attending school-community meetings. After these field visits, we compiled the data we had collected and wrote the case study.

STUDY SITE: CHAMARAJANAGAR DISTRICT

Chamarajanagar District was originally a part of Mysore District and became a new district in 1998. The district has 461 villages with 120 Grama Panchayats and 4 taluk Panchayats. Chamarajanagar, is primarily an agricultural district. Most of the district is subject to infrequent rainfall and this has led to the migration of many villagers to neighboring states.

The district has the state’s largest population of schedule castes (SC) and schedule tribes (ST). Jenu Kurubas, Kadu Kurubas, Yeravas and Soligas are four of the major tribal groups present here. The tribals were earlier living in the forests, but after the demarking of forests as “reserved,” they have been resettled on the outskirts by the government [1].
According to the 2001 census, the literacy level of the district is 51 percent and is much below the state average of 67 percent, which ranks it as one of the low literacy districts in the state. The literacy rate of men in the district is 16 percent more than that of women (43%).

There has been improvement in the accessibility to schools, but infrastructure and the facilities available in schools are uneven. For example, more than 50 percent of the schools do not have toilets and drinking water facilities [1].

**GOVERNMENT POLICIES**

The Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is the Indian Government’s national flagship programme to achieve Universal Primary Education. Through SSA, funds have been released for creating more schools, expanding the infrastructure of schools, training and workshops for teachers community leaders and development of Block and Cluster Resource Centres.

The four kinds of schools in Karnataka are government schools, Ashramshalas, government aided private schools and unaided private schools. The DPI, which is part of the Department of Primary and Secondary Education, runs the government schools. Ashramshalas are residential schools for Schedule Tribes run by the department of Tribal and Social Welfare.

Annexure A shows the administrative structure of the DPI. For the purposes of this case study, being familiar with the administrative structure from the block level and below is sufficient. At the Block level, the Block Education Officer (BEO) is responsible for the running of government schools. After the District Primary Education Program (DPEP) started, the Block Resource Centres (BRCs) and Cluster Resource Centres (CRCs) have been established for providing a platform for teachers to discuss issues on teaching frequently. The Block Resource Persons (BRPs) and Cluster Resource Persons (CRPs) are responsible for the running BRCs and CRCs respectively.

The School Development and Monitoring Committee (SDMC, formerly known as Village Education Committee) is a mandatory Government of Karnataka (GOK) organisation, which includes the Headmaster and the parents of children in the school. It is formed once in three years and meets regularly to discuss issues relating to school infrastructure and educational problems and to monitor the school. The SDMC members are entitled to trainings from the government to understand their roles and responsibilities. The SDMC also has limited financial authority for overseeing the development of school infrastructure.

The HM of a government school has both administrative and academic responsibilities including monitoring basic school functioning. A complete list of HM's responsibilities is given in Annexure B.
Ashramshalas are residential schools for standards 1 – 5 run by the Department of Tribal Welfare. These schools aim to provide education and accommodation facilities for SCs and STs. Depending on the demography of the region, seats are distributed between SCs and STs. Funds for Ashramshalas come from separate schemes from the state and centre, but not from SSA. Their administration does not come under the purview of the DPI.

The Tribal Welfare department appoints one teacher for every twenty-five students. Each Ashramshala has a cook and an assistant cook. In the initial recruitment of teachers for Ashramshalas, many were appointed who had no formal training in teaching. Since these schools are residential, teachers are also wardens. Ashramshalas receive funds from the Tribal Welfare Department for both the academic as well as daily expenses of children. These expenses include stationery items, uniforms, general groceries, bedding and food. After decentralization, the local ZP provides these goods, instead of the department [12].

Ashramshalas and government schools follow the same syllabus. However, teachers in Ashramshalas do not receive trainings or attend workshops since these are financially supported by the DPI.

It is suggested for Ashramshalas to form Poushakara Samitis (PSs) or parent-teacher associations. PSs are similar to SDMCs in functionality but they lack financial powers.

There is a lack of documentation about the policies of the government with respect to Ashramshalas since the concerned directorates (Social Welfare, Tribal Welfare) do not always work in unison.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF ADVANCED STUDIES (NIAS)

The National Institute of Advanced Studies (NIAS) was founded by the late J.R.D Tata in 1987. Located on the Indian Institute of Science campus in Bangalore, NIAS’s mission is to bridge natural and social sciences in order to conduct advanced multidisciplinary research. The various academic units deal with both local and global issues.

DISTRICT QUALITY EDUCATION PROJECT (DQEP) / VIDYANKURA

The Sociology and Social Anthropology Unit of NIAS launched the District Quality Education Project (DQEP), also called Vidyankura in 2002. NIAS, Sir Ratan Tata Trust, Mumbai, and the Government of Karnataka support this project. DQEP selected Chamarajanagar for implementing its programmes because of the district’s large proportion of SCs and STs, as well as its low literacy levels. The DQEP was set up to improve the quality of elementary education (1-7) in government schools and Ashramshalas in one district. This quality was to be
achieved by building the capacity of all stakeholders involved – teachers, parents, HMs, CRPs, BRPs, etc. The aim was to integrate the sociological and anthropological perspectives with traditional education studies. The emphasis was on child-centered learning and helping schools cater to children’s cognitive and social developmental needs [10]. In order to do this, DQEP designed and conducted a baseline study of 36 elementary schools in the Chamarajanagar District in 2003. The objectives of the study were to provide a detailed ground-level picture of the schools, the classroom culture, type of teaching provided, the nature and extent of communities’ involvement with schools and education and finally to profile children’s learning.

**DQEP PROGRAMMES**

From the results of the baseline study, DQEP identified key areas with which to work on. They developed the following programmes to implement for the period of 2003-2007. The DQEP chose 28 schools (16 government, 12 Ashramshalas) on which to focus its interventions. The following were the major activities DQEP decided to focus on

1. Strengthening Cluster Resource Centres and Block Resource Centres (Integrated Block and Cluster Development Programme)
2. Multi-grade Language Curriculum Development
3. Materials Development, Documentation, and Monitoring
4. School Community Contact Programme
5. Post Graduate Programme for Professional Development
6. Collaboration and Advocacy

**Integrated Block and Cluster Development Programme (IBCD)**

The purpose of the IBCD programme is to strengthen the academic support systems for teachers and schools in the district by focusing on Block and Cluster Resource Persons (BRPs and CRPs) and centres (BRCs and CRCs). It hopes to achieve this by holding trainings for BRPs, CRPs and teachers, and equipping BRCs and CRCs to be more effective in their functioning. So far, the programme has developed and conducted a one-year certificate course for CRPs including periodic training and follow-up visits in schools and is currently developing pools of Master Resource Persons in various subject areas (Science, Math, Environmental Science).

**Language Development Programme (LDP)**

The baseline study carried out by the DQEP indicated that one of the problem areas was language learning. Tribal children are accustomed to speaking in their native dialects, and as a result there exists a language barrier between them and their Kannada-speaking teachers. The DQEP and The Promise Foundation (TPF) together developed the LDP. It aims at enhancing the Kannada learning levels for children and contributing to teachers’ capabilities for handling multi-grade classrooms. The programme initially focused on 12 Ashramshalas in the Chamarajanagar district, and now also includes 16 Department of Education
Schools under the SCCP. As a result, it is incorporated in the SCCP, but will be discussed separately in this case study.

The programme involves –
- Pre and post intervention tests and continuous documentation
- A continuous process of tracking the progress of the student
- Emphasis on both TLMs and classroom practices
- Teacher’s involvement in various aspects of the programme- analysis, producing materials, implementing and monitoring

Teacher training workshops are an essential part of the LDP and they focus on the importance of lesson planning and development of graded assessment kits for evaluation.

Materials Development and Documentation
It was identified that a need exists for translating important documents from English to Kannada that would be helpful to teachers. DQEP has also set up a documentation process to record the progress of the program and the schools.

School Community Contact Programme (SCCP)
The SCCP programme, started in January 2004, mainly focuses on enhancing the participation of the community and parents in the functioning and development of schools. DQEP team members picked 28 schools in Chamarajanagar District to work with, and had the following objectives:
- Understanding processes of schools and collection of data
- Enhance planning and management of schools
- Support disadvantaged children (Ex. Chinnara Angala, a bridge programme to mainstream dropout children into regular schools)
- Support/inputs for multi-grade teaching
- Enhance teaching of Kannada (see LDP)
- Enhance linkages between school and community

The program is carried out on the ground level by field researchers who regularly visit the schools. Since the inception of the program, the following outputs have been developed:
- School monitoring indicators\(^1\) which track progress of schools in many key areas including infrastructure and teaching methods
- Parents’ handbook (\textit{Sethu}\(^2\)) to give parents pointers on how they can help in the overall development of their children, and to instill a sense of responsibility among parents for their children’s education
- \textit{Chintana}, an outline for planning and managing schools
- Handouts to teachers to emphasise Child-Centered Learning

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\(^1\) The school monitoring indicators were developed by DQEP from interviews with HMs, teachers, community members, NGOs, individual observations and the UNESCO Handbook.

\(^2\) \textit{Sethu} means “bridge” in Kannada
• Language development – TLM aids like charts, cards etc. (see LDP)

The programme also conducts meetings with the community to discuss the *Sethu* handbook and the importance of community involvement in the school.

As the DQEP programmes are working only with government schools and Ashramshalas, this case study will examine one of each kind. Out of the 10 schools and Ashramshalas we visited, we chose Kolipalya Ashramshala and the Hegdehundi LPS. The main programmes affecting each of these schools are the SCCP and LDP, thus they will be the focus in the discussions to follow. Our analysis is based on the observations made on our field visits to these schools.
Kolipalya Ashramshala

The Ashramshala is situated in the village of Kolipalya, which is 45 minutes away from the town of Chamarajnagar. Students come to the Ashramshala from surrounding villages such as Kolipalya, Baanavaadi, and Goodemudlu (all within 1 – 1.5 km). The original school, built in 1991, was grossly inadequate. The entire school was just two rooms. One was the kitchen, but because of the lack of space, classes would happen simultaneously with cooking. There were not even any toilets. No proper lessons were taking place. The teachers did not follow a timetable, and instead would teach just one subject per day, without breaking them up. The school had an enrollment of about 60-80, however only about 5-10 children stayed back at night. Teachers were most concerned with feeding the children, as Ashramshalas are supposed to provide three meals a day.

The Headmaster (HM), along with the support of the community, petitioned the Welfare Department to improve infrastructure of the school. It took several years, but they got the Department to build the new school. The new building opened at the beginning of this academic year (May 2005). The infrastructure has drastically improved in the new school. The school has two floors, three big classrooms and two rooms used as girls’ and boys’ dormitories. Each child has his or her own bedding (including blankets and pillows) and trunks to keep their belongings. There is a separate kitchen, dining room, toilets and bathrooms, and even a library full of books. The entire building and surrounding areas are clean and well maintained.

75% of the seats in the AS are reserved for STs (Schedule Tribe) and the other 25% are reserved for other castes. Currently more Lambanis are enrolled in the school than Soligas. Both Lambani and the tribal children do not speak Kannada at home. When they first come to school they spend 6 months to a year just learning the language, as it is crucial for them to know it before moving on to other subjects. The teachers at the school do not know the local tribal dialect, although most manage to pick up enough to communicate. One teacher at Kolipalya, Annapaswami, is a Lambani himself and thus is proficient in both Kannada and Lambani. The other teacher, Mahadevswami is a tribal.

The Lambanis originally migrated from Rajasthan. They are nomadic people and most are labourers or run small businesses. They are used to interacting with different kinds of people, as their occupations require it. Because of this, the Lambanis tend to be more assertive when compared to the tribals who are a more secluded group of people. The tribals are very family-oriented and parents and children share a close bond. For example, while the Lambanis accept the use of corporal punishment in schools, the tribals do not. It is only recently that the tribals have been interacting with outsiders. Daily wage labour is the main

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3 Lambanis are technically classified as “Other Backward Classes” (OBCs).
occupation of the community and due to shortage of work some people migrate to Kerala with their children for work.

There are currently three teachers at the school (two teachers and one headmaster), one assistant cook and one cook. The HM, Basvanna, was appointed by the Welfare Department since the school's inception. Because there aren't enough teachers to teach separate standards, the classes are multi-grade, split up into 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2\textsuperscript{nd}, and 3\textsuperscript{rd} in one class and 4\textsuperscript{th} and 5\textsuperscript{th} in the other. The Tribal Welfare Department does not provide teacher training to the Ashramshala teachers. The only training they received was on how to set trimester exam papers for the 5\textsuperscript{th} grade. They are employed on a contractual basis from year to year, and their salary is very low (between Rs. 2,000-3,000 per month depending on post). Despite this, the Ashramshala teachers do not express a desire to move to the Education Department.

Of the enrolled students for the 2005-2006 academic year, about half live at the school. Most of those that stay are Lambani. The few tribals that stay at the Ashramshala come from either one-parent families or are orphaned. Most of the children who live at Kolipalya stay there all week, go home Sunday morning, and return Sunday night. One student, Kanthkumar, expressed that he prefers to stay overnight at the new school rather than go home because of the better facilities. The HM and teacher are required to supervise the children at all times. Their responsibility starts at the beginning of the academic year (June) and finishes only in the following April; and they get a two-month break for the summer. The HM and teachers are usually not from the same village as the school and often their homes are at a considerable distance away from the school.

On a normal day, the students wake up and get ready. They finish chores around the school and classes begin around 10 am. All subjects including Mathematics are taught to them by rote. A hot lunch is served at 1 pm to all the teachers and students. Classes resume at 2 pm and go on until 4 pm. Depending on the day, they watch programs on the televised EduSat, following the schedule they have received. After school, the children that stay overnight play games with each other. They then go to the library to study or hang out. Dinner is served at 7 pm. One popular pastime is going to the river behind the school to swim. The teachers don’t allow the younger children to do this, as the water can be quite deep.

Enrollment does not stay consistent throughout the year. There are a few children that are consistently absent from school. During January and February enrollment dips very low as this is harvesting season and children skip school to help their parents. Child absenteeism can also be due to family responsibility at home (taking care of younger siblings), the financial situation at home, repetition of a grade, or migration.
The CRP and Educational Coordinator visit the school occasionally, but according to the teachers they do not give valuable inputs. During their visits, they concentrate on infrastructure and resources, and are not concerned with the children’s learning levels or the quality of teaching. In addition, the CRP only checks if the school has received the supplies, but does not check if these supplies are used efficiently.

The teachers and HM expressed that the Tribal Welfare Department often does not send supplies such as food rations, uniforms and stationary on time. The children are provided with one notebook for the entire year, which they finish in the first month. This puts the HM in a difficult situation because he cannot provide the funds for the notebooks himself, and he cannot pressure parents to buy them. If he does, the parents may stop their children from attending school. Thus, a lot of the children come to school without basic stationary like notebooks and pencils. Many of the children from lower grades are still using slates.

**DQEP Intervention**

The DQEP began working with Kolipalya in December 2003 when the new building was still not in existence. The strategy was to first identify the specific problems of the Ashramshala before giving their inputs. Some of the main problems they found were language differences between teachers and students, absenteeism among children and teachers, multi-grade teaching, low learning levels and the lack of community involvement in the school. These were compounded by the larger problem of inadequate teaching. For example, the teachers were not following the prescribed textbooks. Children from the 4th standard were still being taught addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, which they still found difficult. In general, the Ashramshala was seen as more of a feeding centre than a place for education. The combination of these factors led to low learning levels (as assessed by DQEP) among the children. Another problem was that the HM was faking enrollment numbers by recording that more children were attending school than were actually present. DQEP wanted to concentrate on improving the quality of education at the school, thus they decided not to address this issue, as it might have created hostility towards the other important inputs.

The main inputs to Kolipalya came through the LDP and SCCP. Through the LDP, the two teachers, Annapaswami and Mahadevswami, received training in integrating the children’s local language in teaching Kannada so as to enhance the learning levels in Kannada. The LDP also provided TLMs for the school such as language flashcards, posters and storybooks. The language flashcards would have a picture of something local that they could relate to along with the Kannada spelling for it. For example, some flashcards used local sweets as the basis for the pictures so that the children would be familiar with it.

Through the SCCP, DQEP wanted to emphasize to the HM and teachers that education should be of equal importance to taking care of the children, as
learning should be one of the main purposes of a school. DQEP worked with the HM on a variety of levels. Together, they developed a timetable and annual plan for the school. In addition, he received training in handling multi-grade classes. Innovative classroom activities were also conducted in order to increase children’s interest in learning and to make it more fun. The teachers at Kolipalya have a bachelor’s degree in the arts, and thus DQEP gave them inputs for teaching science. For example, in environmental sciences, the children would plant a sapling and watch it grow.

As one of the problems at Kolipalya was the lack of participation by the community with the school, the main thrust of SCCP was to initiate this involvement. The field researcher for the programme at this school, Lakshmi, helped to form the *Poushakara Samiti* (PS) or parent association. The group was formed and members selected. The president is a Soliga, and his wife is very active politically. The rest of the membership is mixed Lambani and other tribals. Preference is given to the tribals as they are usually more underrepresented in such organizations compared to Lambanis. The PS met once, and failed to meet again after that.

DQEP advocated to the Tribal Welfare Department on behalf of the schools. For example, they helped secure Rs. 500 for all Ashramshalas to use to buy TLMs. This was previously only given to government teachers because Ashramshala teachers are contractual.

In order to see if the DQEP’s inputs were being implemented, Lakshmi makes regular visits to the school. During these visits, she observes classes and documents what is happening. From her classroom observations she checks whether teachers are using the training they have received effectively. She identifies the areas where the teachers are not reaching the students and designs activities accordingly. She also assesses from the teachers themselves inputs that they require.

The second part of her field visits is to the community. She talks with parents, trying to create awareness about education and the importance of community involvement with the school. She has made constant efforts to get the PS to meet by talking to members and setting up meetings.

After each of the field visits, Lakshmi documents her observations, the inputs she has given, and the progress she has made. Every three months she fills out the school monitoring indicators set by DQEP to track progress of the school.

**Outputs**

Since DQEP began working with Kolipalya, a number of tangible changes have occurred, some because of DQEP and some a result of the better facilities available at the new school. For example, enrollment on the whole has increased, and more children live at the school due to better infrastructure.
The other changes are due to DQEP’s intervention. Multi-grade classes are being conducted with inputs provided in the training and trimester exams are being held for the 5th grade. The HM holds meetings with the teachers. Together they develop and design the timetable and class plan, which they try to follow.

They have received and are using TLMs for language. They implement the training they have been given, and express that they have found it very useful. They find LDP useful in communicating with the younger children who are in the process of learning Kannada. In fact, the language learning levels have improved as tested by DQEP. The HM has promised to start math classes for all grades starting July onwards. This year Kolipalya enrolled 16 students who passed the 5th grade into higher-level schools.

Effects and Impact
Progress is also being made to involve and integrate the community with the school. The HM now sends reports cards to parents, and parents are beginning to get involved in school functions. For example, the HM organised a Rangoli competition for the tribal women, held at the school. He also engages in discussions about school development and children’s learning levels.

Lakshmi has observed that the HM and teachers have changed their attitudes towards their duties and towards children. Initially the teachers used to just come and teach occasionally. They did not take any initiative to see if children were learning. Since DQEP indicated that the real learning levels of the children were low, the teachers have become aware of this problem. They have also learned how to identify these children and give them special attention. Now teachers make sure the children have learned something from the lessons. Annapaswami had the interest to improve his teaching skills, but did not have any encouragement. The field visits by DQEP team members gave him the support he needed.

Overall, the teaching methods have improved. In the past, teachers weren’t using drama, games and art inside the class. Now they not only use these activities, but also integrate local knowledge that children can relate to. They have not however, invited local resource persons to classes. In general, DQEP has motivated the teachers to develop the school and their own skills. The HM has even expressed that he would like to make the Kolipalya Ashramshala a “model school” [4].

Challenges
One must be cautious in looking at these improvements however. The DQEP intervention is a relatively new and ongoing process, and thus no conclusive evaluation of its impact can be made. This is especially true for Kolipalya, because of the infrastructure of the original building, and because the new school has only been open since June 2005. At the old school the teachers found it
hard to implement DQEP’s inputs due to the lack of facilities. At the new school, they have the potential to commit to implementing the inputs.

There are also many systemic problems that influence and undermine any progress that can be achieved in increasing the quality of education. The PS has failed to meet despite sustained efforts by Lakshmi, because there is a general disinterest in participating in the school’s functioning. This is due to the fact that parents believe the school is functioning very well on its own. From their viewpoint, their children have much more resources than they themselves ever had, so they have no desire to ask for anything more. Their priority is that their children get three meals a day, are taken care of well, and that teaching at least occurs.

Not all problems relate solely to the community. Administration of most Ashramshalas is often rampant with corruption. HMs often fake enrollment numbers to get more supplies from the government, which they sell to make a profit. The supplies that are supposed to go to the children (soap, oil, bedding, grains, food provisions) are given to them sparingly, and the rest sold off. Food is cooked outside with firewood (which is free) despite the fact that the government gives funds for gas to fuel the stoves. The teachers can get away with this because there is no adequate monitoring from the department.

There are also other factors that impede DQEP’s intervention at the school level. Sometimes when DQEP gives inputs to the school, the teachers find it hard to implement them. One teacher expressed that he wished DQEP would teach a demonstration class so that he could find out exactly where he was lacking and what changes he could make. Language continues to be a problem, and the teachers want more inputs regarding this. They also want DQEP to involve the community in terms of sending their children regularly to school and supporting them academically.

The problems DQEP still faces with Kolipalya are with the community and also with the teachers. The teachers do not have the capability to use some of the new learning methods. Multi-grade teaching is not done effectively as it can depend on the teacher’s skills. Another problem is that a lot of the changes have occurred because DQEP has been a constant monitoring presence at the school. For sustained improvements this monitoring must ideally be taken up by the community, therefore, one of DQEP’s goals for this academic year is to concentrate on capacity building of PS members.

Analysis
There are many issues related to the problems facing the Kolipalya Ashramshala, and also with the DQEP intervention that deals with those problems. The community consists of two groups, the Lambanis and Soligas. The following issues not only deal with the differences between the two groups but also with their involvement in the functioning of the school.
The teachers believe that the Lambani children pick up lessons more quickly while the Soliga children are “slow.” In fact, even in class the Lambani children are quicker to respond to questions, more assertive, outspoken, and sure of their answers than the Soliga children. One must be careful however in labeling the Soliga children as “slow.” It is not that they have some inherent disadvantage when it comes to learning. As mentioned before, the Soliga children have very close bonds with their family, and are usually the ones absent from school. They are also more reserved because of their general lack of contact with people outside their communities. The tribals have historically lived in the forests, interacting with outsiders only when necessary. It is only recently that they have started having contact with society because of the government policies that have displaced them from the forests. A combination of their irregular attendance and shyness may account more for their poorer performance (in comparison with the Lambani children) than them being “slow.” The teachers must not disregard these children as slow, because wrong conclusions about the child’s learning levels are bound to occur. A child may be held back because he is thought not to know the lessons, when in fact it could be that he is not able to effectively communicate what he knows because of his shyness. In this way, the Soliga children need more encouragement and specialized inputs from teachers so that they can excel in the classroom.

Soumya, a tribal girl in 4th standard answered questions in a very quiet voice with her hand over her mouth to hide her shy smile. This stood in stark contrast to Kavya, a 5th standard Lambani girl who spoke with confidence about her family, her life and future aspirations. Soumya repeated most of Kavya’s answers, indicating that she might never have had the opportunity to think about such topics.

Another issue that exacerbates the disparity in learning levels between the Lambanis and Soligas is their different viewpoints on the importance of education. While neither group adequately checks up on their children’s learning levels, the Lambanis do so much more in comparison to the Soligas. They make visits to the school and are active in making sure their children are learning. They have many role models within their community that illustrate what education can accomplish. The tribals on the other hand are first generation learners. They do not emphasise education because their ancestors have survived for generations without it. However, since their displacement from the forests, circumstances have changed and thus there is a need for education.

In addition to the repercussions these issues have on children’s learning, they also influence the functioning of the school. Currently the teachers have the sole responsibility of the children’s well being and learning levels. If the parents were more involved, this burden could be somewhat shared.
The teachers and HM continually express that they would like the community to be more involved in the school. According to them however, this involvement only includes that the parents send their children regularly to school, buy them the appropriate materials, etc. True community involvement would also include that the parents are so in tuned with what is happening at the school that the teachers and HM have to ultimately be accountable to them. The parents are the most interested stakeholders in their child’s education. Ideally if parents were monitoring the school effectively, the inefficiency of a faulty government monitoring system would be alleviated. The parents could then check that their children are treated well, are learning appropriate lessons, are receiving all the supplies that they are entitled to, and that learning is happening at a continuous level. Perhaps if the teachers realized this now, they would not be such ardent proponents of getting the community involved. Whatever their motives are, the most important fact is that they are on board to enlist the community’s participation in the school.

While community involvement is necessary, it must come in conjunction with effective government monitoring. One of the most important duties of the CRPs and BRPs is to make regular visits to the schools and monitor learning levels of the children. However, most do not carry out these duties. Even if they do make these visits, the teachers do not find their inputs useful. By focusing solely on infrastructure the CRPs and BRPs overlook the most important aspect of their visit – children’s learning levels. DQEP’s presence at the school is the monitoring presence that is supposed to be provided by the government. The reason that there has been progress at Kolipalya has a lot to do with the fact that Lakshmi makes regular visits to the school. Before DQEP came in, the teachers at Kolipalya were not under pressure to improve their performance even though they had the capability. By simply being a continuous presence at the school, DQEP has achieved what the government should have a long time ago.

As there are young girls living at the Ashramshala the lack of adult female supervision may lead to a number of safety issues. Female supervision at these Ashramshalas is absolutely necessary, as girls need someone they are comfortable with to discuss their personal problems. There are a number of female teachers appointed, but the government does not distribute the male and female teachers evenly. Some schools are staffed with all female teachers while others have only male teachers. It is mandated by the government that there should be an adult female presence in every Ashramshala [12]. But, the school and the government engage in a blame game about who has the responsibility to ensure this mandate. Ultimately, girl children end up not having anyone to turn to.

As Ashramshalas are administered by the Welfare Department, there are many systemic problems that must be addressed. These problems cannot be adequately addressed by DQEP’s intervention, or any other organization that is outside the government.
The teachers and HM at the Ashramshalas are not just teachers, they are wardens and have many additional responsibilities in taking care of the children. They find it difficult to manage all of these responsibilities and give equal importance to providing quality education. Many of them are placed in schools far away from their hometowns and must stay at the school for the duration of the school year. To make matters worse, their salary is very low compared to that of government teachers despite these extra responsibilities. Also, their employment is contractual, so there is less job security. This becomes the ideal breeding ground for corruption. It is noted in the field visits that the teachers and HM are absent from the school frequently – at times there is only one adult there, and at worst only the cook is present to supervise the entire school. The staff has the opportunity to pilfer supplies to make extra money. The result is that the children suffer. It is not that the HM and teachers are excused for this behavior because of their extra responsibilities, but this activity is bound to happen given the structure of the system. The government must set a tighter policy that provides enough incentives coupled with adequate monitoring to avoid this type of corruption.

Hegdehundi Government Lower Primary School

Hegdehundi LPS belongs to Yelandur taluk, situated six kms from Yelandur town. The school was started in 1957, and has two teachers, thirty one students and two rooms. In the 2003–2004 academic year, a classroom was added through funds provided by SSA. Classes 1 to 3 and the HM’s office are in the same room, and the classroom walls are decorated with English words, Kannada words, numbers etc.

The school lacks a good playground and its premises get dirty when it rains. Work on the school compound wall is still incomplete. However, the ZP has constructed toilets, provided facilities for drinking water and electricity. In June 2005 the school’s toilets were in good condition, but water facilities were poor. The school has Radio and Edusat facilities and Edusat programmes are telecasted. It also has a library, which houses 513 books.

The food supplies provided by the government are cooked at JSS Mutt and then sent to the school. The Mutt caters food to all government schools in Yelandur block. This has relieved the school staff from the responsibility of providing mid-day meals to the students. The Edusat timetable had arrived but had not yet been integrated into the school timetable. Report cards for the last semester had also not been issued to the children. The school maintains separate files of each student’s exam papers and report cards as per the government rules laid down two years ago. The information contained in them will be used for giving differential importance to children in the revision classes.

At the beginning of the 2005-2006 academic year, most of the children were
present and all of them were wearing uniforms that were neat and tidy. They were made to sit on the floor even though the school had wooden stools. When asked what they wanted to be when they grow up, the boys spoke about their ambitions (doctor, policeman etc.) with confidence. However, the girls were very shy and when one girl said that she wanted to be a tailor, all the other girls also said that they wanted to stitch clothes. Kannada was the most popular subject of the children, and mathematics the least favourite. Many of the TLMs in the school were related to Kannada. The boys like to play games like cricket and the girls mostly play hide and seek. When asked about the problems of the school, the children also complained about the dirty playground when it rains.

Hegdehundi has only one community – the Kurubas. They come from a shepherding background, but have now taken to agriculture. There are 61 families in the village and its total population is about 375 [13]. Literacy rate is quite low in the village. Parents are supportive of their children’s education but are unable to assess their learning levels.

Drinking water facilities are adequate for the village population. The main crops that are cultivated include rice, ragi, and sugarcane. Sugarcane cultivation and the production of jaggery is the main economic activity. About five percent of the population is financially well off and the other 95 percent are living through daily labour. The village has one Anganwadi (government women’s cooperative) and a few women’s organizations and Self Help Groups (SHGs). There is also a silkyarn centre. An NGO, Karuna Trust, runs the Anganwadi centre. It also provides a substitute teacher to the school when one of the teachers is not present.

Parents make sure that the children attend school regularly. Most children have at least one literate family member. One child said that his parents would beat him up if he missed school. At home, children do daily chores like washing clothes and bringing water. If they have younger siblings, they get them ready for school. At school, they clean the classrooms. Everyday, the children collect the packed mid-day meals from the Mutt, distribute it amongst themselves and after lunch clean up the dishes. When visitors come to the school, teachers ask older children to arrange for chairs and refreshments.

The HM of the school, Mr. C.K. Madhurananda, has attended language training under DQEP’s LDP. The assistant teacher Mr. Nanjundaswamy has not attended any DQEP training. He is on deputation and comes to the school only three days a week. Both the HM and teacher have undergone multi-grade training from the department of education. The teacher has undergone Integrated Education for Disabled Children (IED) training provided by the Department of education. This training helps him to attend to the special needs of disabled children and provide them with the facilities offered by the government.

The school SDMC meets once in three months, but it has not been re-constituted
this year. When the past SDMC was formed, the President was selected by the HM without following the due procedures. The President of the SDMC has undergone an Orientation programme conducted by DQEP in 2004. The SDMC has generated funds for building the school flag post. It has also planted a few trees around the school premises. The SDMC oversees the maintenance of the school infrastructure and monitors teachers’ and children’s attendance.

**DQEP Intervention**

DQEP began working with Hegdehundi in January 2004. The fieldworker Mahadevaswamy, has visited the school 15 times over a period of 18 months [7]. Hence, leaving out summer vacations and training programmes, he would visit the school twice a month on an average. The activities Mahadevaswamy conducts in the schools he visits are preplanned. He makes use of the training he has received from DQEP to prepare inputs, which he applies to all the schools he visits. His method of intervention involves providing inputs and then following up to see whether the activities suggested by him are being conducted. The fieldworker has conducted some demonstration classes and classroom observations but these activities were conducted without the teachers’ participation [14]. He started his intervention in the school by providing inputs on the importance of clean school environment and the use of dustbins to maintain cleanliness. He suggested ways to use maps in the teaching process. He also provided inputs on how to use the library effectively.

Mahadevaswamy stressed the importance of sports and made arrangements for giving out prizes to students on Independence Day for different competitions. He made the children of 3rd, 4th and 5th standards read newspapers and identify alphabets based on their reading capabilities. The children were made to watch a television programme on the food chain and were then asked questions about it. The fieldworker prepared Teaching and Learning Materials such as flashcards for both simple and complex Kannada words. He also took the children for an academic outing in order to teach them about nature and climate in a natural setting. This was followed by a discussion with the children about what they had learnt from the outing.

The fieldworker initiated the preparation of alphabet charts for each alphabet in Kannada and conducted story-writing sessions for improving the vocabulary of the children. He also conducted activities for 5th standard children to improve their word usage in English. He provided inputs for 1st and 2nd standard children for money based calculations, coin summation for making arithmetic problems interesting as well as inputs for reading and writing the days, weeks and months of the year. He also helped teachers to handle problems of children with low learning levels. He held group based question-answer sessions for 4th standard children in Kannada on the lessons in Environmental Studies. He conducted the same kind of activity for 5th standard children in science. These activities were found to be helpful in improving the revising, questioning and thinking capabilities
of children [5].

**Outputs**
The field indicators show that after DQEP’s intervention, classes are taking place more regularly and the general cleanliness of the school has improved. When we visited the school the annual plan had been made. The HM and the teacher implement lesson plans only for a few lessons. From the last one year, Unit tests are being held regularly in the school and grades are being recorded. The use of corporal punishment is a problem but has declined since the fieldworker has been visiting the school. Homework assignments for children are not given regularly [6]. A few TLMs like flashcards, alphabet charts have been prepared by the teachers with the fieldworker’s help and are being used in some classes. The teachers’ adoption of the inputs provided by the fieldworker and the training is partial.

Teachers face difficulties in selecting teaching methods that are suitable to the different learning levels of children in a multi-grade, multi-capability situation. The situation gets more problematic since one of the teachers is on deputation. In such situations, a substitute teacher provided by Karuna Trust helps the school. But, teaching all children and keeping them engaged and interested still remains a problem.

With the help of the fieldworker, the school held a “Welcome programme” to create awareness about primary education and to stress the importance of sending children to schools. Enrollment campaigns have also been conducted. The teachers visit the houses of children who are missing from school for a long time and explain the importance of education to their parents. Children’s attendance in the school averages above 75% on most days [6]. The school also conducts cultural and co-curricular activities on national holidays.

Community presence in the school’s functions has increased as compared to the past. There is an increased awareness about education in the community and the school’s rapport with the community has improved. As a result, the community has a better understanding of the school culture and its activities. But, there is a lack of understanding about the community’s role in the betterment of the school.

Inputs and suggestions to the school are also being provided by the concerned CRP, BRP and EC. The CRP has been visiting the school regularly. He has provided several inputs to the HM and has given solutions for issues relating to Language, Maths and Science subjects. The EC’s visits are irregular and he has not helped much to solve the school’s problems. The BRP has provided inputs for preparing timetables for the trimester scheme of education. He has enquired more about infrastructure issues than about the educational progress of the school.
Effects and Impact
Clearly, many stakeholders are interested in making this school a well functioning school. These stakeholders include the teachers, the SDMC, the community, the government officials of the area and DQEP. The changes we report in this study are a result of their combined efforts. However, we will be focusing on the particular changes brought about by DQEP’s intervention.

There is an increased use of TLMs and a better understanding of children's learning levels among the teachers. There is use of some teaching methods that suit the different learning levels of students. TLMs and activity based learning methods have made learning more enjoyable for the children.

Problems of co-ordination among the teachers have been noticed due to the methods of monitoring used by the fieldworker. The teachers are dissatisfied with DQEP’s training programmes since only one of them is repeatedly called for these trainings. The HM is not completely satisfied with the quality of these trainings. Also, the fieldworker's relationship with the HM is strained due to various reasons including caste bias.

Since DQEP’s intervention, there is an increased presence of teachers in the school. They have started taking more interest in the school and its activities. Enrollment has increased steadily in the past 6 years and all the children in the village are enrolled in schools.

Challenges
Hegdehundi LPS faces several problems that are not apparent at first glance. There are basic problems that manifest at different levels within the school’s normal functioning. One such problem is the politicization of the SDMC.

The position of the President of the SDMC is highly contested leading to a lot of infighting and factions within the SDMC. This lack of unity has rendered the SDMC incapable of taking initiative for monitoring and developing the infrastructure of the school.

The SDMC has been active in Hegdehundi. But only a few SDMC members understand their roles and responsibilities in monitoring the overall functioning of the school. They also realize the problems within the SDMC and its detrimental effects on the school.

The SDMC President wants to continue holding his current position. However the Vice President did not seem to be very keen on the current President continuing his tenure. He expressed that the HM and the President did not reveal the budget of the SDMC to the other members and felt that the money was being misused. The work on the school compound has not progressed for a long time and the SDMC has failed to complete the construction. The Vice President felt that even though Hegdehundi is a single caste community, there is rivalry and infighting
between the community members. This has affected the efficiency of the SDMC.

The community in Hegdehundi is mostly illiterate and many children are first generation learners. Parents do not feel confident enough to monitor their children’s academic activities both at school and at home. Most female students drop out of school after 5\textsuperscript{th} standard due to difficulty in commuting to the nearest HPS. However, most male students in the village do continue their education. It is not clear to what extent DQEP’s intervention has been able to instill a sense of continued responsibility in the community for their children’s education.

Recently, the fieldworker organized a meeting to discuss and share the parents’ handbook at Hegdehundi. On the same day, there was a marriage in the community and majority of the people were attending it. Hence, many people who had already received the Sethu handbook were absent. There were nineteen people present in the meeting but most of them were restless and many walked out in the middle of the meeting. Even the HM was not pleased with this date for the meeting and he too walked out. Of those present, very few actually knew the purpose of the meeting and they did not raise any questions or doubts regarding Sethu. This poor participation may be attributed to two reasons. Firstly, the date chosen for this meeting was not suitable to the community calendar and secondly, the people do not perceive such meetings as useful and important for the education of their children. It seems that this community is aware of the need to involve themselves in their children’s education but is not sure of ways to participate effectively.

Another problem of the school is the relationship between the teachers. The HM has the dual responsibilities of administration and teaching. There have been complaints about the way he allocates money for different activities both by the SDMC Vice President and the teacher. The teacher is absent from the school because he is on deputation. Even otherwise he has not been regular. The HM and the teacher have a difference of opinion on how each of them should be carrying out their responsibilities. This has created a rift between the two. We feel that the teachers’ inefficiency and their poor relationship form a vicious cycle. As a result of this, the overall teaching learning levels of the school are adversely affected.

Analysis
DQEP’s inputs in this school are focused towards improving the quality of teaching. While this in itself is a good cause, there are other problems in the school that have made their intervention less effective. The department of education and DQEP conduct trainings and workshops throughout the year and teachers have to attend these events frequently. Since the school has only two teachers, classes are disrupted and teachers are over-burdened when one of them is not present. Moreover, only the HM has been invited to attend DQEP’s training since he takes language classes for standards 1 to 4. As a result of this, the other teacher feels left out of DQEP’s trainings and hence is not very
receptive to its inputs at the school level. This clearly shows that DQEP has been able to generate a demand for its trainings. However, this has also added to the deteriorating relations between the HM and the teacher.

The fieldworker visits the school regularly. However, the teachers have not welcomed all his inputs. As his activities are preplanned [14], the inputs provided by him are not framed towards solving the specific problems faced by the school. They are sporadic and lack continuity. A systematic framework for improving the teaching methods in the school seems to be lacking.

When asked to mention one important problem of this school, the fieldworker replied that the teachers have to develop more TLMs. However during fieldvisits, it was observed that ample TLMs had already been prepared. The problem was not of non-receptiveness to the fieldworker's inputs; but the infeasibility of using them due to the overburdening of the teachers. We feel that, at present, the school has more vital issues to deal with than the use of TLMs. In the school's visit book, the fieldworker has written about the teachers not using newer teaching methods while the issue of absence of teachers was not mentioned. This puts the teacher who was present in the school in an awkward position when the CRP or the BRP read the book. This inspection mode of monitoring affects the school - fieldworker relationship. Also the HM does not like to receive inputs from the fieldworker since he belongs to a lower caste. This has impeded the success of the intervention.

In summary, the fieldworker was looking at providing solutions to the school's problems from the perspective of DQEP's programmes and the training he had received. This restrictive view in analyzing and providing solutions to the schools problems stem from both the design and the implementation of the intervention.
Analysis of DQEP

Sustainability

The DQEP is a time-bound project and needs to be phased out by 2007. The plan is that in the final phase the programs will focus on turning their operations over to appropriate stakeholders and slowly pulling out. The ideal is that by 2007, those stakeholders will have the capacity to fulfill their responsibilities and continue the work initiated by DQEP.

The key to this handover is ownership. If by 2007 all interested stakeholders (teachers, HMs, parents, CRPs, BRPs, etc) get a sense of ownership over their respective schools, then DQEP’s work in Chamarajanagar will be sustained. As of now, most CRPs and BRPs do not have the feeling that the schools they are in charge of are “their” schools. Practically all levels, from teachers to BRPs, look above to the next level for direction. For parents, the school is still seen as a government institution, and not one that they have any say over.

DQEP’s intervention has thus far been trying to instill this sense of ownership. However, it is still to be seen whether this will happen. Already during trainings and workshops that are supposed to be run by the stakeholders (the IBCD resource pool trainings for example), it has been noticed that they turn to DQEP for ultimate guidance and direction.

One important point to realize, however, is that this ownership of the school can only be achieved when certain other elements are aligned. For example, the interested stakeholder must not be corrupt, or at least not be in his or her position simply for the purpose of having power. At one LPS school in Hanur block, the HM had absolutely no interest in the needs of the children or the community, and seemed only concerned with increasing his own personal power and wealth. Such people cannot be helped or convinced, but rather need to be removed from the system.

There are aspects of the intervention that will continue when DQEP pulls out. Valuable teaching techniques have been given to many teachers in the district. For some (Ashramshala teachers), this is the first of such trainings they have undergone. Even the government school teachers, who have been through multiple government trainings, say that DQEP trainings have shown them techniques they have never been exposed to. Innovative activities and new ways of approaching problems are things that are learned and not easily forgotten. It is not as if the teachers and other stakeholders are going to suddenly “unlearn” all the training they have received in 2007, nor can the TLMs simply disappear. Of course, the next step is to implement the trainings. However, this will be difficult to observe after 2007. At the very least, DQEP knows that their ideas have been listened to, taken in, thought about, and generated interest.
Another major issue to be addressed is whether there has been a change in the mindset of teachers when it comes to learning. While DQEP has tried to introduce new ideas to them, many hold onto the old methodology of rote learning. Activity-based learning has been demonstrated to them, but this is not the type of learning the teachers themselves have undergone. It may take a continuous, sustained effort, most likely going past the 2007 deadline for this to occur.

Overall, most of the changes the DQEP intervention has put into place might not continue when they pull out. The exceptions to this are the trainings, TLMs and inputs that have already been given. The monitoring presence, the guidance and direction, grassroots organization of SDMCs and PSs, and many other things may cease to exist without DQEP. The only way they will carry on is if the systems already set in place (HMs, CRPs, SDMCs, etc) begin to take ownership of their schools, and fulfill their responsibilities. Creating this sense of ownership will be a challenge for DQEP in the future.

Efficiency

Field Practices
Among other reasons, DQEP’s fieldworkers have faced a considerable amount of hostility due to their continuous monitoring in schools. The problems began when the fieldworkers started questioning the misrepresentation of facts like the actual number of students enrolled in the schools. The schools’ teachers were offended by this and had become indifferent to the fieldworkers. Noting this, DQEP decided to ignore these issues and concentrate more on the academic problems of the participating schools. This stance by DQEP has improved the school-fieldworker relationships.

DQEP keeps a copy of the school indicators and a visit book in each school as part of its intervention. These documents were aimed at observing and monitoring the functions of the schools. Some teachers felt threatened not only by what was written but also by the tone it was written in. Teachers requested the fieldworkers to give their comments and suggestions verbally instead. DQEP will now eliminate sections from the indicators that deal with teacher attendance, but keep a copy of this information for themselves.

Deciding not to interfere with these issues and focusing on quality issues was the best strategy for DQEP. This allowed for building rapport with the school staff and paving the way for success with their other inputs. However, there is a fine balance that needs to be achieved because making DQEP’s presence less threatening might lead to increasing complacency on the part of the teachers.
Training Teachers
Based on what subjects and standards teachers handle, differential preferences are given in selecting them for the training. This has created problems as hostility is created between teachers who receive training and those who do not. In addition, fieldworkers observe teachers who have not received training, and give inputs to them. Thus, in selecting teachers for training, there is a need to make a tradeoff between those who satisfy the training eligibility criterion and those who are just monitored as part of SCCP and LDP.

Limitations of the Baseline Study
The baseline study has had a very strong influence on the training received by the fieldworkers. The issues raised by the study apply to the learning levels of all schools since the tests were extensive and covered all types of schools in the Chamarajanagar district. In their inputs, the fieldworkers tend to concentrate on problems highlighted by the baseline study, overshadowing any new or more relevant problems specific to the school they are working in. There is a need to explain the limitations of the baseline study while training fieldworkers.

Effectiveness

SCCP
When the intervention started, DQEP had extensively discussed with teachers, BRPs and CRPs while designing its strategy. Since issues and problems are numerous and unique to the schools, SCCP was designed to be a broad based and flexible intervention. Hence, for SCCP to work efficiently, a great deal of understanding and responsibility is required on the part of the fieldworker.

It was noted in a report in July 2004, when the intervention was just beginning, that the activities/inputs carried out as part of the intervention were “not systematized and were quite random and efforts are made to systematize them” [3]. Depending on the fieldworker, varied frameworks have been developed after analyzing the specific problems of each school they visit.

While progress has been made, not all schools have been receptive to these inputs. Different levels of receptiveness can be seen in adopting DQEP’s suggestions. One factor affecting this is the fieldworker’s recognition and responses to the problems of the school. In Hegdehundi, the actual problems affecting the school’s functionality could not be solved through DQEP’s intervention. The fieldworker did not highlight this problem but continued suggesting activities that were targeted towards a different set of problems. In Kolipalya, after analyzing the problems of the school, the fieldworker took an integrated approach to provide solutions. On the whole, Kolipalya has been more receptive to DQEP’s inputs.

SCCP has taken an adaptive approach in framing its activities to target different issues connecting to the functioning of the schools. Over a period of time, based
on the results of previous activities, new approaches have been taken to tackle different programmes. For example, in many schools, the fieldworkers have concentrated more on academic inputs and plan to increase attention on community mobilization in the next year. In the case of SCCP, designing a systematic approach is quite difficult because of the adaptive nature of the intervention.

When SCCP began, the issues that were identified to be tackled were simpler (like formation of timetables, identifying slow learners etc) and suggestions for them were straightforward. Hence, within a few months encouraging results were seen. However, as the intervention began targeting more complicated issues such as routinization of TLMs, mobilizing SDMCs, and catering to different learning levels of children, the difficulty in achieving success has also increased. Some fieldworkers tend to give up hope because they do not see the results immediately.

The structure of SCCP allows each fieldworker to use his or her creativity and talent in designing inputs, activities and TLMs. There are some areas where fieldworkers need more guidance and suggestions in planning their activities. On the whole, SCCP has been very successful in utilizing the individual talents of the fieldworkers.

In summary, SCCP’s goals and objectives cannot be generalized. There are success stories where in fieldworkers have been able to comprehend the problems affecting the schools and have tackled them effectively. There are cases where in the fieldworkers have failed to visualize the larger picture of the intervention and have hence failed to bring visible improvements. These setbacks can also be exacerbated given the existing problems and external factors that impact schools.

**LDP**
The LDP seems to be very successful with its interested stakeholders. Many teachers and HMs express their satisfaction with the inputs they have received from the LDP. This may be due to the fact that the programme is more focused in its scope and implementation. It deals with one specific problem and involves fewer tasks, and therefore is simple for fieldworkers to implement. Teachers from Ashramshalas have also been more receptive to LDP inputs. Because language is such a problem in those schools, it is easy to see changes in the beginning. In the future, these changes may be harder to come by. As compared to SCCP, it is also relatively easy to measure the changes brought about by LDP.

**IBCD**
Since IBCD does not directly affect the schools in this case study, no specific statements on its effects can be made. However, the concept of the programme
should be commended. Strengthening administration at the block and cluster levels will make all schools run more efficiently in the long run.

Levels of Receptiveness
In general, other programmes in the past have concentrated more on donating funds for developing school infrastructure and its functioning. However, DQEP’s intervention concentrates more on capacity building of the various stakeholders in the system. This requires more involvement and active participation from the teachers and other officials. DQEP’s approach has increased monitoring of teachers and others, as compared to other interventions. This is not a populist approach. This might be one of the reasons for varied levels of receptiveness of the intervention, but this does not mean that DQEP’s efforts are not recognized. Various government officials have extended support to DQEP after understanding their unique approach. Many who were initially hostile towards DQEP are now receptive and participate enthusiastically in DQEP’s work.

Creating a Knowledge base
Beginning with the baseline study, DQEP has been actively involved in gathering information on the many schools in Chamarajanagar. Through their intervention work, they have obtained a more refined knowledge of the issues and problems facing these schools. This has actually been one of the successes of the intervention, as a better knowledge of the schools will help in not only DQEP’s efforts, but also any other efforts to follow.

External Factors
The DQEP is facing many systemic problems that they do not or cannot address with their specific intervention. Some of these issues have come to light only with working closely with the schools.

Differences Between Government School Teachers and Ashramshala Teachers
Teachers and HMs in schools have many responsibilities, (see annexure A for list of duties), on top of which the Ashramshala teachers have a number of additional ones. Government schools run from 9:45 a.m. and finish at 4:10 p.m., whereas in Ashramshalas once the children come to school in June, the faculty is responsible for them until they leave at the end of the academic year. The only break Ashramshala teachers get is for two months in the summer. They not only have the responsibility of educating the children, but also of looking after the children’s overall well being. Therefore, it is very difficult for Ashramshala teachers to give equal importance to all their duties. Feeding the children becomes the main priority, second is children’s health and third is education.

In a government school a teacher can be appointed only if he/she has completed the teacher’s training course prescribed by the government. Once appointed, the teachers are given a lot of support from the education department in terms of additional trainings and TLM’s. It is not mandatory for Ashramshala teachers to
complete this training to be appointed, so most of them are not adequately qualified to teach. They also do not receive any training whatsoever from the Welfare department. This is the main reason Ashramshala teachers are very receptive to DQEP’s inputs, especially with regard to the LDP.

The CRPs and BRPs are required to monitor government school teachers to see whether they are implementing inputs that they receive during the trainings. The welfare department has no such monitoring system in place for Ashramshalas. The CRPs sometime visit the Ashramshalas, but visits are not mandatory and thus tend to be irregular and inputs given are not systematic. The Ashramshalas, unlike the government schools, are not accountable to the Education Department and therefore tend to lag behind in many aspects. For example, the learning levels of the children at Ashramshalas are much lower than that of the children at the government schools.

On the whole, the Education Department seems to be more organised and systematic than the Welfare Department. The government school teachers are paid much more and are given a lot more support. Ashramshala teachers feel that the government school teachers are being pampered by the Education Department, as they do not get half the resources the government school teachers receive. However, the Ashramshala teachers do not want to move to the education department, because along with all the advantages, they will also be monitored more carefully. If monitoring at Ashramshalas increases, the teachers will be held more accountable for their actions.

Community’s Viewpoint on Education
Involving the community in the education of children as well as in the functioning and monitoring of schools has been the major focus of the SCCP. They conduct parents’ meetings (Sethu) at various schools, however sometimes these dates are not chosen in accordance with the community calendar and what is suitable for the community members. The Sethu meetings at both Hegdehundi and Vaddagere were held on the date of a marriage in the community. From our field visits, it seems that dates for these meetings are chosen without adequate consultation with the community.

The concept of the PS handbook and the Sethu meetings has been fairly successful in creating awareness among community members about their need to participate in their children’s education. Clearly the community has become aware of its roles and responsibilities, but they are not always clear about the ways in which they need to intervene and monitor effectively in the school. In this way, DQEP’s intervention has been successful to a limited extent in creating a sense of ownership of the school among the community members.

As a result of DQEP’s intervention, school SDMCs and PSs have begun to work on improving the infrastructure of schools. They have also begun to focus on issues like teacher absenteeism. However, SDMC/PS members are not taking
action to improve the quality of education provided by schools. This is partly because the community members are not in a position to assess both the learning levels of children and the effectiveness of the teaching methods adopted by teachers. This is especially true of the PSs. It is good that SCCP hopes to work on this aspect in the future.

The politicization of SDMCs has also hindered their ability to monitor the functioning of schools. Many SDMCs are examples of the capture of power by a few elite members of the community. Membership of SDMC’s is highly contested and there are problems in their reconstitution. As a result of this SDMCs are often not able to fulfill their responsibilities. Since money does not go through PSs, this elite capture is less of a problem in the Ashramshalas.

Many community members feel that they really have no right to make a demand for better schooling for their children, as there has been tremendous improvement in school infrastructure and facilities since the time they were students. Many parents who find it difficult to provide their children with three square meals a day are satisfied with schools just because they provide mid-day meals to children. Moreover, Ashramshalas not only provide all three meals but also provide bedding, soaps etc. In fact, schools do not even open until the government sends food rations. Thus, so long as the schools meet the basic needs of their children, parents do not see the need to ask for more from the school. This is why many parents are not very concerned about the quality of education the school is providing to their children.

Most parents view education as a means for their children to get jobs. When children are not able to get jobs even after completing their education, parents feel disappointed with the whole education system. Parents may not even send their children to higher-level schools for this reason. This is especially true for girls because higher-level schools are further away and because of the inequity in the importance of educating a girl compared to educating a boy.

There is clearly a need to provide both parents and children with clear goals about what good education can help them achieve, as this will motivate them to continue their education. Both teachers and DQEP fieldworkers have not been able to do this very successfully so far.

Caste Bias
Caste biases hamper DQEP’s interventions, the overall functioning of schools and ultimately the quality of education that the children receive. For example, the teachers of Pete Higher Primary School in Chamarajanagar town have a very unsympathetic attitude towards their HM because he is an SC. As a result, the HM is unable to exercise his authority over the teachers, and they in turn take advantage of this to do as they please. He is not able to manage the school and teachers are very irregular in taking classes. Thus, despite DQEP’s monitoring the teachers failed to prepare a timetable before the school opened for the new
session on 1st June. The repercussions of the HM’s lack of control over the teachers can also be seen in the poor quality of teaching and subsequently in the low learning levels of the children. The sixth standard students find it difficult to do even simple multiplication and division. In recent times there has been a lot of talk about closing down the school and it is safe to say that the caste bias towards the HM and the general disaffection among teachers has exacerbated the conditions that have led to this situation.

At Hegdehundi HPS, the caste bias of the teachers towards the fieldworker has adversely affected DQEP’s intervention. Since the fieldworker is of a lower caste than the teachers, they are not very receptive to his inputs and have frequently made demands for visits by “higher” authorities from DQEP.

In Ashramshalas the caste bias that teachers have towards community members and children can be seen quite clearly. Many times teachers hold the belief that tribal communities are very superstitious and backward, and that tribal children are very slow. This attitude affects the way they treat these children as compared to others. For example, teachers may value tribal children less, and may also expect less from them.

**Government syllabus**

In order to make lessons interesting and fun for the children, the teachers should be able to relate the lessons to the children’s lives. However, this does not seem to be happening. It has also been noticed that children drop out or at the very least are not interested in school because of the way they are taught. Their lessons do not relate to their lives, and they therefore cannot see the connection that education has with what their lives are like. For example, in one school the HM expressed that he did not think that Environmental Studies is important at all. Environmental Studies is the one subject that can easily be related to the children’s lives as most come from tribal backgrounds and live close to nature.

Teachers should be trained so that the curriculum can be adaptable to the point that good teachers can take the lessons and relate them to children’s lives. On the other hand, it has to be structured enough so that novice teachers will have some guidelines with which to work. The curriculum should try to cater to the overall development of the children and emphasis given to allowing room for building individuality and creativity of the child.

**Decentralization in Education**

Education is one of the 29 subjects of governance the states have to devolve to Panchayat Raj institutions as mentioned in the 73rd Constitutional Amendment. While this has happened on paper in Karnataka, there still exists a lot of confusion and ad hoc policies in practice [9].

Several state departments together with the local gram sabhas are involved in the functioning of both government schools and Ashramshalas. The building
grants, mid-day meals, appointment of teachers, constitution of SDMC members, and grants for SDMCs are a few issues wherein a multitude of government departments and public representatives operate. This complicated system creates loopholes that allows for inefficiency to creep into it. Some examples are that buildings are not completed on time, stationery items, books and grains are not allotted on time, SDMCs are not reconstituted, and teachers are not monitored regularly. A simplified, straightforward system will greatly reduce the transaction costs involved in the present situation.

The DQEP intervention has to be commended for its vision of building capacity at so many levels within this system. On one hand, mobilization of the community and parents’ associations increases the awareness of the power and responsibilities handed to the community by the government. The intervention also strengthens the officials and teachers within the system at many levels (BRPs, CRPs, BRCs, CRCs, teachers, MRPs).

Fiscal and administrative decentralization is limited in Ashramshalas. Being residential schools, Ashramshalas have a lot of untied expenditures and the HMs have to keep writing to higher authorities to get grants or supplies every time a necessity arises. Moreover, a single expenditure pattern for all Ashramshalas does not hold well considering each school has unique needs. Thus, there is a necessity for granting more powers to Ashramshala HMs. However, the staff at Ashramshalas is inadequate to handle this extra responsibility, as they are already thrust with more than they can handle effectively.
Conclusions

Capacity Building vs. Funding
With thrust on education, the Government of India has released large amounts of funds for education through SSA. This was a much-needed improvement in the field of education. SSA concentrates on the overall development of the school but the issue of improving the quality of teaching and learning is not specifically addressed and is left as an open-ended question [8].

Now in Karnataka, access to a primary school is not a big problem, but access to quality education is. Both good infrastructure and quality education are necessary and equally important conditions for the overall development of the child. DQEP must be given credit for taking the lead in addressing the quality of primary education. This intervention demonstrates that improvement in quality of education is possible if the current government setup functions efficiently. However, the issue of attaining the right balance between capacity building and funding for each state (depending on the situation) needs to be further explored.

Community Involvement
A major part of SCCP focuses on involving the community in their children's education. This has created awareness in the community about the importance of education, but the community has largely failed to contribute significantly in increasing the quality of education. This might be because many parents are illiterate or even if they are literate, have not understood their part in the education of their children.

If the parents are able to assess the learning levels of their children and bring them to the notice of teachers, it will make it easier for the teachers to adopt suitable teaching methods. It will also help the community to monitor the school's efficiency in imparting quality education. In the larger context, this will empower the community to have a say in their children's education.

School Catering to the Child's Needs
The goal of DQEP was to enable schools to cater to children's cognitive and social developmental needs [10]. It aimed at "making elementary education accessible, enjoyable and significant (by endowing creativity and critical thinking) in the lives of children..." To achieve these goals, the approach was to go beyond 'training and transfer' and to use orientation strategies and activities that co-evolve with schools. In implementation however, the approach to the intervention depends entirely on the fieldworker and the school. Thus, some schools have been successful and others still have a long way to go.

In practice, teachers are not always able to relate lessons to children’s lives, making learning uninteresting and irrelevant. Schools focus on curriculum, and not on enhancing children's self-expression, self-confidence, and social skills. Due to DQEP's intervention there are improvements in the learning levels of the
children but it is difficult to specify as to what extent schools are catering to the needs of the child.

Effective Monitoring
Friendly and regular monitoring of schools is a very important aspect of DQEP. It has shown that regular monitoring and follow-up by resource persons can be very helpful for the teachers and for the overall functioning of schools. This serves to keep an eye on inefficient teachers. Also, it recognizes efforts of enthusiastic teachers and motivates them to do better.

BRPs and CRPs tend to become complacent once they are appointed. There is a lack of motivation among them to carry out not only the duties of monitoring the infrastructure, but also to help schools to become centres of quality education. Hence, the need for monitoring is vital even at higher levels in the education system. Efforts towards such monitoring are necessary for imparting quality education to the majority of the country.

DQEP’s objective was to make the school an institution that brings about improvements in the overall development of the child. This ambitious project involves changing people’s perceptions of the school as a place just for teaching. This is a difficult and slow process and has not been achieved entirely. However, it is heartening to see that the intervention has initiated changes in the quality of teaching. This is evident from the difference in the functioning of the schools before and during the intervention. DQEP must be congratulated for its efforts at capacity building and monitoring. It has provided an example for improving the quality of education that can be adapted in similar situations in other states.
Annexure A: Academic Structure of Ministry for Primary Secondary Education
(from the official website of the Department of Primary and Secondary Education
http://www.schooleducation.kar.nic.in)
Annexure B : Head Master’s Responsibilities in Government Schools

School functionalities:
1. Annual plans, timetables, schedules,
2. Conducting bridge programs
3. Distribution of free text books, uniforms, bags and notebooks
4. Celebrating national holidays
5. Conduct co-curricular activities, community oriented activities, sports and educational trips
6. Creating student organizations and student governments
7. Conducting unit tests, trimester examinations and maintaining report cards and sending report cards regularly to kids
8. Allowing for the community, SDMC members and others to participate in national festivals

Others:
1. Teachers attendance
2. Class-wise children’s attendance
3. Attendance signature from kids
4. School supplies maintenance
5. Accepting encouraging plans and projects
6. Summarized report cards
7. Scholarships
8. Managing government, SDMC and non governmental funds
9. Maintaining visitor books
10. Activities record books
11. Inspection follow-up registry

Academic:
1. Preparing capability based learning activities
2. Preparing class timetables, teachers timetables and planning educational activities
3. Teachers’ annual plans
4. Lesson notes and pre-class prep – monitoring
5. Adopting new teaching methodologies- kalinali, nalikali, chaitanya, multi-grade teaching and monitoring other teachers
6. Holding monthly teachers meetings for assessing students’ learning capabilities
7. Assisting children with low learning abilities
List of Acronyms

BEO – Block Education Officer
BRC – Block Resource Centre
BRP – Block Resource Person
CRC – Cluster Resource Centre
CRP – Cluster Resource Person
DPEP – District Primary Education Programme
DPI – Department of Public Instruction
DQEP – District Quality Education Project
EC – Educational Coordinator
GOK – Government of Karnataka
HM – Headmaster
HPS – Higher Primary School
IBCD – Integrated Block and Cluster Development
IED – Integrated Education for Disabled Children
ISRO – Indian Space Research Organization
LDP – Language Development Programme
LPS – Lower Primary School
MRP – Master Resource Person
NGO – Non Governmental Organisations
NIAS – National Institute of Advanced Studies
PS – Poushakara Samiti
SC – Schedule Caste
SCCP – School Community Contact Programme
SDMC – School Development and Monitoring Committee
SHG – Self Help Groups
SSA – Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan
ST – Schedule Tribe
TLMs – Teaching Learning Materials
ZP – Zilla Panchayat
**Glossary**

BRC – Centre with teaching resources for all teachers and HMs in the block.

BRP – Person who is in charge of the block level resource centre.

CRC – Centre with teaching resources for all teachers and HMs in the cluster.

CRP – Person who is in charge of the cluster level resource centre.

DPI – Department in charge for elementary education in Karnataka. Comes under Department of Primary and Secondary Education.

DQEP – NIAS’s Social Anthropology and Sociology Unit’s project to improve quality of education in Chamarajanagar district.

IBCD – One of the programmes of DQEP, see page 4 for further details.

LDP – One of the programmes of DQEP, see page 4 for further details.

NIAS – Located in Bangalore, whose founding mission is to bridge natural and social sciences in order to conduct advanced multidisciplinary research.

PS – A group consisting of the parents of children studying at Ashramshalas. Similar to SDMCs but with no financial authority.

SCCP – One of the programmes of DQEP, see page 5 for further details.

SDMC – Government mandated group to monitor school functioning. Membership consists of HM and parents of children studying in government schools. Has limited financial control over the school.

SSA – Indian Government’s national flagship program to achieve Universal Primary Education.

TLMs – Teaching aids like flashcards, posters, etc.
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