Model School Closure Report

May 2019 | Pune
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Background

Origin of the concept and its foundation

PMC Shikshan Mandal Model School project started in the academic year 2016-17. The concept for the model school project evolved from the Maharashtra Government Resolution on ‘Schools under innovation’. The GR stressed on infrastructure transformation through a budget head of ‘New Project’ under Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan and made the Municipal corporation responsible for the school selection and project execution.

This was an opportunity for PCC to pitch it as a model where infrastructure transformation could be augmented with a focused effort on building the capacity of the school staff leading to whole school transformation. Please see the annexure 1 for the letter of Intent that was shared by PCC to School Board, Pune Municipal Corporation. PCC also pitched it as a model of single shift school with extended school hours. The rationale for doing this was to provide good quality education along the lines of NCF 2005 framework, time for remedial education, adequate teaching and instruction hours and reversing the poor image of PMC that led to loss in enrollment.

The foundation principles of the model school project were: forming the right school team, creating a development & support system at all levels in the school, effective & sufficient infrastructure in the school, Strong School Leadership, Effective teaching and Supportive & invested non-teaching staff. Please see the annexure 2 for the concept that was shared with PMC.

The model school project was designed as a three year project with the first year (Year 0) being the foundational year to meet the non-negotiables for the project. The foundational elements for the project were as under:

- Visionary school leader
- Effective academic coordinator
- Skilled and motivated teachers
- Supportive non-teaching staff
The Selection Process: selecting the right team

- School Selection:
  One of the criteria for selection the school was the condition to increase the school hours. Due to this only those schools that were in a position to merge the morning and afternoon shift schools or those schools that operated as a single shift school were eligible to apply. Local politicians too took it up as prestige issue to set up a model school in their constituency Out of the proposed list of 20 schools, PMC finally identified 15 schools to be a part of the model school project.

- Staff selection:
  An application form (see annexure 3) was rolled out for the teachers and school leaders (HMs) to apply for being a part of the model school project. The idea was to only select those teachers and HMs who are motivated to be a part of the project and make it aspirational and voluntary and not force it on teachers.
  A session was organized for PMC where the then municipal commissioner Mr. Kunal Kumar pitched the idea of model school. Mr. Narendra Goidani, Lifeschools too pitched the idea to the teachers. Post this session, a series of selection conferences were conducted. The selection process included group discussions and interviews.
  However, the number of teachers applying was less than the number of teachers required. One of the reason for this gap in the teachers applying was due to the clause of having extended school timing. A lot of teachers felt that this was an additional burden put on the model school teachers and with no rewards (increments) being given to them in return. Another reason for the low excitement was the concern of the teachers that they will be monitored on continuous basis and will be put in constant limelight, something that the teachers didn’t want.
  Eventually PMC decided to given a formal notice to the teachers and instructed them to attend all the trainings and perform the tasks as per the set expectations for the project.

- Partner Selection:
  PCC and its technical committee in consultation with PMC selected the following partners for the model school project: Anjali Gokhale (Consultant, Pre-primary), QUEST (Grade 1 to 5), Gram Mangal (Grade 6 to 8), India School Leadership Institute (HMs), Prathan (Urdu medium), Akanksha Foundation (Social Workers) and Centre for Learning Resources (Grade 3 to 5 English). Apart from these pilots were conducted with 5 schools using Nalanda tablet (grade 6 & 7) and Limited Resource Teacher Training UK volunteers (5 schools).

The Structures and process: supporting the staff

- Monthly training of teachers in their respective groups:
  Monthly trainings were conducted for 2 days per month. This also served as an excellent platform for teachers across schools to come together and share their learnings and best practices with other teachers. The training dates were finalized in consultation with all the partners and the schools were given an off on both the days of the training.

- Whole Staff Development Workshop:
  PCC team also conducted periodic whole school development workshop. This served as an excellent platform for the entire school staff from HMs, teachers and support staff to come together as a team.
● School level support by Academic Coordinators:
ACs would visit the schools periodically. The structure was centred around supporting the HMs to drive school level structures and initiative and build a positive school culture.

● Classroom level support by partners
The partner field staff also visited the classroom and provided in-school support to the teachers and the HMs.

● Exposure visits
Periodic exposure visits for teachers and HMs were organized. This also provided an excellent opportunity for teachers to bond with each other and learn from best practices of successful models.

Progression

Development of plan and design

The coming together of government officials, PCC and partner organizations brought in a lot of ideas and sense of possibility to achieve the whole school transformation. In order to make the most of this opportunity, it was extremely essential to create a strong plan. The PCC team decided to use the logical framework approach (LFA), which is a well known methodology for designing, monitoring, and evaluating developmental projects. (see annexure 4 for all LFAs)

The main idea was to break down the project’s foundational principles into goals, outcomes and outputs. Based on that the inputs were planned. Given below is the goal statement of the project:

Theory of change

The main project goal was broken down into smaller goals that would help track the progress. These goals were aligned to some of the foundational elements. Following were the four goals in focus from year 0:

1. Increase in student enrollment
2. Increase in student learning outcomes
3. Improvement in teaching learning practices
4. Efficient school structures and processes

The measure of success of each is defined in the LFA attached. In order to meet each of these goals PCC team reached out to different experts who have years of experience in each of these domains. The strategies that were finalized for each of the goals were as follows:

1. Strengthening the community engagement by allocating social workers in schools and strengthening SMCs. Akanksha foundation, has been running high performing schools in Mumbai and Pune with strong community engagement from last 25 years. They became the partner in this project in order to bring in their learnings and support the social workers and school SMCs.
2. Understanding the learning levels of students and designing/implementing programs and student materials accordingly.
3. Structured grade wise teacher training with in-classroom support
4. Capacity building of school leaders to drive better structures and processes along with the support of Academic Coordinators

Key strategic shifts

In the first academic year (Year 0), the focus was to get the basic requirements like, extended school timings, introducing level based student support programs and improving school - community interface. The focus was also on improving student attendance and enrollment and on getting teacher readiness to attend monthly trainings and getting periodic classroom support.

In the academic year 2017-18 (Year 1), the focus was to consolidate our learnings from Year 0 and to provide support to schools with a greater depth through academic coordinators (ACs) and partner support in transforming the school systems.

In the academic year 2018-19 (Year 2), the overall focus has been to strengthen the structures that have been effective. The LFE team and partners reduced their direct support and focused more on making sure the school staff takes ownership to dive the change in their school.

The following table summarises the key shifts in the project over 3 academic years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Area</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student Enrollment</td>
<td>- Social workers(SW) were hired and trained</td>
<td>- SWs were discontinued</td>
<td>- HMs with some support from the PCC team continued to work with SMCs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Home/community visits by SWs</td>
<td>- Academic coordinators with the help of HMs planned the SMC strengthening</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Learning Outcomes</td>
<td>- Baseline for balwadi and grade 3 to 5 was conducted</td>
<td>- Student material for grade 1 to 5</td>
<td>- Student material for grade 3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Student material for grade 1 to 5 was procured</td>
<td>- Midline testing for grade 1 to 5</td>
<td>- Endline testing for grade 1 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Students showcase being organised in all schools as a platform for all students to present their academic learnings</td>
<td>- Second year of student showcase being organised in all schools as a platform for all students to present their academic learnings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Tablet based maths learning Nalanda project for grade 6</td>
<td>- Tablet based maths learning Nalanda project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The project goal of extending Model schools till class 10 had to be dropped as PMC was unable to extend the classes due to a complicated political process and inability to recruit and pay for the salary of additional teachers.
One of the initial project hypotheses was also to get motivated teachers to voluntarily apply to be a part of the model school project. Instead they were pushed by the system to join the schools. Due to this a lot of focus of the ACs would go in building motivation of the teachers. This has affected the outcomes in those schools.

The support to the 2 Urdu medium schools had to be withdrawn in year 2 as there weren’t any partner available who were willing to provide classroom support along with the training inputs. Additionally, the shortage of funds restricted in deploying additional resources for the Urdu medium schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching learning practices</th>
<th>for grade 6 and 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monthly teacher trainings started for teachers from balwadi to grade 8</td>
<td>Monthly teacher trainings continue for teachers from balwadi to grade 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure visit for grade 1 and 2</td>
<td>Exposure visit for grade 3 to 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher needs analysis for grade 6 to 8</td>
<td>In classroom support to teachers from balwadi to grade 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In classroom support to teachers from balwadi to grade 5</td>
<td>Teachers take up Action Research Project</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The partner support for grade 6 to 8 had to be discontinued in year 2 due to shortage of funds. Due to this the teachers couldn’t receive any training and classroom support in the last year of the project.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School structures and processes</th>
<th>for grade 6 and 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ISLI once a month training for HM with in school support</td>
<td>ISLI once a quarter training for HM with some in school support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMs begin to do school walkthroughs, classroom observation and create SIDP</td>
<td>HMs continue to do school walkthroughs, classroom observation and create SIDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meetings conducted by ACs</td>
<td>Exposure visit for HMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two whole staff meetings conducted</td>
<td>Staff meetings co-facilitated by ACs and HMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HMs co-facilitate ISLI PLCs</td>
<td>Staff meetings lead by HMs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff meetings</td>
<td>HMs continue to do school walkthroughs, classroom observation and create SIDP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One whole staff meeting conducted

Academic Coordinators (AC) were at the core of integrating inputs of the partners at a school level. The model was first envisaged as having one AC per school. However, this was a CSR funded position, hence the budget crunch diluted this position. In year 0, here were two ACS, year 1 there were five ACs and year 2 there were three part time ACs. This resulted in inconsistent support structures through the three years.

Input data 2016-19

While there were certain shifts in the overall focus of the project explained in the table above, the structures and processes meant for the development and support of the school HMs, teachers and non-teaching staff remained consistent throughout the three years of operation. The following table provides the input data of these activities (primarily for the HMs and the teachers) for all the three years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activities</th>
<th>2016-17</th>
<th>2017-18</th>
<th>2018-19</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher training hours (Balwadi, QUEST, Grammangal)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HM training hours (ISLI)</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exposure visits (total)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whole school development workshops</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Partner school visits (QUEST)</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balwadi Sahyogi school visits</td>
<td>379</td>
<td>555</td>
<td>N/A*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic coordinator school visits</td>
<td>256 (2 ACs)</td>
<td>584 (5 ACs)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Data yet to be acquired from Partners for Y2
Highlights

Glimpses of key activities from past three years

In addition to the focus area specific inputs several events and activities were organised in the past three years with an aim of providing the best opportunities and sharing platforms to the Model school staff. These events, aimed at all levels of intervention in the Model schools, were organised in collaboration with PMC and the partner organisations and also saw the involvement of external organisations. The highlights from these activities are described in the following paragraphs.

- Sharing school best practices at PMC Shikshan Utsav

In the years 0 and 2, PMC organised a platform for teacher best practices sharing inspired by the state government’s Shikshanachi Wari. PCC supported PMC in designing and executing the two-day event called ‘Shikshan Utsav’. At the event teachers put up stalls displaying their work and paralllely workshops and lecture series were organised for the visiting audience. Model school teachers were selected to showcase their work in the Shikshan Utsav in both the years. They displayed the classroom teaching learning material that was created by the teachers, showcased the activities undertaken in the class, displayed the material used in their Balwadi classroom and also presented the overall school structures and activities.

- Building student leadership- the Design For Change Challenge

Building student leadership and student voice has been a major focus of Model school programme. Each school got involved in government mandated as well external opportunities to develop problem solving skills in the students. One such platform is the Design for Change (DFC) challenge. DFC is a global movement that cultivates the 'I Can' mindset in every child. 4 of the Model schools participated in the challenge in the past 3 years with the ‘Anna He Purna Brahma’ project of Pandit Deendayal Upadhyay School (74G) and the ‘Meena Raju Manch’ project of Bhausaheb Appa Jadhav School (23G) Urdu Medium being selected among “Top 100” projects in India, an incredible feat. These schools were invited to the national level ‘I CAN Awards’ at Ahmedabad and received a cash prize to continue the project.

(Left: Stall by Balwadi teachers at Shikshan Utsav 2019. Right: Stalls at Shikshan Utsav 2017)
• **Nalanda intervention- piloting a technology based classroom**

Year 1 marked the beginning of a pilot of the Nalanda Project, a Tab based blended learning model for Math, in grade 6 & 7 of five Model schools as a result of a partnership with the organisation Motivation For Excellence. Each school was provided with tablets, teacher laptop and charging cabinet. The objective of this intervention was to enable higher student learning outcomes using a blended learning level based approach specifically for Math. Teachers were trained to use the technology with periodic follow-ups and supported through classroom visits by the PCC members. The use of the Tabs resulted in higher engagement of the students during the class, more independent practice and increased confidence of the students as reported by the teachers. Some schools even incorporated the Tab classes in their regular school time table.

• **PMC ownership for Action Research Project**

During the fellowship with ISLI, the HMs were introduced to the concept of teachers working on an independent Action Research Project(ARP) and were coached on how to support the teachers for the same. In Year 1, the most of the teachers from the model schools participated in the ARP organised by ISLI and supported by the HMs. In year 2 this idea was further encouraged by PMC. The Model school project head from PMC, AAO Manorama Aware madam took the initiative to push teachers from 13 Marathi medium Model schools to independently(with the help of PCC team members) work on an ARP from December 2018 to March 2019. 24 teachers completed their ARP in the stipulated time. The presentation of their research was held in collaboration with the Maharashtra SCERT. Officers from the
MSCERT and experts from leading colleges and NGOs constituted the panel. It was very encouraging to see teachers presenting their work and learning from each other. The teachers were given participation certificates from PMC during the End-of-year conference.

- **HM monthly review meetings**

As the focus in year 2 increased on building the ownership of the HMs to lead the school level structures there were more expectations and responsibilities from the model school HMs. A space for all of them to come together, share their best practices and challenges became very important. Thus, working closely with the PMC Project Head of Model School, AAO Manorama Aware, the PCC team prioritized the establishment of the structure of HM reviews. During the review meetings the HMs presented the monthly school level updates, best practices and challenges they were facing. They were able to brainstorm on solutions for each others’ issues and learn from their collective experience. This platform also enable the project head to keep the group motivated by appreciating their work. These meetings were conducted regularly throughout the year with the exception of the last quarter owing to time constraints and exam schedules.

- **Combined conferences for Model School HMs and Sahyogis**

With the intention of encouraging sharing of best practices among schools and teachers, in Year 2 common platforms for the HMs from the Model schools and the PMC Sahyogis were created.
This commenced with the Beginning of the Year (BOY) conference held in June 2018. In this conference, the HMs and the Sahyogis worked together to plan the year and were given common inputs in the field of leadership and team culture building. Similarly, towards the end of the first semester, Mid-year conference (MY) was organised where this group was exposed to the academic work going on in different institutions. Sessions on coaching skills were facilitated by the PCC team members as well.

• **LRTT fellowship- international collaboration in 5 Model Schools**

Limited Resource Teacher Training (LRTT) is a UK based organisation working on teacher mentors and teacher development. In Year 2, 5 Model schools were chosen to be part of the LRTT fellowship as the host schools. Fellows from LRTT coached and supported the teachers (from 1-8 grade) on the use of different effective teaching learning techniques in classroom. The fellows intensively worked with teachers in the schools for 2 weeks. This brought a new wave of excitement amongst the teachers and children. It was a learning process for the fellows as well as the teachers. The teachers received participation certificates at the end of the intervention.
Successes

Outputs and achievements of the model

The following section outlines the major successes seen in the three years of the model school project. The successes have been bucketed under the foundational elements of the model school project explained in the section 1 of this report.

- Improve teaching learning practices

The HM support program was a partial success in the model schools. The HMs were given training on school processes such as classroom observations and school walkthroughs. Over the last two years, the schools saw the HMs in 15 schools doing over 100 walkthroughs, using a rigorous structure. At the end of the year 2 there was also a concrete shift seen in the teaching practices in the classroom.

While recording the observations based on pre-defined objectives, it was seen that there was a significant change in the teacher actions in the classrooms with respect to the measured objectives. The percentage of teachers who performed in the second quartile (25-50%) on the said objectives, reduced from almost 50% to 3%. Meanwhile the percentage of those who scored in the fourth quartile increased from 35% to 82%. Based on qualitative observations, it was also seen that there was a significant increase in the teaching learning material in classrooms. Student work was seen on walls and teachers got habituated of completing planned teaching tasks in the allotted time.

The balwadi teachers have been consistently creating detailed weekly plans and getting it approved by the respective Balwadi Sahyogis (on-ground teacher mentors). Following such a continuous and rigorous planning, a balanced program including literacy, numeracy, social and motor skills was seen in majority of the classrooms.
• Remedial Education

The targeted remedial program run in the model schools saw success in improving the learning outcomes of students in grades 3-5. At the end of Year 2 of the intervention (Midline), there was a significant increase in the students' achievement in Language and Math. The number of students in the lowest quartile decreased while that in the fourth quartile more than doubled. The numbers in second and third quartile remained mostly same. The increase was significant as compared to a control group (Marathi schools in the neighbourhood of model schools) which did not receive any intervention over the two years. *(based on the QUEST report)*

![Scores on Language test Grade 3 to 5 (2017-18)](image1)

![Scores on Math test Grade 3 to 5 (2017-18)](image2)

Moreover, post the two years of grade level intervention in 1st and 2nd grades, it was observed that most of the students were at grade level in grade 3, and hence the remedial program was no longer needed for grade 3 in the third year of the intervention.

• Holistic Student Development and Community Engagement

The 2nd year of School Improvement Project saw all 15 schools put up the Annual Student Showcase where the students displayed the work that they had done in the academic year. The platform was created to provide exposure to students and to increase the investment of parents in the school. The structure was a big success and culminated in a series of student showcases in year 3. A cluster-wide parent-teacher meeting in Bhawani Peth cluster was organised and attended by high ranking officials from the Pune Municipal Corporation and parents. As intended, the showcases attracted a large crowd and gave a chance for students to present their learnings in front of an audience.
One shift per school

At the beginning of the project, it was necessary for model schools to run in single shift schools, so that the schools can have longer student learning time. The timings for Model schools was successfully increased to have 6 hours of instructional time, as compared to 5 hours in non-model schools. This also led to single shifts in all model schools. Such a change at policy level was unprecedented and allowed for a higher level of inputs from teachers to improve the learning outcomes of students.
Challenges

Obstacles in realising the full potential of the model

The Model school project through is life cycle faced a lot of challenges, primary reason being there were a lot of changes in the modus operandi of the government system and dependencies on external funding to sustain interventions. Below are some of the key challenges that affected some of outcomes of the project and left certain hypotheses untested.

1. Social Workers contract renewal
   Based on the recommendations, PMC had recruited 10 social workers albeit on a 6 month contract. Though the requirement was for a long term but PMC suggested that the contracts will be as per their terms of engagement with any contractual employee - which was of 6 months. Also, the PMC process for renewal of the contract was a tedious process with lots of bottlenecks, hence the contract renewal didn’t happen on time. Additionally, the social workers didn’t receive the salary on time. Due to this a lot of time was just wasted in following up with PMC for salary disbursal.

2. Selection of contractual teachers & social workers
   Selecting human resource on PMC contract is a complicated political process. One of the project hypotheses was to strengthen English language education to improve the positioning of the school with the community. PMC wasn’t able to recruit high quality contractual English teachers as it was struggling to recruit contractual teachers for English medium schools as well. Moreover, the expectation that PMC would pay a decent remuneration to the English teachers to attract good quality teachers was rejected by PMC as they feared it would affect their contracts with other teachers.
   In addition to this, the social workers recruitment too wasn’t as per standards as the selection criteria got compromised in interdepartmental transactions.Due to this certain project hypotheses were not tested and the impact was not seen on the ground.

3. Third party evaluation
   It was extremely important to conduct a third party evaluation to establish the efficacy of the model but this couldn’t happen due to two bottlenecks. First, PMC was unwilling to give permission sighting a reason that too many student assessments were already being conducted by the state government and the teachers were already reporting student scores periodically, Secondly, there was a fear of backlash from the teacher unions if this was mandated as this might just highlight the discrepancy in student outcomes. Due to this, the project couldn’t validate the gains through a third party assessment but instead had to rely on internal assessments of the partners.

4. Sustained funds for interventions
   Model school project has been a cost intensive project with CSRs paying for the NGO partner costs. In the second and third year of the intervention there was a lot of pressure to raise funds for the project. Due to which the intervention of Gram Mangal for grade 6 to 8 teachers had to be discontinued. Additionally, the academic coordinator support model to all schools had to be
discontinued as the funds were not available to sustain their contracts. This resulted in the dilution of the project inputs which eventually did affect the project outcomes.

5. **Non-negotiables of the project**

At the start of the model school project a list of non-negotiables, without which the model would not have been established, was shared with PMC. This included basic things like availability of classrooms for Balwadi (pre-primary), one Balwadi teacher and Sevika in each classroom. Out of the 27 classrooms under the project, only 13 classrooms could meet this criteria. A decision was eventually taken to only provide classroom support to those classrooms where the non-negotiables were met.

6. **Balwadi sahyogi reimbursements**

PMC had to give a monthly reimbursement of Rs 1500 to each of the Balwadi Sahyogis. This was essential as the Balwad Sahyogis travel long distances to support the teachers. This was a huge deviation from their daily routine of teaching Balwadi students in an allotted school near to their home. PMC too agreed to pay the monthly reimbursements, as the Balwadi teachers get a meagre salary from PMC. However, the monthly reimbursement didn’t happen on time. PCC had to follow up a lot at the commissioner level to get this sorted. In the middle, the Balwadi sahyogis stopped going to the classrooms as they couldn’t afford the travel. This took a huge toll on the support that was to be provided to the Balwadi teachers from the Balwadi sahyogis.

7. **Transfers in the middle of the academic year**

Another non-negotiable that was set to ensure continuity in the interventions. However, few teachers would use their political influence to get them transferred from the model school. The reasons for requesting for transfers ranged from personal to the teachers not willing to put in extra effort and time, something that was expected as part of the project. This resulted in discontinuity in the interventions and time being wasted as a new teacher had to be supported and brought up to speed as compared to other teachers.

8. **Additional hour for teacher preparation**

The school timing was extended by an hour with the hope and intention that the teachers would use this time to prep for the next day and to attend the staffroom meetings. However, a lot of resistance was faced from the teachers to use it as a preparation time. Eventually, this time had to be reduced to 30 minutes.

9. **Overlap with other trainings**

There were few overlaps with other state trainings. While PMC did try to isolate the model school teachers from the trainings but there were certain trainings that the teachers had to attend. This either resulted in teachers getting confused on what to do in classroom or in wastage of their time.

10. **Investment of the officers and teacher unions**

The officers and teacher unions were not invested in the project. This resulted in unions protesting the increase in school time and officers not attending the monthly teacher trainings. Additionally, the end of year school inspection was not aligned with the training inputs.
Learnings

Key takeaways from the past three years

From conceptualizing of the project idea to executing the model school closure conference the PCC team, PMC officers, partner organizations and school staff went through lots of highs and lows. Being one of its kind, most of the activities were very unique. But one common belief that kept the entire team going was the belief in learning. An important aspect of the project was to ensure that the learning are continuously being captured. This helped in make the required changes and made sure that the project was moving in the right direction. Out of the numerous learnings from this project some of the key learnings are mentioned below:

1. Higher efficiency in the implementation of school-level structures helps build a positive school culture

As mentioned earlier, an important goal of the project was Improving school level structures and processes of the model schools project. The idea was to strengthen the HMs for the same with the help of India School Leadership Institute (ISLI) and PCC academic coordinators. This support was gradually reduced year on year as the HMs started taking ownership. The school's structures were very contextual based on the needs of the school. Some of the common structures that were implemented in most of the schools were:
   a. HM school walkthrough
   b. Classroom observation and peer coaching
   c. Shout out wall
   d. Morning meeting
   e. Staff meeting
   f. Grade wise morning assembly
   g. Student Showcase

While supporting the HMs to implement these structures, there was a noticeable shift in the response of other staff members and even students. It was observed that in schools where the structures were implemented more frequently and efficiently the school staff was able to understand the value of the structure. This also helped them see the change in their school and themselves. Their participation and ownership also increased. This translated into positive school culture and was very much visible in the schools through the regularity of their meetings and an environment of collective action and motivation.

2. The availability of academic platforms for HMs, teachers & students helps them feel motivated and accelerate learning.

The monthly training platforms for HMs and teachers were driven by the trainers at the beginning of the project. In quick time the HMs and teachers started using this platform to share their best practices and seek feedback. The trainers also made sure they appreciate the teachers. As the practices shared were mostly applicable to other teachers also the peer learning increased. In the third year, the HM support was called Peer Lead Learning Circles and the HM took ownership to research and discuss on different school management areas.

This was also visible in the student showcases as the students felt motivated and they also got to learn a lot in the process.
3. 6-hours of instructional time helps in setting time for teacher development to meet growth in student learning outcomes

Due to the ‘one shift per school’ policy of the model school project schools with lesser student enrollment were merged into one school to effectively utilize teachers and school infrastructure. This not just led to increased time for remedial education but also helped in setting consistent teacher workshops at regular intervals. The extended hours made 2 days of teacher development workshops (for Balwadi to grade 8 teachers) by partners every month possible since 2016. Teachers from other non-model schools have taken the initiative to combine schools and run one school in full shift. They took the ownership of convincing the SMC to have 6-hour schools with additional support for students. One such example is school number 42B school in Ghole Road cluster.

4. The technology pilot shows high student excitement and the need for robust program support.

The tablet-based Nalanda project in partnership with the MFE team was implemented in 5 model schools as a pilot. This implementation showed high excitement in students as they were always eager to use the tablets. The students tried their best to make the most of the available content in the tablets. However, the comfort level of teachers and HMs in using technology in the model schools was found to be less than expected. This resulted in a lesser number of tab classes. Thus a key need that arose was to have a different support strategy for them. The supporting structures would have to be robust, flexible and accommodate the challenges faced by the teachers and HMs.

5. Student-led sharing platforms help build the ownership of parents eventually affecting the enrollment in these schools

Student showcases was a platform to showcase student performances at the school level to parents and people from the community. With all the students participating, this gave an opportunity to all students to share one of their learnings using either a TLM or an activity with the visitors. Every parent enjoyed seeing their child presenting and gave the parents the confidence to understand the academic interventions of the school. Since the last two AY, the teachers have reported that this platform has helped in increasing the enrollment in 15 model schools posts the student showcase.

6. For sustained improvement, it is essential to integrate the different inputs at the school level.

As the model schools project included multiple partners coming together, different stakeholders received different inputs. At the school level, it was essential to not only support the stakeholders in the implementation but also capture the learnings post-implementation. It was also essential to check for conflicting inputs and resolve them when necessary. The role of the academic coordinator was designed to meet these needs. The academic coordinator (AC) was responsible to make sure the in-school implementation done smoothly. The ACs made sure they do co-visits with partners and have frequent partner meetings to capture learnings and resolve challenges. The teachers and HMs got enough opportunity to share their challenges and they felt supported. This helped them see their growth; resulting in more sustained improvement.
7. **Availability of social workers helps teachers & HMs build the rigor of the communication between schools and community**

PMC provided additional support to the schools by appointing 8 social workers who reported to the school headmasters. Their role included going into the community every day and reduce the number of absent students by paying home-visits. Due to the efforts of the social workers in year 1 the percentage of absenteeism was reduced by 12% across all 15 schools. The learnings and practice set by the social workers also aided to build strong communication between all community and school staff.

8. **Review structures help push accountability.**

In the third year of the project, the monthly review meetings for all the HMs of the model school helped establish stronger accountability structures with the schools. The PCC team and more importantly the PMC officer-in-charge pushed the HMs to drive more rigor in the work. The officer also made sure that the schools feel appreciated and the challenges are noted down. Overall this structure helped the project officer to drive the work with more ownership from the schools.