



Building a Strong Foundation for School Education in India

Greetings!

On 11 April 2023, we hosted the inaugural edition of the CSF Education Conclave 2023, wherein we brought together a committed group of 200+ sector experts and professionals to collectively share and discuss the 'how' of improving Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) learning outcomes for ALL children in India.

Our objective behind the conclave was to create a forum for sharing wins and best practices towards the NEP 2020's vision of improving the quality of school education in India - especially at the early learning stages. It was most heartening to have participation and engagement of all our key stakeholders including policymakers, educators, tech innovators, nonprofit leaders, and our children.

On behalf of the entire team at CSF, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to you for your support and for being a champion of CSP's work. We sincerely hope that you found the sessions insightful and are feeling as energised as we are by the conviction to build a better future for all children that filled the room that evening.

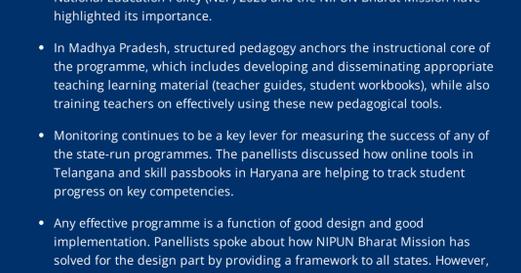
In case some of you were unable to attend the sessions, I am sharing a quick snapshot of key takeaways below.

Here is to hosting more engaging forums with your support in service of all our children's learning!

Regards,

Shaveta Sharma-Kukreja
CEO & MD
Central Square Foundation

Ideas Corner 1: Moving the Needle on FLN, from Commitment to Change



Dr. Anshaj Singh IAS (State Project Director, Samagra Shiksha, Dept. of Education, Govt. of Haryana)
Karuna Vakati IAS (Secretary, Dept. of School Education, Govt. of Telangana)
Lokesh Jangid IAS (Additional MD, Samagra Shiksha, Dept. of School Education, Govt. of Madhya Pradesh)
Sourav Banerjee (Country Director, Room to Read India)

Moderated by **Amitav Virmani** (Founder and CEO, The Education Alliance)

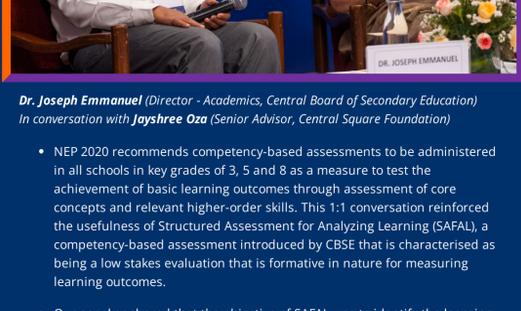
- There is an enabling policy environment for FLN in India and the new National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 and the NIPUN Bharat Mission have highlighted its importance.

- In Madhya Pradesh, structured pedagogy anchors the instructional core of the programme, which includes developing and disseminating appropriate teaching learning material (teacher guides, student workbooks), while also training teachers on effectively using these new pedagogical tools.

- Monitoring continues to be a key lever for measuring the success of any of the state-run programmes. The panellists discussed how online tools in Telangana and skill passbooks in Haryana are helping to track student progress on key competencies.

- Any effective programme is a function of good design and good implementation. Panellists spoke about how NIPUN Bharat Mission has solved for the design part by providing a framework to all states. However, effective implementation of the mission requires iterating and adapting a framework for local contexts.

Kids Connection

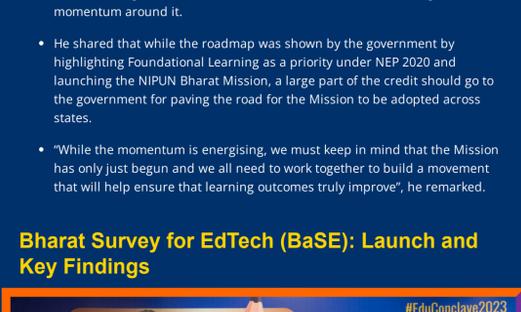


Neelesh Misra (Audio Storyteller, Journalist & Author) in conversation with school children

- We were joined by India's most popular audio storyteller, Neelesh Misra, for an engaging 'classroom reading'-styled session with very special guests - six students from Grade 3 studying at a government school in Gautam Buddha Nagar, Uttar Pradesh.

- Neelesh engaged the children and the audience in a storytelling session on the tale of *Lopata Sundari*, and in the process, introduced FLN and its importance to the children in a playful manner by personifying the concept as 'Mr. FLN'. The children gave an enthusiastic response, as they shared their own tales, cracked jokes and were seen enjoying the session.

Q & A: Competency-Based Assessments for Improving Student Learning and School Quality



Dr. Joseph Emmanuel (Director - Academics, Central Board of Secondary Education) in conversation with **Jayshree Oza** (Senior Advisor, Central Square Foundation)

- NEP 2020 recommends competency-based assessments to be administered in all schools in key grades of 3, 5 and 8 as a measure to test the achievement of basic learning outcomes through assessment of core concepts and relevant higher-order skills. This 1:1 conversation reinforced the usefulness of Structured Assessment for Analyzing Learning (SAFAL), a competency-based assessment introduced by CBSE that is characterised as being a low stakes evaluation that is formative in nature for measuring learning outcomes.

- Our speaker shared that the objective of SAFAL was to identify the learning levels of children - both gaps and giftedness - at an early stage using this digitally-administered assessment tool, helping all stakeholders to get timely feedback that can eventually help the child learn better.

Keynote Address: Taking NEP 2020 and NIPUN Bharat Mission to India's Classrooms



Ashish Dhawan (Founder-CEO, The Convergence Foundation)

- In his address, Ashish expressed his delight at the momentum on prioritisation of FLN that is being seen across the country. He also congratulated the Ministry of Education for making FLN the highest priority and launching the NIPUN Bharat Mission, and states for building the momentum around it.

- He shared that while the roadmap was shown by the government by highlighting Foundational Learning as a priority under NEP 2020 and launching the NIPUN Bharat Mission, a large part of the credit should go to the government for paving the road for the Mission to be adopted across states.

- "While the momentum is energising, we must keep in mind that the Mission has only just begun and we all need to work together to build a movement that will help ensure that learning outcomes truly improve", he remarked.

Bharat Survey for EdTech (BaSE): Launch and Key Findings



- A key highlight of the event was the launch of India's first household survey, 'BaSE: Bharat Survey for EdTech', conceived and conducted by CSF.

- The survey aims to bring the voice of the end-user in Bharat around the discourse on EdTech and provide policymakers, educators, and tech innovators a common frame of reference as well as reliable data and insights for informed decision-making towards improving the quality of education for all.

- The survey was undertaken between November 2022 and January 2023 with parents and guardians of approx. 6000 low income households spread across six very diverse states of India, namely Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Mizoram, Odisha, Telangana and Uttar Pradesh.

Ideas Corner 2: Imperatives for EdTech in India – Way Forward



Rahul Kulkarni (Co-Founder and Partner, DoNew and Chief Technologist, Samagra)
Dr. Sahana Murthy (Professor of Education Technology, IIT-Bombay)
Shashank Pandey (Co-Founder and President, ComeGenius)

Moderated by **Gouri Gupta** (Project Director – EdTech, Central Square Foundation)

- Our panellists agreed on the premise that there is tremendous potential for EdTech to accelerate learning outcomes for Indian learners and also supplement their learning in schools, if used well.

- To meaningfully use EdTech solutions, we need clarity on three things - use case of the tool; its implementation; and whether it meets the quality standards for effective EdTech. Talking about usage and design, our panellists discussed the different motivations for different stakeholders in India, e.g. children are motivated by fun, parents by aspiration, teachers by convenience, and administration by compliance.

- Our panellists agreed that EdTech needs to be contextualised and positioned as a 'plus one' to what people are already familiar with (in terms of technology usage) in order for it to completely benefit the bottom 20 crore population in India.

- A point of caution unanimously shared by the experts was that EdTech solutions should not exacerbate the differences that they sought to reduce in the first place, hence, highlighting the importance of access and contextualisation.

Advancing FLN 2020 on the Ground – The Sewapuri Story

Context-setting and introduction by **Dr. Dhir Jhingran** (Founder and Executive Director, LLF)

Panellists

Abdur Rahman (Numeracy Teacher, Govt. Primary School Thathara 1, Sewapuri Block, UP)

Dr. Dinesh Chand (Academic Resource Person (ARP), Sewapuri Block, UP)

Pooja Kannaujia (Literacy Teacher, Govt. Primary School Arjunpur, Sewapuri Block, UP)

Moderated by **Supriya Ghosh** (Content Development Coordinator, LLF)

- In a conversation led by Language and Learning Foundation (LLF), teachers and academic mentors shared the changes that they have seen in the teaching-learning process since the NIPUN UP Mission was launched on the ground.

- Our panellists shared how the new teaching guides, lesson plans and student workbooks have been helpful in bringing about a change in the classroom experience. They also shared how this material supported them in bridging the gaps in learning among students, after the pandemic.

- One of the panellists remarked that while the design of the Mission was comprehensive, consistent messaging among the stakeholders helps to drive sustainable change on the ground with regular data collection and monitoring, teacher professional development and mentoring, along with access to school-wise performance via a common dashboard.

- Panellists highlighted factors such as student attendance, teacher availability, parental involvement, administrative responsibilities and strategic revision of course material as some of the current challenges towards effective implementation of the Mission.

Ideas Corner 3: Improving Early Childhood Education in India

Amrita Sengupta (Education Specialist, Rajasthan, UNICEF)
Dr. Venita Kaul (Professor Emerita (Education), Ambedkar University, Delhi)

- The CSF team shared a presentation which highlighted the current status of Early Childhood Education (ECE) provision in India and outlined some gaps and opportunities.

- Following this, our speakers drew on their experience to highlight that while there has been considerable momentum from states to focus on early learning, low prioritisation of ECE and subsequent low budget allocations continue to be a challenge. There is also a capacity constraint, in terms of low teacher availability as well as lack of a dedicated teacher in Anganwadis.

- Our speakers also advocated for increased focus on play-based pedagogy during a child's formative years.

Virtual Session: Moving the Needle on FLN in a Global Context

Dr. Karthik Muralidharan (Professor in Economics, University of California, San Diego)
Dr. Luis Crouch (Emeritus Senior Economist, RTI International)

- For the last session of the evening, we were joined by two global education experts who focused on the role that effective teaching can play on FLN learning outcomes among children.

- Our speakers focused on the centrality of effective teaching in the classroom for improved FLN outcomes, and highlighted how the key to achieving this efficiency is following the structured pedagogy approach. They also shared their perspective on the myth that this approach takes away the autonomy from teachers and instead, expressed how it actually provides them with evidence-backed solutions.

- Both speakers highlighted how in order to convert the national movement on FLN into action, there is a need for independent ways to measure learning outcomes. They also highlighted how research from around the world shows that such measures help provide autonomy on process and accountability on outcomes, which is what we as a nation should move towards.

- Sharing their closing remarks, our speakers emphasised that it is important to iterate and adapt interventions, so that one can learn what works in the classroom. They also shared how the success of countries like Korea and Japan is closely linked to how they saw education as being fundamentally central to national survival, capability and pride. What also worked for them was how at the same time, these nations learnt from the Western successes and adapted their models to their own contexts.