
Book Review

Enriching Primary Schooling in India

by Singh, L.C., and Meenu Dev

PUBLISHED BY SHIPRA PUBLICATION, DELHI

PRICE ₹ 600 PAGES 144

The present book, that addresses the issues of primary schooling for the teachers and teacher educators, is altogether different from other books on the subject. The preface of the book itself sets a tone for the whole composition and describes how it is different in terms of its approach, novelty and cogency of thoughts, and touches the core issues and problems that coexist with the teaching learning process at the elementary level. The book seeks to posit and answer various queries that normally crop up in the field of primary education from time to time, despite sincere efforts being put by the state and central governments to resolve them and the constitutional provisions in place starting from Article 45 of Indian constitution to Right to Education Act. The book also sets about the pragmatics for removing the hurdles in the area of primary education.

Divided into eleven chapters, the first four chapters takes care of the out-of-school children, the government efforts to meet the challenge of educating them, inclusive education and mainstreaming, and education for integration. This is followed by early pedagogical interventions, pedagogical inputs required at the elementary level in next two chapters. ICT related actions appear in two chapters thereafter that cover capacity building in ICT and role of ICT in school education. The remaining three chapters of the book are devoted to assessment and evaluation, innovative practices in teaching and discussion on revamp of schooling initiatives. All these chapters enlightened the readers by their facts and figures, presentation, and innovative thought processes. The book presents convincing viewpoints with a new perspective.

The first chapter on out-of-school children presents historical perspective, gender gap, the concept and nature of out of school children. It also gives the demographic classification of out of school children, early main streaming efforts, alternative provisions and a case study. The various government initiatives to reach to out of school children and school dropouts such as non formal education,

residential and non residential bridge courses, alternative schools, human development centres, Right to Education act etc, are accessible in chapter 2. This chapter also contains a few select case studies, problems of implementation, and age appropriate enrolment of out-of-school children. The third chapter on the inclusive education and main streaming reflects upon legislations and constitutional provisions, other initiatives, non detention policy, optional examination policy, ICT intervention, concerns and challenges of mainstreaming, special training for out of school children. The concept and dimension of integration together with integration strategies and the teachers' role have been the focus of the subsequent chapter.

The fifth chapter on early pedagogical interventions and exciting activities has paved a way for understanding special provisions, pedagogical interventions, needed pedagogic reforms, and the language of instruction, and also reflects upon various effective activities for the primary stage learners. The sixth chapter on pedagogical inputs at elementary stage discusses learner centred pedagogy, critical pedagogy, experimental and participatory learning, problem solving and investigatory approach, peer learning and other such approaches at one place. The subsequent chapter on capacity building and ICT integration stresses the importance of capacity building as an important aspect reflecting on face to face programmes like orientation for development of material, pedagogical methods, inter disciplinary approach, and exposure to community work with key government initiatives. The chapter talks on mission 2007- Every village – a knowledge centre. The preparation needed for any assessment has been discussed in the next chapter. This chapter has beautifully described the early level assessment profile of out of school children and learning support guidelines for them. This chapter also talks about assessment for learning and has included a variety of examples and exemplars, tasks and tests, skill based strategies and practices.

The eighth chapter of the book on innovative practices in teaching presents traditional practices such as learning together, soft skill strategies, concept networking, and peer tutoring, on the one hand, and emerging practices such as constructivist teaching, reflective teaching, techno- pedagogy, on the other. Revamping primary schooling initiatives in action is the focus of the subsequent chapter that describes the segregation syndrome, fate of inclusive education, quality education determinant with a thematic approach

on a reforming teacher. The chapter also describes the recent initiatives and the challenges before the system. The book ends with promises and prospects of ICT in teacher education and school education with modalities of implementation and integration of ICT in primary as well as elementary education in India.

The book is certainly a good collection of literary work by Prof. L.C Singh and Meenu Dev. The case studies cited in the book are real eye opener for a beginner and give a deeper insight to every reader. The book is an excellent collection of material on different aspects of primary education and contains a variety of unique features giving guidance to all those who are working in the area of elementary education.

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