

***Chavadi Vachan* — The Social Audit of Reading**

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Chavadi Vachan, a social audit initiative of learning, was implemented in the State of Maharashtra as part of the Quality Enhancement Campaign by the Maharashtra Prathmik Shikshan Parishad (MPSP), Mumbai, in the year 2011. The programme, which aimed at ensuring Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE), was carried out in government and local body schools across all mediums of instruction.

‘Social audit’ refers to a form of citizen participation that focuses on government performance and accountability. As part of the initiative, children are asked to read aloud passages or excerpts from a vernacular newspaper before villagers and not just in the school assembly. This is termed *Chavadi Vachan*. Academicians, teachers and other stakeholders, then, ask questions to them in order to check their reading comprehension skills. The students are asked questions before the villagers, the results of which are declared on the spot. It is like showcasing the learners’

progress in the vernacular language and mathematics in front of the whole community. The students who perform well in *Chavadi Vachan* are awarded prizes.

The head teacher along with other teachers conducts *Chavadi Vachan* practice sessions in their respective schools. The programme is, usually, conducted for three hours from 8–11 am as per the convenience of the stakeholders, preferably, twice a month. In few cases, the programme is organised only once a month considering the availability of the concerned stakeholders.

These programmes are conducted in natural, joyful and informal atmosphere. The *Chavadi Vachan* programme helps a child gradually move from simple texts to advanced ones. Hence, the format of the programme is such that it offers the learners an opportunity to showcase their talents and skills in a phased manner. It also provides an opportunity to the teachers to polish their teaching–learning skills. Since it is a part of CCE, it enables the

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teachers to receive regular feedback of the learners' progress and plan their teaching-learning strategies accordingly. The programme also enables parents to get immediate feedback about the progress of their wards.

The material used for *Chavadi Vachan* are textbooks, self-learning cards, library books, newspapers, magazines and educational aids. The reports are presented in School Management Committee (SMC) meetings. The SMC members also discuss the progress of each student in its meetings in order to design an action plan to further improve their performance.

The programme stresses putting in continuous and comprehensive efforts, conducting monitoring of the students at regular intervals, and encouraging active participation of the learners and stakeholders at all levels — right from the headmaster to villagers — to achieve universalisation of elementary education. It can be achieved only by enhancing the skills of the learners with coordinated interactions among the different stakeholders, such as headmasters, teachers, cluster heads, members at the *Panchayat* level, representatives of the people, academicians, social workers, members of parent-teacher associations and mother-

parent associations, SMC members, villagers, etc. All stakeholders from local authorities and monitoring system attend the *Chavadi Vachan* programme. The stakeholders are informed about the programme three days prior to it.

There is also a provision to utilise the school grants made available under the *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* (SSA) for the purpose.

It needs to be noted here that according to the Right to Education (RTE) Act 2009, the responsibility of imparting quality education to the learners in the age group of 6–14 years lies with the State government and local bodies. Hence, the entire administrative and monitoring system in the State participate to make the *Chavadi Vachan* programme a success and meet the aim of learning enhancement.

Along with *Chavadi Vachan*, another initiative undertaken in the State of Maharashtra is that of creating a 'reading corner' called *Vachan Kopara* in every classroom and 'reading string' called *Vachan Dori*. Age-appropriate reading material is kept in the reading corner to develop reading habit among the learners. Some magazines are also hung on the reading string, within the reach of the learners in order to inculcate reading habit in them.