

Effective Implementation of Quality Monitoring Tools: Some Reflections

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Overview

Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA) is implemented as India's main programme for universalisation of elementary education. SSA makes an effort to universalise access to and retention in schools, while at the same time, emphasises quality of elementary education through community-based monitoring system.

- **What is Monitoring:** Continuous assessment of progress for diagnosing strengths and weaknesses
- **Why it is Done:** To take timely corrective measures for optimising effectiveness and quality
- **How it is Done:** Identification of in-built milestones in programme, permeate through all its operations and components
- **When it is Done:** Total life-cycle of programme – pre-planning stage to implementation of planning and assimilation.

Government of India's commitment for quality monitoring is also highlighted in the following paragraph from *National Policy of Education (1986)*—"Within a multi-level framework of educational development, central, state and district and local level agencies will participate in planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation and monitoring implementation of National Policy on Education (1986)."

Salient Features of Monitoring in *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*

- Community-based monitoring with transparency
- Establishment and effective use of EMIS
- Availability of monitoring structures at different levels – community, sub-district, district, state and national
- Convergence of Research and resource institutions

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- Periodicity in monitoring
- Field-based monitoring
- In-built and independent Monitoring
- Comprehensive coverage – Implementation, finance and quality
- Inclusion of various facets – supervision, monitoring, evaluation, research, etc
- Provision of feedback and follow-up.

Why Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs)?

With a view to providing relevant and necessary inputs for enhancing the understanding of stakeholders including educational administrators, field level functionaries and teachers, a need was felt to provide a set of tools on various aspects of quality education in the context of SSA. The main objective of the document – QMTs is to equip the field level functionaries with a better understanding of the quality dimensions of elementary education so as to enable them to devise ways and means for reorganising classroom processes, adopting suitable evaluation techniques and developing harmonious relationships with parents and community leading to improvement in the quality of education at elementary stage.

Improving the quality and efficiency at school-classroom level is a major thrust area of the SSA programme. Mere focus on access, enrolment and retention without resulting into betterment of learning

levels becomes counter productive, besides adversely affecting school effectiveness. It is, therefore, imperative that efforts towards achievement of quality need to go hand-in-hand with efforts directed towards increasing access, enrolment and retention. Interventions for pedagogical improvement are the most difficult to plan, apprise and implement. Adequate, rigorous, inclusive and continuous monitoring and supervision are the most important keys to successful implementation of any educational programme. The same is true for *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*. SSA also lays emphasis on improving the quality of elementary education, thereby making education useful and relevant for children by taking steps like improving the curriculum, child-centred activities and effective teaching-learning strategies. As the ultimate goal of all quality directed interventions is to achieve positive changes within the school-classroom settings so it is important to ensure quality in the inputs and processes for achieving quality education. All the monitoring formats are formative in nature and quality-oriented. These help the functionaries at various levels to realise 'Where do we stand?' These are quite useful for self-monitoring and self-introspection for assessing one's own strengths and bottlenecks experienced during the implementation of Quality Monitoring Tools. The feedback obtained at various levels need to be utilised to further improve the situation

and enhance quality in various aspects. Information is collected through these formats at different levels, viz., school, cluster, block, district and State. It is a system of two-way flow of information. The status is reported from one level to the next higher level and so on, which provides feedback to the preceding level for further strengthening the strengths and replicating the success stories as well as removing the bottlenecks. Thus, this monitoring system not only assesses the progress of the SSA programme but also enables the states to take timely corrective measures.

In this context, the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) has been identified as the nodal agency at the national level to bring about improvement in the quality of education at the elementary level through a multiplicity of initiatives. With a view to introducing a system of continuous monitoring of quality aspects of elementary education, the Department of Elementary Education, being the nodal Department at NCERT for SSA related activities developed a set of 14 monitoring formats and three analytical sheets, known as Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs), through a nationwide rigorous process of consultations. These formats were rolled out by the Ministry of Human Resource Development across all the states during 2005-06. This is a self-sustaining mechanism for quality improvement at all operational levels

of elementary education, viz., school, cluster, block, district and state.

Quality Monitoring Tools (QMTs) were implemented in the states and UTs with the aim to bring out improvement in quality of elementary education having focus on identified quality dimensions:

- Basic infrastructure and other Facilities
- Management and community support
- School and classroom environment
- Curriculum and teaching-learning materials
- Teacher and teacher preparation
- Opportunity time (teaching-learning time)
- Classroom practices and processes
- Learners' assessment, monitoring and supervision.

In order to achieve this aim, QMTs were developed and implemented with the following objectives such as:

1. to establish a system of periodic monitoring and regular feedback at elementary level within and outside the classroom;
2. to monitor the progress of key indicators for each quality dimension;
3. to analyse and provide feedback for improvement at different levels; and
4. to establish a community-based monitoring system at the school level.

Description of the Formats

Monitoring under *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan* programme has been envisaged as a multi-tiered one:

monitoring at the school/ community level, at the cluster level, at the block level, at the district level, at the state level and at the national level. This necessitates development of a proper monitoring mechanism at various levels, i.e., school level/community level, cluster level, block level, district level, state level and the national level for a functional self-sustained feedback system. For this, there is a need to have an effective monitoring system through which not only the progress of the programme can be analysed but also timely corrective measures can be undertaken. The levels for monitoring and feedback mechanisms have been envisaged in Fig. 1.

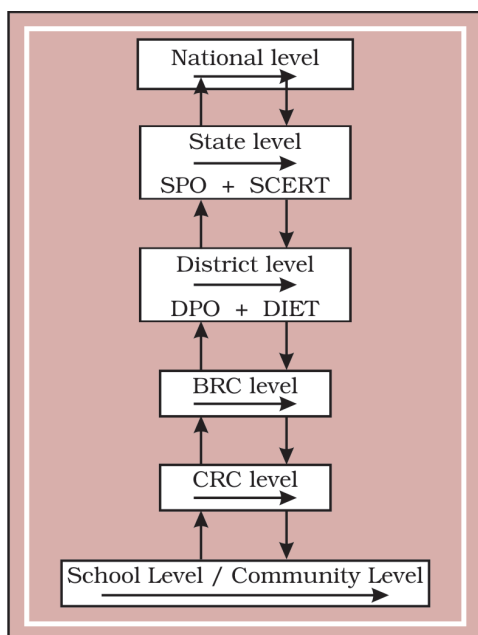


Fig. 1: Information Flow Systems in the Quality Monitoring Tools (Linkages with DIETs and SCERTs)

It was expected that the information collected at the school level and the information collected by community-based organisations would be consolidated and analysed by the Cluster Resource Centre (CRC) coordinator. However, every teacher analysed the quarterly data on learners' achievement, to reflect on her/his own students' learning and performance. CRC coordinator collated attendance and achievement data for the entire cluster and also analysed it to identify the trends and various needs. However, CRC coordinator was directly engaged through classroom observations and their quantitative and qualitative analysis. CRC coordinator sent data on attendance and learners' assessment along with his/her analysis to BRC coordinator.

At the block level, BRC coordinator was expected to go through the analysis and information sent by CRC coordinator and also to collect some information at his/ her own level. It is important to mention that the BRC coordinator collected the required information himself/herself and not through CRC coordinator. There were certain items on which BRC coordinator had to report, which do not figure in CRC coordinator's formats, for example, data on teacher appointment, etc. The reason behind this segregation was that BRC coordinator plays an important role in ensuring teacher appointment.

BRC coordinator will send all the data and the information to District Project Office (DPO) as well as to the

respective District Institute of Education and Training) (DIET). It was envisaged that the team in DPO would reflect on the information and collate information coming from different blocks, before sending it to State Project Office and SCERT. DPO will send the data on attendance, learners' assessment and other items. The monitoring formats filled by the BRC coordinators was to be sent to the DIETs who should analyse the specific achievements and shortfalls for areas mentioned under curriculum and teaching-learning materials, teacher and teacher preparation, classroom practices and processes, and learners' evaluation, monitoring and supervision and then prepared their assessment and remedial plan for their districts.

The DIET was to send their comments to the DPO after analysis who then consolidate the information and forward it to the State Project Office. The DIET Principals send their comments to the Director, SCERT for State-wise review and consolidation. The DPOs, BRC and CRC coordinators were to take into account the areas identified by DIET faculty members, which required attention while planning in-service training of teachers and finalised it in consultation with DIETs.

The State with the help of SCERT consolidated learners' assessment data for every quarter. The State Office also reflected on information about enrolment and actual attendance of children in schools but did not send it

to the National Level. DIETs and SCERTs were to own the responsibility for improving the areas mentioned under curriculum and teaching-learning materials, teacher preparation, classroom practices and processes, opportunity time, teaching-learning time and learners' evaluation, monitoring and supervision.

QMTs did gain acceptance from different States and Union Territories since its inception. But a look at the data in Fig. 2 showing Frequency of Monitoring Reports submitted by States/UTs to NCERT reveals that whereas some States and UTs like Chandigarh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Madya Pradesh were quite regular in sending these formats for feedback from NCERT, there were few States and UTs like Goa, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, West Bengal and Jammu and Kashmir which did not actively participate and sent very few formats. This calls for a review to apprise the system about the bottlenecks or the constraints being faced in the implementation of QMTs by these States and Union Territories.

Accordingly Secretary (SE&L), MHRD observed in the 169th meeting of Project Approval Board held on 20 May 2011 that it has become essential to assess the effectiveness of the QMTs in getting some useful insight into the quality of education in the schools. NCERT must think through the ways to analyse the report and bring out relevant takeaways from them for the states. Similarly Additional

Frequency of Monitoring Reports Submitted by States/UTs

Sl.	States/ UTs	STLF I (a)*	STLF I (b)**	STLF II***
1	Andhra Pradesh	7	7	7
2	A & N Islands	2	2	2
3	Arunachal Pradesh	1	1	1
4	Assam	3	2	2
5	Bihar	2	2	2
6	Chandigarh	8	11	11
7	Chhattisgarh	2	2	2
8	Dadra & Nagar Haveli	3	3	3
9	Daman & Diu	4	4	4
10	Delhi	5	6	6
11	Goa	0	0	2
12	Gujarat	4	8	8
13	Haryana	1	4	4
14	Himachal Pradesh	5	3	6
15	Jammu & Kashmir	1	2	2
16	Jharkhand	2	2	4
17	Karnataka	3	4	3
18	Kerala	3	3	1
19	Lakshadweep	3	5	3
20	Madhya Pradesh	6	7	7
21	Maharashtra	1	1	1
22	Manipur	1	1	3
23	Meghalaya	1	1	1
24	Mizoram	4	5	5
25	Nagaland	6	6	3
26	Orissa	3	3	4
27	Puducherry	4	7	3
28	Punjab	7	7	10
29	Rajasthan	3	5	5
30	Sikkim	5	5	4
31	Tamil Nadu	10	11	11
32	Tripura	4	9	9
33	Uttar Pradesh	4	7	8
34	Uttarakhand	3	4	4
35	West Bengal	1	1	1

* STLF I (a): Annual Monitoring Report on various Quality Dimensions

** STLF I (b): Quarterly Monitoring Report on progress in In-service Trainings

*** STLF II: Quarterly Monitoring Report on Learners' Achievement

Fig. 2

Secretary (SE) also added that QMTs are being seen as an additional data collection exercise and a burden on the CRCs and BRCs. Unless they lead to deepening the understanding of the needs and challenges of ensuring quality education at the district and sub-district levels, there is little point in collecting a large volume of data. She also expressed the opinion that the data collection formats have been revised without any meaningful consultation with the stakeholders and taking the implication of the RTE Act, into account. As regards QMTs, the appraisal team observed that the programme did serve a useful purpose in the initial years, but it needs serious rethink if it should continue in its present form for the following reasons:

- Heavy emphasis on data collection most of which is already being collected through DISE adding additional burden on the teachers and sub-district level functionaries.
- Absence of a robust mechanism for the analysis of this data at any level.
- Uniformity of tools completely does not allow the contextualisation of the whole exercise and establishing meaningful linkages with the prevailing pedagogical approaches in the states.
- The basic purpose of generating useful insights into the efficacy of the quality interventions at the school level does not seem to have been served. There is no evidence of the findings of this exercise being factored into the curriculum renewal process or teacher training

strategies at the national or state level.

- States are not enthusiastic at all about continuing it and even NCERT's capacity to provide support to the states is extremely limited.
- Despite the programme being in existence for about six years, no qualitative report or document exists on the findings of the QMTs.

Director, Elementary Education informed the PAB that all these issues regarding QMT were discussed with the NCERT team during the appraisal process and a suggestion was made that this programme should be replaced by a programme smaller in scale in terms of coverage of the schools, but designed to undertake intensive study and analysis of the quality interventions at the school level with reference to the preparedness level and effectiveness of the support institutions like DIETs, BRCs and CRCs to carry forward the quality agenda of the state. It was discussed that the new Quality Monitoring Programme should be implemented in schools falling under 100 clusters across the country ensuring that at least one cluster is covered in each State/UT. This exercise should result not only into the capacity-building of the schools and district and sub-districts level giving an in-depth perspective on the strengths and challenges in ensuring quality education in schools in different states. Additional Secretary (SE) supported the view that QMTs should be replaced by a more intensive and focused quality monitoring

programme and said that it should also have linkage with the findings of the national level achievement surveys. Director, NCERT also endorsed the idea of intensive monitoring of quality interventions and development of good documents for the use of states and other stakeholders. The Department of Elementary Education agreed to the suggestion to have a relook at the Quality Monitoring Formats and finalise them in active consultation with the states. It was assured to the chairperson that NCERT would strive to improve the analysis of the reports and quality of the analytical reports shared with the states. Accordingly, NCERT in collaboration with the States/UTs revised QMTs in the context of RTE Act, 2009. The revision is based on NCF-2005. *Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan*–Framework for Implementation, based on the RTE, 2009, Model Rules on RTE, and experience gained in the implementation of QMTs since 2005-06. The revised QMTs have been submitted to the MHRD and released for implementation during 2013-14 to all States and UTs. The objectives of the revised QMTs are as given below:

1. To institutionalise quality monitoring system of elementary education in the States/ UTs.
2. To promote understanding of various dimensions of quality of elementary education among State, district, sub-district and school functionaries.
3. To ascertain the participation of community in functioning and

monitoring of elementary school education system.

4. To monitor the progress of and provide feedback on various dimensions of quality education at elementary level within and outside the classroom.
5. To improve the quality of elementary education as envisaged in RTE Act, 2009.
6. The revision of QMTs consisting of 14 formats and three analytical sheets resulted into seven simplified formats, to be used at different levels – school, cluster, block, district and state.

The major quality dimensions for improving quality of elementary education covered under the revised formats are:

- Children’s Attendance;
- Community Support and Participation;
- Teacher and Teacher Preparation;
- Curriculum and Teaching-learning Materials;
- Classroom Process; and
- Learners’ Assessment, Monitoring and Supervision.

Under the revised scheme there are four quarters of monitoring in a year, that is, the QMTs at different levels will be completed four times in a year– once in each quarter. The four quarters have been shown in Table 1.

A comparison of Table 1 (revised QMT) and Table 2 (previous QMT) shows that number of formats to be completed has been reduced from 14 to seven in number. Earlier there were 14 formats and three analytical sheets

which have been simplified to seven. The information on quality management aspects were collected for two quarters in an academic year earlier. The period covered in Quarter I was June/July to September, in

Quarter II it was October to December and in Quarter III the months covered were January to March. Table 2 presents consolidated picture of quarters of monitoring at various levels of previous QMTs.

Table 1: The Quarters of Monitoring

<i>Quarter</i>	<i>Period covered</i>	<i>Submission of tool/format to next higher level</i>	<i>Format to be completed/ consolidated</i>	
I	April to June	July	SMF, CMF, COS, BMF, DMF	—
II	July to September	October	SMF, CMF, COS, BMF, DMF	SMCF, STMF
III	October to December	January	SMF, CMF, COS, BMF, DMF	—
IV	January to March	April	SMF, CMF, COS, BMF, DMF	SMCF, STMF

Table 2: The Quarters of Monitoring

<i>Levels</i>	<i>Attendance</i>	<i>Community/ VEC support</i>	<i>Teacher Preparation, TLM &T-L Processes</i>	<i>Learners' Assessment</i>	<i>Total</i>
School	1 Quarterly	1 Annually	-	1 Quarterly	3
CRC	1 Quarterly	-	1 Quarterly	1 Quarterly	3 + 1 Analytical Sheet
BRC	1 Quarterly	-	1 Quarterly	1 Quarterly	3 + 1 Analytical Sheet
District	1 Quarterly	-	1 Quarterly	1 Quarterly	3 + 1 Analytical Sheet
State			1(a) Annually 1(b) Quarterly	1 Quarterly	2
Total	4	1	4	5	14 + 3 Analytical Sheets

Suggestions for effective implementation of QMTs

Since the QMTs have been operational, the monitoring for management of quality education has made headway in terms of sensitising about the quality aspects of elementary education. These formats are being implemented in all the thirty-five States and Union Territories across the country; however, they are at different stages of implementation. Over the years, it has been found that there are variations in the way in which QMTs have been adopted by different States and Union Territories. The participation of some States and Union Territories were far behind as expected. In order to attain the desired impact of QMT, greater involvement of all concerned becomes imperative. Accordingly few suggestions have been made for not only bringing improvement in Quality education but also its sustenance.

- All the BRC and CRC structures should be functional in all States/ UTs.
- CRCCs, BRCCs and other SSA functionaries should be deployed in required number.
- Responsibilities of CRCCs and BRCCs should be specified.
- CRCCs and BRCCs should pay regular visits to schools. Sometimes, these visits may be made without any previous information.
- CRCCs and BRCCs should devote maximum time in visiting the concerned schools and in providing on-site support to the teachers.
- We should try to achieve coordination at all levels of implementation of SSA programme.
- There should be active involvement of VECs/ PTAs/ MTAs and other community members in the school activities.
- Real information should be filled-up, which will help the SSA functionaries to derive action points for improvement. For real feedback, real data is needed. Genuineness is the crux of monitoring.
- Quality assurance depends on the raw things obtained. It is possible that the persons at the grassroot level commit mistakes. Accept errors for modification.
- The analytical sheets at various levels are for reflection of real situation at that level. There should be willingness among concerned SSA officials to take corrective actions. If required, some support must be available for them in the system.
- Empowering functionaries at different levels in analysing the collected information and taking corrective measures on the basis of identified problems.
- Development of computer programme for facilitation in data compilation at different levels.
- Sharing Meetings should be organised in different states for dissemination of best practices and incentives to the concerned functionaries.

CONCLUSION

Monitoring gives us opportunity to assess health of the system. All the monitoring formats are formative in nature and quality-oriented. It is not useful to collect the data only. Rather, we should make efforts 'how we can enhance the utility of information

gathered through QMTs'. If we strengthen our monitoring mechanisms at all levels, we will not only be able to sustain the interest of children in schools but, we will also be able to improve the achievement levels of children through effective classroom processes.

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