

International Schools Project

School Education Department - Government of Maharashtra

A. BACKGROUND:

As India sets its course to achieve the 2030 UN Sustainable Millennium Goals of *ensuring inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning*, the State of Maharashtra has been leading systemic reform agenda through landmark resolutions and initiatives to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the 100 odd thousand schools serving about 22 million children. In the recent times, the idea of education and its facets are evolving every day. It is essential for a robust education system to recognise and cater to the changing needs of citizens and countries in the 21st century. A standout feature of this is the availability of ever-present, dynamic and up to date information that is easily accessible on internet and newer forms of mass media to anyone. The skill to research online, efficiently access the information and develop one's skills is enough to enable children at large to acquire knowledge. This knowledge could be history, geography, science, maths, language or social studies. Information related to all subjects is easily available online. Going by this, it is to be noted that information by itself is not of the utmost importance and hence school education cannot be seen merely as a way to just *disseminate* information.

A 2014 WISE survey studied that academic knowledge will not be the most valuable type of knowledge anymore and teaching learning processes will undergo fundamental changes in the coming years. Education must not merely focus on information transfer, but on building the right skills, values and mindsets for our children to face the 21st century future, which the adults of our age are finding hard to predict. Over the years, the teacher's role has evolved. In Maharashtra, we have seen a great progress in teaching learning processes - a move from just sharing information to facilitating student engagement to construct knowledge through activities, and also supporting students in accessing information on their own to develop their skills and abilities. To this end, therefore, it becomes imperative that student learning evaluations must not be restricted to testing factual information but to evaluate the extent to which students can apply what they have learnt to real life situations and be empowered to participate productively in society. The citizens of the countries whose education system succeeded in this, have been, and are more likely to be successful in creating citizens empowered to meet the needs of the 21st century.

There are internationally reputed assessments in Reading, Science & Math that have been developed for assessing the student learning when it comes to application and higher order learning skills. Three of the most reliable and prominent international assessments are:

1. The **Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)** is a worldwide study by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in member and non-member nations of 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance on Mathematics, Science, and Reading. It was first performed in 2000 and then repeated every three years. It is done with a view to improving education policies and outcomes. It measures problem

solving and cognition in daily life. The 2012 version of the test involved 34 OECD countries and 31 partner countries, with a total of 510,000 participating students. In the 2012 version of PISA, Shanghai (China), Singapore, Taiwan and Japan have prominently scored in the top 3 positions across the three subject areas. It is proposed that students from the selected schools will participate in PISA in 2021.

2. The **Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS)** is a series of international assessments of applying the mathematics and science knowledge of students around the world. The participating students come from a diverse set of educational systems in terms of economic development, geographical location, and population size. In each of the participating educational systems, a minimum of 4,500 to 5,000 students are evaluated. TIMSS 2011 had 52 participating countries for the fourth grade and 45 countries for the eighth grade. Because TIMSS studies are done in 4-year cycle, it opens the opportunity for participating countries to use the results between the fourth and the eighth grades to track the changes in achievement and certain background factors from an earlier study. In the 2011 TIMSS, Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan and Finland have been ranked in the top 3 in both Math and Science, for both 4th and 8th grade student tests. It is proposed that students from the selected schools will participate in TIMSS in 2023.
3. The **Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS)** is an international study of reading achievement in fourth graders. It is conducted by the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA). It is designed to measure children's reading literacy achievement, to provide a baseline for future studies of trends in achievement, and to gather information about children's home and school experiences in learning to read. The reading achievement results present each country with an opportunity to examine educational policies and practices against a globally-defined benchmark, while the report also contains rich information about children's early literacy experiences and reading instruction. The top-performing countries in 2011 version of PIRLS were Hong Kong SAR, the Russian Federation, Finland, and Singapore. It is proposed that students from the selected schools will participate in PIRLS in 2021.

B. THE PROPOSED IDEA:

Maharashtra is at a tipping point of reform implementation with about 18,000 schools out of 65,000 declared as '*Pragat*' - termed to envisage the growing excitement around improving the learning outcomes across the State. As a logical next step, it seemed ambitious to raise the bar for student learning in a context where there are several teachers who are excited to do more! It is therefore envisioned that - **By 2021, Maharashtra State will be ranked in the top 20 in student learning outcomes of Math, Science & Reading as measured by the prominent assessments of PISA, TIMSS & PIRLS.** In order to make this vision a reality, the State Government of Maharashtra (GoM) is envisioning the creation of excellent schools, with motivated teachers who have access to high quality teaching resources and led by able and creative School Leaders.

In the short term, the GoM plans to build *a network of 100 high performing public schools run by local self governing bodies, with a focus on building skills through a strong international curriculum & access to effective learning resources*. A strong structural and centralized support system will be created at the level of the Education Commissioner, who will oversee and co-ordinate the project along with Maharashtra State Board (SSC) and the Maharashtra State Council of Educational Research (MSCERT). The project will have a detailed plan of action and milestones set for June 2017 launch with 100 schools. **In the long term**, the idea of creating *high performing schools will be scaled to different geographies to include more schools in the ambit who will learn and be coached by the first set of 100 schools*. The number of schools which needs to be scaled will be significantly larger which should be able to commit to cater to the 20 million children across the State.

C. THE PLAN & PROCESSES:

C.1 Selection Criteria for first lot of 100 schools:

1.1 Each grade in the school must have at least two divisions. Alternatively, schools comprising of grades 1 - 5 must at least have 300 students; schools comprising of grades 6-8 must have at least 210 students, schools with grades 9-10 at least 160 students; schools with grades 11-12 at least 200 students. There is no grade availability restrictions.

1.2 The students who attend the selected 100 schools will necessarily come from the school's nearby localities.

1.3 At least one school from the hundred must be from an adivasi or hilly/remote areas.

1.4 For the selection of a school, the School Principal, School Management Committee, and the *Gram Panchayat/ Nagar Palika/ Municipal Corporation* must jointly make an application

1.5 In the application, it will be necessary to demonstrate and provide details about the readiness to put in the hard work, willingness and openness to learn, and ability to identify and access additional resources as required.

1.6 The selection of schools from Adivasi/Remote areas will be done at the State level, without any formal application process, in coordination with the Tribal Welfare Department of GoM

C. 2. The Selection Process:

2.1 There will be a Selection Committee appointed under the Chairpersonship of the Education Commissioner, Maharashtra. The Directors of the MSCERT, SSC Board and Primary and Secondary Education will constitute the body of the selection committee.

2.2 The selection will be done based evaluation of on information submitted in applications according to '1.3' above as well as interviews, as necessary.

C.3. Processes and Support Systems to enable increase in education levels:

3.1 A special cell for international level education will be created in MSCERT.

3.2 For the schools that wish to benefit from this, a separate Board will be established within the existing SSC Board - potentially named as SSC-i Board

3.3 The services of Cambridge University and British Council will be utilised in developing procedures and ongoing support structures to Schools

3.4 There will be a 'Visioning Workshop' arranged to train all the three levels of employees of the selected schools - Teachers, School Principals and School Management bodies.

3.5 After this process, each school will develop its own vision, goals and work plans. The learnings from the study tour of the current top performing countries will be integrated in this.

3.6 A state level expert committee will evaluate and provide feedback on each school's vision document and work plan.

3.7 With the help of Cambridge University, the existing curriculum will be adopted and adapted as necessary to the Maharashtra context. All relevant literature will be translated by experts into Marathi and Urdu. Based on this there will be trainings organised for the teachers and school leaders of the selected schools. The objective will be to ensure that every child from these 100 schools will at least score 60% in the international assessments.

C.4. Selection and posting of School Leader (Head Master - HM) and Teachers:

4.1 In case of the school being selected based on an application made by the school principal, they will remain the school principal for the next 5 years. After the tenure, the same candidate may apply for the post when the fresh selection process commences.

4.2 The teachers for each school will be selected by a committee under the chairpersonship of the school principal.

4.3 The job tenure of the selected teachers will be for the duration of five years ONLY.

4.4 After 5 years, when the tenure of the selected teachers and principals comes to an end, a fresh selection process will be undertaken. The candidates from the first cycle, will remain eligible to apply again and will have to go through the entire selection process to secure a position.

4.5 School Principals will be selected by a State level committee. After the necessary calibre and capabilities of the candidates have been vetted, the order of preference for the same will be as follows: schools run by local self governing bodies, government aided private schools, external persons.

C.5. Monitoring & Evaluation:

5.1 The true test of whether the school has reached an international level of excellence in education is actually the children's performance on the assessment.

5.2 There will be periodic assessment of students' academic performance based on the plan and advice given by Cambridge University. There will be a specific computer software to track concept wise, subject wise and student wise performance. In case students are found to be lagging behind in specific concepts, teachers are to provide remedial assistance. In case an entire class of students is found to be lagging behind on a particular objective, an individual plan will be designed to help the teacher. It will be the School Principal's responsibility to track this data and follow up with the necessary support structures.

5.3 In case it emerges from the data that a particular teacher is repeatedly found in need of support for meeting learning objectives, it will be assumed that the teachers selection was not appropriate. The contracts of such teachers will be terminated with immediate effect. Similarly, there will be an annual appraisal and evaluation of the teachers' work based on which decisions about their appointment for the forthcoming year will be taken.

5.4 There will be an annual plan for ongoing support and continuous professional development of all the selected teachers

5.5 An evaluation / appraisal of all the selected teachers and HMs will be undertaken by the International Cell in the MSCERT or an external organisation. The services of teachers or HMs found to be performing below expectations will be terminated with immediate effect.

C.6. Availability of Funding:

6.1 The consultancy fees for Cambridge University will be raised through CSR.

6.2 The training expenditure, including stay, food, and travel will be cleared through SSA and RMSA budgetary provisions.

6.3 The expenditure for facilities at the school level - for eg: supplementary reading material, remediation material, worksheets, activity learning kits, learning infrastructure etc. and as well as for the study tours will be raised through a combination of school community funding and CSR.

6.4 There are numerous privately operated international schools functioning in the state. Arrangements will be made to facilitate visits to these schools.

6.5 The expenditure for SSC-*i* Board will be internally borne by the Board itself.

6.6 The government will bear the expenditure of all the government employees involved in the work of the International Cell at MSCERT. In case of services by external resource persons, funds will be raised through CSR.

6.7 If there is a necessity for these employees to undertake an international study tour, the expenditure may be borne either through the SSC Board or CSR.

C.7. In case of increase in student enrollment:

While this is a pathbreaking programme, it is envisioned that, in the near future, all schools will be elevated to international standards. Therefore, in case there is a shortage of classrooms, open school ground and other requirements in the respective schools, no new students are to be admitted. However, there is a possibility of raising the progress of another school in the same area.

C.8. Schools other than the 100 selected:

The SSC Board will give recognition to such schools based on their results. These schools can work towards their progress either by observing and learning from the 100 selected schools or by their own effort. Until the 100 selected schools are supported to achieve the international benchmark, the government will be unable to support other schools who wish to align themselves to the new Board.

If such schools happen to be from within *Zilla Parishad, Nagar Palika* or Municipal Corporations, committees will be constituted at the respective levels and the government will take responsibility for their capacity building. For this, each local self governing body will have to sign a MOU with the Education Department. All the related expenditure for this will be borne by the respective local self governing bodies.

C.9 Schools under Tribal Welfare Department and Social Welfare Department:

Both these departments will be able to participate in this programme with upto a maximum of three schools. All the procedures other than the ones for school selection (including selection of HMs, etc) will remain the same. The only change will be that in the selection committees for these schools, there will be representatives from the respective committees.

C.10. Medium of Instruction:

The selected schools may follow any medium of instruction. However, in case the schools follow a medium of instruction other than english, English language instruction and Spoken English instruction will be of the highest quality. Similarly, Marathi language instruction will be of excellent quality within English Medium Schools.

C.11. Districtwise Distribution of Schools:

There will be at least one school selected from each district. In the case that there is no application from a particular district, a school will be selected with assistance from district level officers. It will be seen to it that no more than 4 schools will be selected from a single district.

C.12 Schools from Adivasi or Hilly Regions:

Selection of schools from such areas will be given utmost importance. To enable the teachers in such schools to stay near the school premises, appropriate measures will be taken to construct houses (मुख्यालयी घरे).