

Elementary Language Learning Certificate
Course of
Language and Learning Foundation

Analysis of the Baseline and Endline assessments of
batch 2017
(Report May 2018)

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1. About the Course

Language and Learning foundation has completed the 2 batches of its 9-month long professional development course on Early Language and Literacy development. This 9-month course by the name “*Prarambhik Bhahsa Shikshan Certificate Course*” is implemented in a blended distance learning mode in the 5 states of India, viz Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. It has been specially designed for teachers, teacher educators, such as language faculty in DIETs and SCERTs and Academic Support Staff including CACs, CRCs, BRPs and ABRCC, who are associated with the teaching and learning of Hindi language in classes 1 to 3.

1.1 Objectives of the Course

Literacy is a foundational skill since it forms the basis of most other learning activities in the classroom. Students need to read with understanding to access the entire curriculum. Ensuring that students learn to read early and well is the most important way of ensuring that every child gets an equal opportunity to learn at the primary stage of schooling. At present, however, a large number of children are not acquiring basic reading skills as evidenced by several surveys (NAS, ASER etc.). Levels of comprehension and writing abilities are even lower. In order to improve this situation, it is important that there is a change in knowledge, skills and attitudes of teachers and teacher educators about teaching and learning of language and literacy in early grades. There is a dearth of professional development opportunities in the area of early language and literacy development in Indian languages. Limited access to quality resource materials and limited know-how to address practical issues such as the multilevel and

multilingual learning situation in the classrooms further intensify the problems of the teachers. Considering this, Language and Learning Foundation (LLF) conceived and designed a flexible professional development certificate course on issues relating to early grade language and literacy development for teachers, teacher educators, educational administrators and programme personnel.

The course aims to provide participants with improved conceptual understanding and practical skills of teaching language and literacy in early grades. It equips resource persons and master trainers to provide effective support to teachers for Language and Literacy development in the early grades.

1. Have enhanced knowledge and skills about teaching learning of language and literacy in early primary classes
2. Be able to plan and implement appropriate classroom activities for teaching of language and literacy in their classrooms
3. Teacher educators from SCERT and DIETs , Block and Cluster Coordinators and Resource persons and Master Trainers will be able to provide higher quality and more effective support to teachers for language teaching
4. Contribute to process of designing of an early grade language and literacy learning programme at cluster, block or district level.

1.2 Course design

The 9-month course has the following components:

Fig: 1 Course Components

Course Components			
<p>Self Reading</p> <p>12 Modules: 40-60 pages each. Include key readings. Supplemented with Audio and Video Resources</p> <hr/> <p>150 hours</p>	<p>Group Conference Call</p> <p>1 mentor for 17-20 participants. One interactive, 2 hour audio call every 2 weeks</p> <hr/> <p>20 hours</p>	<p>Online Discussion Forums</p> <p>Moderated online on pre-selected topic, one topic per module</p> <hr/> <p>15 hours</p>	<p>Assignment</p> <p>Desk based and Field assignments and small task</p> <hr/> <p>13 Days</p>
<p>Project</p> <p>Culmination of the course: Field based action research over a month</p> <hr/> <p>10 days</p>	<p>Quiz</p> <p>Test yourself: End of Module, 10 Knowledge based questions, attempted online.</p> <hr/> <p>10 hours</p>	<p>Expert Calls/Sessions</p> <p>Theme based sessions to enhance understanding and knowledge about the topic</p> <hr/> <p>5 hours</p>	<p>Face to Face Workshops</p> <p>In person meetings, discuss doubts, clarify concepts</p> <hr/> <p>6 days</p>

The most unique feature of this course is that it allows participants (teachers, academic support persons, teacher educators) to practice principles and strategies learnt in the course modules in their own classrooms and areas of work as the course progresses through field-based assignments and module related activities while documenting their own performance and progress in the form of videos and short tasks reviewed by Mentors with timely feedback and sustained attention. Additionally, peer support, updates and suggestions through online and offline networks and chat groups is also available. The course also strives for alignment of professional development with teachers' needs. The principles, approach and strategies promoted in the course, modes of evaluating teaching practice and follow-up monitoring of Teachers and

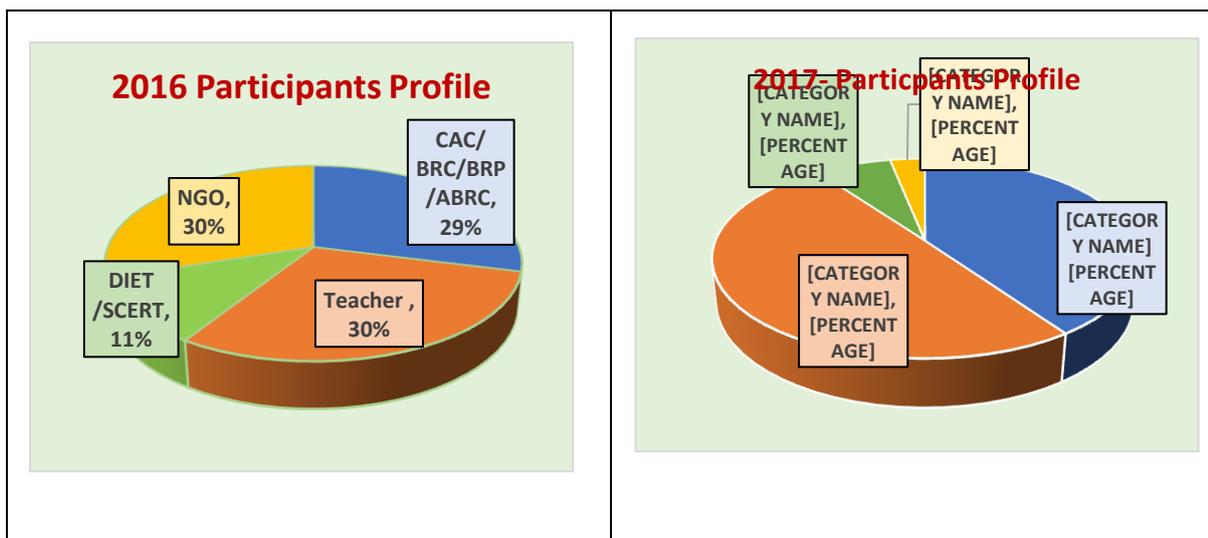
Academic support persons and other resources are other strengths which make the 9-month long course highly engaging and hands-on.

1.3 Course Implementation in 2016 and 2017

The first batch of this 9-month course was implemented in partnership with the SSAs, SCERTs, and DIETs of the 5 states (Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh) and 2 NGO partners (Room to Read and CARE) in the year 2016. Around 102 participants enrolled in the course in the first year.

This number doubled in the second year, 2017, where around 206 participants enrolled for the course. These participants were from the same 5 states of Bihar, Chhattisgarh, Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

Fig 2 Participant profiles



1.4 Analysis of course participation and completion in 2017

The second batch of the course for the academic year 2017 started in the month of March 2017 with a total of 206 participants from across the 5 states.

Table: 1 Participants in the 2017 batch

S.No.	Profile	Bihar	CG	Haryana	Rajasthan	UP	Total
1.	DIET /SCERT Personal	10			1	2	
2.	CAC		27		1		
3.	ABRCC/ BRC/ BRP	4	5	37		2	
4.	Resource Persons	11					
5.	Teachers / Head Masters	17	43		16	24	
6.	NGO		3		3		
	Total	42	78	37	21	28	206

As the course was purely voluntary, intellectually challenging, and demanded on-going practical application, reading, feedback, etc., it was expected that there would be a few drop-outs. However, it was encouraging to find that dropouts were very low, and 181 participants remained and completed the course. The dropout details are as follows:

Table 2: Dropouts from the course

S.No.	Dropout at different stages of the course	Bihar	CG	Haryana	Rajasthan	UP	Total Participants
1.	After Module 3	0 (42)	7 (71)	1 (36)	0 (21)	1 (28)	197
2.	After Module 6	2 (40)	1 (70)	5 (31)	2 (19)	0 (27)	187
3.	Near the Project work	3 (37)	1 (69)	2 (29)	0 (19)	0 (27)	181

On analysis we found that dropouts after Module 3 were mainly because of personal reasons of the participants. Many of them did not know beforehand the kind of engagement required for the course and were not able to devote the required time. Dropouts after Module 6 were either because of personal reasons or a few participants were dropped as they were not participating adequately, did not complete the minimum required assignments and quizzes, participate in calls, and so on.

Some participants left the course after Module 10 close to the project work requirement. They had been lagging behind in many of the course components and did not take up the project work.

1.4.1 Course completion details:

Participants were graded on the different components of the course like conference calls, assignments and quiz (that are associated with each module) and other components like discussion forums and end of the

course Project work. The table shows the number of participants in different grade as per the final scores:

Table 3: Grades achieved by participants

S.No.	Grade	Explanation	No. of Participants
1.	A+	Excellent - Above 83 %	27
2.	A	Good – 68%- 83%	61
3.	B+	Average- 53% - 67%	32
4.	B	Below Average – Below 53%	14
5.	Pass	Pass with only 1 component not completed	8
6.	Pass	Pass with only project work not completed	24
7.	Not completed	Did not do complete the project work and also some other component of the course	15
	Total		181

1.5 Overview of Evaluation of the Course

The evaluation of the course included two major components, (a) Analysis of change in knowledge and attitudes related to teaching-learning of early literacy through a questionnaire administered at the beginning and end of the course, and (b) an evaluation of the change in classroom practice of a small sample of teachers based on a framework of desirable teaching practice assessed at the beginning and after the end of the course through classroom observations.

2. Evaluation of Changed Classroom Practice of Teachers

2.1 Course objectives of change in classroom practice

The course had specific objectives and expected specific changes in practice of teachers. These are described in detailed below:

Table 4: Objectives and expected changes

S.No.	Themes	Expected changes
1.	Oral language development	The ratio of teacher and children talk is balanced. Teachers conducts activities for oral language development for at least 10 minutes with scope for children's interaction; invites children to respond; listens carefully to children's responses, uses them to take the conversation forward.
2.	Reading:	Teacher uses techniques like read aloud, interactive reading, shared reading, guided reading and independent reading strategies
3.	Meaning-making:	Teacher discusses meaning of read passage with plenty of student participation and variety of strategies, questions, referring back to the text, focusing on new words, encouraging guessing and inferring, etc. Teacher gives students time to explore the meaning of the material they are reading, not explaining meaning in a top-down manner.
4.	Decoding instruction:	Teacher conducts a variety of activities to help different students for phonemic awareness, to make letter sound association, decode new words, read fluently, depending on their level and need.



5.	Writing:	Various strategies are used for improving the writing skills of children, like shared writing, scaffolding writing, etc. Emergent writing is encouraged. Appropriate feedback is given. Independent writing is encouraged rather than copying
6.	Participation of children	Teacher ensures that students are engaged in all the activities, get a chance to speak, creates an atmosphere where children ask questions, encourages quiet students to speak and participate, children initiate discussions or activities
7.	Multi-level teaching	Teacher conducts differentiated activities for different ability groups which are clearly identifiable
8.	Contextualising:	Teacher contextualises content of reading text with a good introduction, ample references from students' lives, relating it with their previous experiences, encouraging comments and experience-sharing from students, and keeps referring to this context several times in the lesson.
9.	Use of home language	Children are not stopped from using their home language. The language of the children should be used strategically in the learning of the school language. Teacher consciously switches back and forth from home to school language, helping students to see the connections between the two and to learn the school language vocabulary and usage

10.	Print-rich environment:	Classroom should be print-rich environment with a variety of materials —charts, posters, storybooks, word wall, children’s work display, functional print like attendance chart etc. which looks fresh and not old, and teacher should be seen to use this effectively. Functional print material like attendance sheets, notices, news etc are seen. Children are seen interacting with this material which is placed appropriately for them.
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2.2 Tools for Classroom Observation

The tools included the following:

- I. Teacher Tool 1A, Part 1: Classroom Observation related to teaching practice for language and literacy
- II. Teacher Tool 1A, Part 2: Teachers’ preparation and own analysis on their lesson
- III. Teacher Tool 1A, Part 3: Overall impression of the observer
- IV. Tool 1B: The number and type of questions asked by the teacher and children during the lesson
- V. Tool 1C: What children were doing during the observed lesson?

The ultimate objective of teacher professional development is improvement in student learning achievement. However, learning outcomes cannot improve unless the teaching-learning process undergoes a transformative change. The 9-month course has focused on several crucial dimensions of the language teaching-learning process that need to change. Therefore, this baseline concentrates on this

aspect of change in classroom processes initiated by the participating teacher. For that reason, the baseline looks at teachers currently teaching early primary grades, and at the cluster level supervisory-cum-mentoring staff, referred to here as CACs.

Tools for classroom observation were developed looking at three specific aspects – the process of teaching reading and writing, oral language interactions including question-asking, and the time students and teachers spend on the tasks being performed. As the purpose of this study was to understand the influence of a particular professional development input, viz. the 9-month course on ELL, the information sought too was with reference to the way the course works with teachers, and eventually, the changes the course hopes to see in the participants. This was therefore not a generalised teacher observation tool but one designed specifically with reference to a particular set of criteria related to the course objectives as defined in 2.1 above.

The same tools were used in the endline observations and discussions. The findings that follow concentrate on the changes seen in teacher practice at the end of the course.

- I. *Classroom Observation related to teaching practice for language and literacy:* Teachers were scored on the following:
 - Oral language development: at the end of the course teachers are expected to understand the role of oracy in literacy learning and reflect this in classroom practice
 - Teaching reading: Use of a range of appropriate strategies for teaching-learning of reading
 - Meaning-making focus: Is this reflected in the classroom activities related to oral language, reading and writing?

- Decoding instruction: Is the teaching of decoding systematic and allows adequate scope for children to practice?
- Teaching writing: The movement expected for course participants is from getting children to do meaningless copy writing to supporting them to become independent writers
- Eliciting participation of all children: The movement expected is from the commonly seen focus on a few bright students in the front rows, to involving different and diverse learners
- Multi-level approach: even classes that do not have multiple grades nevertheless have multiple levels of students. The course hopes to build teacher capacity to plan teaching around these differing levels
- Use of home language: The course encourages recognition of the home language as a rich resource for student learning and a necessary bridge across to the regional language of school instruction
- Print rich environment: With the right exposure and guidance it is hoped that teachers will become adept at creating for their students a classroom environment that is conducive to literacy learning and taking pleasure in reading.

The above points were scored on a scale of 0-3, with 3 being the best achievable score in each parameter. Negative marks were given for observed behaviour that is detrimental to making students independent readers and writers. This was Teacher Tool 1 A, Part 1 (see appendix for tools)

- II. *Teachers' preparation and own analysis on their lesson* : At the end of the course it is expected that teachers become more reflective practitioners, and that they plan their lessons keeping in mind the

multi-level and often multi-grade classroom, the specific outcomes expected, on-going assessment and follow-up. This was Teacher Tool 1 A, Part 2.

- III. *The observer's overall impression of teacher's preparation, implementation and understanding* of what he/she was doing was scored in Part 3 of Teacher Tool 1A, Part 3.
- IV. *The number and type of questions asked by the teacher and children during the lesson*: a change in the number and more importantly the type of questions asked would indicate the change to a more interactive classroom where the teacher's role of scaffolding learning is also reflected. This was recorded in Tool 1B.
- V. *What children were doing during the lesson* (by observing a small sub-group of learners in the classroom): at the end of the course it is expected that teachers make better use of classroom time and students spend the large part of their time in effective learning activities rather than in mechanical and repetitive tasks. This was recorded in Tool 1C.

2.3 Training of Research Team

An external consultant who had developed the tools was invited to conduct a 4-day workshop along with the LLF team in March 2017. The researchers were given the course material beforehand which they had to study before the workshop. During the workshop, researchers familiarized themselves with the tool, followed by field testing of the

teacher observation tool along with the consultant. This was followed by a reflection and modification of the tool. The tool was then used again in the field by the researchers, and inter-rater reliability was assured after detailed discussions. Guidelines for the researchers were written and finalized. Finally, the tool for CRCs was finalized based on their job profile in various states.

2.4 Data collection

For the baseline and endline observations, data was gathered by 2 observers over 15 language periods at baseline and 23 language periods at the time of endline. Classrooms of 11 teachers were observed at baseline and 12 teachers at endline. For each teacher, 2 language periods were observed, with one observer noting the classroom processes and number of questions asked, while the other observed 15 students closely to note their activity and level of involvement. This was followed by perusal of teacher’s planning and reporting documents, and discussion on what the teacher felt about the lesson, what he/she felt could have been better etc.

The sampling for baseline and endline are detailed below. The changes between the number of periods observed at baseline and endline were due to changes in roles of the particular participants or personal issues resulting in absences.

Table 5: Sample for baseline and endline assessments

S.No.		Baseline	Endline
	Rajasthan		
1.	Total number of teachers	16	14

2.	No. of Teachers sampled	5	5
3.	No of language periods observed	5	10
Chhattisgarh			
1.	Total number of teachers	43	38
2.	No. of teachers sampled	6	7
3.	No of language periods observed	11	13
4.	No of CRCs sampled	6	2

3. Findings:

3.1 Classroom process observations:

The course has at its basis an idea of the kind of classroom interactions that would best enhance students' language and literacy abilities and interest. In the best-case scenario, we would like to see a lively and interactive classroom with students participating in activities that take them towards intelligent and independent users of language. We would like to see the teacher with a plan for the period, including a plan for each of the grades in the multi grade classrooms, with TLM organised and ready. We would want to see a flow of the lesson that moved towards a specific learning objective. At the end of the period we would expect the teacher to have some jottings that would feed into CCE records, and into the next day's plan.

In the endline, while we definitely see progress in teachers in the desired direction, we cannot say that most teachers have reached the level we want to see. A detailed analysis follows.

1. **Reading Activity:** In 15 out of the 22 language periods observed, a textbook reading activity was conducted. In the baseline, this figure was 20 out of 22. This was the first positive outcome, as more teachers were seen conducting non-text-book activities like story-telling, spelling activities, songs and poems etc. Even in classes where teachers were conducting 'teaching of a textbook lesson', a broader range of activities were seen, with more emphasis on setting a context, meaning making and oral language activities. Though these were not conducted to the level that would warrant a high

score, the improvement is measurable and encouraging. The most noticeable improvement is in the involvement of children.

II. Frequency of desirable activities: The table shows the number of the observed periods where the specified types of **desirable** interaction was taking place, comparing baseline with endline:

Table 6: Number of periods observed

S. N o.	Language and Literacy teaching-learning Interactions	Number of language periods where this was seen: Baseline	Number of language periods where this was seen: Endline
	<i>Desirable activities</i>		
1.	Introductory discussion to set context	9	14
2.	Involving students in making sense of the text	4	13
3.	Oral language activity conducted	9	13
4.	Most students involved in the activity	1	15
5.	<i>Avoidable activities</i>		
6.	Explaining the meaning of the text, or asking self-answered questions to do so	12	10
7.	Teacher or selected student reads, the rest listen or follow in their books or chant aloud sentence by sentence	17	7
8.	Students copy words or Q and A from BB or text book	13	8

There was also a reduction in the more routine and almost meaningless activities seen earlier, like copying from the textbook or blackboard, or

repeating word by word after the teacher or another child who is reading aloud. However, though some improvement was seen in the type of writing activities conducted, they remained at a basic copying level, without independent writing.

Fig 3 below provides examples of desirable practices that were seen in more classrooms at endline compared with baseline. Fig. 4 indicates reduction in periods where undesirable practices were observed.

Fig 3: Change in desirable practices

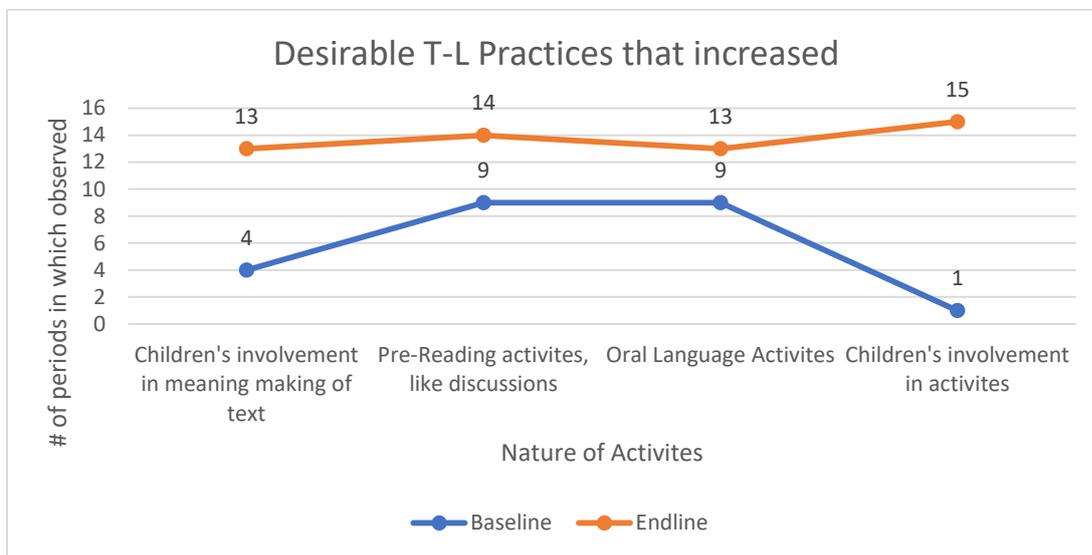
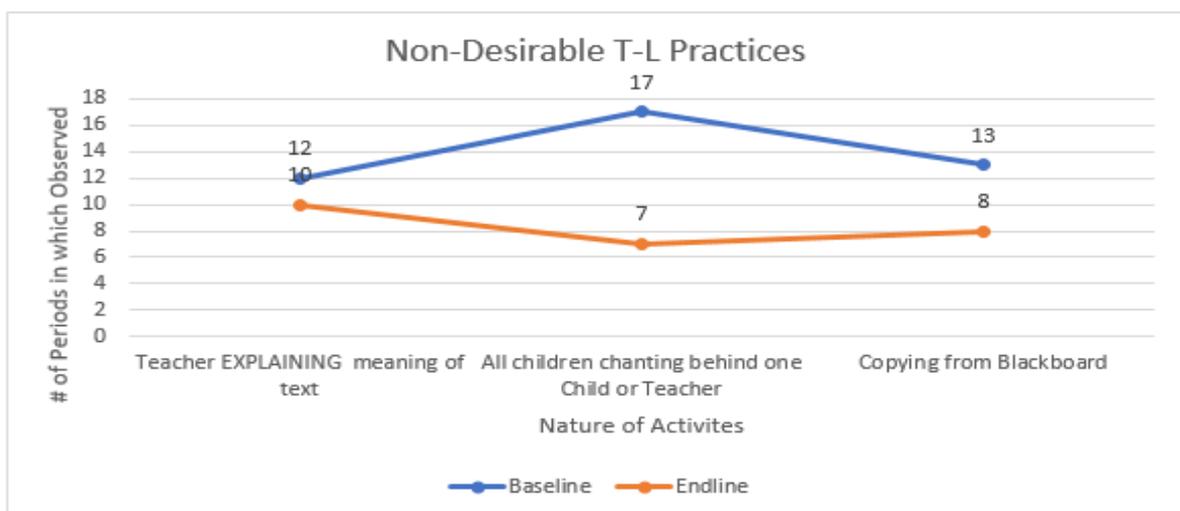


Fig 4: Change in undesirable practices



III. **Scores on important parameters:** A look at the scores of teachers on the 10 parameters observed is interesting. The table below shows the average scores for each parameter, and the number of lessons observed in which teachers performed in each score category, comparing baseline with endline. It can be seen that in each category, the average score has nearly doubled, with more teachers scoring 1 and even 2 than in the baseline. However, no score of 3 (maximum) is seen in any of the categories. (Individual teacher scores are in the tables in the Annexure).

Table 7 Scores on observed classroom practices

No	Observed behaviour	Score Baseline	Score Endline
1.	Oral language development: 0- No oral language activities 1- Some oral language activities conducted but for short time and not much speaking by children 2- Conducts activities for oral language development for at least 10 minutes with scope for children's interaction; invites children to respond; listens carefully to children's responses, uses them to take conversation forward	Average 0.3 Range: 0 in 15 lessons 1 in 7 lessons 2 in 0 lessons	Average 1.3 Range: 0 in 5 lessons 1 in 5 lessons 2 in 13 Lessons
2.	Reading: 0- Mostly teacher or one child reads aloud 1- Some opportunities given to children to read aloud or silently 2- Uses varied reading strategies	Average 0.4 Range: 0-13 1 – 9 2 – 0	Average 0.7 Range: 0-11 1 – 9 2– 3

	(paired reading, guided reading, silent reading etc.)		
3.	<p>Meaning-making:</p> <p>0- No discussion of meaning, or teacher explains meaning while students are passively listening</p> <p>1- Some discussion on meaning with few children participating,</p> <p>2- Teacher discusses meaning of read passage with plenty of student participation and variety of strategies, questions, referring back to the text, focusing on new words, encouraging guessing and inferring, etc.</p>	<p>Average 0.6</p> <p>Range:</p> <p>0 - 9</p> <p>1 – 13</p> <p>2 – 0</p>	<p>Average 1</p> <p>Range:</p> <p>0- 6</p> <p>1– 12</p> <p>2– 5</p>
4.	<p>Decoding instruction:</p> <p>0- No teaching of decoding strategies</p> <p>1- Specific teaching or practice of few sounds, letters or words</p> <p>2- Teacher conducts a variety of activities to help different students to make letter sound association, decode new words, read fluently, depending on their level and need</p>	<p>Average 0.09</p> <p>Range:</p> <p>0 - 20</p> <p>1 – 2</p> <p>2 – 0</p>	<p>Average 0.6</p> <p>Range:</p> <p>0- 12</p> <p>1– 9</p> <p>2– 2</p>

5.	Writing: 0- Students do writing or only copywriting or repetitive writing of letters 1- Students do differentiated writing tasks of letter/word/text writing without independent writing. This can include dictation 2- Teacher conducts some writing activity that encourages independent writing	Average 0.04 Range: 0 - 21 1 – 1 2 – 0	Average 1 Range: 0-7 1-10 2-6
6.	Participation of children: 0- Mostly teacher talking or leading, children silent or repeating/reading in chorus etc 1- Teacher initiates some discussion or participation, with few children taking part 2- Teacher ensures that students are engaged in the activities, get a chance to speak, encourages quiet students, children initiate discussions or activities etc.	Average 0.5 Range: 0 - 10 1 – 12 2 – 0	Average 1.1 Range: 0- 2 1– 17 2– 4
7.	Multi-level teaching: 0- Whole class does the same activities throughout 1- Some different activity given to a few students 2- Teacher conducts differentiated activities for different ability groups which are clearly identifiable	Average 0.04 Range: 0 - 21 1 – 1 2 – 0	Average 0.4 Range: 0-16 1-5 2-2

8.	Contextualising: 0- No relation of text to children’s daily life made 1- Makes one or two references to students’ experiences 2- Teacher contextualises content of reading text with ample references from students’ lives	Average 0.3 Range: 0 - 14 1 – 7 2 – 0	Average 1 Range: 0-9 1-6 2-8
9.	Use of home language: 0- Only school language used 1- Teacher gives some meanings in home/local language 2- Teacher uses some local language words and phrases in discussions, and encourages students to do the same;	Average 0.4 Range: 0 - 13 1 – 9 2 – 0	Average 0.9 Range: 0-9 1-7 2-7
10	Print-rich environment: 0- Classroom is bare, with no print displayed, or mechanical lists of words etc painted permanently 1- Classroom has some charts, children’s work or books displayed but not much in use 2- Classroom is a print-rich environment including—charts, posters, storybooks, word wall, children’s work display, functional print like attendance chart etc. which looks fresh and frequently changed	Average 0.4 Range: 0 - 21 1 – 1 2 – 0	Average 0.9 Range: 0 - 6 1 – 13 2 – 4

Clearly, on most of the components of early language and literacy practice the scores show improvement at endline over the baseline

scores. Some aspects where the scores show significant improvement are oral language development, active engagement of children, nature of writing tasks and multilevel teaching practices (See Fig.5). Similarly, there is a significant reduction in ‘zero scores’ that show complete absence of desirable practice between baseline and endline (See Fig. 6)

Fig 5: Average scores at baseline and Endline

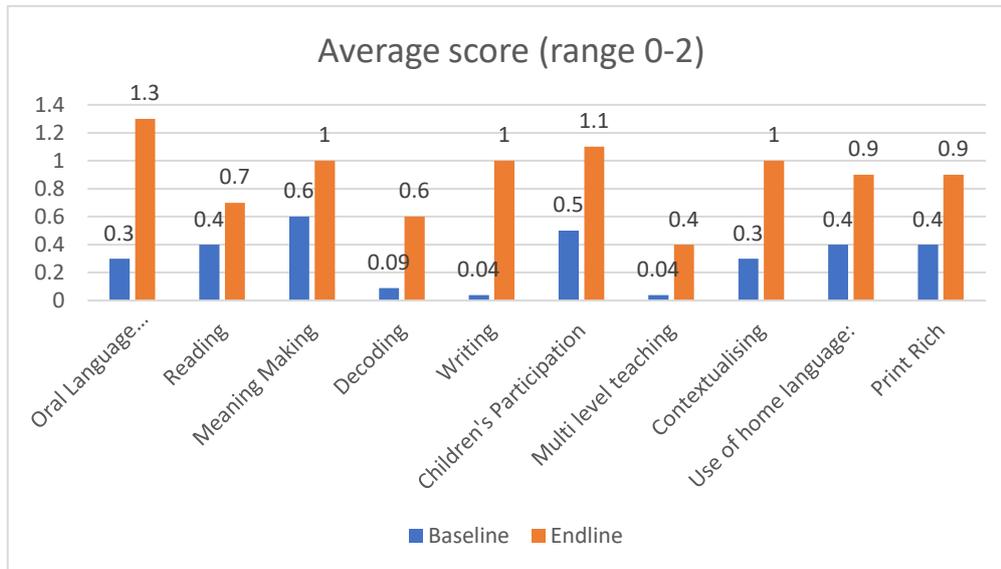
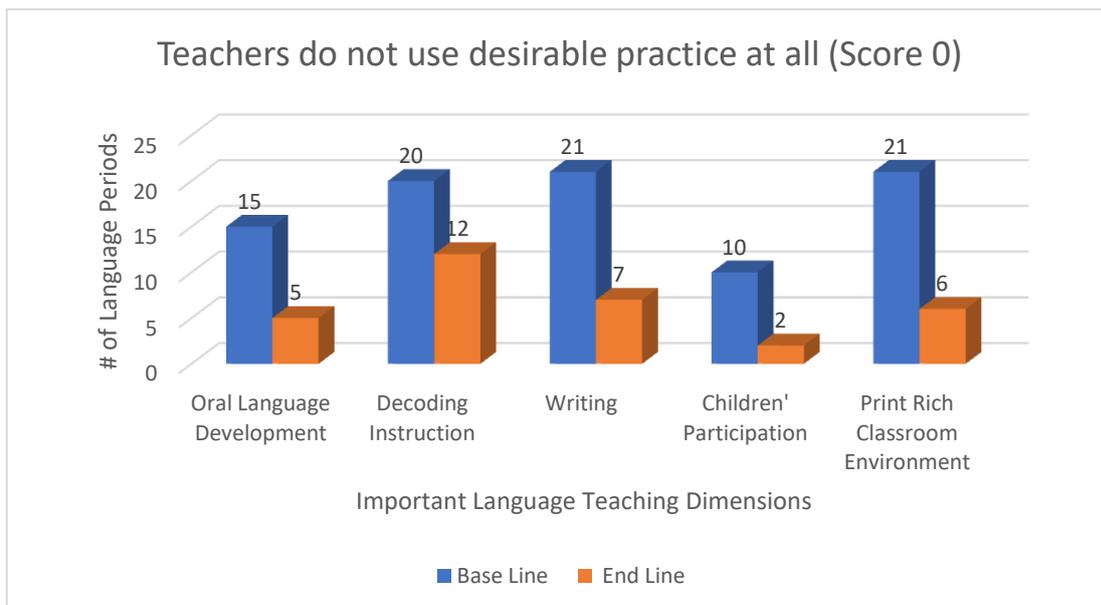


Fig 6: Teachers scoring zero for desirable practices



IV. Type of questions asked by teachers: One of the indicators of an interactive classroom is a healthy give and take between teacher and students. In order to facilitate this, particularly with younger learners, a teacher needs to ask questions that take the discussion forward, that scaffold the students' learning or open new avenues of thought or enquiry. In the teaching and learning of literacy, one would also wish to see open ended questions related to the text, that require thinking and higher order comprehension or inferential thinking. Observers are asked to note the number and type of questions asked by teachers and students during the course of the lessons observed.

The endline observations show a marked reduction in the 'pseudo questions' so commonly used by teachers in the Indian classroom. These are questions that are mere markers in the teacher's explanation of a lesson or concept and are immediately answered by the speaker. They do nothing to either engage the listener's attention or elicit discussion. E.g.: "He went into the house, and what did he see? He saw an old woman stirring a pot."

Questions requiring one-word answers based on making meaning of the text, increased from 36.38% of the questions asked to 57.73%. Higher order questions doubled compared to the baseline, but remained at a low 7.54%

The table below shows the comparison in the baseline and endline findings:

Table 8: Types of questions

S.No.	Type of questions asked by teachers	Frequency	% of total questions	Frequency	% of total questions
		Baseline	Baseline	Endline	Endline

1.	Pseudo questions immediately answered by the teacher	327	36.06	51	9.62
2.	Questions requiring Yes/No answers or rhetorical questions	222	24.48	133	25.09
3.	Questions requiring one-word answers, based on the text being read or discussed	330	36.38	306	57.73
4.	Higher order questions inviting opinions, choices, inferences or guesses	28	3.08	40	7.54
5.	Total questions recorded in 22 observed language periods	907		530	

In only two classes did students ask questions (a total of 6 questions over the 23 lessons observed) that related to the work they were doing, and in only one of these were the questions actually part of a discussion or seeking more information.

This finding underscores that the course has helped teachers to reduce sort of meaningless rhetorical questions that fill up their discourse and increase the number of questions that elicit meaningful responses. However, the use of open ended higher order questions to aid critical thought and meaning making is still far from the desirable level, as is the creation of a classroom atmosphere that encourages students to ask questions.

V. ***Acceptance and use of home language:*** Both the areas where teachers were observed have a substantial population of students

whose home language is different from the standard school language. An important pedagogical practice, emphasized during the courses, was creating an emotionally supportive environment where the learner feels safe to use her home language without fear of ridicule or other negative consequences.

In 14 out of 23 lessons observed, teachers were seen to be referencing the home language and/or allowing its use during classroom transactions. However in only two lessons observed was a conscious trans-languaging effort seen. (See table in point c) above)

VI. *Socio-emotional support and supportive learning environment:* In teaching reading, especially to young learners, the support and encouragement of the teacher plays a big role. In most of the classes observed in the endline, observers noted that the teacher had a comfortable and relaxed relationship with the children. In some cases it was reported that children were a bit tense and not very relaxed, but there was no report of violence or threats as were seen in the baseline. (Refer to scores on Tool 1A Part 3 in the appended table)

In 17 of the observed classrooms a print-rich and child-friendly physical environment was observed, a significant improvement over the baseline where this was seen only in one classroom.

VII. *Classroom management and organisation:*

- *Lesson Plan:* In around 50% of the observed lessons, teachers had made a plan for the day. Many of these were cursory, with only 5 lesson plans reported as detailed. However this is certainly an improvement over the baseline where there were no lesson plans seen in any of the classrooms. The average score for this section was 0.3 out of 5 in the baseline, and 3.4 in the endline, indicating a

great improvement in the ability and interest in properly planning a lesson.

- *Multi-level teaching:* In several classes, students were grouped for a part of the lesson observed. However these did not appear to be ability groups, but only grouping for the sake of the activity. In most cases however students were still being taught as one homogenous group. Observers did note however that the teacher in many cases paid attention to students who were not responding very well.
- *Multi-grade classrooms:* In _ of the observed classrooms, students from another grade who normally share the same teacher were seen sitting to one side. In none of the observed periods did the teacher set any task for these students. They merely sat watching. Teacher did not have a lesson plan for them and did not even give them any task at all. This may be because the teacher was told that the language period of Class 2 was being observed, so he or she did not think the other grade needed to be considered. It does however point to the dismal lack of planning.

VIII. Writing: The only writing activity observed was copy writing of words or questions and answers from the blackboard or text book. Consequently, it was not possible to do any separate analysis for this aspect

3.2. Student engagement and time on task

During each period observed, one observer selected a mixed group of around 15 students and took notes of what students were doing during the period. Observations were noted every 3 minutes. In addition to noting the assigned task or expected activity, the observer also noted the number of students out of the 15 who were actively involved in the task.

The differences between baseline and endline showed that there was less of chanting of answers to questions, and less time spent listening to someone read aloud, though the latter still took up a lot of student time. The significant changes, and important ones, were in the time students spent in discussion – up from 11.6% to 19.8%,

The following table shows the percentage of time spent by students on each of the tasks or activities, as a proportion of the total time observed in the baseline and endline.

Table 9: Time on task

	Task or activity	% of observed time Baseline	% of observed time Endline
1.	Chanting song or poem	9.5	4.2
2.	Choral reading after teacher or student	7.9	12.4
3.	Copy writing from textbook or blackboard	3.7	17.5
4.	Oral activity or game	0.5	0.8
5.	Waiting (as teacher checked student work)	3.2	3.2
6.	Listening to teacher or student read aloud	32.8	22.9
7.	Chanting answers to textbook Q and A by teacher	14.3	5.5
8.	Discussion on textbook lesson or related topic	11.6	19.8
9.	Relevant activity related to textbook lesson	16.4	13.6

We can group these observed student tasks and activities as follows:

Table 10: Time spent on types of activities

S.N o.	Category	% of time spent	% of time spent
		Baseline	Endline
1.	Useful, relevant activities related to literacy (nos. 4, 8, 9 in the previous table)	28.6	34.2
2.	Routine, rote activities like choral reading, copy writing, chanting answers, listening without involvement (Nos 1,2,3,7)	35.4	39.7
3,	Wasted time: waiting, listening to someone read without involvement (Nos 5, 6)	35.9	26.1

Even though, there is some improvement in the time spent on relevant, learning activities related to literacy at the time of endline, but, as Table 9 shows, a high percentage of students' time-on-task time is still spent on copying work and choral repetition.

3.3 Teachers' reflections on own work:

Observers were asked to have a discussion with teachers after the lesson.

In the discussion conducted informally, teachers were asked to:

- I. point out some problem issue that the observer had also noticed, in planning as well as execution of the lesson
- II. point out which activities were particularly effective/enjoyed by students/ineffective/uninteresting

- III. suggest ways in which s/he will follow up in the next lesson
- IV. identify children who need extra attention and had strategy for doing that
- V. describe an assessment strategy for the lesson taught, even if not planned earlier

In the baseline, for all language periods observed, the observers gave only the minimum score of 1 for this part, where they were asked to grade teachers on a scale of 1 to 5 based on their discussion. In the endline, the average rose to 1.8. Teachers could identify students needing more attention, and had some strategies for helping them. However, ongoing evaluation is still a challenge.

3.4 Broad conclusions:

- I. Clear improvements were seen in the teachers' overall understanding of the differing needs of the class, and in the way that they planned their lessons. While a clear remediation strategy is not yet seen to be in place, there is certainly the awareness of the need to have one, and some attempts in that direction.
- II. Improvements were also observed in the classroom process, particularly in the involvement of children in activities, reduction in rote learning activities, increase in discussion, and less time wasted by children in doing nothing.
- III. Observers also noted more print-rich classrooms and a more child-friendly atmosphere in the classroom as compared to the baseline. Use of children's home language and a focus on oral language seems to have improved significantly.
- IV. An unnecessary and disproportionate amount of time is still spent by teachers on reading aloud lessons or getting students to read

them aloud. Silent or private reading by students and attempting to comprehend the texts on their own was not observed.

- V. Though less than the baseline, there was still a large amount of copying from the blackboard on the part of the students. No attempts were made to encourage or develop independent writing skills
- VI. In the observed classrooms, students from other grades, when present, were not given any specific learning task to do while teacher taught the grade being observed. No multi-grade teaching strategies were observed.
- VII. Teachers were not seen to be implementing the concept of CCE, no assessments were conducted or noted.

4. Assessment of Participants' Knowledge and Beliefs (Part 2)

The following analysis looks first at the tool used for assessing knowledge, beliefs and skills of the participants. The tool contained multiple choice questions, True/False statements, hypothetical situations where participants' responses were sought, etc. The analysis looks at the changes in teacher knowledge, skills and beliefs between baseline and endline.

It should be noted here that change in knowledge and belief need not immediately translate into practice, as techniques still need to be tried out and teachers need to gain confidence before they can effectively use these in the classroom.

4.1 Knowledge: What do participants know about the teaching and learning of elementary literacy?

The following table 11 shows the breakup of the questions under the heads of various concepts whose knowledge was assessed.

Table 11

S.No.	Themes /concepts	Number of questions for each category	Question Numbers
1.	What is reading and literacy	3	33,34,11 (iv)
2.	Approaches to teaching of reading	5	3,4,19,20,27
3.	Oral language development, talk and comprehension	4	1,24,25,35
4.	Differences, diversity and equity	4	6,10,9,11 (v)
5.	Learning and learning environment	6	5,11 (I, ii),13,15,17,31
6.	Different language situations, home language	2	8, 11 (vi)
7.	Teaching and assessment of learning in multi-level classrooms	2	21, 7
8.	Skills involved in reading/ literacy (Comprehension, vocabulary, fluency, concepts of print, questioning, talk)	4	2,22,23,26
9.	Aims/ goals/ objectives of reading and reading strategies	3	28,32,36
10.	Script (orthography issues) and writing	4	11(iii),12,29,30

1. How much clarity have teachers gained about the concept of literacy?

It seems that this very basic concept was clear to only 65.5% of participants at the baseline, Literacy is generally considered to be being able to read and write. In response to questions like What is involved in literacy? the number of participants that gave correct answers rose substantially in the endline. It is encouraging to see that the course did succeed in clarifying this basic concept, which should eventually make the participants more effective both in teaching and in supervision.

Table 12: % of participants who gave correct responses to the questions under this head

S.No.		Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	Literacy involves all of the following: to listen, to speak, to read, to write, with thinking and understanding	66	92

II. ***Why do we teach children to read? What is the aim of teaching reading? What does being able to read mean?*** These concepts were discussed in different questions in the assessment.

Fig 13: % of participants who selected the correct response

S.No.		Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	Constructing the meaning of text by using background knowledge, reasoning and logical thinking.	84	97

The percentage for correct responses was already quite high. It appears then that teachers and CRCs have a good understanding of what learning to read really means. This rose further to indicate that almost all participants have gained good clarity on this issue. Interestingly, the observations of the classroom processes for a sample of teachers does not entirely bear this out. In the observed teachers, while the number who scored 1 for meaning-making activities increased and the number scoring 0 decreased, there were only 5 lessons observed where the

researchers could score the teacher at 2, where substantial meaning-making activities were conducted.

- III. ***Different approaches to teaching of reading*** were discussed in the course, and 5 of the questions in the assessment tool looked at participants' understanding of what these approaches entailed. The baseline and endline showed some improvement but not to any significant level. Participants seemed to have some basic understanding of these issues to begin with. However, the picture was different when it came to the very crucial aspect of reading comprehension.
- IV. ***What factors affect comprehension of a text?*** Most teachers use the textbook unthinkingly, explaining the meaning of texts as they go along. The course encouraged teachers to select a range of reading material to teach reading comprehension. An important concern was the choice of text suitable for the grade/age/level of the child or group.

Table 14: % of participants who responded correctly to questions that expected them to identify issues that affected the comprehensibility of a text.

S.No.	Factors influencing text comprehension	Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	Correct options included - complexity of meaning, background knowledge, selection of words, sentence length, difficulty level of the text (eg. complex sequence of events, unfamiliar concepts, or too many characters)	60	82

It can be seen that exposure to a range of reading materials and analysis of their suitability has helped participants to better identify characteristics of appropriate reading materials. It is also hoped that this will help them to analyse the textbook they use and compensate for the difficulty of certain lessons using different techniques learnt.

V. What is the place of questions in the classroom? How does the type of questions asked affect learner comprehension? What kind of questions encourage meaning making?

Table 15: % of participants who responded correctly to assessment items testing their knowledge on questions asked in the classroom

S.No.		Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	Why do we ask questions? Correct answer: To ensure students' participation and higher order thinking about the text	42	78

It is interesting to note that while participant's understanding of the purpose of asking questions rose dramatically, their understanding of the *type* of questions that are needed to be asked improved much less.

This is further borne out by the observations in the classroom which included a listing of the types of questions teacher asked. Higher order questions, requiring opinions, inferences, choices or guesses were

only 3.08% of the total questions asked at the baseline. While this more than doubled in the endline, rising to 7.54%, higher order questions remain a small fraction of the questions teachers ask in class. Simple factual questions requiring one-word choral answers dominate in classroom practice.

One of the positive outcome on questioning skills found in the classroom observations was that the number of ‘pseudo questions’, those that are asked and immediately answered by the teacher herself, a very common practice in Indian classrooms, dwindled from 36.06% in the base line to 9.62% in the endline.

VI. **Language learning is essentially a social activity.** Language is learnt above all for communication. Yet classrooms are often expected to be silent places where students listen to the teacher and do not talk amongst themselves and rarely to the teacher. The course encouraged a lot of reflection on how language develops in young children and how classrooms can be made more conducive to the learning of language not only from the teacher but amongst peers.

Table 16: % of teachers who responded correctly to questions assessing their attitude to students talking and discussing things in the classroom, with guidance and scaffolding by the teacher.

S.No.		Base Line	
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	Interaction amongst students in the classroom will develop, the students’ oral language skills and also the skill to	78	100

S.No.		Base Line	
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
	listen to others and understand them		

VII. **Children from deprived backgrounds:** In most government schools in India, students often come from socio-economically deprived backgrounds, from marginalised communities and from families where older members may have had very little or no school education. Most teachers come from higher socio-economic strata of society. It has often been seen that teachers, even the well-intentioned ones, have very little appreciation of students' abilities and talents if they are not performing well in the traditional reading and writing activities expected from schools.

The course discussed these issues in depth, with a view to enhancing participants' appreciation of the uniqueness of children, their rich background experiences at home, their language abilities in their home language.

Table 17: % of participants who responded correctly to questions related to innate abilities of children from illiterate home backgrounds, or without pre-school experience, and to their language background

S.No.		Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	Such children come with good skills in the local language or mother tongue	91	91

S.No.		Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
2.	In most of the schools the learning language and the mother tongue are different	66	89

It can be seen that there was no significant change in the score on the first question. Innumerable training programmes conducted by the government in recent times have stressed on the fact that home language is a valuable resource to be used in the classroom, and it appears that teachers do understand this at least theoretically. In classroom practice it was seen that the score for use and acceptance of home language rose from 0 to 7 lessons observed. Therefore, it appears that while participants' understanding remained the same, their ability to put it into practice improved slightly.

The scores for the recognition of the language issue itself rose, substantially. It appears that while being aware in theory of the need to use home language in the early language classroom, many participants were not aware of the fact that children do not speak the same language at home as is spoken by teachers in school. As the regional language, which is the language of instruction in schools, is generally used by all adult communities in the area as the language of daily commerce, teacher often make the assumption that children understand it. This assumption was explored during the course, resulting in greater awareness of the issue.

VIII. **Regular assessment:** Multilevel teaching is a necessity in most classes, and this requires continuous assessment of learner levels. The implementation of the Continuous and Comprehensive Evaluation (CCE) has been very unsatisfactory, partly due to this lack of conviction at all levels. On this backdrop, the course attempted to help participants gain a deeper understanding of the need for ongoing assessment for the better planning of multi-level classroom teaching. It is interesting to see that at the baseline itself, theoretical knowledge on this issue was fairly high, and this increased further at the endline.

Table 18: Scores on the question relating to the need for on-going assessment

S.No.		Base Line	Endline
	Correct Response	% of participants who responded correctly	% of participants who responded correctly
1.	It helps in identifying the current level of learning in order to prepare the lesson plan accordingly	60	72
2.	For a better differentiated teaching , a teacher must evaluate students on regular and continuous basis	89	88

4.2 Skills: Application of knowledge and techniques in hypothetical situations

With a batch of nearly 200 participants spread over different states, it is not in the realm of practicality to observe the actual application of knowledge and techniques learnt in the course. While a small sample was observed (as described in part 1 of this report), another way in

which skills were assessed was by presenting participants with situations that they were asked to respond to with appropriate pedagogical strategies, including lesson planning. *Participants showed an overall improvement in scores in this section, with the percentage of participants giving all correct answers increasing from 12 to 44% for teachers and 9 to 32% for CRCs. Clearly the endline scores are still unsatisfactory, but the improvement over baseline is impressive.*

4.3 Beliefs and Attitudes

Teachers' beliefs regarding their students and the pedagogic process have a deep effect on the classroom processes and outcomes. The assessment sought participants' responses to a range of statements about the process of learning to read and write (e.g. 'In order to avoid confusion, younger children should be taught reading and writing skills separately', 'In order to read or understand a passage it is important that the students first memorise it' etc.)

A few interesting points emerged.

- I. There was no change in the percentage of teachers who gave the right response to the statement, "Children should be given story books to read even before they learn all the alphabets and matras". 69% teachers already knew this to be incorrect, before as well as after the course. Similarly, even in the baseline, there was over 90% correct response to a statement that said that children's reading skills become stronger if they are exposed to story books that are interesting and of their level.
- II. From general observation it is seen that most teachers treat library period as unimportant and rarely expose children to story books. It

appears that this is an instance where despite the belief, the system or other factors do not support adoption of appropriate pedagogy.

- III. Certain other beliefs, that are actually crucial to being able to teach reading and writing effectively, changed to some extent but not at all to the desirable extent. For example, at the end line, only 57% teachers and 65% CRCs believe that the focus of teaching in Class 1 and 2 should be on the mechanics of decoding while comprehension can come in towards the end of Class 2.

5. Broad conclusions: Based on Knowledge, Practice, Belief written assessments

- I. There was a clear positive shift in knowledge, practice and beliefs in most of the questions. CRCs started at a higher baseline than teachers and therefore had a higher endline score, but the shift was similar in both groups.

Areas where dramatic improvements were seen were:

- The understanding that students' home language and school language are almost always different
 - Interaction amongst students in the classroom has a positive effect on learning
 - Asking the right kind of questions in the classroom has a specific pedagogic purpose
 - Literacy consists of listening, speaking, reading and writing with thinking and understanding
- II. There did not appear to be much change in participant's understanding of the place of assessment. The baseline score itself was quite high. However, classroom observations and discussions with teachers had not yielded any evidence of well thought out formative evaluation going on. It appears that teachers and CRCs are well up on the theory of CCE but are not actually putting it into practice or do not have the skills to do so.

6. Implications for the course going forward

The following points need greater emphasis:

- I. Formative assessment techniques
- II. The skill of asking questions, especially open-ended questions
- III. Encouraging student questions
- IV. Reduction in time spent on copying activities
- V. Increase in children's independent writing activities
- VI. Reducing teacher or student read-aloud routine for textbook lessons
- VII. Allowing time for engagement with books
- VIII. Allowing students to make sense of the read text *before* teacher explains it to them, discussing their meaning-making attempts
- IX. Noticing and taking action when students begin to lose interest