

## Innovation in Public Services Delivery : Case Study of Management Development Initiative in Karnataka's School Education Department<sup>1</sup>

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### Introduction

There has been an increasing level of interest in public services delivery in recent years. A reason is that while liberalization of business has brought about gains, it has also been realized by policy makers that for liberalization to succeed, there is a need for strengthening public services delivery. In addition, with democracy consolidating roots in India the deficiencies in quality of public services are expressed much more openly by citizens.

### Earlier Initiatives and Select Literature on Public Service Delivery

Attempts have been made in India to improve the quality of public services delivery. An example is the Bangalore Agenda Task Force (BATF) that focused on urban management using a public-private-partnership model. Another important effort has been in IRM Anand (IRMA), which, in collaboration with the Government of



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<sup>1</sup> Officially known as Department of Public Instruction

Gujarat, implemented a major training effort to “reform the bureaucracy so that it could effectively face varied and complex challenges”<sup>2</sup> faced in a modern society through the Vadodara Model District Project. Khandwalla (2000) made a case for reinventing the government to make the government agencies more effective in meeting stakeholders’ requirements and called for structural reforms<sup>3</sup>. Bogaert (2000) speculated on the place of professional managers in Gram Sabhas and highlighted the scope for capacity building in Panchayati Raj Institutions and lamented that the enormous needs of rural HRD has not been tackled adequately.<sup>4</sup>

Innovations in public services delivery have been examined by the World Bank to draw lessons from success derived from case studies in India and concluded that improvements could take place even if large scale systemic changes were not undertaken<sup>5</sup>(World Bank 2006). There are many reasons why innovation is not widely seen in public services as in the case of private sector. These include in our opinion, lack of incentives to innovate, absence of clear framework in which innovation can be attempted, the fear of failure and hence possible penalties for innovators in public service delivery institutions, vagueness in the specific goals of the public service and absence of management capabilities at the cutting edge level to implement changes. As per Mulgan and Albury (2003) “Successful innovation is the creation and implementation of new processes, products, services and methods of delivery which result in significant improvements in outcomes efficiency, effectiveness or quality”<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> Reddy, Pratap, K and Madhavi Mehta, 2000, ‘Revitalising the Public Bureaucracy: Training as a Major Intervention in the Vadodara Model District Project’, Working Paper 151, Institute of Rural Management, Anand.

<sup>3</sup> Khandwalla, Pradeep, 1999, ‘Recharging the Indian Bureaucracy in Proceedings of the National Symposium on Building and Managing Organizations in Rural Development’ in Proceedings of the National Symposium on Building and Managing Organizations in Rural Development, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, Institute of Rural Management, Anand.

<sup>4</sup> Bogaert, M V de, 1999, ‘Is there scope for professionally trained managers in the Gram Sabhas’, Bureaucracy in Proceedings of the National Symposium on Building and Managing Organizations in Rural Development, 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations, Institute of Rural Management, Anand.

<sup>5</sup> World Bank, 2006, ‘Reforming Public Services in India: drawing lessons from success, a World Bank Report’, Sage Publications, New Delhi, p88

<sup>6</sup> Mulgan, G. and Albury, D. (2003): Innovation in the Public Sector, Strategy Unit, UK Cabinet Office, October 2003

In our case study, we have focused on one such innovative initiative, the Management Development Initiative implemented by Karnataka's School Education Department (DPI), Canara Bank School of Management Studies of the Bangalore University (CBSMS) and the Azim Premji Foundation (APF) during 2007.

### Primary School Education in Karnataka

Karnataka's school education department has four major arms in an organizational structure that deals with academic delivery in 66,885 schools in 32 educational districts across the state. These include the teaching structure in schools, the support structures like academic support units in block and district levels, DSERT (including DIETs that deal with development and research) and the administrative structure. There are special units for textbook production. In addition to the above units, the state government also encouraged formation of the School Development Monitoring Committees (SDMC) to strengthen community involvement in schools. There is also the interface between schools and the local/district level administration. Thus the structure is very complex and constrains any attempt to innovate. Before the innovations in designing the management development initiative are discussed, it may be useful to understand the classification of (school) education systems across ownership and their usage of management knowledge as given in Table 1<sup>7</sup>:

**Table 1:** *Usage of management concepts across school education system*

Sources and usage of management concepts	Ownership of education system			
	<i>Govt run/govt supported</i>	<i>NGO operated /ideology driven</i>	<i>Market based/ Franchisee</i>	<i>Investor owned (schools operated by corporates)</i>

<sup>7</sup> Suresh, Maruthi R, 2005, 'Write-up on management training for schools' submitted to Azim Premji Foundation, Bangalore

<i>Organization/ HRM</i>	Bureaucratic	Founder's ideology	Drawn from business management	Drawn from business management
<i>Finance/ Costing/ Management Control</i>	Non-profit situation	Not-for-profit but focus on costs	Enterprise approach	Enterprise approach
<i>Marketing</i>	Service approach	Founder's ideology	Brand building	Niche marketing
<i>Systems/MIS/ Project Management</i>	Driven by procedures, large size adds complexity	Mostly single unit, focus on achieving Founder's goals	Professional usage of IT	Professional usage of IT
<i>Community involvement</i>	SDMC and Village Panchayat	Inspired followers	Formal relationship such as Parent-Teacher's Association	Elitist and exclusivist
<i>Strategy and Policy</i>	Government directives	Stick to ideology	Segment driven	International benchmarks

As can be seen and inferred, market based and investor owned school systems mimic business enterprises in using management concepts. The Government owned /supported system has built in complexities topped by a non-profit orientation. Management development initiatives ought to incorporate these dimensions at the design stage to make the same relevant. The form and content of a training endeavour is influenced by the stated and latent needs of its constituency and also by its future needs. In the specific initiative under discussion, for the education department, the training needs fall under three broad categories:

- ♦ Administration and Management
- ♦ Community Management
- ♦ Academic aspects

While the “academic” training has been directed at the teacher, the competencies required to handle management issues have not been adequately addressed so far at the strategy level and the level at which such interventions can be made. The situation has arisen, to a great extent, for reasons such as a lack of recognition that “education” sector needs management training, absence of contextual relevance<sup>8</sup>. Given this situation, the challenge faced by the State Education Department was a major one with no models to look for, and as a result what was attempted was a **pioneering** and innovative one.

### **Constituency for Management Training**

While the constituency for management training, broadly speaking, is the education department, there are many levels. There is also the interface of this structure with Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRI) at the district. Thus the constituency has many sub-constituencies with varying training needs. Often, a stated training need, say, budgeting ought to be handled with different degrees of conceptual intensity for an officer at the district level and another at the state level. Conventional efforts in management training have attempted to organize programmes for the “Head Office”, “Divisional offices” and so on. Such efforts have not recognized that the task variations and decision-making aspects at different tiers of the organizational hierarchy. All officers at the Head Office, for instance, do not take strategic decisions.

It was prudent to group the constituencies for management training programme in the education department at three levels<sup>9</sup>. The levels and designations at these levels are given in Table 2.

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<sup>8</sup> Halse, Michael, 1980, ‘A New Institute of Rural Management- a New Developmental Discipline’, Institute of Rural Management, Anand

<sup>9</sup> Suresh, Maruthi R, 2005, ‘Write-up on Management training for internal circulation’ given to Azim Premji Foundation, Bangalore

**Table 2:** *Levels and designations of officers in Karnataka school education department*

Level of decision making	No of officers	Designations
Strategic and policy	118	Deputy Directors, Joint Directors, Directors Commissioner till Secretary
Tactical	630	Senior Asst Directors, Senior Lecturers of DIETs, Bloc Education Officers, Education Officers, Deputy Project Coordinators
Operational	7883	Asst Directors, Lecturers of DIETs, Asst Project Coordinators, Education Coordinators, Block Resource Persons, Cluster Resource Persons, Cluster Resource Coordinators, Subject Inspectors, Inclusive Education Teachers

Source: Policy Planning Unit, Dept of Public Instruction (figures approximate) as of 2007

The above approach had the following advantages:

- ♦ A more focused content and usage of appropriate pedagogic methods
- ♦ The difficulty in identifying the unit of focus in training in many management development programmes was eliminated.<sup>10</sup> (Often there is a lot of dilemma and debate in development as to whether the thrust needs to be the cluster, block, district, or state level)
- ♦ Post –assessment of training programmes becomes easier<sup>11</sup>
- ♦ Identification of resource persons and institutions for relevant levels of decision-making become easy
- ♦ Frequently, management development and training interventions focus on a specific tier. On acquiring new skills after training, the

<sup>10</sup> Sridhar, M K, 'Inception report submitted to Karnataka Department of Public Instruction', Canara Bank School of Management Studies, Bangalore University, January, 2007

<sup>11</sup> Sridhar, M K, 'Draft proposal submitted to Karnataka Department of Public Instruction', Canara Bank School of Management Studies, Bangalore University, Bangalore, November, 2006.

officer is unable to implement his newly acquired competence in the absence of similar understanding of his superiors / subordinates. In addition, officers get transferred and are required to handle new roles. As a result, the training intervention is rendered waste.

Thus any management training effort, strategically speaking, ought to **target all three levels of decision making** for it to have lasting impact.

### **Context of Quality of Education and Education Management**

As a major response to ensure quality of school education, and in alignment with the National Educational Policies, the Government of Karnataka has set up the Karnataka Schools Quality Assurance Organization (KSQAO) and Karnataka Schools towards Quality in Education (KSQE). These are pioneering strategies in India to measure learning levels of children across the state and to develop school level plans with a view to improving learning levels and school infrastructure. A KSQE charter with signatures of major stakeholders was released in a public function by the Chief Minister of the state. Thus any management development in the education department ought to address the quality issues that have been emphasized in the National Curriculum Framework. A study was also undertaken by Price Waterhouse Coopers (PWC), a leading management consulting firm, on different aspects of Organizational Restructuring in the department. The management development initiative described in this paper was, therefore, context driven.

### **MDP Process**

The MDP initiative implemented by Canara Bank School of Management Studies of Bangalore University involved undertaking pilot programmes, choosing a cascading model for the initiative, identification of goals, selection of participants, implementing the management development programme in four phases, preparation of modules by participants for cascading to lower tiers, certification of Management Development Facilitators (MDF) from participants of

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the programme and development of projects for implementation. These are described in detail in the oncoming sections. A snapshot of the same has been given in Table 3.<sup>12</sup>

**Table 3: A Snapshot of MDP**

In content	In numbers
Selection	a) MDP
Training	102 persons completed
Project work	36 days X 4 batches
Module development	124 projects
Pilot delivery	98,496 man hours
Certification	b) Pilot delivery
	39 places
	888 trainees
	8 days x 39
	302 projects
	1,76,040 man hours

### **Pilot Programme**

To break the myth of non-receptivity of the Education Department officers to modern management concepts and to test their willingness to management pedagogic methods such as case method and case analysis presentations, two pilot programmes, one on case method and another on strategic management for public organizations were conducted under the scope of Policy Planning Unit. The receptivity to a structured management programme gave the necessary insights for examining the MDP (management development programme) designs proposed by different management institutions (CBSMS was selected by the department for designing and implementing the MDP for operational level officers after a process of examination of MDP designs put forth by different management institutions in Karnataka)

<sup>12</sup> Sridhar , M K, 'Presentation to top officers of Department of Public Instruction and Azim Premji Foundation, Bangalore, September and October, 2007.

### Identification of a Cascading Model

As the personnel who were in large numbers could not be given centralized training, it was conceptualized that the training programme might be of cascading approach i.e. to train some select personnel of the department and make them Management Development Facilitators (MDF) to carry the training forward. It was decided that prior to going out as MDFs, they ought to undergo a certification process. The cascading model in a government department itself is an innovation as training programmes in public services are often related to rank of officers and limited in its reach.

### Goal Identification of the MDP Initiative

Based on many interactions with the officers of the Department of Education and Azim Premji Foundation (APF) that played a facilitating role and observation research undertaken at a DIET centre and a School Development Monitoring Committee, it was decided that CBSMS would intervene and build capacities at the operational level through training programmes aimed at this level. It was novel in the department to focus on training by breaking hierarchical level and categorizing them on the basis of decision-making levels.

Based on the above process, the goals of the MDP initiative were arrived at from the perspective of an operational level officer of the department as below<sup>13</sup>:

- ♦ How to improve the Quality of education in Government schools in Karnataka?
- ♦ How can Leadership and Management improve the quality of Education in Government schools in Karnataka?
- ♦ How can each participant improve the effectiveness of Government schools in Karnataka?
- ♦ How can each participant develop herself and others as educational leaders for improving the quality of education in Government schools in Karnataka?

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<sup>13</sup> Sridhar, M K, 'Draft Report on MDP for Karnataka's School Education Department', Canara Bank School of Management Studies, Bangalore University, Bangalore, September, 2007

### **Selection Process Innovations**

If a distinct quality message was to be conveyed, the participant's involvement must be of high quality. CBSMS had an apprehension whether the department would agree to 'selection' of participants as government departments were averse to such ideas on the notion of fair treatment to employees. The department agreed to this advice of CBSMS. The concept of selection of participants for the programme was unique and innovative.

Another innovation was discussing the programme with potential participants in a teleconference mode to generate interest and enthusiasm among them to attend. A teleconference was organized at DSERT with 800 potential participants. Dr M K Sridhar, the Project Leader of the MDP initiative, focused on the MDP, its need, how it was proposed to be organized, selection process, place and mode with the potential participants. The teleconference presentation and the activities apart from creating interest also gave a small clue about the nature of future training. The selection process consisted of 4 components:

- ♦ Written test
- ♦ Individual effectiveness, measuring rigidity for learning, lesser the rigidity for learning, they are more open for learning, which is very important
- ♦ Learning ability
- ♦ Group discussion

The above process was not positioned as an examination but to gain insights into a potential participant's willingness for change and what he could do in his circle of influence.

It was originally proposed to train 160 persons in 4 batches of 40 each. It was inevitable to select 160 out of 273 persons, on the basis of marks scored, despite their eagerness to attend. CBSMS's suggestion that it was better to conduct it in four phases instead of six phases planned by the department to minimize travel was agreed.

### **Overall Structure of the MDP Initiative**

Four teams of participants were formed to be trained in four phases with 10 days of class room training in first three phases and 6 days in last phase of training totaling 36 days of training. With inclusion of days spent in project work, the same would be around 100 days of training. After each stage of training a project work involving various aspects was identified, then on joining next phase, an evaluation and analysis of project work was carried out. Thus participants were sensitized to the reality of applying learning to field situations. The entire MDP was so designed that it was relevant and applicable to the context of the participants. Equally important was the effort to have the sessions conducted as far as possible in Kannada, the state language. In both these aspects considerable efforts was put forth by CBSMS, without compromising on quality. The MDP duration was for 147 days from 5 February 2007 to 11 August 2007. 102 persons, working in various positions of the department of education, completed all the phases and submission of all projects, were part of the MDP in different locations in Bangalore. Even the selection of the venue was done with care to minimize culture shocks that government field level functionaries encounter in high profile training institutions.

### **Idea, Scope and Spread of the MDP Initiative**

The following training needs were identified for onward diffusion by MDFs to the operational staff:

- ♦ Change in mindset from inspection and supervision of schools/ teachers to facilitation for quality learning
- ♦ Proactive orientation and self management have to be corner stones of performance management in addition to instructions from above
- ♦ Need for fresh and lateral thinking as well as creativity
- ♦ Knowledge of contemporary and emerging environment in education

- ♦ Stakeholder management in the light of the recent initiatives of PRIs and SDMCs
- ♦ Coping with changing profile of jobs in view of mid-day meal scheme, Sarva Siksha Abhiyan etc
- ♦ Equipping with skills and techniques of Change Management
- ♦ Addressing various issues relating to leadership at grass root level
- ♦ Focus on performance management in Key Result Areas (KRAs)
- ♦ Developing the right perspective of quality in education in addition to academic competencies identified by KSQAO and KSQE
- ♦ Attitude, knowledge and skills of education management
- ♦ Preoccupation with statistics and information to be replaced by database management
- ♦ Developing the larger picture of role, responsibility and duty that would inspire and motivate

To meet the training needs identified above and have a logical flow, the MDP was planned in four phases as follows:

- ♦ *First phase* of ten days with focus on ice breaking, framework of MDP, perspectives of education environment, quality in education, quality tools for problem solving, skills for enhancing circle of influence and introduction to project work.
- ♦ *Second phase* of ten days with focus on project review, dimensions of human resources management, leadership and team building in education, work planning and review and project scoping.
- ♦ *Third phase* of ten days with focus on project review; train the trainer techniques, development of facilitation, as well as module development and test delivery.
- ♦ *Fourth and final phase* of six days with focus on review of pilot delivery, action plan, blueprint of training to be undertaken and certification of participants.

Consistency of resource persons was maintained in all phases and the number of resource persons was deliberately kept limited to ensure constant interaction and understanding, observation across phases and the final certification.

During third and fourth phases, attention was focused on module preparation. Subsequently these future MDFs would be utilizing these modules for cascading the same to around eight thousand officials.

### **Pilot Delivery of the Modules**

After the third phase of MDP, the participants undertook a pilot delivery of the MDP for six days and two days of project review in batches of about 20 to 25. These participants carried out projects in teams of 2 to 3 participants. The pilot delivery encompassed the following on a cascading model:

- ♦ Organizing non-resident MDP for Block Resource Persons, Cluster Resource Persons and Education Coordinators
- ♦ A project work from the participants about a “problematic government .school’ or ‘a process at cluster level’ as the case may be.
- ♦ Self analysis, mutual analysis and detailed analysis from the MDFs about the project work done by the participants was carried out.
- ♦ Further, MDFs collected self analysis and feed back from participants in prescribed formats about the pilot delivery carried out by them.
- ♦ Preparation of detailed report of pilot delivery and submission of the same to the core team of MDP.

All the four teams of participants undertook pilot deliveries at 39 places throughout the state and 888 participants were the beneficiaries of the pilot delivery. Table 4 provides the summary of the same.

**Table 4: Pilot Delivery to grassroots officers – No of Places and designations covered**

	Elite Delivery :No of Places	Block Resource Persons	Cluster Resource Persons	Education Coordi- nators	Block Resource Coordi- nators	Cluster Resource Coordi- nators	Inclusive Education Teachers (IFET)	Total Particip- ants
Total	39	234	512	126	02	06	08	888

In the last phase of six days in the training, each team shared their experiences of pilot delivery. The cascading model and linking it to project development was novel.

### Certification

In this last phase, all the participants underwent a certification process. Selection was made in the beginning to meet a certain yardstick. Similarly, after completion of the training it was planned to ensure quality through certification of Management Development Facilitators. Of the 800 officers who attended the teleconference, 273 underwent the selection process. 123 participants were selected for MDP at CBSMS, of which 102 qualified for certification. Finally, 74 participants (9.25% of original who attended teleconference) were certified as Management Development Facilitators in two grades A and B.

### Certification Consisted of the Following Five Aspects:

**Interview (viva-voce):** Totally three or four interviewers including resource persons, department and one or two experts interviewed each participant for 20- 25 minutes. The interview consisted of questions on different subjects viz., their understanding of facilitation, their interpretation about zone of influence and its expansion, how they had perceived their responsibility in enhancing the quality, their future plan etc. This had a weightage of 35%.

**Project work:** Project work was viewed in three important dimensions: achievement of objectives, workability of the project and the quality

of report, relevance and usefulness of the project. A weightage of 25% was allocated for this part.

**Group discussion:** Small groups of 6-7 participants were formed and one subject for each group was given for discussion and observed during the discussion. In this group activity, each participant was observed based on four aspects, subject knowledge, leadership qualities, behavior in the group, and communication in the group. A weightage of 15% was allocated to this component.

**Written test:** A written examination of one and a half hour duration with focus on different applied aspects was conducted. These included necessity of this training in the background of challenges faced by the field of education today, the skills required to become facilitators, involvement of school committee in the development of school, suggestions to improve cluster level process and to improve schools backward in learning in the context of Work Plan Review. A weightage of 15% was allocated to this part.

**Personal effectiveness:** Freedom of learning and other aspects related to personality were evaluated. Totally a weightage of 10% was allocated to this component. Totally 102 persons successfully completed the four phases of the MDP, and the project work and attended the certification process.

### **Innovations in the MDP Initiative**

There were many innovations in the entire MDP initiative. They have been summarized as below:

Perhaps for the first time the management development initiative was context driven, did not restrict itself to perspective building through management training or designing a short programme based on a training needs analysis. The MDP initiative was also conceived as a base for future innovations by Karnataka's education department.

It went by decision-making levels breaking hierarchy and functional roles, an innovation in the government department. In addition, pilot programmes were undertaken to check the receptivity to test the

pedagogic approaches and receptivity of officers to management concepts in a public service context.

Customizing management concepts to the type of school ownership is an innovation in as much it focused a lot on service quality, circle of influence, work planning and review etc. While management development programmes for public services have been attempted before, a distinguishing feature of this endeavour is customization of management concepts to the context of school ownership pattern.

102 Management Development Facilitators (MDF) were selected, using a formal process, from 273 interested officers. Using a selection process preceded by pre-MDP briefing deploying a modern communication technology were innovations. Participants were trained in four teams in four phases for 150 days in a first of its kind effort to link management development with the department's programme strategy. The four phases were preceded by pilot programmes as indicated earlier.

The Management Development Initiative was a **Certified** one, an innovation in a government department and the certification process is a model that could be replicated. The goals of the programme were derived from the perspective of the operational level officer entrusted with implementation, based on observation research and consultation with the officers of the department. The MDP endeavour was not positioned as a one-time effort but as a continuous process and linked to the programmes such as KSQE being implemented by the Karnataka education department.

The management development initiative is linked to project implementation an ongoing effort unlike most such endeavors that stop with classroom training. It adopted an innovative cascading model to transfer management learning. The 102 MDFs would be taking the concepts learnt further down the hierarchy across the state to reach around 8000 officers. Modules developed by participants for cascading were tested by undertaking pilot delivery across the state. While cascading model of training is known in public service training, involvement of MDFs in development of modules for further

percolation down the structure, pilot delivery, continuous support from CBSMS team and feedback from peers were distinguishing and innovative features. This also ensured that the MDP initiative was not entirely top down.

The MDP initiative was an inter-organizational effort of a large magnitude, consisting of an academic institution i.e CBSMS, Dept of Public Instruction of the Government of Karnataka, the Policy Planning Unit (a joint initiative of the Department and Azim Premji Foundation). This was in itself an innovation as no single organization could have done it alone.

Novel and modern management pedagogic approaches were used. In addition, quality of the programmes was ensured by having independent observers.

The MDFs in the department were encouraged to develop modules in Kannada, the state language, for further transfer of learning at the grassroots level. Qualitative analysis indicates that the MDP initiative has been found relevant in actual situations. Psychometric information that has been collected is also being analyzed.

### **Conclusions**

The MDP initiative described as above supports the view innovations can be undertaken even when large systemic changes are not carried out. The relevance of the context is very critical in introducing innovations in public service delivery and there is a need to involve all stakeholders in the innovation process for it to sustain rather than restrict to mere training need analysis. Identifying gaps in public service delivery and designing innovations to overcome can lead to better implementation of innovation. In this case how to sustain the interest of certified MDFs is an issue. Another dimension is that the MDP initiative had high involvement at the strategic level of the state education department. It is crucial for such initiatives the top management is continuously involved. For innovations to sustain there is also need for a structure that continues the process which could be within the education department in our case or an external organization that is designated to do the same.

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