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# Conducting quality education in a constantly changing environment

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**Abstract**
Education is the soul key of a society and is the key for transformation of civilization. A grass-root level education is not only a prerequisite for building a strong base, needed for development of one's own personality, but also is indispensable for scientific, technological, social and economic advancement of a country. "Primary education provides the foundation for all subsequent advancement in the education system. The most formative years in a young person's development are spent at primary school" (Aibhistin, 2006). "Education investments in children have shown to have high returns" (Bhalotra & Zamora, 2008). Considerable consensus exists around the basic dimensions of quality education today, however quality education includes:

1. Learners whom are healthy, well-nourished and ready to participate and learn, and supported in learning by their families and communities.
2. Environments that are healthy, safe and protective and gender-sensitive, and provide adequate resources and facilities.
3. Content that is reflected in relevant curricula and materials for the acquisition of basic skills, especially in the area of literacy, numeracy and skills for life., and knowledge in such areas of gender, health, nutrition, HIV/ AIDS prevention and peace.
4. Processes through which trained teachers use child centered teaching approaches in well managed classrooms and schools and skillful assessment to facilitate learning and reduce disparities.
5. Outcome that encompass knowledge, skills and attitudes, and are linked to national goals for education and positive participation in society.

**Keywords:** quality education, Primary education, grass-root level education

## 1. Introduction
Children are the future of our nation. Any gap at primary school education of a child can be resulted in to serious problem. As per the union budget of our country, the fund allocated for education in Eleventh Plan is the double of what was spent in the Tenth Plan, as a proportion of total budgetary support to Central Ministries.

Through, there was considerable progress in elementary education in India but there are quality issues that need to be addressed (Planning Commission-GOI, 2008). The government has set up various committees to review the quality of primary schools at regular intervals of time, which has suggested measures to enhance the excellence in education.

In all aspects of the school and its surroundings education community, the rights of the whole child, and all children, to survival, protection, development and participation are at the centre. This means that the focus is on learning which strengthen the capacities of children to act progressively on their own behalf through the acquisition of relevant knowledge, useful skill and appropriate attitude; and which creates for children, and helps them create for themselves and others, places of safety, security and healthy interaction. (Bernard, 1999) [4]. What does quality mean in the context of education? Many definitions of quality in education exist, testifying to the complexity and multifaceted nature of the concept. The terms efficiency, effectiveness, equity and quality have often been used synonymously. (Adams, 1993) [1].

## The quality of education in developing countries
C.E. Beeby made the first attempt to generate a model for understanding educational theory. He conceptualized quality as having three levels. First, classroom quality,

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which is concerned with the acquisition of measurable knowledge and learning skills as well as harder to measure behaviors and attitudes, including "habits of industry attitudes of respect for authority and love of country". At the second level, quality education must serve the economic goals of the community in which learner and live. Related to this at the third level, quality is judged by broader social criteria. These last two criteria for quality education are now defined as relevance (Hawes and Stephens, 1990) or "external quality" (UNESCO, 2005).

According to H. Hawes and D. Stephens (1990) quality can be interpreted as having three strands:

- Efficiency in meeting set goals
- Relevance to human and environmental needs and conditions
- 'Something more' in relation to the pursuit of excellence and human betterment.

Definitions of quality must be open to change and evolution based on information, changing contexts, and new understandings of the nature of education's challenges. New research- ranging from multinational research to action research at the classroom level- contributes to this definition.

Systems that embrace changes through data generation, use and self- assessment are more likely to offer quality education to students (Glasser, 1990). Continous assessment and improvement can focus on any or all dimensions of system quality: learner, learning environment, content, process and outcomes. Each of these will be discussed below.

## 1. Quality Learner

School systems work with the children who come in to them. The quality of children's lives before beginning formal education influences the kind of learners they can be. Many elements go in to making quality learner, including good health and nutrition, early childhood psychological development experiences, regular attendance for learning, and family support for learning etc.

- Physically and psychologically healthy children learn well. Prevention of infection, disease and injury prior to school enrolment are also critical to the early development of a quality learner.
- Positive early experiences and interactions are also vital to preparing a quality learner. A child who misses positive stimulation or is subject to chronic stress in the pre-school years may have difficulty with psychological development later in life (McClain & Mustard, 1999) [6]. A high level of quality in early childhood development programmes can be achieved when health and nutrition components are combined with structured psychological development in the pre-school years.
- When they reach school age, research demonstrates that to achieve academically, children must attend school consistently.
- Parent's level of education has a multifaceted impact on children's ability to learn in school. School can play a role in helping parents to enhance the 'home curriculum' and improve the quality of parental involvement in their children's education.

## 2. Quality Learning Environments

Learning can occur anywhere, but the positive learning outcomes generally sought by educational systems happen in quality learning environments. Learning environments are made up of physical elements which include quality of school facilities, interaction between school infrastructure and other quality dimensions, class size. Its psychological elements include, peaceful, safe environments, especially for girls, teachers' behaviors that affect safety, effective school discipline policies, inclusive environments, and non-violence.

- Physical learning environments or the places, in which formal learning occurs, range from relatively modern and well-equipped buildings to open-air gathering places. The quality of school facilities seems to have an indirect effect on learning, an effect that is hard to measure.
- The quality of school buildings may be related to other school quality issues, such as the presence of adequate instructional materials and textbooks, working conditions for students and teachers, and the ability of teachers to undertake certain instructional approaches. Such factors as on-site availability of laboratories and a clean water supply, classroom maintenance, space and furniture availability all have an impact on the critical learning factors.
- Within schools and classrooms, a welcoming and non-discriminatory climate is critical to creating a quality learning environment.
- Relative to both girls and boys, parents, educators and researchers express important concerns about teachers who create an unsafe environment for students. In some schools in Malawi, for example, male teachers sexually harassed girls even with outside observers present.
- Well-managed schools and classrooms contribute to educational quality. Students, teachers and administrators should agree upon school and classroom rules and policies, and these should be clear and understandable.
- War and other forms of interpersonal and group conflict clearly have an impact on children's mental health and their ability to learn. Many young victims of violence suffer lasting physical, psychological, socio-emotional and behavioral effects.
- The school service environment can also contribute to learning in important ways. Provision of health services and education can contribute to learning first by reducing absenteeism and inattention.

## 3. Quality Content

Quality content refers to the intended and taught curriculum of schools. National goals for education, and outcome statements that translate those goals in to measurable objectives should provide the starting point for the development and implementation of curriculum (UNICEF, 2000). Quality content includes student-centered, no-discriminatory, standards-based curriculum structures, uniqueness of local and national content, literacy, numeracy, life skills and peace education.

- In general, curriculum should emphasize deep rather than broad coverage of important areas of knowledge, authentic and contextualized problems of study, and problem-solving that stresses skills development as well as knowledge acquisition.
- The specific contents of school curriculum, however, depend on local and national values. In the main subject areas of primary education, which include language,

- math, science and social studies, little variation is found among different regions in the developing world.
- A recent UNICEF study on curriculum showed that in some cases, literacy skills are taught as a separate subject, in a language course, where the instruction tends to focus on teaching the language as an end in it self.
- The term life skills can be broadly interpreted, and is often assumed to include such topics as health, hygiene and vocational skills. Life skill curriculum focuses on attitudes, values and behavioral change, rather than seeking to provide young people with a body of knowledge about a set of topics.
- Peace education seeks to help students gain the ability to prevent conflict, and to resolve conflict peacefully when it does arise, whether on the interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

## 4. Quality process
In recent years, however, more attention has been paid to educational processes- how teachers and administrators use inputs to frame meaningful learning experiences for students. Their work represents a key factor in ensuring quality school processes. It includes teacher's professional learning, their competence, ongoing professional development, feedback mechanisms and school efficiency. Besides this quality of administrative support, students access to languages used in schools, and new technologies to decrease rather than increase disparities.

## 5. Quality outcomes
The environment, content and processes that encounter in school lead to diverse results, some intended and other unintended. Quality learner outcomes are international, expected effects of the educational systems. They include what children know and can do, as well as the attitude and expectations they have for themselves and their societies. Academic achievement is often used as an indicator of school quality because it is easily measurable using standardized tests, while other outcomes may be more complex and less tangible. Educational quality also implies positive outcomes for participants' health. Students should receive services to improve health, such as treatment for illness and infection and school feeding programmes to improve nutrition.

## 6. Conclusions
Quality education requires the development of systems of education that closely connect a child-centered learning environment with community development. Establishing a process where learning outcomes (the level of achievements which should be linked to national goals for education) are compared with actual learning outcomes is essential to determine if children are genuinely learning. Using practical assessment tools within the classroom and developing systems of education to address areas of weakness is most effective way of promoting quality education. Improving learner achievement by enhancing the quality of education is contingent on the development of strong community-based school systems that are upheld by highly mobilized communities and supported by enthusiastic and competent local government departments. Teachers are the perhaps the most influential variables to develop a quality learning environment in the classroom. Developing the skill and motivation to teachers through innovative and ongoing training in a single investment guaranteed to enhance the quality of classroom exchange and improve learning achievement.

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