CENTRAL SQUARE FOUNDATION

Summary Report

Improving Teacher Uptake of Effective Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN) Instruction

Findings from interventions to improve pedagogy adoption for improving FLN in UP

November, 2024

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List of Abbreviations/ Acronyms

CSBC	Centre for Social and Behaviour Change
CSF	Central Square Foundation
FLN	Foundational Literacy and Numeracy
GRR	Gradual Release of Responsibility
IDIs	In-depth interviews
OLD	Oral Language Development
RCT	Randomised Controlled Trial
TG	Teacher Guide

Executive Summary

Building on insights from a diagnostic study and a Randomised Controlled Trial (RCT) conducted by the Centre for Social and Behaviour Change (CSBC) and Central Square Foundation (CSF), this qualitative study examined the implementation and on-ground realities of targeted interventions aimed at improving foundational literacy and numeracy in Uttar Pradesh's Sitapur and Hardoi districts. The interventions—a WhatsApp chatbot for lesson planning and micro-practice videos (MPVs) to enhance pedagogy—were designed to address behavioural barriers such as cognitive overload, limited teacher agency, and technological constraints.

The qualitative study engaged **18 teachers and six headmasters (HMs)** through **in-depth interviews (IDIs)** and **classroom observations** across diverse school contexts. The findings revealed significant disparities in intervention uptake, with Sitapur showing higher engagement with the chatbot than Hardoi, where infrastructural and logistical barriers inhibited participation. MPVs, while promising in design, saw limited adoption, reflecting a disconnect between the interventions and teachers' immediate needs.

The observations and practices documented across these schools highlight a range of both effective and problematic teaching methods. Overall though, the findings suggest that while these interventions have potential, refining them to enhance engagement and better align with teachers' need, while working on salience, will be crucial to achieving the desired impact on foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes. This report provides a detailed summary of the qualitative report that examined the teacher engagement levels, the effectiveness of each intervention in promoting targeted behaviours, and the challenges teachers faced, offering insights into how such tools can enhance FLN practices while identifying areas needing additional support for sustainable adoption. From entrenched behavioural hurdles, such as low teacher autonomy and disengagement, to administrative burdens and infrastructural challenges like inadequate classrooms and broken amenities, the key barriers provide valuable insights for refining interventions and effectively addressing the systemic and behavioural challenges faced by educators in the NIPUN Bharat Mission.

Chapter 1

Background

The NIPUN Bharat Mission, launched in 2021 by the Ministry of Education, seeks to address foundational literacy and numeracy (FLN) challenges among children in India by 2026-27. In partnership with the Uttar Pradesh government, Central Square Foundation (CSF) is implementing this initiative across over 111,000 schools, impacting more than 11.8 million students and 333,000 teachers in grades 1-3. Despite increased school enrollment, learning outcomes in FLN remain low, particularly in rural and underserved communities, with only 44% of Class 3 students in Uttar Pradesh achieving grade-level reading proficiency, as per NAS 2021.

This project seeks to bridge the learning gap through innovative interventions, including a WhatsApp chatbot and instructional videos. The chatbot provides personalised teacher support, while the videos equip teachers with practical strategies to enhance classroom practices. Together, these tools aim to create an engaging, student-centred learning environment.

The two interventions were tested in Sitapur and Hardoi districts and engaged approximately 200 teachers with diverse demographics, experience levels, and educational qualifications. Participants ranged from early-career to experienced teachers, representing urban, semi-urban, and rural schools. This diversity offered valuable insights into FLN challenges, enabling a nuanced understanding of how targeted interventions can affect teacher practices in Uttar Pradesh.

Chapter 2

Qualitative Report: Methodology

The qualitative study employed a Positive Deviance approach to identify and understand effective teaching practices within the Teacher Behaviour Change teacher cohort. This approach aimed to identify teachers who demonstrated unusually successful performance despite common challenges. The study categorised teachers based on their performance improvements from baseline to endline, including categories like “High Delta” (teachers showing the highest improvement) and “High Scorers” (teachers with consistently high scores). This method allowed the study to focus on outliers whose practices might offer insights into effective strategies that could be scaled or adapted more widely.

The selection criteria aimed to capture various experiences and outcomes by including teachers from various performance levels based on scores from 10 questions linked to Teacher Knowledge and Practice.

The sampling was adjusted due to the overlapping General Elections, resulting in 13 teachers from Sitapur and five from Hardoi being included. Teachers were selected based on a spectrum of criteria, including high performance and significant improvement, ensuring diverse insights into educational practices and barriers. Teachers with low scores were also compared and contrasted to provide a more nuanced picture.

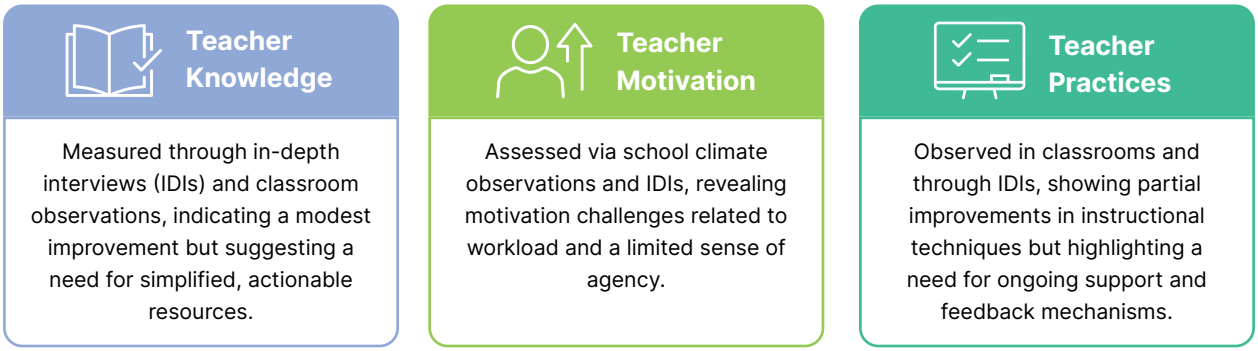

Figure: Three key measurable outcomes for qualitative study

This methodology ensured a rich, detailed exploration of factors influencing teacher performance and student engagement. Teachers ranged in age from 29 to 55, with balanced gender representation and varied educational qualifications, including some with advanced degrees and teaching certifications. The study also considered teacher reassignments and attendance rates, which provided further context for evaluating intervention impacts.

The broader goal was to understand the efficacy of interventions within the NIPUN Bharat Mission and identify actionable strategies to enhance foundational literacy and numeracy outcomes. By examining a variety of teaching contexts—from highly effective to struggling—the study aimed to uncover strategies that could inform broader educational reforms and support sustainable improvement across the region.

Chapter 3

Key Findings and Insights

Our key findings and insights are structured around critical dimensions that influence the success and sustainability of the NIPUN mission. In the first section, effective practices identified through positive deviance include **personalised instruction, contextual teaching, and engaging methods using TLMs**, fostering deeper understanding and participation. The next section outlines barriers to intervention adoption, categorised into **Implementation and Design Challenges, Infrastructure and Resource Constraints, Regional and Contextual Factors, and Cultural Influences**. Key issues include **misaligned designs, resistance to change, resource gaps, regional disparities, cognitive overload, limited training, and low community engagement**, impacting teacher adoption and intervention effectiveness.

Effective Teaching Practices Identified

- **Personalized Instruction and Adaptive Grouping:** One teacher excelled in adapting instruction to meet diverse student needs by categorising students according to their learning levels. This proactive approach facilitated tailored groupings based on assessment outcomes, enhancing differentiated instruction.
- **Contextual Teaching:** Another teacher enhanced lesson relatability by incorporating examples from students' own village contexts, making abstract concepts more accessible and engaging.
- **Engaging and Interactive Teaching Methods:** The use of Teaching Learning Materials (TLMs) that students helped create fostered an interactive and engaging learning environment. This approach not only engaged students but also promoted deeper understanding through active participation. Teacher 121 utilised TLMs effectively by involving students directly in the creation of these materials. Teacher 105 initiated engaging question-and-answer sessions that captured students' attention and encouraged active participation right from the start.

The insights gained suggest that practices such as personalised instruction, contextual teaching, and engaging methods seem highly effective in specific contexts. However, these need to be tested to see how the practices could also be scaled or adapted to improve educational outcomes across broader settings. For more positives and key highlights, please refer Annexure II.

Chapter 4

Barriers to Intervention Adoption

Implementation and Design Challenges

The interventions lacked sufficient customization to address the specific needs of teachers, leading to low adoption rates and reduced engagement. Teachers resisted rapid shifts in teaching practices due to a lack of support and the ingrained nature of traditional methods. Engagement with the interventions was a mix of compliance driven largely by external pressures and less by genuine interest motivated by tangible benefits.

Mismatch Between Design and Need: How did the mismatch between the intervention design and the real-world needs of teachers impact adoption?

The interventions lacked sufficient customization to address the specific needs and challenges faced by teachers in different contexts. The interventions were designed with a top-down approach, focusing on behavioural barriers identified in preliminary studies, but without sufficiently validating these solutions through iterative testing with the teachers themselves. This may have resulted in a lack of ownership and perceived relevance among the teachers. Teachers expressed that resources like the Teacher Guide (TG) were rigid and did not accommodate the diverse learning levels in their classroom. Teachers in schools 112, 108, 110 all agreed that the TG limits their freedom to teach and that it might be too rigid. Neither the WhatsApp bot nor the MPV looked to solve this problem, limiting their relevance. This disconnect between the interventions' design and real-world classroom challenges may have resulted in lower adoption rates and reduced teacher engagement. Furthermore, the interventions did not adequately account for regional diversity in teaching conditions, such as differences in teacher competencies, student demographics, and school environments. A headmaster observed, "The targets are too ambitious given the students' current levels," highlighting the gap between intervention expectations and classroom realities.

Resistance to Change: Did teachers adopt the interventions readily? What factors contributed to teacher resistance to change?

Teachers' resistance stemmed from the expectation of a rapid shift in teaching practices without providing adequate pathways for gradual adaptation. Existing teaching methods were deeply ingrained, and sudden shifts without scaffolding or support led to pushback in terms of inertia for change. Many teachers relied on traditional, lecture-based approaches and were hesitant to adopt student-centric techniques proposed by NIPUN. There is a preference for older teaching methods (School 113), and it is noted that it is not feasible to cover everything in a single day. At School 120, some teachers find that few students struggle to understand methods like bundling, leading them to revert to traditional teaching techniques. The absence of continuous professional development and on-the-ground support mechanisms limited the teachers' ability to integrate new practices effectively.

Compliance vs. Genuine Engagement: How much of teacher engagement is driven by compliance versus genuine interest?

Teacher engagement with the interventions exhibited a complex interplay of compliance and genuine interest. While external pressures, such as monitoring and official reminders, drove compliance in certain schools, particularly those in Sitapur (e.g., schools 106, 112, and 123), genuine interest emerged in others (e.g., schools 107 and 113). Teachers in these latter schools were motivated by the tangible benefits they observed, such as improved student outcomes and streamlined lesson planning. This suggests that a balance between external accountability and intrinsic motivation is crucial for sustained engagement with educational interventions.

Infrastructure and Resource Constraints

Schools face infrastructure challenges like inadequate classrooms and limited technology access. Teachers often lack adequate training and support, and school leaders struggle to balance administrative duties with leadership. These factors hinder student learning and effective implementation of interventions.

Infrastructure Gaps: What are the infrastructural and resource constraints that hinder the effectiveness of interventions? How do these constraints impact student learning outcomes?

Schools in Hardoi, such as School 106, 112, and 123, face severe infrastructure constraints, including inadequate classroom space, poor sanitation, and limited access to technology. These deficiencies hinder academic performance and student engagement by restricting interactive learning activities and contributing to higher absenteeism, particularly among girls. Scarce internet access diminishes the effectiveness of digital tools like chatbots, exacerbating educational inequalities compared to better-equipped schools like 115, where instruction is more consistent and of higher quality. One teacher noted, "The chatbot was helpful in planning but felt like an extra burden due to network issues," highlighting technical and logistical barriers.

Cognitive Overload: How did the cognitive load associated with the new interventions impact teacher engagement?

Teachers reported feeling overwhelmed by the new tools, perceiving them as additional tasks rather than supportive aids. The burden of adapting to these interventions, alongside their existing workload, created resistance. Teachers reported spending significant time on administrative tasks and managing midday meals. Another issue mentioned by some teachers was domestic/household work. A teacher noted, "We have very little time in school to access the TG and it is difficult to find time at home also. We have to stay back for 15-20 minutes to go over the TG and fill out the Teacher Diary."

Leadership Challenges: What leadership challenges do headmasters face in effectively implementing educational initiatives?

HMs face key leadership challenges in implementing educational initiatives. Balancing administrative duties with teaching, as seen in School 106, often limits focus on instructional quality. The HM at School 123 noted that NIPUN goals often exceed rural students' current abilities, requiring more tailored approaches. Community engagement remains a hurdle, with HMs from Schools 106 and 107 highlighting poor attendance due to limited parental involvement. Resource constraints impact teaching methods; the HM at School 124 implemented a role-sharing system to maintain quality despite varying teacher motivation and limited resources.

Training and Capacity Gaps: What are the key deficiencies in teacher training and qualifications that hinder effective intervention adoption? Are teachers receiving continuous professional development?

Deficiencies in teacher training are significant, with teachers from Schools 106, 112, and 118 reporting limited hands-on practice, digital literacy challenges, and training overly focused on theory. While some teachers in Schools 108 and 114 receive basic training on TLMs and TGs, ongoing CPD is insufficient, particularly in practical areas such as classroom management and student engagement. There is no dedicated training for HMs, as reported by multiple schools like 106, 112, and 118. They handle significant administrative responsibilities, overseeing midday meals and managing elections, leaving limited capacity to support teaching staff. Teachers in Schools 106, 112, and 118 report needing simplified guides and regular mentorship to better handle multi-grade classrooms and address varied student needs.

Regional and Contextual Factors

Teacher engagement with interventions varied across regions, with higher adoption in Sitapur compared to Hardoi. Challenges in applying structured pedagogical models for numeracy instruction were evident. Low parental involvement and community support hindered effectiveness of interventions.

Variance by Region: How does the effectiveness of digital interventions and program engagement vary across different regions? What factors influence teacher engagement and adoption?

Teacher engagement with digital interventions varied significantly across different regions. In Sitapur, where connectivity and device access were more readily available, teachers exhibited higher levels of engagement, particularly with the Chatbot for tasks like lesson planning. Features like reminders and leaderboards boosted sustained use. Well-resourced schools and teachers with digital experience were more likely to engage with the intervention. Strong institutional support, peer networks, and concise, feedback-driven content were crucial for sustained use. Well-resourced schools like school 115 and teachers with digital experience were more likely to engage with NIPUN resources. In Hardoi, which faced challenges in terms of infrastructure and digital literacy, the levels of engagement and adoption of these tools were lower. The initial resistance from teacher unions during the baseline phase, coupled with protests over data privacy concerns, further reduced the adoption of digital interventions.

Subject-Specific Challenges: Were there any specific challenges in implementing FLN instruction?

Teachers were more inclined to use the TG in literacy classes than in numeracy. This discrepancy suggests a need for targeted support in numeracy instruction. Teachers expressed difficulty applying structured pedagogical models like the Gradual Release of Responsibility (GRR) in numeracy lessons due to varying student competencies. In one of the observed schools, despite claims of following the TG and using TLMs, the teacher's practice showed inconsistencies. The TG was not used in numeracy classes, and TLM usage was also minimal. The teacher's diary was incomplete, and there was a lack of independent practice and real-life application in numeracy lessons. This pattern was observed in most schools, indicating a general lack of consistent application of structured pedagogy, especially in numeracy.

Cultural and Community: Factors How did cultural and community factors impact the effectiveness of interventions?

Variability in community support and parental engagement significantly affected student attendance and engagement, which in turn impacted the perceived effectiveness of the interventions. Models such as tutoring circles, library initiatives, and family literacy programs encouraging localised support for education. Schools like 107 have demonstrated the positive impact of community engagement through active participation in literacy-focused initiatives, with parents and local volunteers contributing to improved student outcomes. However, schools in underserved areas, such as 124 and 106, face challenges in mobilising community resources due to economic and logistical barriers. Parental involvement was low, partly due to cultural and socioeconomic barriers. A teacher commented, "Parents here are focused on daily survival; education is a secondary priority," illustrating the limited parental support for educational initiatives.

Chapter 5

Policy Recommendations for Effective Implementation of NIPUN

Based on the challenges and insights provided, here are some policy recommendations to improve the NIPUN mission's effectiveness and ensure sustainable progress:

Salience Building and Strengthening Middle Management through District Project Management Units (DPMUs)

Current Issue	Low adoption of interventions stems from their lack of systemic embedding, limiting alignment with district mandates. Additionally, RCT design restrictions prevented engagement with middle management—key academic and administrative agents who drive implementation and influence behaviour change.
Recommendation	Leverage DPMUs as key sites to study and drive behaviour change among teachers and middle management. Focus on pathways such as governance and salience building, strengthening middle management, and enhancing data systems and validation. Embed interventions within district machinery to align with existing structures and utilize a mix of high-touch and low-touch approaches for sustained impact on behaviour change.

Actionable Steps

- Deploy micro-practice videos, reminders, and rewards systems through ARPs via block WhatsApp groups and during in-person supportive supervision visits.
- Utilize a stacked academic calendar to streamline intervention delivery and ensure consistent teacher engagement.
- Conduct structured, data-led reviews at block and district levels, led by BEOs and BSAs, to monitor progress and refine strategies based on implementation feedback.

Expected Impact

By examining the influence of CSF's behaviour change modalities on middle management and teachers, we can identify shifts in their beliefs, attitudes, and practices around evidence-informed structured pedagogy. Understanding these changes across classrooms, blocks, and districts will help pinpoint enablers and barriers, refine intervention strategies, and uncover best practices for driving sustainable behaviour change and improving instructional outcomes.

Need-Based Tailoring of Interventions and Effective Coaching for Higher Teacher Salience

Current Issue

Interventions often lack customization, leading to a mismatch between their design and the real-world needs of teachers. This top-down approach, without sufficient validation through iterative testing with teachers and understanding of the process, results in a lack of ownership and perceived relevance.

Recommendation

Conduct a needs assessment before designing interventions to ensure they match the specific requirements of each region. Engage teachers in co-creating resources, making them more practical and relevant to their teaching contexts. Moreover, teachers should understand the "why" of TG through training and coaching so that it is not just seen as robotic compliance but purposeful engagement with the child.

Actionable Steps

- Establish teacher-led resource development teams to create materials that are aligned with local contexts and teaching practices.
- Analyse existing data, such as student performance data and teacher feedback, to identify trends and patterns. Use feedback to refine the interventions and make necessary adjustments.
- Link the year-end learning outcomes (Lakshya) to intermediate micro competencies (Soochi) and the Teacher Guide to ensure teachers understand the linkages and follow the learning progression.

Expected Impact

By tailoring interventions to the specific needs of different regions and involving teachers in the co-creation process, we can increase their buy-in and engagement. This can lead to higher adoption rates, improved teaching practices, and ultimately, better student learning outcomes.

Enhancing Teacher Autonomy, Flexibility, and Agency

Current Issue

Teachers often feel constrained by rigid guidelines and a lack of flexibility in adapting interventions to their specific classroom contexts. Teachers may perceive the interventions as additional burdens rather than supportive tools, leading to resistance and decreased engagement.

Recommendation

Provide a more flexible framework in resources like the Teacher Guide. While the lesson plans can serve as a common floor for minimum quality of teaching, allowing teachers to adapt lesson plans based on student needs, focusing on broader goals rather than rigid structures is recommended. Involve teachers in the process of refining the interventions, giving them a voice in tailoring the tools to their classroom realities.

Actionable Steps

- Develop flexible frameworks for teaching and learning that allow teachers to adapt to the diverse needs of their students.
- Engage teachers in the co-creation of resources and curriculum materials. Provide training and support to teachers on instructional design and curriculum development.

Expected Impact

By providing teachers with greater autonomy and flexibility, we can increase their job satisfaction, reduce resistance to change, and promote innovative teaching practices.

Addressing Resistance through Peer Learning

Current Issue

Teachers may resist change due to a lack of support, confidence, and a fear of failure. The top-down approach to intervention implementation can further hinder their willingness to adopt new practices.

Recommendation

Implement peer mentoring programs to support teachers in adopting new methods. Peer observation can reduce teachers' worry, hesitancy, and pressure throughout the teaching process, making it more dependable and real[1].

Actionable Steps

- Establish peer mentoring programs where experienced teachers can support and guide their colleagues.
- Create opportunities for teachers to collaborate and learn from each other through peer observation and reflection.
- Pair schools with similar contexts to facilitate knowledge sharing and collaborative problem-solving.

Expected Impact

By fostering a supportive and collaborative learning environment, peer learning can reduce resistance to change, increase teacher confidence, and promote the adoption of new pedagogical techniques.

1 Katal, A., Singh, V. K., Choudhury, T., & Imran, F. (2022). Enhancing teaching and learning through peer observation: an Indian case study. Education Research International, 2022(1), 7825178.

Peer Learning through School Pairing (Twin-School System)

Current Issue

Schools with low performance are unable to quickly catch up to those with higher performance, leading to disparity in outcomes, like School 108, lag behind due to a lack of exposure to successful practices.

Recommendation

Pair high-performing schools with lower-performing ones in a mentorship or buddy system. High-performing schools can share their successful teaching methods, resources, and practices to help pull up their lower-performing counterparts. This collaboration can bridge gaps and improve outcomes through shared learning.

Actionable Steps

- Teachers from higher-performing schools (e.g., School 105) mentor teachers in lower-performing schools like 108 to share effective instructional techniques. One teacher from School 105 noted, “Working with teachers from other schools would help us learn what works in different settings”.
- Organise joint professional development workshops for paired schools, encouraging the exchange of best practices and resources.

Expected Impact

The pairing system will encourage a collaborative learning environment, leading to improved teaching practices, enhanced student outcomes, and reduced performance disparities between schools.

Chapter 6

Appendices

Annexure I: Classification of Schools Based on the Study

Criteria	Effective Schools	Developing Schools	Schools needing support
Teaching Pedagogy	Teachers use student-centred, participatory methods, incorporating storytelling, peer activities, and structured guidance. Lesson planning is often thorough, with teachers using tools like teacher diaries to track progress. (Schools:104, 105, 107, 109, 115, 116, 121, 124)	Teaching methods primarily consist of whole-class instruction with moderate student engagement. Teachers Sometimes, TLMs are used but have limited strategies for addressing varied learning needs. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118, 123)	Instructional methods are primarily lecture-based, with minimal adaptation for diverse learners. Teachers often need more structured lesson plans and demonstrate more engagement with students. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)
Physical Infrastructure	The facilities are well-maintained, clean, and safe. They have designated classroom spaces, accessible washrooms, and functional water sources. Classrooms are arranged to support active learning. (Schools: 104, 107, 109, 115, 124)	Infrastructure is basic but generally functional; classrooms are crowded, and hygiene varies. Resources and space sometimes compromise safety and cleanliness. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118, 121)	Buildings are poorly maintained, with overcrowded classrooms, broken furniture, unsafe sanitation facilities and inadequate seating arrangements negatively affect the learning environment. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)

Criteria	Effective Schools	Developing Schools	Schools needing support
Learning Infrastructure	Equipped with diverse educational resources, including updated textbooks, digital tools, and various TLMs that are used consistently in lessons. Libraries and reading corners are available and regularly accessed. (Schools: 104, 105, 109, 116, 121, 124)	Basic resources are available, including some TLMs and outdated textbooks. Digital tools are seldom used due to limited access. Resources often need more variety, restricting teaching flexibility. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118)	Significant lack of educational resources, with outdated or missing materials and minimal access to TLMs or digital tools. Libraries, if present, are underused or poorly stocked. (Schools: 106, 108, 113, 120, 123)
Teacher Qualifications	Teachers possess strong qualifications, including advanced degrees and certifications. They participate in professional development and demonstrate effective communication and subject knowledge. (Schools: 104, 107, 115, 121)	Teachers hold basic qualifications but have limited access to professional development. Subject knowledge and teaching skills vary, impacting their ability to meet diverse learning needs. (Schools:110, 112, 114, 118)	Teachers have minimal qualifications with limited training and professional development. Subject knowledge gaps are evident, leading to inconsistent teaching practices. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)
Student Engagement	High levels of student engagement with regular involvement in activities, positive peer interactions, and enthusiastic participation in classroom discussions. Teachers promote an inclusive and collaborative classroom climate. (Schools: 104, 105, 107, 115, 124)	Moderate student engagement with varying participation in classroom activities. Motivation levels are mixed, and co-curricular involvement is occasional rather than consistent. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118, 123)	Low student engagement with minimal participation in class activities, negative peer interactions, and high absenteeism or dropout rates. Classroom climate is often unstructured and disengaged. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)
Headmaster's Leadership and Engagement	Active, visionary leadership with strong engagement in school activities. Headmasters encourage positive school culture, support teacher development, and collaborate with the community to enhance school outcomes. (Schools: 104, 107, 115, 124)	Leadership is moderately active with occasional involvement in school events and teacher support. Headmasters focus on day-to-day operations but may lack consistent vision or proactive community engagement. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118)	Leadership is passive or absent, with minimal involvement in school activities. Headmasters rarely engage with teachers, students, or the community, which affects school morale and performance. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)

Criteria	Effective Schools	Developing Schools	Schools needing support
Parent and Community Involvement	Active community involvement with regular Parent-Teacher Meetings (PTMs), strong School Management Committee (SMC) participation, and parents engaged in supporting learning and school activities. (Schools: 104, 107, 115, 124)	Occasional parental involvement, primarily through PTMs and limited engagement in school activities. SMC participation is minimal, with community involvement primarily driven by specific events. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118)	Very low parental or community involvement; minimal communication between school and families. SMC is often inactive, and there is little support for school-related initiatives or student learning. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)
Academic Outcomes	High literacy and numeracy proficiency, with strong performance in assessments. Schools meet NIPUN targets, and students clearly grasp foundational skills. (Schools: 104, 105, 107, 109, 115, 121,124)	Average academic proficiency with mixed assessment outcomes. Some students struggle with foundational skills, though there are signs of improvement where resources and teaching support are available. (Schools: 110, 112, 114, 118)	Low literacy and numeracy proficiency, high dropout rates, and significant gaps in foundational learning. Few students meet NIPUN targets, and there is limited academic support for struggling learners. (Schools: 106, 108, 111, 113, 120)

Annexure II: Key Positives and Highlights

The NIPUN Bharat Mission has boosted several positive outcomes across schools, including enhanced visual and inclusive learning environments, increased awareness of pedagogical practices, effective use of teaching materials, and supportive peer structures. These elements collectively reflect a foundational shift towards holistic and engaging educational practices that align with NIPUN's broader objectives of improving literacy and numeracy, even as the program continues to work on bridging gaps in implementation.

1. **Strong Visual Learning Environment:** Several schools made substantial efforts to create visually engaging and stimulating classrooms, supporting active learning. For example, School 107 effectively used charts, posters, and displays that contributed to a vibrant learning atmosphere. This visually enriched environment provided students with a clear and engaging presentation of topics, supporting both teacher-led and self-directed learning. School 112 also featured reading corners and attractive posters that offered additional avenues for learning, showing a positive commitment to enriching the school environment.
2. **Inclusive Teaching Practices and Positive Discipline:** Instances of inclusive practices were observed, such as in School 121, where teachers aimed to incorporate cooperative learning methods. Schools that adhered to NIPUN's training on non-coercive discipline promoted a safer and more welcoming environment. This positive shift towards encouraging students rather than relying on punitive measures is a notable outcome of the training efforts, demonstrating that teachers are beginning to adopt student-centred practices.

3. **Teacher Awareness of Pedagogical Best Practices:** There was evidence of teachers being knowledgeable about best practices, even if they sometimes struggled to implement them fully. For instance, Teacher 105 articulated an understanding of lesson preparation and student engagement, reflecting that NIPUN's professional development sessions have helped build awareness. While the transition from knowledge to application remains ongoing, teachers' familiarity with effective teaching strategies represents a foundational achievement of the mission.

4. **Conducive Learning Atmosphere through Teaching-Learning Materials (TLMs):** While some schools reported limited access to TLMs beyond lower grades, School 113 used accessible educational displays to reinforce the curriculum, creating a well-rounded learning environment. The presence of subject-specific materials supported various topics, which, despite some limitations, demonstrated the mission's positive influence on resource utilisation. This atmosphere helped enhance student engagement and learning effectiveness, especially in environments where TLMs were effectively integrated into daily activities.

5. **Encouragement of Multigrade and Collaborative Learning Structures:** Schools with multigrade setups, such as School 124, managed to maintain a positive physical and collaborative learning environment. Although infrastructure issues occasionally limited effectiveness, the multigrade setup enabled students to benefit from mixed-age group learning, promoting peer support and interaction. This approach highlights an adaptability that promotes social learning while optimising limited resources.

6. **Recognition of Teachers' Role in Sustaining Engagement:** Some schools displayed consistent efforts to acknowledge and reward teacher participation in NIPUN goals, creating an environment where educators felt valued. For instance, in School assemblies or meetings, teachers who demonstrated commitment to inclusive practices and curriculum goals were informally acknowledged, reinforcing their roles as key influencers in the program's success. Such practices help build morale, boost commitment, and are integral in sustaining momentum in rural and underserved areas.

Annexure III: Key Issues with Program Implementation

Headmaster Issues in the Context of NIPUN Bharat Mission

1. **Leadership and Management Challenges:** One of the key issues identified among headmasters in the context of the NIPUN Bharat Mission is the challenge of providing effective leadership amidst high administrative burdens. Headmasters are often required to manage multiple tasks, including overseeing the implementation of the NIPUN Bharat objectives, coordinating with teachers, ensuring adherence to curriculum standards, and handling the administrative workload. This overwhelming responsibility often impedes their ability to focus on quality educational leadership, leading to inefficiencies in program delivery.

2. **Lack of Sufficient Support for Teacher Engagement:** Headmasters also face difficulties in engaging teachers effectively with NIPUN's goals, as there is a lack of systematic support mechanisms for continuous professional development. Despite efforts to tailor professional development programs, the implementation remains inconsistent. The issue

is compounded by insufficient resources and time for headmasters to develop a culture of continuous learning among teachers. This creates a disconnect between the mission's objectives and the teachers' day-to-day practices, resulting in reduced teacher motivation and engagement with the mission's long-term goals.

3. **Inefficient Resource Allocation:** Headmasters often struggle with the challenge of resource allocation, both in terms of human resources and materials, to adequately support NIPUN's implementation. The misalignment between available resources and the actual needs of the school undermines the effectiveness of the mission. The lack of flexibility in resource distribution due to bureaucratic processes limits the headmaster's ability to respond quickly to the needs of the school, further contributing to inefficiencies.

4. **Communication Gaps and Stakeholder Coordination:** Effective communication between headmasters, teachers, and external stakeholders, such as local authorities and parent bodies, remains an ongoing issue. Headmasters often find it challenging to communicate NIPUN's objectives clearly to all stakeholders and ensure active involvement. This gap in communication limits the collaborative efforts necessary for the successful implementation of the mission and prevents the formation of strong community partnerships that could enhance student learning outcomes.

5. **Limited Professional Development Opportunities for Headmasters:** While teachers have access to tailored training, the professional development of headmasters often remains neglected. Without targeted training and support, headmasters are unable to fully grasp the strategic and operational aspects of the NIPUN Bharat Mission, which diminishes their effectiveness in leading the implementation of its objectives. This lack of development opportunities leaves them less equipped to address emerging challenges and improve school-level outcomes under the mission.

6. **Dependency on External Support and Funding:** Another significant issue is the reliance on external funding and support for the effective implementation of the NIPUN Bharat Mission. Headmasters often face challenges in securing timely financial resources and support from external bodies, leading to delays and inconsistencies in program execution. This external dependency undermines the autonomy of schools and hinders the sustainable integration of the mission's objectives into the daily functioning of schools.

Teacher Practice Issues in the Context of the NIPUN Bharat Mission

1. **Inconsistent Implementation of Best Practices:** Teachers have expressed an understanding of best teaching practices, but the consistent implementation of these practices in the classroom remains a significant challenge. Many teachers struggle to apply theoretical knowledge in practical classroom settings. For instance, while teachers acknowledge the importance of lesson preparation and student involvement, this is not always translated into well-executed lesson plans or effective teaching practices. This inconsistency limits the overall impact of the NIPUN Bharat Mission on student learning outcomes.

2. **Lack of Adequate Feedback and Assessment:** One of the critical issues observed in teacher practices is the insufficient feedback provided to students. Teachers, such as Teacher 105, have been found not to consistently correct students' notebooks, depriving students of essential feedback to understand their progress and areas for improvement.

Furthermore, teachers like Teacher 111, who focus on individual feedback, sometimes rely on intimidation rather than providing constructive and supportive feedback. This lack of positive reinforcement and guidance undermines the learning process and prevents students from reaching their full potential.

3. **Ineffective Classroom Management:** Inappropriate and harsh discipline tactics have been observed among certain teachers. For instance, Teacher 105 physically hit a student, violating acceptable teaching practices. Teacher 111 also used a stick to intimidate students, which compromised their safety and created a hostile classroom environment. Such disciplinary methods create fear and disengagement among students, preventing them from fully participating in the learning process. These practices are counterproductive to the NIPUN Bharat Mission's focus on creating a safe and positive learning environment.

4. **Neglect of Student Participation:** Many teachers tend to focus on more engaged or vocal students while neglecting those who are less active or disengaged. For example, Teacher 121 primarily interacted with students who were already engaged, leaving other students out of the learning process. Teacher 105's separation of boys and girls also negatively affected classroom dynamics and reduced opportunities for collaboration. Such practices contribute to feelings of exclusion among students, which can hinder their overall academic development and engagement with the curriculum.

5. **Limited Use of Teaching Materials and Resources:** Another issue in teacher practices is the ineffective use of teaching aids and resources. Teachers, like Teacher 105, may have access to visual aids but fail to use them effectively, often leaving the classroom to guide students in their use. Similarly, Teacher 121 recognises the value of teaching guides but struggles to apply them effectively in the classroom. This inconsistency in utilising available resources limits students' engagement and their ability to fully benefit from instructional materials.

6. **Rigidity in TG:** Teachers find the TGs provided under the NIPUN Bharat Mission to be restrictive, limiting their ability to adapt lessons to the varying needs and learning levels of their students. The TG's lack of flexibility makes it difficult for teachers to tailor lessons to students' individual needs, reducing the overall effectiveness of the curriculum. Teachers need more autonomy and flexibility in lesson planning to ensure that all students can learn effectively, regardless of their starting point.

7. **Limited Preparation and Time for Professional Development:** Teachers like those at School 115 received the Teaching Guides only a few days before the academic year began, limiting their time to prepare adequately. This lack of preparation time impedes their ability to effectively use the guides and adapt them to the needs of their students. Without adequate ongoing professional development, teachers find it challenging to stay updated on new teaching methods and approaches that could improve student learning outcomes.

8. **Challenges in Student Absenteeism:** High levels of absenteeism among students at both schools pose a significant challenge for teachers. The structured learning frameworks, such as the Teaching Guides, assume regular attendance, but absenteeism prevents students from benefiting fully from these structured programs. This issue creates gaps in learning, as students miss out on key lessons and fall behind, further exacerbating disparities in academic achievement.

Administration & Infrastructure-Related Issues in School Climate & Learning Environment

1. **Administrative Burden of Mid-Day Meal Program:** The administrative responsibilities associated with the MDM program are creating additional burdens for teachers. For example, at School 109, the meal preparation time and the need for stock rotation every 15 days add significantly to the teachers' workload. The reliance on male staff for MDM-related tasks indicates a gender gap in program administration, further compounding the issue. At School 115, the reliance on the Pradhan (village leader) for MDM-related tasks introduces vulnerability in the program. This dependency means that the program's effectiveness is at risk if there are changes in external support, such as political shifts or unavailability of resources. This administrative overload affects teachers' ability to focus on core responsibilities, impacting student learning outcomes and program effectiveness.
2. **Limited Parental Engagement:** Both schools (109 and 115) experience a lack of parental involvement, which is a barrier to student attendance and performance. The absence of a support structure from home can leave students less motivated to attend school or perform well. Issues like gambling among parents further affect the attention and focus of students. Without strong parental support and engagement, students may experience lower academic outcomes, and school efforts to improve learning may be less effective. Community issues, such as violence and social challenges, negatively impact parental support and student engagement (School 107).
3. **Inadequate Infrastructure:** Schools faced significant physical and learning infrastructure challenges. Inadequate space, non-functional fans, lack of potable water, and faulty washrooms were common issues that affected comfort and accessibility, particularly in Schools 106, 107, and 123. Insufficient classroom furniture forced students to sit on mats (School 112), while limited classrooms and multigrade setups hindered learning outcomes (Schools 123 and 124). Vandalism after school hours creates ongoing problems for the school environment, leading to damaged facilities and unsanitary conditions (School 106).
4. **Inadequate Learning Resources:** Schools 106 and 113 lacked sufficient teaching materials and updated textbooks, while School 107's educational displays were limited by frequent power shortages. Resource challenges, including a lack of workbooks and outdated materials, hinder instructional efforts, alongside a lack of cooperation between different school departments (School 107). The absence of workbooks and disorganised construction restricted classroom utility (School 123). Combined classes and scheduling conflicts further detracted from the learning experience, emphasising the need for infrastructural improvements across schools to support effective education.


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2+2 = 4
3+3= 6
4+4= 8
5+5= 10
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