

SOCIAL IMPACT STUDY OF EKAL VIDYALAYA MOVEMENT

**In the states of
Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka,
Maharashtra & Madhya Pradesh, Bihar & Orissa**

**By : Tata Dhan Academy of Dhan Foundation,
Madurai, TamilNadu.**

**In Association with
Prof.D.V.R.Seshadri of Indian Institute of
Management, Bangalore.**

**For
Ekal Vidyalaya Foundation of India, New delhi**

About DHAN Foundation

DHAN Foundation is a national level NGO founded in 1997. It implements poverty reduction programmes in 12 states in India through microfinance, tankfed agriculture development, rainfed agriculture development, coastal conservation and livelihoods, democratizing panchayat institutions, ICT for poor and development management education. It works with more than 8.5 lakhs poor families (40 lakhs population) including landless labourers, small and marginal farmers and women. It implements the field programmes through community based organizations by involving more than 700 professionals and 3000 local level staff in rural, urban, coastal and tribal contexts. The DHAN's activities have reached more than 10,000 villages. It also implements other development activities such as education, health, social security through micro insurance, preserving traditional livelihoods activities and sustainable livelihoods development. There are six core values guide the DHAN's development activities – grassroots action, enabling, collaboration, innovation, excellence and self regulation.

Tata-Dhan Academy is a development management school promoted by DHAN Foundation with the partnership of Sir Ratan Tata Trust in 2001. Since then it offers a two-year development management programme for young graduates and equip them for grassroots action. They are placed with grassroots NGOs. The Social Impact Study of Ekal Vidyalayas was a challenging project undertook by Tata-Dhan Academy. It was an opportunity for Tata-Dhan Academy to understand the depth and breadth of the Ekal's activities in the country, particularly in the study states – TamilNadu, Andhra Pradesh, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharastra, Bihar and Orissa. It was also an interesting experience for the Academy in terms of coordinating the project in different socio-cultural contexts.

Mr M P Vasimalai is the first Executive Director and founder member of DHAN Foundation. He did management education in Indian Institute of Management, Ahmedabad in 1983 and started his career with NGO –PRADAN in the same year. Since then he continues his work in the NGO sector. By choice he has chosen the development sector to work and decided to contribute for poverty reduction through sustainable livelihoods based development themes. He believes in the wisdom of poor communities in the villages. Hence the implementation of development programmes through community based organizations has become a core philosophy of DHAN Foundation. He believes that professionalism is needed to bring significant impact among the poor people, hence the efforts were taken to bring many youth with professional education qualification. Professionals need systematic orientation towards rural development; hence systematic HR processes became one of the core purposes of DHAN Foundation. Strong HRD systems and processes are built in the organization to unleash the potential of the professionals for the betterment of the down-trodden communities.

About Prof.D.V.R.Seshadri

D.V.R. Seshadri is Faculty at IIM Bangalore. His areas of interest are: B2B Marketing and Corporate Entrepreneurship. He holds a B. Tech. from IIT, Madras, M.S. from University of California and is a Fellow of IIM Ahmedabad, followed by 15 years industry experience.

He has co-authored three books: ‘Innovation Management,’ with Prof. Shlomo Maital, Sage India in 2007; ‘Global Risk / Global Opportunity,’ with Prof. Shlomo Maital, by Sage India, in June 2010; and Indian adaptation of ‘Business Market Management (B2B): Understanding, Creating and Delivering Value,’ with James Anderson, James Narus and Das Narayandas, Pearson Publishing, in June 2010.

Phone: 080-2699 3260 (o), , E-mail: dvrs@iimb.ernet.in



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Preface



Prof.D.V.R.Seshadri,

Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore,

Phone: 080-2699 3260 (o), E-mail: dvrs@iimb.ernet.in

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I have had the opportunity of working closely with EVFI and Tata Dhan Academy, Madurai on the Impact Assessment study of Ekal schools in the country. This has taken me to a different world altogether, compared to the world of business management that I deal with as part of my role as a faculty at Indian Institute of Management, Bangalore. My tryst with Ekal started with a visit to an Ekal school near Kodaikanal, along with key people of Tata Dhan, to understand what actually goes on at the grassroots. The visit was indeed an eye opener. The village was very difficult to access, and had widespread poverty and deprivation. Left to itself, this cycle of grinding poverty would continue generation after generation. In the midst of all this, I found Ekal Vidyalaya as a beacon of hope to the next generation. The conduct and behavior of the children, the discipline they manifested, the neatness with which they dressed (despite having very modest clothes), and most importantly the hope which showed in their eyes, was deeply touching and humbling at the same time.

It was clear that the Ekal movement had deep meaning and was well conceived of by the people at the helm of affairs who are driving it. They are people deeply committed to the cause, not interested in name, fame or prestige that their roles will bring. Many of them work very silently on a cause that they passionately believe in. Their humility and passion is a lesson for all of us to learn from.

Having been convinced that the movement is indeed essential part of our dream for a better India, I have been involved from time to time, along with Ekal and Tata Dhan to develop the broad contours of the impact assessment study. Why Tata Dhan? It is also an organization driven by a vision for a better world, to provide succor to the underprivileged through showing them the way towards a better life. It is headed by a visionary and selfless leader, Sri M. P. Vasimalai, extraordinary on many dimensions. Tata Dhan runs a unique MBA for people with similar transformational zeal, focused on the rural sector. Consequently, they have alumni and presence across the country. They also have deep understanding and empathy for the hard realities of life in the poor villages of the country. They have robust processes and necessary experience for undertaking such studies on a massive scale. I am convinced that they were the best choice for Ekal to go to for doing an independent assessment of the impact Ekal has had on the country.

After considerable discussions, the terms of reference of the study were drawn up and the methodologies for conducting the study were drawn up. Details of these can be found in the detailed state-wise reports that Ekal has done. It was envisaged based on the presence of

Tata Dhan in the targeted states, to conduct the impact assessment in the states of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Orissa and Tamil Nadu. Additionally, Ekal expressed the need to do the impact assessment study in the remaining states of the country where they have presence. However Tata Dhan expressed their inability to take up the study for the remaining states (over and above the eight states listed earlier), as they did not have any presence there. The enormity of the task, visiting hundreds of remote villages under adverse geographic, climatic, social and other constraints in a very short period of time must be appreciated while interpreting the excellent work done by Tata Dhan. I commend them for the excellent work!

Essentially, Ekal is doing a great job on functional education. With regard to development education, there is scope for considerable improvement. We cannot underestimate the challenges being faced by the Ekal field level workers and teachers in rolling out such an ambitious program, under circumstances which can at best be described as very tough. The report also captures some of the challenges that Ekal has to address going forward. I take this opportunity to salute the entire Ekal family for making such a well-conceived program a reality. God speed to them to reach even loftier goals in the years ahead!

It will be useful to know that IIM Bangalore has granted me funding for pursuing case development and perhaps a research paper from this study. The questions of interest to me as an academic are: What are the lessons that can be drawn to modern business enterprises from Ekal? How can it scale to its targeted 100,000 schools in the next three years, from the current 35,000 schools? What is it that drives the 35,000 Ekal teachers and some 6000 other field workers at various levels to give the best years of their life to such an effort? Several other related questions arise, which I hope to explore over the next several months.

Social Impact Study -Summary Report

Data source: 508 villages (thru EV teachers, parents and the key informants)

EV Teachers: mostly qualified with / above matriculation.

1.0 Ekal's Focus on Deprived Population

1.1 Coverage by Ekal of deprived districts

It is commonly understood that the scheduled caste (SC) and scheduled tribe (ST) population in India are considered as socio-economically deprived.

The Ekal movement got initiated in the districts with almost higher share of deprived population

1.2 Literacy

Literacy rate has been considered to be one of the internationally accepted indicators of human development. The overall literacy rates in the sample districts as a whole in all study states were found to be lower than that in the respective non-Ekal districts and state averages. The above fact, however, reveals that the literacy rate of the sample districts as a whole was lower.

1.3 Forest Area

The Ekal movement was intended to enter into the areas which were not only socio-economically backward, but also geographically isolated. The districts with more forest areas were considered in this regard. According to the *State of Forest Report 2003*, the percentage of forest area to total geographical area in the sample districts as a whole was higher than that of non-Ekal districts in almost all study states

1.4 Dependency in Primary Sector (Agriculture)

Ekal movement was initiated in the districts where higher share of workers were dependent in the unorganised sector, primarily agriculture (with its own consequent vagaries in income) et

1.5. Conclusion

With the above analysis by considering all the four socio-economic dimensions such as the share of deprived population, literacy rate, dependency (WPR) in unorganised sector (*agriculture*), and the percentage of forest area, it can be concluded that the Ekal movement had a deliberate choice of selecting the overall socio-economic backward districts to intervene across the states In India.

2.0 Functional Literacy

2.1 Enrolment

2.1.1 Enrolment of students in EVs

It is encouraging to note that EVFI focuses on preventing out-of-school children by enrolling the children at school going age into both EVs and formal (government) schools, thereby attempts to reduce the drop-outs.

The enrolment of children into EVs also good

Particularly the girl children enrolment in EVs is good in Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Orissa compare to that of boys. The enrolment happens both in rural and tribal villages

The analysis shows that the efforts by EVs in enrolling children both in formal schools and EVs is very good in terms of creating access to education among the village children.

Another important aspect to be considered is the facilitation of EVFI in enrolling out-of-school and drop-out children in the formal schools as well as in EVs is appreciable

There are positive changes observed in children going to EVs related to discipline when compared to formal schools in control villages

2.2 Teaching and Learning

2.2.1 Subjects taught regularly by EV teachers.

Teachers teaching different subjects: varied from 51 % to 76 %

Subjects taught: yoga, games, moral & value education, science and social awareness

Teachers teaching different formal school subjects: varied from 44 % to 69 %

2.2.2 Moral and Value Education

With fast pace of growth in India, people are moving away from their customs and traditional values, as seen from increasing individualism and materialism

Ekal consequently seeks to impart value education to children studying in EV schools.

The effect is also expected to rub off on parents and larger village communities (through their children)

Objective: Creation of a value-based Indian society

The study reinforces this commitment, revealing that Ekal teachers gave priority for imparting moral and value education.

These include: respecting elders, maintaining punctuality, personal hygiene, sitting straight posture during prayers (80-90 % of EV teachers impart this)

Other forms of value education imparted include: Learning national anthem, leaving footwear outside as children enter the school, and patriotic songs, touching parent's feet (to get blessings), participating in prayers, etc.

2.2.3 Improved quality of education including the general knowledge

Reading, writing and arithmetic skills (3 R's) of EV children improved significantly.

Improved handwriting and self reading skills of children.

Pedagogy used: Games, storytelling, singing songs

Results: students pick-up concepts very quickly; increased comprehension; enhanced memory power; better General knowledge

2.2.4 Development of extra-curricular skills

This is done through participating in various competitions organised by EKAL, formal schools and by others.

EV teachers help in Identifying and shaping individual talents such as drawing, singing, elocution, yoga.

Key informants have stated that they observe an increase in the participation of children in extra-curricular activities.

2.3 Level of awareness on EKAL and its educational activities among key respondents in the village

2.3.1 Awareness of Ekal's activities

Key respondents were well aware of Ekal's role in helping students in formal school subjects.

Key respondents were aware of Ekal's role in teaching subjects which are not covered in formal school (such as general knowledge, discipline, moral values, patriotism and satsang.)

2.3.2 Attendance of EV children in EVs and formal schools

Key respondents noticed increase in attendance of children in formal schools, and this was attributable to the work of Ekal.

2.3.3 Discipline among EV children

Key respondents noticed better discipline among the EV children (includes attendance, performance in EV subjects and formal school subjects, etc.)

This has also been corroborated by parents and EV teachers.

3.0 Healthcare education

EV children used toilets, bathed regularly, washed hands before meals and cleaned mouth after meals, brushing teeth, cutting nails, etc.

The EV teacher was found to be a key source of motivation and reinforcement for the health practices observed in Ekal villages.

Key informants responded that health seeking behaviour of the villagers in the Ekal operational areas has increased.

EV teachers stated that EVs have contributed particularly in bringing awareness on sanitation, promoting personal hygiene and in ensuring awareness on the importance of safe drinking water.

3.1 Availability of medical kit and reach of health services in Ekal villages

EV teacher are provided with a medical kit.

The EV teacher tries to extend first aid services to the village communities, resulting in increased number of families who have benefitted from the medical kit.

This has also resulted in increased health seeking behaviour among villagers.

3.2 Increased awareness on sanitation

Ekal support, a few of the EV teachers having understood the need and importance of maintaining good sanitation, decided to bring awareness on sanitation and facilitate the people to keep their village surrounding very clean.

3.3 Promotion of personal hygiene

Improvement in the personal hygiene among the children: use of toilets instead of open defecation; cutting nails regularly; insisting that students wear clean clothes, use footwear and wash hands with soap before eating and after using toilets.

4.0 Economic and environment education

EVFI 's initiatives in this regard were not intensive and extensive.

Percentage of people practicing economic and environment related activities was low.

In rural villages, there are however a few instances of EV teacher encouraging women to go for vegetable cultivation by promoting kitchen garden, which has the scope for giving adequate nutrition as well as saving the cost of purchasing vegetables.

In tribal villages, the focus of a few EV teachers was on increasing the awareness for tree plantation.

In summary, a few EV teachers initiated new economic activities. These acted as a role model for others to emulate. However there is no formal mechanism that is doing this in a systemic manner. At present, this depends on the initiative of the individual EV teacher. There is need for further strengthening this important arm of EVFI.

5.0 Village development education and empowerment education

Three EV teachers mobilised people of the village to come together for taking up common initiatives such as cleaning of their villages premises, village temple etc.