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## **MAINSTREAMING OF OUT of SCHOOL CHILDREN: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP INITIATIVES**

### **Learning objectives**

At the end of this module, you will be able to-

1. Understand the need and importance of Out of School Children
2. Demonstrate an understanding of the different barriers in OoSc
3. Reflect on the best practices in OoSC through some case studies from field.
4. Deliberate on the role of school leaders in mainstreaming OoSC.
5. Devise a robust mechanism for involvement of community and parents for timely mainstreaming of OoSC.

**Keywords:** Out of School Children (OoSC), Dropouts, Never enrolled, Barriers, School Development Plan, Administrative leadership and Pedagogical leadership.

### **Mainstreaming of out of school children by school leadership**

One of the major policy goals under NEP 2020, is curtailing dropout rate and ensuring universal access to education at all levels with priority to bring dropouts into the school and preventing further dropouts of the students. Target has been set to achieve the gross enrolment ratio (GER) from Pre School to Secondary by the end of 2030 and it needs framing of robust strategies (planning) and effective and progressive implementation of the programmes towards the achievement of the desired target. Alongside the programme implementing agencies need to understand the barriers which otherwise keep children out of schools.

Providing accessible education and creating opportunities of education to all children irrespective of the barriers that impede the process and progress is a great challenge to the implementing agencies. The right of free and compulsory education Act (RTE Act 2009), guarantees free and compulsory education to all children in the age group of 6-14 years, and there is a major chunk of kids belonging to vulnerable sections of the society, migratory population, labour class, homeless families etc. that remain out of schools. Though the school education department undertakes child tracking through enrolment drives, media and community mobilisation programmes, yet due to poor planning of such programmes and zero follow up of these action plans, a number of children who either drooped out from the normal schooling or never enrolled remain un mapped by the school authorities.

As per the 75<sup>th</sup> round household survey by NSSO, in 2017, the number of estimated OoSC in the country in the age group of 6-14 years is 96.93 lakh whereas the data received from AWP and B received from the states and UTs showed only 11 lakh children out of school. In the UT of Jammu and Kashmir in the age group of 6-14 years as per NSSO household survey is 49113 but AWP&B 2019-20 shows only 11,762 OoSC. Thus an ambiguity exists on the number of OoSC and it is baffling to understand why different agencies are quoting such variations. The onus lies on the fact that the definition of OoSC is limiting or surveying agencies do not undertake a comprehensive child tracking mechanism and their survey timing is not appropriate. The stakeholders involved in household survey also may not have a detailed knowledge of schooling related issues, the prevailing circumstances as well as conducting the survey. A greater challenge for the School Education Department is the identification of OoSC.

Moreover, due to closure of schools on account of Covid 19 pandemic for more than two years, there might be varied learning gaps among the learners that would make them unable to cope up with the studies resulting into increasing dropout rate.

The NITI Ayog report on the school education qualityIndex (2018-19) has also shown the lowest Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) i.e., 67.3 at elementary stage and 47.1 at secondary stage and the transition rate from Primary class (5<sup>th</sup>) to upper primary class (6<sup>th</sup>) is 87.3% and upper primary class (8<sup>th</sup>) to secondary stage (9<sup>th</sup>), is 86.1%.

Based on an instrument and transactional model that views education as an area of investment for human resource development and cultivating of a functional enlightened society, it is not enough simple to declare that schooling is open to all. A comprehensive model with result oriented strategies needs to be enacted to provide the required facilities and support the basic compulsory elementary education for all the children regardless of the circumstances, barriers prevailing around the system and also to understand the background of the children who are dropping out for a variety of the reasons.

At gross root level, school leaders and their supporting staff need to be charged with the responsibilities for developing a comprehensive school development plan with the involvement of the elite people of the society to cater the educational needs and interests of the society with emphasis on the quality education to all children irrespective of their social backgrounds and the factors limiting the children's access to the school need to be addressed suitably. Before developing a school plan, the concerned authorities need to analyse the previous data for identification of gaps and move ahead thereof strategically.

### **Who are out of School Children?**

Since, no standard definition for clarifying who are out of school children has been followed by concerned authorities resulting into the mismatch of the identification of numbers while searching out of school, the Ministry of Human Resource Development has suggested the following definition for clarification of the concept.

“A child in the age group of 6-14 years of age will be considered out of school if he/she has never been enrolled in any elementary school or if after enrolment has been absent from the school without prior information for the reasons of the absence for a 45 days or more.”

In view of the interpretation of the above definition, the following terms need to be clarified

1. Never enrolled children: The children from the age group of +6 years till the completion of 14 years of age, if not enrolled in a school shall be considered as never enrolled and hence OoSC.
2. Dropout Children: The children in the age group of 6-14 years who, if after enrolment in the school remained absent for 45 days or more without any information to school authorities shall be considered as dropout children and hence OoSC.
3. Elementary School: It means any elementary school imparting elementary education and the elementary education means education from 1<sup>st</sup> class to 8<sup>th</sup> class.

As per RTE Act 2009, school includes the following categories:

- a. A school established, owned or controlled by the appropriate Govt. or a local Authority.
- b. An aided school receiving any kind of aid or grant to meet its expenses from the appropriate Govt. or Local Authority.
- c. A school belonging to a specific category such as Sainik School. Navvidyala, Kendrividyala etc.
- d. An unaided recognised school not receiving any kind of aid or grant to meet its expenses from the appropriate Govt. or Local Authority.

Section 3 of NEP 2020, under the heading “curtailing dropout and ensuring universal access to education at all levels”, envisages equitable and quality education from foundational stage to Grade 12 to all children up to the age of 18 Years.

From the above definition and interpretations thereof, it is clear that any child, who is not enrolled in a formal school or is not in a position of receiving a valid document for acquiring elementary education, shall be considered as OUT of SCHOOL CHILD. A child who dropped out at any stage before the completion of the stage of elementary education shall also be considered as OUT of SCHOOL CHILD.

In context of Jammu and Kashmir, the major areas of school dropout include the geographical areas with high hilly terrains and the urban slam areas, the workplaces such as bricklins, hotels etc. The communities which are most affected include the nomadic/migratory population, families of low economic status as well as those of traditional occupations. The gender parity and socio-cultural ethos also lead to increasing dropout rate of the students. One of the leading trends in Kashmir Division is dropout rate from the Orphan category. A good chunk of such kids are seen in religious institutions where least arrangements are in place for formal education.



## **Challenges and Issues with regard to Out of School Children's**

We have a variety of issues and challenges in the UT of Jammu and Kashmir confronting to our educational setup. Some of the major challenges include:

- 1) Inappropriate data collection of OoSC.
- 2) Inaccessibility of difficult and hilly terrains, Unmapped seasonal centres/mobile schools for migratory population and non-establishment of special centres at work places.
- 3) Vulnerable communities such as Gujjars, Bakrwals, Gaddis migratory families and the scheduled tribes/castes.
- 4) Inadequate infrastructural facilities in terms of space, boundary wall, assured minimum facilities.
- 5) Lack of competent human resources.
- 6) Poor academic performance at various levels.
- 7) Poor mechanism for re enrolment of dropouts in age appropriate class and lack of special training centres.
- 8) Socio-political uncertainty for decades also resulted in frequent closure of schools which increased the dropout rates.
- 9) Socio-economic and cultural reasons.
- 10) Low socio-economic status of families and engagement of children in child labour, household engagement of girls.
- 11) Inappropriate tracking of children and lack of co-ordination with child welfare organisations for availability of birth records.
- 12) Zero investment in engagement of trained and experienced educational counsellors for providing necessary Physiological and motivational support.
- 13) Early marriage especially in nomadic and tribal societies and family conflicts.

## **BARRIERS TO ELEMENTARY EDUCATION**

The impediments that exist in itself and act as detrimental for a child to acquire elementary education or the impediments created in the pathway of a child for acquiring elementary education constitutes the hard and soft barriers to education:

### **Hard Barriers: Hard Barriers include the following**

1. Geographical Challenges- In Jammu and Kashmir, we have a number of areas which are considered as hard zones where the schools are somehow inaccessible and where the school days are less than the normal school days owing to physical locations, weather conditions, road connectivity and so on.
2. Infrastructural inadequacy in terms of space, boundary walls, assured minimum facilities for CWSN and female students.
3. Poverty- It acts as a barrier in terms of education cost, child labour, economic migration or occupational compulsions.
4. Conflict- affected situations – Insecurity on account of conflict either social or political has been a great barrier to children for receiving elementary education.
5. Gender Parity – Gender behavioural activities and attributes such as engagement of girls in house hold activities, priority of boys in education and other activities, early marriage of girls and so on act as detrimental to girls for elementary education.
6. Disability – Various disabilities in children act as barriers to their education. No appropriate arrangements are available for home based education to the children who

cannot afford to reach nearby schools on account of various reasons. Identification of children with certain disabilities at a later stage is also barrier to their education.

7. Lack of ECCE – Children in pre-primary stage are more on track in early literacy than the children missing early school days. Least scope of pre-primary education in Govt Schools also affects the schooling.
8. Migration – Seasonal migration by nomadic people, migrations by labourers for work from one place to other places increases dropout rates.
9. Religious institutions not imparting formal elementary education increases no of OoSC.
10. Merger of schools can lead to increase in dropouts.

**Soft Barrier: – Soft Barriers include the following**

1. Corporal Punishment – As per Section 17 of RTE Act 2009, corporal punishments increases dropout rates up to 18%.
2. School Push out-There can be numerous reasons for school push out. As per the Agrasar Report at least 5 students per day are pushed out of schools.
3. Sibling Care – A good number of Girls are involved in sibling care. As per ASER 2017, 70.7% OoSC girls are mothers who have never been to school, more than 80% OoSC have mothers who haven't completed elementary education.
4. Socio cultural factors – Socio cultural factors like Parental perception, cultural factors and apathetic attitude also lead to increase in OoSC.
5. No educational assistance is provided outside schools.
6. Gender insensitivity – About 19% Adolescent girls are dropping from schools.
7. Lack of female Teachers/Quality education.
8. Discrimination on the basis of region and occupation.
9. Peer Pressure. **MAJOR REASONS OF DROPOUT GENDER WISE**

REASONS	Gender Wise Impact MALE FEMALE	
Financial Constraints	23.8%	15.2%
Engagement in Domestic Activities	4.8%	29.7%
Engagement in Economic Activities	31.0%	4.9%
School is far off	0.5%	3.4%
Unable to cop up with studies	5.4%	4.6%
Completed desired Level	5.7%	6.5%
Marriage	-----	13.9%
Other Reasons(Migration,	5.1%	6.2%
Unfriendly atmosphere in schools.	<b>DATA SOURCE: MHRDE EDUCATIONAL STATISTICS, 2018</b>	

**Case Study:** In an area where the school authorities are aware of the fact that the children especially female ones drop out owing to poor attendance in the school and consequent early marriage, what shall be the strategies to improve the schooling system? (Seema, a girl student has interest in school but her parents are not interested in her schooling though her physique is well and her IQ is comparatively good. But she remains engaged in household activities with her parents).

For such a case, the following data needs to be collected and interpreted:

Data identification including name of child, parents' name and address, education and occupational status of parents, number of family members, ordinal position of identified child in the family. Interests of parents such as social, emotional and the compulsions acting as barriers to the education of child.

Recording of the strengths and problems of child such as attitude, interests of child, scholastic and non scholastic differences, class room behaviour and above all the strengths of the child and the effect of the environment working around him/her.

The teacher needs to interpret all the existing conditions/data and the possibilities of modifications thereof with the future of the child and then target the objective of his/her regular schooling.

LET US SUM UP –

#### SUGGESTIVE STRATEGIES TO BE ADOPTED ON LARGE SCALE FOR CURTAILING DROP OUTS

Developing a working mechanism to identify drop outs and bringing them back to schools with the establishment of two SIOS in Jammu and Srinagar having branches in all education zones of UT as alternative schools.

1. Engagement of trained manpower at identified places on regular basis for such SIOS.
2. Setting of skill development centres as per the local and global needs of the society.
3. Integration of women and child development, health and family welfare and school education departments for ECCE, health care and enrolment of children in schools to improve GER.
4. Community mobilization programmes with focus on local cultural activities for ensuing identity/ importance of various social and ethnic groups vis-a vis school development activities and encouraging their participation to enrol / continue the education of their wards.
5. Working towards removal of social, geographical and cultural barriers in the schooling process.
6. Setting up of special training centres for out of school children in identified urban and rural areas at work places for bridging the learning gaps with focus on migratory population, children of low income groups and other vulnerable groups.
7. The establishment and functioning of mobile schools and seasonal centres shall be as per the prescribed schedule of movement of nomadic population and special work force shall be engaged to keep track of their movement so as to bring transparency in such schools/ centres.
8. Residential facilities be also provided at the identified locations
9. Convergence of facilities being provided by different departments.

10. Continuous engagement of field functionaries having special expertise of social mobility/pedagogical approaches to keep a track of child population enrolled/to be enrolled in schools with special incentives for their performance.
11. Provision of trained teaching staff to the schools with PTR of 1:15 in Primary schools.
12. Adopting a standardised mechanism for involving school teachers only in school related activities and preventing their formal/informal deployment to other agencies/departments.
13. Infrastructural development in schools with spacious class rooms and assured minimum facilities including furniture, toilets, heating/cooling equipments and required teaching learning materials.
14. Declaring schools as safe and conflict free zones for welfare of children.
15. Utilizing the school premises/ buildings/infrastructure only for schooling process and purpose.
16. Special Incentives for teachers depending upon their performance.
17. Special Education and skill development Courses for children with different abilities
18. Discouraging certain social evils like early child marriage, child labour and other socio-cultural constraints through school readiness programmes.
19. Ensuring school as a safe and enjoyable zone of learning with focus on creating an in- school family where every individual student has a say and enjoys in a learning culture
20. To engage and partner with parents/community volunteers about the wellbeing of children, sharing their positives and engaging the stakeholder in establishing a relationship with the school and schooling process.
21. Detection of early signs of dropping out a school like poor attendance, feeling bored in academic life, poor academic performance; feelings disconnected from the teachers, peers, and fellow students both emotionally & socially.
22. Sensitization of parents about the conflicting life pressures & ill effects of early drop outs visa-a-vis poor health , continuing of a cycle of poverty through low paying jobs and facing of challenges being posed by the communities as well as future life engagements.
23. Establishing the connection between the academic life and real life through teachers, parents, peers & community.
24. Organising events of national, social and cultural importance
25. Making learning relevant to the desired needs of the children and vice versa where a student feels connected with the system.
26. Adopting the community based and student centered school development plan for the effective participation & realization of school goals.
27. Robust one and one tracking of all learners regarding their attendance, performance and other aspects.
28. STC (Special Training Centre) needs to be opened for the OoSC for doing bridge courses, after completing the said bridge course they can be admitted in age appropriate classes.
29. Religious institutions like Madrasas/Partshallas should be registered with School Education Department so that OoSC which are getting their religious education in these institutes may not remain away from formal education.
30. Strategically a functional approach based on localised and scientific data needs to be adopted to control the dropout rate such as children engaged in economic activities (household activities, hotels or at some other places) during school hours to for meet out the livelihood requirements.



### **KEY POINTS/STARTERGIIES FOR SCHOOL LEADERS TO REMAIN CONNECTED WITH STUDENTS WHICH CAN PREVENT DROPOUT RATES:**

Decentralised planning and the implementation of the strategies chalked out thereof, is crucial to match the identified needs of the children in the given diversity scenario. Every School Head needs to develop the school development plan (SDP) in consultation with the local community and keeping in view the school challenges in terms of OoSc (Barriers, target groups, opportunities, optimum use of resources-human, material and time) and such plan must be reviewed periodically. The SDP shall include mainstreaming of OoSc as an integral part and the adaptation of pedagogical strategies as a trust building tool of the curricular transactions and achievements. Following dimensions need to be worked out for tracking of vulnerable learners.

- i. Understanding the culture of the learners.
- ii. Remaining connected with the parents, community and the learners.
- iii. Coordination with Child Welfare Organisations and the local community for real time data and enrolment of children in the schools at appropriate time.
- iv. Understanding the causes and risks that impede the schooling of children.
- v. Building of learners' trust by attentively listening them, addressing their grievances and showing respect to their thought process for exploring their capabilities.
- vi. Creating an environment that fosters the sense of ownership and responsibility among the learners and the community.
- vii. Specific Planning for inclusion of Children with Special Needs at school level.

Some of the Principles which a school leader needs to take care of, are as under:

1. **Student's joyful engagement:** One of the basic principles for joyful engagement of learners in teaching learning process that helps in their retention in schools, is to catch learners when they are performing well in the areas that help in their behaviour modification. Because of their frequent experience with the surroundings, special attention needs to be given for constructing a positive and feasible environment that enables them to display appropriate behaviour. At each time, the school authorities need to create an inventory when there is a genuine and immediate praise for the student and alongside the student's deficiencies shall be addressed genuinely in a



friendly environment. This invariably enables them to have a reasoning and problem-solving approach towards their immediate social, cultural and natural needs and creates a trusting relationship.

2. **Addressing the Behavioural problems:** As a leader of behaviour modification, understand the reasons and circumstances when a child engages him/her self in undesirable behaviour that might be due to existing environment with which he/she interacts. Once, the underlying reasons that trigger or reinforce such behaviour, are identified, a school teacher gets a better chance of cure through strategic approaches such as classroom privileges or material rewards because every child has an inborn impulse of behaviour modification in the new circumstances/environment. There must be consistency in thought process, practice, praise and meaningful engagement.
3. **Parental Support:** To garner parental support, ensure real time engagement of parents as well as the community into the school system. On association with parents through parent teacher meet, appreciate the real and genuine positives/achievements of the child so as to develop a strong communication system which relatively can help in informing the parents about child's performance and tracking of the concerns thereof.
4. **Peer Support: A classroom buddy** should be a mature and responsible classmate who can help his/her class fellow (s) in discharging various tasks. What a school teacher needs to do is to organise the activities / learning experiences in such a way that demands motivation, integration, cooperation and tolerance among the participants and also reinforces the overwhelming participation at each moment. The teacher needs to create a free and guided environment through a positive and psychological signalling process which explores the strengths of the child whenever, there is a demand for solution of a problem(s) to accomplish the assigned task.
5. **Enrolment Process: Before undertaking any** initiative under community mobilization for enrolment of children in schools, analysis of various data pertaining to social, cultural, academic, economic background of the target groups and the infrastructural/resource avenues of the school should be conducted thoroughly. The barriers to education both hard and soft should be given reasonable empathetic thought to curtail the drop out rate and enhance enrolment. Also, the applicable strategies to be adopted for result oriented fresh /re-enrolment should be discussed among the stake holders before conducting the enrolment drives. Before and after conducting such drives, a proper monitoring and tracking mechanism should be put in place by the monitoring functionaries

#### **ASSESSMENT FOR THE MODULE**

1. Define OoSC
2. Define STC(special Training Centres)
3. Which are the barriers of education for OoSC:
  - a. Hard Barrier
  - b. Soft Barrier
  - c. Both Hard and Soft
  - d. None
4. Gender sensitivity is a reason for children to dropout from schools (Yes/No).
5. Will opening of STCs, registration of Religious institutions and part time schooling curtail dropout rates? (Yes/No)
6. Role of School Leader for curtailing dropout Rate

Case Study: Estimating out of school children for a particular area where vulnerable population groups exist and the administrative data sets mismatch in terms of collecting the information. May be the children in the area are enrolled somewhere in the school and at a later stage, they may be out of school or at the time of survey, they may have migrated with their families to some work place. This eventually leads to mismatch of the data collection. What shall be the modalities for real data collection?

## REFERENCES

1. 'Early Years', Annual Status of Education Report (Rural), 2019, published by ASER centre
2. Research report by Agrasar.
3. Guidelines of OoSC, Ministry of Education, GOI,2021

### Tentative Schedule of Training:

S. No	Date	Time line	Activity/Event	
<u>1</u>	<u>Day One</u>	<u>10 .00 to 10.20 am</u>	<b>Registration</b>	<b>By SCERT Authorities</b>
		<u>10.20 to 10.40 am</u>	<b>Introduction session</b>	<b><u>SLA Nodal Officer</u></b>
		<u>10.40 am to 11 am</u>	<b>Tea Break</b>	
<u>2</u>		<u>11 am to 11.50 am</u>	<b>Understanding OoSC</b>	<b><u>Expert</u></b>
<u>3</u>		<u>11.50 am to 1.10 PM</u>	<b>OoSC Identification and Elementary schooling</b>	
<u>4</u>		<u>1.10 PM to 2 PM</u>	<b>Lunch</b>	
		<u>2 PM to 3.30 PM</u>	<b>Challenges and issues in context of J and K</b>	
<u>5</u>		<u>3.30 PM to 4.20 PM</u>	<b>Group Discussion on a case study and Tea</b>	
<u>6</u>		<u>4.20 to 4.30 PM</u>	<b>Debriefing</b>	
<u>1</u>	<u>Day Two</u>	<u>10. am to 10.40 am</u>	<b>Recapitulation</b>	
		<u>10.40 to 11 am</u>	<b>Tea Break</b>	
		<u>11 am to 12.10 PM</u>	<b>Large Scale strategies for curtailing drop outs</b>	
		<u>12.10 PM to 1.10 PM</u>	<b>Group Discussion in context of localised case studies</b>	
		<u>1.10 Pm to 2 PM</u>	<b>Lunch Break</b>	
		<u>2 PM to 3. 30 PM</u>	<b>Leadership Role</b>	
		<u>3.30 PM to 4.20 PM</u>	<b>Tea and valedictory session</b>	<b><u>BY SCERT Authorities</u></b>