

Seminar on Improving Teacher Supervision and Support Services for Basic Education in Asia

From (May 6-8, 1997)

Seoul, Korea

As part of the research programme on 'Improving the Quality of Education' IIEP initiated a new project with the objective of analysing different country experiences in providing professional support to teachers. In the first phase of the project, focusing on Asia, national diagnoses on supervision and support services were carried out in five countries (Bangladesh, India - (the State of Uttar Pradesh), Korea, Nepal and Sri Lanka), while monographs were written on three innovative strategies in supervision, implemented in Bangladesh, Nepal and Sri Lanka. These different studies, together with a comparative analysis, formed the seminar's main working documents.

The objectives of the Seoul Seminar were : (i) to exchange experiences on teacher supervision and support services among countries of the region; (ii) to identify innovative ways of improving them. Needless to add it was expected that the seminar would contribute to the strengthening of supervision and support services to teachers to improve quality of basic education.

The seminar brought together researchers, senior administrators, incharges of primary education, specialists in teacher support services and the representatives from national training institutions engaged in the areas related to monitoring of quality of education. Thirty-one participants from nine Asian countries, and a participant from South Africa participated in the Seminar.

The first theme of the seminar namely; 'Supervision and Support in Asia - Main Issue and Trends provided a comparative analysis of the national diagnosis study undertaken under the project. This general presentation on the comparative analysis was followed by country-specific presentation from Korea, Philippines, India (Uttar Pradesh), Nepal and Sri Lanka.

The second theme of the seminar focused on bringing supervision and support closer to the local level. Pre presentation on experiences of resource centres and school clusters in Nepal and Bangladesh was followed by pre presentation of the experiences of supervision of non-formal education programme in Thailand. Another pre presentation provided an analysis of educational supervision practices in Malaysia.

The third theme of the seminar was on reinforcing in school - supervision and support which had presentations on school based support experience of Sri Lanka Pakistan and Newzealand. The final thematic session focused on promising avenues for improving supervision and support services in the countries of this region. Participants were divided into two groups to provide scope for detailed discussions on the theme.

The seminar provided very good opportunity to clarify many of the issues pertaining to supervision and teach support practices in most of the countries of this region. It is interesting to note that discussions in the seminar essentially centered around the following themes :-

Support versus Control: In many countries, inspection and supervision activities were seen more as control mechanisms than as support services to improve quality of education. Therefore, the need for re-orienting the existing administrative managerial machinery from a controlling to a supporting system was emphasised in the deliberations.

Remote versus School Based Support : Whether supervision mechanism should be school-based or remote-based was another issue which was deliberated upon in the seminar. School-based supervision and support

mechanism focuses more on academic dimensions which closely relate to day to day functioning of the schools. The experiences of cluster level resource centres show that support services can be provided even outside the traditional administrative channels and closer to the schools even when they are not directly school based.

Micro versus Macro Changes : Another major issue which came up for discussion was on integration of micro level successful experiences and initiatives with the larger system. Some of the country experiences have shown that innovation experiences on a smaller scale are very successful. However, when efforts were made to translate such experiences to the system they were found to be less successful. Therefore, efforts towards integrating micro level initiative experiences with the macro system is an important issue.

The seminar while discussing these very dimensions also highlighted the need for involving supervision mechanisms as facilitating instrumentalities to provide a sustained support system for improving quality of education.

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