

Reviving Government Schools: A case of innovation in Poirou Khongjin High school, Manipur

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ABSTRACT:

The article attempts to highlight a case of reviving Poirou Khongjin (PK) High School from merely 100 students in 2007-08 to 635 students at present with a pass percentage of above 90% in class X Board Examination for past 7 years. The school is unique in the sense of the bright hope it shows and being an exemplar Government School in the present day Manipur. The success has primarily been achieved through extension of Pre-Primary section in the school, more commitment of the teachers, co-operation and support from the community and the special coaching for class X students of the school run by the school itself. The innovation made by the school is an interesting case which gives a ray of hope to the Government Schools to innovate and improve.

KEY WORDS: *Innovation, Pre-primary, Innovation, Coaching, Community support*

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I. INTRODUCTION:

Schools right from its inception has been changing in terms of teaching learning practices, the way students and teachers are engaged to get improved learning outcomes out of the teaching learning practices. The teaching learning practices need to be improved as there are a lot of changes occurring in the school process. Schools also need to respond to the societal needs, parental aspirations and the desired outcomes. NCERT in 2017 and in 2019 developed Learning Outcome document for Elementary and Secondary classes respectively, the document emphasised on achievement of learning outcomes at all levels. To improve the student learning outcomes several attempts have been made from all possible ways, various stakeholders try to innovate, experiment and look forward to the desired learning outcomes. During a field visit made in Manipur the authors came across a Government school which has improved drastically in terms of infrastructure, won the confidence of the people and proved that government schools despite being counted as non performing can really achieve. This is the case of Poirou Khongjin High school, in Manipur. In this case study, the authors explore how a practice-oriented model of teaching and learning can alter a situation and bring desired changes in the school atmosphere/ achievement. The case study strategy allows for an analysis pertaining to the interest in understanding one case in its context (teaching and learning innovation in a rural school of Manipur) and learning from the unique aspects of the case. The purpose of the study is to share an innovation

Innovation is not something which is always special, it is some sort of doing things differently and thereby giving a positive impact in the existing system. One of the most important characteristics of innovation is that it should be communicable and able to be implemented in equivalent situations. Innovation is some insight that leads an innovator to investigate an issue or phenomenon and finding a way to approach the problem scientifically. Such insight is usually shaped by an observation of what appears to be true as well as creative. Of course, many a times, innovation is driven by the felt need of the community, the curiosity, willingness to take risk, a commitment to excel or for a continuous improvement in the existing situation.

As education is visualised as a man making process, different stakeholders may innovate in many ways for various purposes: the organisational structure, the teacher recruitment process, the preparation and reward given, the classroom process etc. Being innovative is about looking beyond what we currently do whether it is okay or needs urgent attention, identifying the great ideas for tomorrow and putting them into practice. Like managers (of an enterprise), educators such as teacher educators, head-teachers and class-teachers try to innovate in some or other attributes of performance in order to improve upon. With many ideas coming up from individuals working in different sectors, there are ample scope of innovation in many ways.

The process of innovation will involve sensing the need for doing something new, learn from others by adoption, planning and execution of the plan. It is expected that the innovator has to share his idea, have discussion about the strategies and implementation with stakeholders. According to Everett M. Rogers (2003), there are four main elements for diffusion of innovative idea (1) Innovation with perceived attributes: relative

advantage, compatibility, complexity, triable(ness) and observability (2) Communication channels for innovative information flow (3) Time taken to evaluate rate of adoption in the observed changes and (4) Social system.

Innovation Theory in Learning and Education: If we consider learning and giving education as a service to the people of the society, it has to have a service concept, well defined clients and a delivery mode which will lead to the transmission of the cultural as well as the universal values or as desired by the community. As schools are within the society it has to fulfil the societal expectations. It is expected that the kinds /types of learning given in schools should have the power to transform the student's mind-set, ingrained the value system and acquire the skills needed for co-existence.

According to Drucker, (1974, pp. 15ff) each institution exists for a specific purpose and mission: it has a special social function and this social function has direct relevance to the economic performance. With its mission to educate a student, who will learn something and will reinvest his/her knowledge in the social system a few years later (Drucker, 1989, pp. 89ff), therefore, the learning and institution can similarly have its own innovation strategy and its model of innovation with adequate inputs, processes, outputs and outcomes.

Theoretical foundations: what is innovation practice?

This section outlines the theoretical background for understanding innovation as a concrete real-life 'practice'. If we consider innovation in the area of education, it is observed that there is a broad consensus that public school system is lacking somewhere or other in terms of delivering quality education and because of this reason lot of works has been done taking efficacy of the system as an indicator. School efficacy could have many factors responsible like the school climate, teacher training, teacher professionalism, aspirations and involvement of the community, parental as well as student motivation. Yuan and Woodman (2010) suggest that innovation academics have had a strong tendency to rely on the efficiency perspective, which assumes that innovators make rational decisions. They further pointed out that, however, current innovation research has started to pay some attention to "how innovation is actually carried out rather than how it should be done" [Yuan and Woodman (2010), p.24].

The interest in how innovation is carried out in organisations connects with the conceptualisation of innovation as something that is accomplished and 'done' in innovation communities (Fichter, 2009) and in interaction of people, activities, artefacts and contexts (Nicolini, 2013). Therefore, concept of 'innovation practice' has a background in the more general 'practice turn' that has taken place in social sciences and organisation studies (Corradi et al., 2010; Gherardi, 2009).

The next concern here is why one should share the innovations taking place in some place, it is because of the very nature of innovation which can be applied in similar situations. One may benefit to a large extent from the adoption of ideas that was practically successful. The only concern is that we need to focus on the emergent and nature of innovation practitioners' work and ask: how and with whom innovation practitioners work; what kind of activities, tasks and routines do they performed. Not only this, also the knowledge, competence, norms and values embedded in these, and the expected preconditions for work are equally important. It is very pertinent to look into the school related innovations as an emergent action on the basis of the self-reflection in the present system and the ideas that followed.

The case:

Teaching and learning innovation is gaining importance at present with the emergence of the concerns in quality education whether it is early primary education, secondary education and higher secondary stage. NCERT as a national apex body for school education is also encouraging innovation in teaching learning practices in school level, to get it shared in the school level, block level and to the larger teaching community (NCF -2005, p-120). The organisation has also instituted an All India Competition on Innovative Practices and Experiments in Education for Schools and Teacher Education Institutions with purpose of sharing and encouraging innovations as well as for sustainability in the field of school education.

In this paper, the authors explored how Poirou Khongjin High School (upgraded 2014), a rural Government school located in Andro Village (Imphal East District) about 20 Kms away from Imphal could rise to be one of the best schools in Manipur with current enrolment of 600 students from being a rural school with 100 students in 2007-08. The school provides an interesting context for a case study because the school could achieve so much in only about 5 years. At present the school has 943 students which is probably highest among the government schools in 4 valley districts namely Imphal East, Imphal west, Thoubal and Bishnupur Districts. The student population is mainly the rural poor, but interestingly many students who were in private schools got transferred to this school in contrast to the general trend of shifting from schools to the private schools. The school initiated certain measures to reduce student dropout and improve the quality of teaching learning under the able guidance of the Headmaster and the senior teachers of the school.

In the year 2020, the school has 32 (25+7) teachers including the Head master, 25 regular teachers and seven (7) locally engaged teachers. Out of these 7 teachers 2 are Nursery teacher (called Rhyme teacher) and 3 are science and mathematics teachers teaching higher classes. The kind of innovation adopted by the school as below:

- Extension of Pre - primary Section
- Special coaching class for class X students and
- Extensive support from the community

Extension of classes in Primary Section: Like other schools in Manipur, PK high school has no pre-school section as per norms of the Government of Manipur. The school as other government schools in Manipur is affiliated to Board of Secondary Education, Manipur (BSEM) and follows the curriculum and syllabus of BSEM. From the syllabus of class- I, it seems that all the children have attended Pre-school/*Anganwadi* and has already achieved certain level of competencies in terms of reading and writing. However, the reality as the authors have observed is the functioning and achievement of *anganwadis* are minimal, perhaps because of the mandate of the *anganwadis* which is not clear about the development of pre literacy skills¹. Therefore, even if all the children have received skills imparted by the *anganwadis*, many are lacking in the pre-literacy skills and have a tough time adjusting the demands in the class I.

A point to be noted here is that the state of affair of *Anganwadis* in rural Manipur is quite disheartening, though there is provision for opening an *Anganwadi* centre for every 200 households, more recently *Mini- Anganwadis* are coming up for 100 households, the number of functional *Anganwadi* is very few. There is provision for children's to be in the centre for children up-to 6 years of age however, such centres are hardly functional as parents do not wish their children to be in the *Anganwadi* centres for long, they consider its contribution to children's literacy development is low, they also feel the need of shifting to formal school as soon as possible. Another reason for not attending to such *Anganwadi* centres is the availability of low cost Private English Medium schools in the locality. Parents always have a passion for English and they think that this could be achieved only through English Medium Schools. Though few parents could afford sending their children to English Medium Schools for many Government Schools are still the only option. Such group of parents send their children to government schools and probably because they are poor they have little or no time for their children. For such children if in case the school gives their best and they could improve, seeing their ward's improvement parents immediately think of sending their children to private schools with the hope that private schools will do justice to the development of literacy to the child. Many such students seek transfer from the government schools and get themselves enrolled in Private Schools making all the efforts of the teachers and schools null and void. As is expressed by the Headmaster of PK high school he was tired of this situation and started discussing the matter seriously among the staffs and few community youths, and this was the seed of innovation.

Expected Learning Outcomes for Class –I, as per recommendation by Board of Secondary Education Manipur are as follows:

Listening	Speaking	Reading	Writing
(i) to listen to the simple rhymes, poems, stories/tales in English (ii) to understand and follow oral requests and instructions in situations familiar to him. (iii) to understand simple 'yes' –'No' answers questions in familiar situations (iv) to understand and say greetings, introducing, gratitude etc. In familiar social situations	(i) to recite simple nursery rhymes and songs in groups with appropriate gestures. (ii) to answer simple questions with 'Yes' or 'No' and one word or short answers. (iii) to talk about himself/herself, members of the family and immediate environment. (iv) to identify a person, object or thing etc. (v) to convey expressions of greeting, introduction,	(i) to recognize the letters of alphabet, both Capital and Small Cursive and Print. (ii) to read simple words and short sentences with the help of pictures and understand them. (iii) to recognise whole words or chunks of language.	(i) to perform simple pre-writing functions like drawing lines, figures, semi circles and circles. (ii) to write alphabets, both capital and small, cursive and print. (iii) to write simple words and sentences in English related to his immediate environment

¹Pre literacy here means the school readiness, recognition of alphabets and numbers.

	gratitude (thank you), etc. In normal social situations.		
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The class I, English Textbook: An Analysis:

Title: A Composite Modern English Textbook, Class –I, BSEM, 2011(Nov. 2015, reprint)

The book has 20 lessons grouped into 8 units, out of which 4 units have 3 lessons each and the remaining 4 units have 2 lessons each. The book has 123 pages in total. There are 12 worksheets in the book which are given for writing practice. Writing practice begins with writing of Block letter, Cursive both capital and small in a page. Alphabet writing occurs on page 15(worksheet, 4), page 34(worksheet 5), page 52 (worksheet8), and on page 68(worksheet8)while the remaining worksheets are sentence writing in cursive. Interestingly, the Worksheet number 6 (page no. 35) allotted for writing of 4 different sentences. What is assumed here is the child has already mastered the alphabets and the cursive writing as the book has no scope and room for teaching of alphabets and the required mastery of phoneme grapheme correspondence.

Inclusion of a rhyme/poem in every chapter partially takes care of introducing second language in a context enjoyable to the child and of course the textbook has provided lots of language usage patterns in the child's context. A brief unit wise analysis of the textbook is presented below:

Unit –I:

(i) Language items included:

- Knowing colours
- Use of pronoun *it*, contracted form of *it is –it's*
- Use of *is* and *are, this - these*

(ii) Teaches writing of 7 letters (A to G), in block, cursive capital and small.

(iii) Worksheet 4(page 14) is complicated for a child of class I, as s/he has to fill the gaps in two slots to make a sentence by using picture as a cue (e.g. The ----- is ----- in colour).

Unit – 2:

(i) Language items included:

- Knowing numbers
- Plurals (cat-cats, child- children)
- Use of question words *what is.... ? , what are.....?* and answering with *It is....., and they are....*
- Reinforcement of *--is, am, are*

(ii) Teaches writing of next 12 letters (H to N), in block, cursive capital and small.

Unit – 3:

(i) Language items included:

- Knowing the concept of home and names of homes of animals.
- Knowing the question words and ways of responding. E.g. *What is this/that? Who is that? Who are you?*
- Use of various forms of beverb: *was/were, has and have*

(ii) Teaches writing of 6 letters (O to T), in block, cursive capital and small.

Unit – 4:

(i) Language items included:

- Names of occupation.
- Knowing the concept of word groups under a particular heading – e.g SKY: moon, star and sun, HOSPITAL: nurse, doctor, bed etc.
- Usage of *has and have*.

(ii) Teaches writing of last 6 letters of English alphabet (U to Z), in block, cursive capital and small.

Unit – 5:

(i) Language items included:

- Knowing ordinal numbers, first, second....
- Introduces *prepositions* (on, in, under, near, behind, in front of, between)

- (ii) Teaches all the letters in words.
- (iii) Teaches the use of Capital letters for special names/proper nouns.
- (iv) Teaches writing about self by filling the gaps (like My name is....., My mother's name is....., My hobby is).

Unit – 6:

(i) The unit does not teach any new items but reinforces the use of 'Who' and 'What' and answering questions beginning with these two question words, introduces vowels a and e, children are allowed to fill the gaps by using these two vowels. (e.g. f...rm...r, g..rden...r etc)

Unit – 7:

(i) Language items included:

- Knowing opposites.
- Use of demonstrative pronoun --*This/that*
- Answering with-- *Yes/No*

Unit – 8:

(i) Language items included:

- Introduces Dialogue and Story
- Introduces article – *a/an*
- Reinforces the use of --- *Yes/No* along with other grammatical items like *Yes it is....., Yes, they are, No, they aren't* etc.

(ii) The story has complex sentences like: (a) *The monkey attentively listened to what the rabbits said.* (b) *I haven't a picture book but I have a story book.*

The vision for sustaining: Through a series of discussions and meetings among the staff and the community members it was finally decided to take up various steps to sustain the school which includes:

- (i) Changing the medium of instruction to English, the basic reason being attracting students, the school has changed its medium of instruction from Manipuri to English in 2009.
- (ii) Opening of Pre Class-I (Classes A, B and C within class I)
- (iii) Special coaching facility by the teachers and community members for Class –X students.

The paper intends to highlight the last two points in making the success story of the Poirou Khongjin High School.

Introduction of Classes A, B and C: These three classes are basically included under class I and are called Class-IA, Class –IB and Class –IC. The stipulated time for completion of the class is three years. The idea of need of extending pre –primary section in the school came from the difficulty of the book itself for a student who came out from a general Anganwadi centres which could not equip the child with pre-literacy skills. teach anything concrete to the child. The courses they study in these three classes are as follows:

Class-IA: This class is primarily school routine adjustment time. In this class children normally are allowed to develop oral competency in Mother tongue, English and Mathematics. It is more or less like a play school with lots of educational toys and a very large space. They are taught basic writing not in a compulsory basis, but just for fun, drawings and colouring are the main activity the children do with their hands. The books they use for this class are: *Mayek Mapi*, Alphabet Book, Number Book, Drawing book and Rhyme all of which are published by PRIME, a leading Publisher of school books in Manipur.

Class –IB: As the children completes class IA, they are allowed to attend this class, in this class they started writing activity in all the three subjects – Manipuri, English and Mathematics. The books used for this class are: *My Second Book* (Scholar Publishing House), *My Next Book* (Prime Books), *Mathematics Book -0* (Prime Books), *Rhymes Book-II* (Prime Books), *My Drawing Book –II*(Prime Books) and *Meitei Mayek* (Prime books). In this class children acquired mastery on writing the alphabet, few words and few sentences.

Class –IC: This class is the usual/normal class I. In this class, children used the books prescribed by the Board of Secondary Education Manipur for class I for all the schools in Manipur.

One speciality of these three classes is that a child does not necessarily stays three years to attain class –II, if a child of Class –IA masters the basic competencies in 4/5/6 months she is allowed to attend class IB, So as with class IC. The teachers and community members are of the opinion that the school preparedness time given to the child helped him/her to acquire better competencies and at the same time solved the problem of sending

children to the private schools and they retain in the same school. The result is evident from the school record pertaining to enrolment and retention, the current number being 106 students in class I as against only 20 students in the year 2007.

In addition to this structural extension of class I, the school has made some changes such as introduction of Hindi subject at class II rather than at class III and use of some extra books which are not prescribed by the BSEM. From Class –II onwards they use Scholars Science series up-to Class V, the reason being teachers are of the opinion that Scholar Series in Science is well written and is better than the one developed by BSEM.

Regarding the Expenditure incurred, it is again a joint venture. The teachers of the school agreed to extend their extra services while the members of VEC, school teachers, officers from the community and the local MLA, all are willing to contribute money for engaging few more teachers as and when required. School record shows that in 2010 there were 11 extra teachers hired for the school (few are local youths) and till date there are 5 teachers teaching on hired basis. The effort put on by the local MLA for the development of the school is worth mentioning. He made arrangements for transportation of the teachers who come from Imphal areaduring bandhs and blockade call by youths on local issues. He provides finance for most of the teaching materials for class –IA &IB from the SSA fund from the TLM head

FreeCoaching Class: Another initiative the Poirou Khongjin High School made is the coaching class for class –X students. Every year with the consent of the parents and guardian of the students, coaching classes in all subjects are arranged from September/October till the commencement of the class X Board examination, which is normally held in later part of February or early March. The students are dropped by the parents at 5.30 AM in the school and have to stay till 7.30pm, after 7.30 pm parents have to come to the school and pick up their children by themselves. The school provides two rooms one for boys and the other for girls. During this time the teachers are also made available for two hours for each subject. The Headmaster of the school reaches school before the students and leaves after the students have left the school. He supervises the whole affair and support the teachers when needed. Any student can approach any teacher and can discuss certain topics. The impact of this innovation is reflected in the results of HSSLC exam of the school which is given below:

Table 1: Results of HSLC examination for PK High school

Sl. No.	Year	No. of students appeared	No. of students passed			No of students failed	Pass percentage
			I-Div	II-Div	III-Div		
1.	2012*	13	2	11	0	0	100
2.	2013*	10	1	9	0	0	100
3.	2014*	12	1	10	1	0	100
4.	2015*	22					
5.	2016	22	5	16	1	0	95.45
6.	2017	36	3	25	1	7	80.56
7.	2018	41	3	33	1	4	90.24
8.	2019	37	23	11	0	3	91.89
9.	2020	48	23	24	0	1	97.92

* the students of the school were affiliated under Azad High School, as the school’s class X was not affiliated to BSEM

Following is the **Analysis** of the problems, solutions and benefits of teaching Learning innovation at the PK High School, Manipur

Problem	Solution	Benefit
Non preference of Govt Schools : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Medium of instruction • Students are not enrolled in such schools • Poor teaching learning quality • Frequency of transfer to Private Schools was very high. • Less coordination with parents 	The following strategies were adopted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changed to English medium • Caters the need for child from 3 years (i.e before 6 years) • Improved teaching learning • Village Education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enrolment increases from mere 256 in 2007-8 to 943 students since 2016-17. The trend is still increasing. • The school could attract students from Private Schools even.

• Lack of infra-structure	Committee meetings • Improved infrastructure with the help of the community	
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II. CONCLUSION:

The case of Poirou Khongjin High school is an exemplary toother government schools having intention for revival. The extension of pre-primary classes and the special coaching of the Class X candidates in the school are the major breakthrough in the sustainability of the school, the school's working environment. The support and coordination among the staffs and the community including the local MLA make things better than what was conceptualised in the beginning. Not only the support and commitment, the responsibility shouldered by the headmaster along with other stakeholders is commendable and all of them deserve the credit for making this success story. The case clearly shows that innovative ideas have a way to make things better and what is required is the commitment, trust and support from the larger community. s

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