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How can empowering communities drive demand for quality education | Explained

What is the Ganitha Kalika Andolana Model and is it empowering the community to drive a demand for quality education? Here's all you need to know.



Here's all you need to know about Ganitha Kalika Andolana.

**India Today Education Desk**

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Ganitha Kalika Andolana (GKA) is a maths learning movement designed and incubated at the Akshara Foundation. It is an example of how community collaboration can lead to enhancement in the quality of education.

The foundation has collaborated with multiple stakeholders to deliver quality maths education to children in government primary schools. A pilot effort that started in three educational blocks in Karnataka has gone on to impact 7 million children in government schools across the states of Karnataka, Odisha, and Andhra Pradesh.

The initiative identified the gaps and provided solutions without disturbing the theoretical framework of the maths pedagogy suggested by the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) 2005. The National Initiative for Proficiency in Reading with Understanding and Numeracy, NIPUN BHARAT, GUIDELINES FOR IMPLEMENTATION has cited Ganitha Kalika Andolana (GKA) as one of the best practices in maths teaching.

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WHAT IS GANITHA KALIKA ANDOLANA MODEL?

The Ganitha Kalika Andolana Model begins with classroom interventions, engages the community, and uses appropriate technology for programme monitoring and data analysis. It advocates home-based learning using low-end, entry-level digital devices as a supplement to classroom instruction.

Ashok Kamath, Chairman of Akshara Foundation says, "In all our work over the past two decades, one of our key learnings has been that stakeholder participation is vital in ensuring quality education in government schools. Their effective participation makes school management more porous and increases the demand for quality education. Unless the locus of control moves from the supply side to the demand side (parents, SDMC members, Education Volunteers, and Gram panchayat leaders), the quality of schooling will not improve."

He further adds that for a programme to be sustainable well beyond any NGO or organisation implementing it, every stakeholder needs to recognise its potential, take ownership of its outcomes and continue to implement it long after our exit from geography.

HOW HAS THE FOUNDATION MANAGED TO DO THIS?

1. Building a cadre of educational volunteers

The foundation has over 50,000 educational volunteers. According to Ashok Kamath, volunteers are an essential aspect of the model. Akshara believes that volunteers can work under direction to energise the school system, educate children in their spare time, and enlighten communities. These young people are aware of the kinetics of village communities and can connect with the people there.

They administer the on-site processes of the Gram Panchayat Maths Contests; they coach students in weak subjects during out-of-school hours; and sensitise the community to the importance of schooling and engage community members in putting up 1-3-6-9 wall writings and attending those meetings.

2. Facilitating Gram Panchayat math contests

The Gram Panchayat Maths Contest is a first-of-its-kind community initiative in India to encourage all concerned stakeholders to push to enhance the quality of teaching and learning of mathematics, across the education system. These contests are an independent, transparent, out-of-school, curriculum-linked evaluation of children's current maths learning levels.



Typically, a Gram Panchayat raises and spends about INR 15,000 on a contest. The tests themselves were conducted transparently and the results were announced within three hours. On the chosen day, children in the 4th, 5th, and 6th grades turn up at the contest venues, usually at the Gram Panchayat headquarters or school forecourts. They sit in neat, disciplined rows, under a colourful shamiana, and await their maths test.

The timer is set to 1 hour as they begin the test. Village Education Volunteers evaluate the answer sheets soon after the hour is over, before finally announcing the winners.

The volunteers are local village youth who are reasonably educated and willing to give time and effort to education without any monetary reward and are identified, selected, and trained by the foundations' field coordinators. Doing this in the community also meant that we were able to engage the community and all the costs (except printing the question papers and data analysis) were borne by the local communities themselves.

Between November 22, 2022, and March 10, 2023, Akshara Foundation facilitated the conduct of maths contests for children in grades 4-6 across 2,625 Gram Panchayats in Karnataka. Around 3,12,550 children participated in these contests.

The Gram Panchayat Contest report by the foundation shows that even in the lowest performing district, the results show that 40% of the children were able to answer more than 8 out of 20 questions correctly.

This brings a lot of optimism that models that involve all stakeholders can make a big difference. Maths has always been considered a difficult subject, but these results are encouraging. The concept of Gram Panchayat Maths Contests has opened up many a healthy dialogue between stakeholders like parents, teachers, and other community members, regarding their children's performance. ■

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