

QUALITY EDUCATION SUPPORT TRUST



ANNUAL



REPORT

2021-2022

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Our QUEST – Nilesh Nimkar



QUEST completed 15 years in January 2022! Our work on quality education has grown wider and deeper in these 15 years. We started working with 7 Anganwadis in Wada taluka, and have now reached over 2500 Anganwadis in Maharashtra. It is evident that we have achieved considerable scale. On the other hand, the research papers published by QUEST, the educational materials developed for children, the manuals and educational films produced for teachers indicate the depth. Quality and scale are inversely proportional. If you focus on quality, the scale remains limited, and if you aim at a wider scale, the quality suffers. In India, the issue is not one of quality of education alone, but it is about how much depth you can achieve given the daunting scale of challenge. One has to set one's sights on 'Quality at Scale'. QUEST is constantly alert to maintain a balance between scale and quality by making its programs relevant to the field realities through constant feedback.

The covid19 pandemic of 2020-21 hit the education sector hard, as schools remained closed for almost two academic years. The option of online education, even if we keep its effectiveness out of the scope of this discussion, was available only to a handful of urban children, and majority of rural children were deprived of it due to poor connectivity and lack of hardware. A study by QUEST pointed out that despite sincere efforts, children in rural areas could make only marginal progress through online inputs. Frankly, we are not yet able to estimate the damage caused by this extended school closure. The need of the hour is to assess children's current learning level and map the input on their needs, rather than hurriedly completing the grade appropriate syllabus. This flexibility would be possible only if teachers are equipped to plan locally for the next two academic years, rather than giving them target-bound centralized programs to make up the loss in learning. In QUEST's Anupad program, we have been using such a 'level based approach' since before covid pandemic, which has now become all the more relevant for rural as well as urban schools.

In 2020, the government announced the New Education Policy, which considers the age group of 3 to 8 years as the foundational stage of curriculum. NIPUN Bharat guidelines have been issued by the central government to implement the same. Beneficiaries of this curriculum who are in the 3 to 6 years age group are enrolled in Anganwadis. Therefore, Anganwadis need to be strengthened to provide suitable Early Childhood Education. QUEST's Palavee program, which has been strengthening ECE in Anganwadis for over 10 years, has now assumed more importance in the field.

In order to achieve its goals, any social organization requires two critical factors: One is a strong team of people who believe in the goals and values of the organization. The other is donors and funders who support the work. QUEST has been fortunate on both counts and I take this opportunity to acknowledge everyone's contribution.

In recent years, a number of highly educated youth are coming forward to work on the issues of rural education. They need a conducive environment and good facilities to learn, explore and meaningfully impact the sector. Keeping this need in mind, QUEST dreams of setting up an educational campus in a remote village near Sonale. I hope that this campus will become a shared dream for all of us.



ABOUT US

VISION

An egalitarian society where every individual leads a dignified life.



MISSION

To enrich the learning experience of under-served children through the professional development of teachers and educators and through parent awareness.

STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



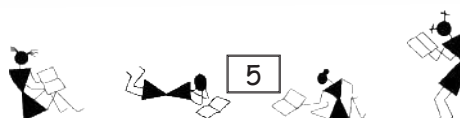
Demonstrate the replicability of quality education interventions at scale to interpret and effectively implement government policy



Develop innovative solutions to bridge gaps in the field of ECE and Elementary Education



Build a team of inspired professionals committed to enhancing the quality of education



INTERVENTIONS



A program to strengthen the Early Childhood Education (ECE) Service in Anganwadis through systematic input to Anganwadi workers and Supervisors

An extension of Palavee program to primary schools, to strengthen the teaching of Foundational Literacy and Numeracy in the early grades, through capacity building of teachers



A Level-based Learning program to address the needs of children who are trailing behind their grade appropriate achievement level by building capacities of teachers

Centres to strengthen the foundation of elementary school children through active, collaborative, child centered learning which helps to generate pedagogical knowhow

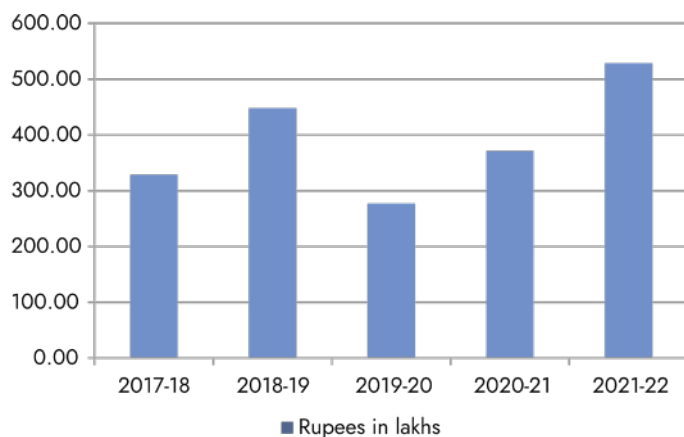


A program for ongoing professional development of elementary school teachers and educators through blended mode courses (Face-to-face sessions + online mentoring)



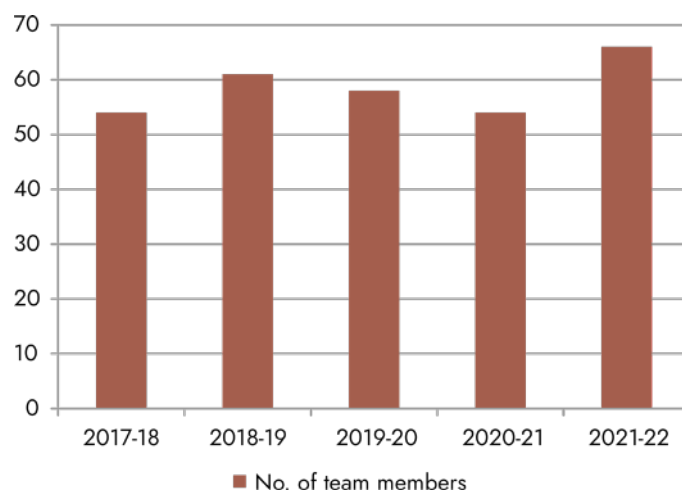
GROWTH AND IMPACT

Grants & Donations



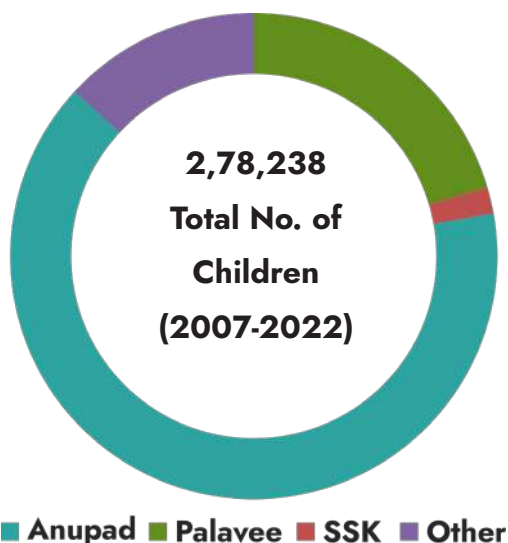
QUEST's financial growth in the last five years

Personnel

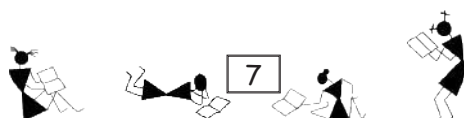
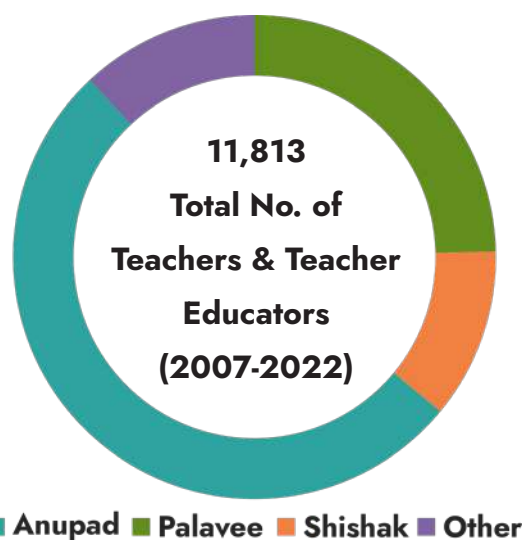


Growth of QUEST's team size in the last five years

Outreach – Children



Outreach – Educators



Moving ahead despite repeated lockdowns and school closures

Due to the covid lockdown two years ago, QUEST had to repurpose most of the programs. Since regular fieldwork in schools and Anganwadis was not possible, we had to think of ways to reach out to teachers and children using the online medium. The availability of smartphones and internet in the rural areas was limited, but we tried our best to work with the resources available.

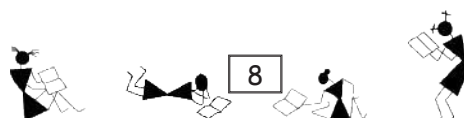
In 2021-22, the schools and Anganwadis continued to remain closed, while the other institutions and industry started functioning normally. QUEST continued to use the online medium to reach out to a new set of stakeholders – parents! The Anganwadi Majhya Ghari (Anganwadi in my home) and Majhi Shala Majhya Ghari (My school in my home) initiatives were designed to engage parents as co-teachers. QUEST's Gatuvit app, a special Learning Management System, coupled with a whatsapp interface was used extensively for this purpose.

By February 2022, the educational institutions were allowed to start functioning again. Our team was happy to go back to the field and work face-to-face with teachers and children in the classrooms. The 'new normal' of online work slowly got replaced with the old and familiar ways of working.

In the following pages, you will read 'Stories from the Field', shared by some of our stakeholders. It is quite rewarding to see the impact as told by the users and beneficiaries! Our team members have also written about their struggles to deal with online mode of teaching-learning. Articles in the 'Development' section will give you an idea about the efforts by the team to convert knowledge from the field into useful educational materials. In the 'Research' section, we have outlined how the QUEST team tried to mitigate learning loss among school children due to extended school closure.

The QUEST team continues to work on finding innovative solutions to the challenges in the field. A popular line heard often in QUEST team meetings is "Every day in QUEST is different, you never know what's going to happen!" But that is exactly what makes us thrive and renew our commitment to Quality Education!

- Editorial Team



PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



In 2021-22, the Palavee program for strengthening Anganwadis was operational in the following places:

Parbhani

Launched in March 2019

Location – Manwat and Pathari blocks

219 Anganwadis, 8972 children

Project supported by H T Parekh Foundation

Palghar

Launched in April 2019

Location – Varale, Wada block

10 Anganwadis, 313 children

Project supported by Esmech Equipment Pvt. Ltd.

Amravati & Yavatmal

Launched in December 2019

Location – Teosa block, Amravati and Ner block, Yavatmal

293 Anganwadis, 6614 children

Project supported by Motivation for Excellence & Tata Trusts

Raigad

Launched in December 2021

173 Anganwadis, 4098 children

Project supported by Cipla Foundation

In these places, training of Model Anganwadi Sevikas is complete, and they are now conducting workshops for other Anganwadi Sevikas from their beats. Palavee teams working in these districts are supporting them in this endeavor.



During the lockdowns, when the Anganwadis were closed, QUEST launched a new initiative called 'Anganwadi Majhya Ghari' (Anganwadi in my home) to engage parents as co-teachers. It has successfully continued in 2021-22. QUEST has been sending videos of educational activities and related worksheets to parents via Whatsapp, which they can conduct at home with their children. For those who don't have smartphones and internet connectivity, the Anganwadi Sevikas conduct parents' meeting and show them the videos. Parents have responded positively, and have been sharing their own videos of conducting the activities with their children. This is operational in Parbhani, Amravati and Yavatmal.



Anupad Implementation in Ashram Schools under Nashik Tribal Development Project Office

Project launched in February 2018, completed in March 2022

54 teachers, 2606 children

Supported by National Stock Exchange Foundation

Quality Education program for residential schools run by Dept. of Social Justice

Project launched in May 2018

52 Schools in 24 Districts of Maharashtra.

Outreach in 2021-22 : 102 teachers, 8287 children

Supported by Tata Trusts



The Collaborators for Transforming Education (District Transformation Program)

Launched in July 2020

Location – 10 clusters in Hingoli district

163 teachers, 4142 children

Supported by EdelGive Foundation



Centres operational in 7 places in Wada Taluka (Dist. Palghar)

Dadhare, Moj, Baliwali, Sonale, Devgaon, Uchat and Varale.

Outreach

Grade 1 to 4 – 424 children

Grade 5 to 7 (Anupad LBL program) – 347 children

Supported by Metores Trust, Nelson Global Products India Private Limited,

Deepti Tamhane and Esmech Equipment Pvt. Ltd.



No. of online & offline performances - 125

Outreach

Ashram school children 2503

Anganwadi Workers 104

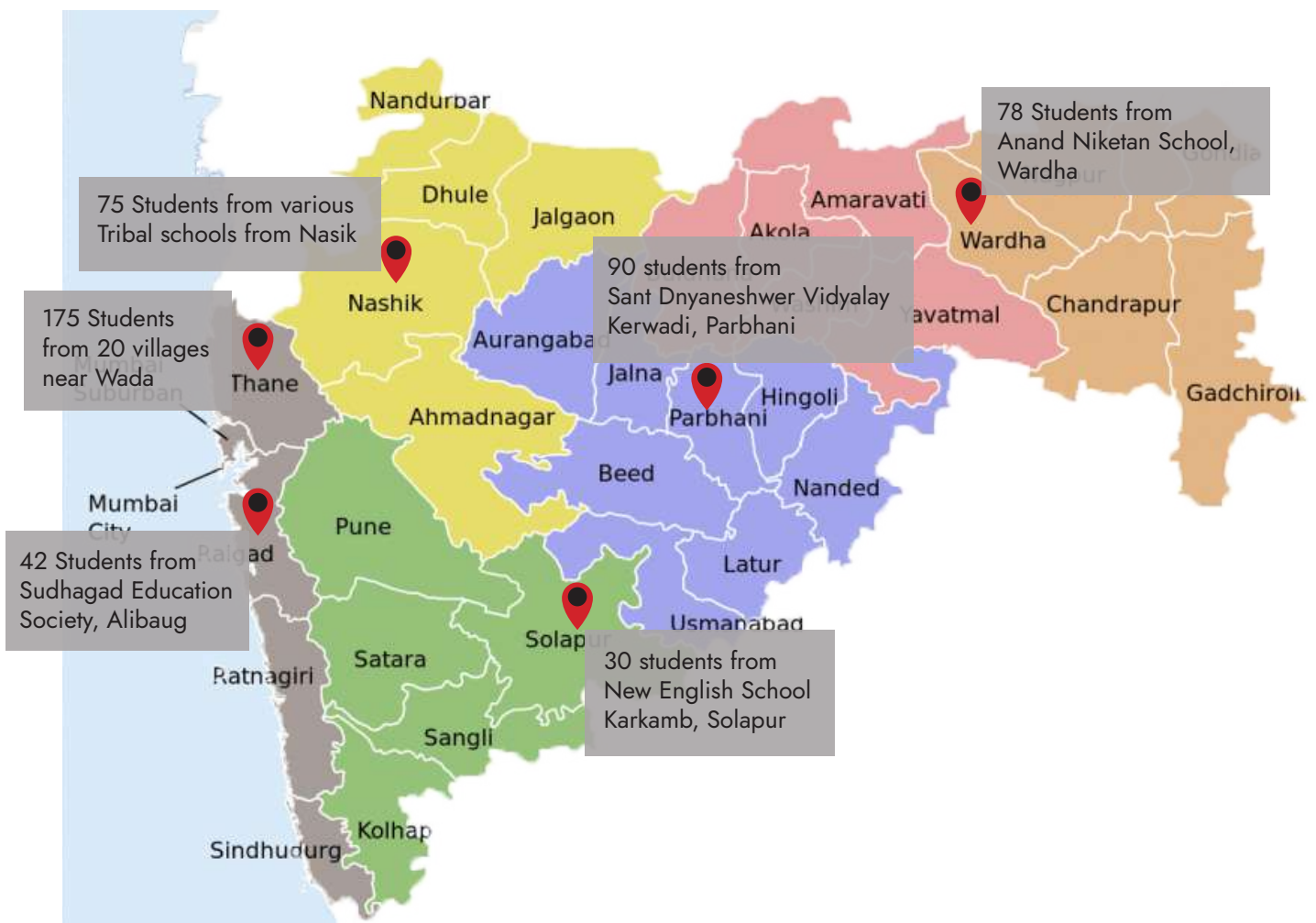
General audience 571



NEW INITIATIVES

DIRECT TO CHILD PROJECT

In 2021-22, QUEST conducted the 'Direct to Child' program for the first time, with the support of Servier India Private Limited, reaching out to a total of 540 children – 490 as shown in the map, and 50 others from various districts of Maharashtra. QUEST's Balmitras and academic team members conducted online courses for children on language – especially comprehension and expression. The courses comprised of 8 to 10 online sessions. The study material and assignments were provided through WhatsApp Interface in a particular sequence, and the progress was monitored by a mentor. Despite various odds such as multiple lockdowns, limited availability of mobile phones and network, the students who attended, enjoyed the sessions were motivated to complete their assignments.



COMMUNITY CENTRES IN NASHIK

To continue working with children despite school closure, the QUEST team came up with the novel idea of setting up a 'Community Centre'. In Nashik, where QUEST was already working with the Tribal Development Department, the QUEST team garnered support from a few local Gram Panchayats and set up these Community Centres.

The most active centre was in a village called Varas Vihir. Young women and men from the village participated as village volunteers. Around 75 children came regularly to the Community Center, which became operational in June 2021. The children started taking special care to get ready when visiting the centre, and started helping to keep the premises clean!

QUEST had kept some story books and five tabs at the Centre. The team trained the children and the volunteers to use the tabs and the Gatuvi app (QUEST's Learning Management System for online teaching-learning). Around 25 children started attending online sessions using those tabs. They became proficient at using the Whatsapp Interface, attending zoom sessions, accessing their assignments and uploading the solved worksheets.

This initiative was discontinued by February 2022, as the Ashram Schools started functioning and the children went back to school. However, while it lasted, it was a good experience for the village volunteers as well as the QUEST team – together, they kept the children engaged in activities like reading story books, writing their experiences and stories and basic mathematics. This connection with reading-writing helped the children to cope with school work later.

(With inputs from Yogesh Raut)



COLLABORATION WITH AHMEDNAGAR EDUCATION SOCIETY

In May 2021, QUEST started a new project called 'Pre-school Transformation program through Palavee' for 49 teachers from 8 pre-primary schools of Ahmednagar Education Society. This was QUEST's first intervention in private schools. The objective was to strengthen the knowledge of teachers about early childhood education. ECE experts from QUEST conducted the input sessions in the online mode to start with, and later shifted to the face-to-face mode when the lockdown ended. Teachers responded with great enthusiasm. The project was wound up in March 2022.



STORIES FROM THE FIELD

MODEL ANGANWADI SEVIKA BECOMES A TRAINER...!

I have been working as an Anganwadi Sevikas for the last ten years. I had attended a few training sessions on Early Childhood Education (ECE) and I would make honest attempts at delivering those inputs to the children. Our supervisor, Ms. Poonam was quite supportive. However, I was not able to gauge the effectiveness of the inputs.



The Palavee project commenced in Teosa Block from December 2019. Poonam madam informed me that the Palavee team from QUEST will be visiting my Anganwadi to observe how I conduct the ECE activities with the children. I was not at all confident. I mustered some courage and conducted the proceedings. The Palavee team appreciated my efforts. I was pleasantly surprised when my Anganwadi was selected as one of the Model Anganwadis of the Palavee program. But as the details of the program emerged, I got cold feet...! I was told that the Model Anganwadi Workers were to impart training to the Beat Anganwadi Sevikas from the second year onwards. I am an introvert by nature. I was apprehensive about taking up this responsibility. I even requested Poonam Madam to cancel my name from the list. But she convinced me that it will benefit me and my Anganwadi children to a great extent.

Various aspects of the Palavee training caught my eye from day one. From the preparation for the workshops to the way the training was conducted, I found it very engaging. The trainers were using Teaching Learning Material extensively and most importantly they were conducting the training in a very friendly manner. My opinions were given due weightage and I was getting plenty of guidance. My demo-lesson was appreciated by the resource persons! These factors created a sense of self-belief within me.

After the training, I received consistent support from the Palavee team. They visited my Anganwadi, observed my sessions, suggested improvements and always appreciated the good points. This encouraged me to learn more and work with renewed vigour. I was not only learning new things but I could also see the impact on the children.

Eventually I took the next step as a trainer and started sharing my experiences with the other Anganwadi workers from the Beat. They visited my Anganwadi to observe the proceedings. They were also able to

see how effective the Palavee program was. I could feel the change in their attitude towards me as they started appreciating my work. Even Poonam Madam started seeking my inputs for classroom work.

The Palavee program has enriched me with new knowledge. I am using that knowledge in my own Anganwadi as well as to train others. Now I feel I am contributing meaningfully to children's development.

Vaishali P Behere, Anganwadi Sevika, Kurha No. 87/16

Model Anganwadi Sevika under Palavee Project, Amravati

(With inputs from Ajinkya Patil and Rohit Choudhary)

GOING BEYOND THE BRIEF



DIET Hingoli is one of the main stakeholders of the CTE program. Deepak Kokare is a subject assistant with DIET Hingoli. He participated in the workshops and had the first-hand experience of the QUEST's Level Based Learning program. He recognized the importance and effectiveness of the inputs for the children. He has also been an active supporter of QUEST's initiative of reaching out to the teachers across the Hingoli district from the platform of Shikshan Parishad.

QUEST is the knowledge partner in the 'Collaborators for Transforming Education' program, working with DIET Hingoli and Education Department, supported by EdelGive Foundation. The CTE program is being run across 10 clusters of the Hingoli district. The inputs provided by QUEST such as the teaching learning of script, method of learning letters (consonants and vowels), writing for children are having a significant impact on the children in enhancing their learning levels. The inputs provided by QUEST are helping the teachers to cope with the challenges faced by them as children return to schools after a significant gap caused due to COVID induced lockdown.

QUEST has gone beyond its outreach of 10 clusters in Hingoli. It has been given an opportunity to provide guidance to the participants of 'Shikshan Parishad'. Shikshan Parishad is a monthly meeting of the selected teachers from across the district to discuss their professional tasks and challenges. Various



fundamental concepts such as emergent literacy, introduction to script, shared reading, number concepts and basic mathematical operations are discussed in detail.

The Shikshan Parishad is envisioned to build a resource pool of teachers who will act as experts for providing guidance in the school education setup at the district level. The teachers participating in it are not only from government schools but also from the privately managed institutions. QUEST

has been giving inputs on teaching learning methodologies as well as National Educational Policy (NEP) and Foundational Literacy and Numeracy (FLN). These inputs will definitely help us teachers make the teaching-learning process more effective and meaningful.

- Deepak Kokare

(With inputs from Rajendra More and Rohit Choudhary)

A TEACHER FINDS THE ANSWERS

As a teacher I always strive to ensure that I deliver the best possible learning inputs to my students. My intention is to make sure no child is left behind in studies. In our residential school, children are admitted from 6th grade onwards. Almost 50% of them have not successfully achieved their learning outcomes till grade 5. They struggle with reading comprehension and basic arithmetic concepts. As teachers, we struggle to find solutions to this problem year after year.



In the academic year 2018 -19 QUEST's Anupad program was introduced in our school. The methodology taught by QUEST really helped me to work towards fulfilling my dream of helping every student learn to his/her best potential. QUEST assesses the students' learning level and provides level based learning opportunities. The teaching approach goes beyond the textbooks and creates learning spaces around the students such as a well-equipped library. In the Anupad program, students are engaged in group-based learning wherein each student has a scope for self-learning. Children find it stimulating to engage in independent writing and speaking, where they can bring their own experiences in the classrooms.

During the pandemic, I took help of this program while reaching out to the students. I used the exercises and the worksheets given in QUEST's 'Saksham Banu Ya' books for this. I photocopied the pages, laminated them and distributed them among the students. This helped the students to an extent - despite being away from school for so long, they could cope with grade appropriate inputs after schools reopened. There was no significant learning loss observed in the case of these students.

The students who passed the matriculation examination this year have scored more than 75% in Math and Language. They have also been able to gain proficiency in other subjects due to their understanding in language and Math. The Anupad program has played a big role in this transformation.

- Dhruvas Mamaraj Rathod

Scheduled Castes and Neo Buddhist residential school, Chalisgaon

(With inputs from Nitin Marade and Rohit Choudhary)

WHEN A PARENT BECOMES A TEACHER



Ansh with his father

Ansh Ranjit Rathod is a six-and-a-half-year-old child who goes to Pimpalgav Kale Anganwadi in Mojhar Beat in Ner Block of Yavatmal District.

He used to regularly attend the Anganwadi since he turned three years old. But from April 2020 onwards, he was forced to remain at home due to the onset of covid-related lockdown.

The period between 3-6 years is very critical in the development of a child. Ansh and many other children like him were at a risk of missing out on right inputs which would have aided the linguistic and cognitive aspects of development.

QUEST's 'Anganwadi Majhya Ghari' initiative provided a solution to this crisis. Ansh's father, Ranjit Rathod, realized the importance of the inputs sent by the QUEST team. He is a farmer who has completed SSC. He took efforts to understand the contents of the video and subsequently conducted the activities with Ansh. He conducted most of the activities demonstrated in the video and also got Ansh to solve the worksheets.

Since Ansh is a reserved and a quiet boy, he did not respond much to the activities initially. Gradually with the persistence of his father, he started participating in recording short videos of the activities with his father and solving worksheets. With guidance from his father, Ansh learnt to count from 1 to 10, compare two different sets of objects, identify colors, have a sense of cleanliness and to play some games. He also developed the habit of keeping the things in place in the household by reading the labels pasted on the objects.

Ranjit says that now Ansh asks him to take up the video activity if it is not done for a few days. The Anganwadi Majhya Ghari initiative has not only enabled Ansh to be School-ready but has also inculcated the liking for learning.

Story shared by Rupali Patil from Palavee team

Translated by Rohit Choudhary



Images from **QUEST's Palavee App** showing the progress record of Ansh Ranjit Rathod



TEACHING CHILDREN ONLINE

My name is Asmita Ravate. I work as a Balmitra in QUEST's Shikshan Samruddhi Kendra.

During the covid lockdown, all the schools were closed. We were unable to go to the field. We were wondering what to do. Our seniors proposed that we should work online with children. This 'online' teaching was totally new to us. We were quite clueless.

We contacted the teachers from the school where our Shikshan Samruddhi Kendra was operating. We took the contact numbers of the children. All this time, we didn't need this data because the children were in school and they would come to our centre at their appointed session timings.

Our team decided to conduct sessions on zoom and send worksheets via whatsapp to as many children as we could reach out to. We started calling the parents to instruct them how to download the zoom app and how to use it. This was a hidden opportunity in a way, as we started communicating directly with the parents for the first time.

We created whatsapp groups of children as per their learning levels. We started sending them worksheets according to their levels. The team prepared power point presentations to teach specific topics. All the Balmitras had to conduct mock sessions within the team before conducting the online session with children. We were enjoying these new challenges. But the children were not in front of us like in our usual classrooms, so we could not say for sure how much the children were able to understand the content.

We worked in this manner for about a year and a half. Then QUEST developed a new system called 'whatsapp interface'. Through this system, we started sending the relevant homework to

the children based on their learning levels. The children had to complete the homework or solve the worksheets and send them back on whatsapp. We could track the progress of each individual child through the system. But many children did not send the worksheets back – often due to connectivity issues. We had to regularly call them and follow up for submission.

In this entire period, we had to learn new technology ourselves. We had to polish our presentation skills. We had to break up the lesson plans and prepare short presentations because the children had a short attention span.

We were able to connect with only 20-30% children because most others did not have access to smartphone and internet. But at least with these children, we could continue teaching some topics from the curriculum. The team was happy to establish direct communication with the parents. Most parents were cooperative and tried to ensure that the children were completing the homework.

As the schools reopened after a gap of almost 18 months, we have seen a learning loss among all the children. But I can say that our efforts have helped at least some children to remain actively engaged with the curriculum in this period.

Asmita Ravate, QUEST

Translated by Anupamaa Joshi



QUEST'S ONLINE INPUTS GAVE ME A HEADSTART...

When corona came to our country, our school was closed for two years. Our teacher had given mobile phones to all children. He used to send us homework on the phone. Vaishali madam from QUEST also used to send us homework. I had to type 'Hi' on the whatsapp number. Then I would receive homework with my name. I used to complete that homework and send it back. Then I would type 'Hi' again, and I would get new homework.

Vaishali madam conducted classes on the mobile phone during the lockdown. She used to send a link on whatsapp. We used to join on zoom using that link. Children from different villages used to be present in those zoom sessions.

In one of the classes, Vaishali madam taught us how to read a paragraph and write a summary. It was a paragraph about the bird, kingfisher. I got a lot of information about the kingfisher and I saw photos also. Vaishali madam taught us how to write a news item and an advertisement as well. It was fun to attend those online sessions.

When the school reopened, the teacher asked us to write a news item. It was very helpful that I had already learnt it online! When the school teacher told us to compose an advertisement, I was the first one in the class to complete that assignment!



Chiranjit Manje, Grade 5

Zilla Parishad Primary School, Balivali

(Translated from the Marathi whatsapp message sent by Chiranjit)

GOSHTARANG - TELLING STORIES ONLINE

"Hey, is the PPT ready?"

"It is quite dark inside the house. I will have to sit in the balcony to conduct the session."

"I'll buy some lights and extension board. Maybe we can control the light with a fan regulator... It will give a nice dramatic effect."

"Let's put up a backdrop – we will get it painted on a large cloth."

"There is no internet."

"My sim card doesn't have good internet speed. I will go to a friend's house – she has wifi."

"Take the storybook with you, ok? You have to show the original book and read from it online."

Why are we doing all this? Because we must continue to tell stories to children despite lockdowns and all the restrictions. How do we do that? Online! Using the zoom app.

This new medium was posing many new challenges. We were going to present stories sitting in our homes, via the small screen of the smartphone. It was a completely different space. Looking into the eyes of the audience was not possible. The 'action-reaction' paradigm was totally different in this virtual medium.



Mahendra Walunj telling a story online, using his mobile phone

It was difficult. We had to put in a lot of energy to capture the attention of the children. If the internet went off in between, we had to work hard to bring them back on the story track.

We tried out different tricks with lights to bring in a dramatic effect, to surprise the children and keep them hooked to the story. We got colourful backdrops painted to make the visual exciting. We tried to

make the power-point presentations attractive. We identified pictures from the storybooks which we could discuss with the children. We had to really put in a lot of work to finalize the session plan.

During our live sessions, we always sing the Goshtarang song at the beginning. Even in the online sessions, it proved to be very effective to generate a happy energy and a bond between us and the children who were attending from their homes. In all our online storytelling sessions, we were getting more responses from the girls – they wanted to sing along, they had many questions.



Using lights, dabbas, wires, stools – the stage is set for online storytelling!

A new technique of storytelling evolved through these efforts. It was rewarding because it kept us in touch with stories and children. Of course, we always prefer the live sessions – there is nothing to compare the energy that an actor can get from a live audience... hence we were very happy when the 'offline' sessions resumed in February-March 2022.

Mahendra Walunj, Goshtarang Fellow, batch of 2019-20

(Translated by Anupamaa Joshi)

Using the 'new normal' mode of working online, the ex-fellows of Goshtarang continued their storytelling work. QUEST collaborated with Dr Bhau Daji Lad Museum to conduct online storytelling sessions once in two months, which were open for public. The Fellows were also engaged in conducting online sessions for the children of Residential Schools of Department of Social Justice, where QUEST is running the 'Anupad' program. These storytelling sessions were a breath of fresh air for the children,

bringing them back to books! One of the students from Washim spontaneously wrote a poem about this experience! A few lines from the poem, translated loosely -

Let us all join via zoom

Let us all watch the program 'Goshtarang'...

The storytellers are our friends, we don't need to have any fear

Let's sing the Goshtarang song, let's respond to the story and laugh

Let us all join together and enjoy 'Goshtarang'!

COMING SOON...

QUEST'S CAMPUS NEAR SONALE

By developing this new campus, QUEST wants to create and nurture a community of professionals in the education sector, working to enrich the learning experiences of children.

As a 'thought leader' in the field of quality education, QUEST has achieved a sizeable outreach among children, teachers and parents, QUEST is now taking the next step towards organizational growth by investing in infrastructure.

QUEST has visualized a campus which will be a vibrant space to bring together educators, academicians and artistes to consolidate existing knowledge. This synergy will help to increase the outreach of current programs and to develop new programs to have an even greater impact on the field of education.



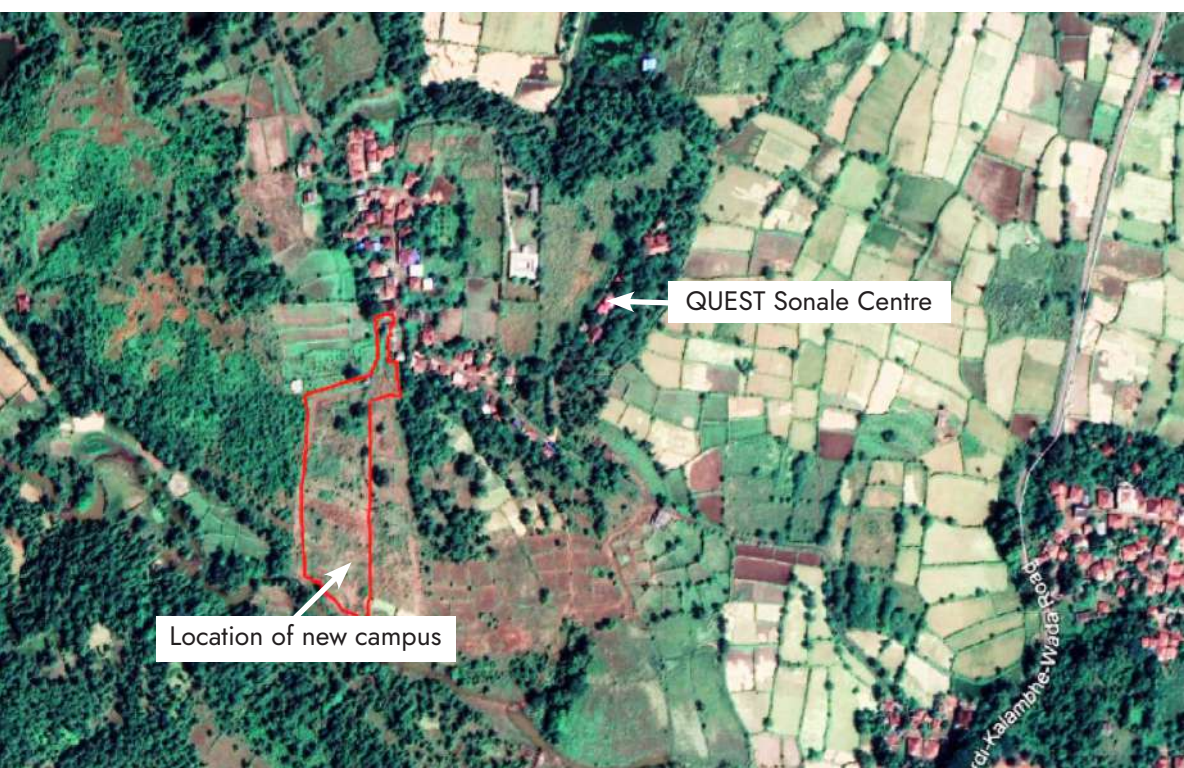
- Three major centres have been proposed -

Centre for Teachers' Professional Development	Centre for Educational Research and Development	Centre for Visual and Performing Arts in Education
A centre to enhance teachers' skills and knowledge in content and pedagogy to impact children's learning experiences.	A centre which will create context specific knowledge and act as a bridge between the field and the academic world.	A centre which will explore and use proven creative techniques to enhance the quality of education.

QUEST has already acquired land for this campus, through the generous support of philanthropists and well-wishers. Over the past few months, the QUEST team has zeroed in on the architect who will design the campus. The fundraising is underway and construction will begin after the monsoon months.



Design of the proposed campus



Images are from the architect's first conceptual drawings and are subject to change



INTERVIEW

WORKING ON QUEST'S EDUCATIONAL FILMS



Prashant Pandav, is a postgraduate from Dept. of Mass Communications, Savitribai Phule University of Pune, Batch of 2003. He has been associated with Nilesh Nimkar in making Educational films since 2004. He worked as an editor in some earlier films and later he and his team of iLink media has handled the production of QUEST's educational films since 2016. We present a few excerpts from his interview.

The shooting process

The process of shooting with the QUEST team is quite stress-free. QUEST has developed insights into the technical aspects of filmmaking over the years. They do intense preparation with the cast, especially the non actors, 10-15 days before the actual shooting commences. The actors and the production team of QUEST go through several rehearsals which helps the actual shooting process to run smoothly. QUEST has developed the faculty of casting the right persons for the roles. There are professional actors as well as non actors such as in-service teachers, QUEST's employees etc. Over the years we have developed a process which balances the roles of the trained actors and the untrained ones.



Working with Children

There are various challenges while shooting with children in real classroom situations. Normally the shooting location is a very noisy place. The crew handling the various departments are used to communicating in loud voices. We give specific instructions to the crew members at the site locations to speak in hushed voices. It takes a day for children to get used to the shooting paraphernalia. They even pick up our terms such as 'Call time', 'Pack up time'! By the second day, they shift their focus to the actual task at hand.



The shooting with children is often unscripted as it takes place in real classroom-like situations. The children behave as they do in the normal classrooms - they yawn, they pick up quarrels with fellow students etc. Unexpectedly a child may react in a way which is not connected to the lesson being taught. At that point it is not prudent to instruct the particular child as it draws the attention of other children towards that child during the shooting, which does not concur with the script. We have to omit the shot and move ahead. It has happened more than once in the past that a large chunk of the shooting was found unusable when it was brought to the editing table. This costs a lot of money but we have to give priority to content and quality.

Technical aspects of shooting Educational Films

Before every shooting schedule, my team conducts a technical recce. We determine the spots where the camera, lights, editing set up, etc. can be placed optimally during the shoots at various locations. This is determined as per the script which is provided to us. We conduct rehearsals with actors who have scripted dialogue.

Usually, we shoot with children from tribal areas. They are not used to speaking loudly, which poses a problem for us. Our sound equipment is not able to record the words spoken in low voices. We orient the teachers to seek responses from the children in a way that the microphones can pick them up.

Shooting an educational film is quite different from shooting corporate films or ad films or feature films. Earlier we used to shoot with a single camera, as is done with feature films. As it didn't prove effective, we switched to shooting with multiple cameras. Now we use a multi-cam setup in a classroom with live/line editing. The footage is further edited offline. For a film of duration 10 minutes we need recorded footage of around 45 minutes.

Learning through collaboration

There are two major aspects which work behind the camera during the shooting. One part is the content of the film which relates to pedagogy and the other part is the technical aspect of shooting, camera angles etc. We have collectively developed a sense of what is working and what isn't over the course of several shooting schedules. I have come to understand the connotations of terms used by Nilesh Sir and he too has a keen understanding of the requirements of the production team. This helps to achieve the critical and content-oriented objectives of the filmmaking. For my team and myself, this has been an enriching learning experience over the years!

(Interview and translation : Rohit Choudhary)





Comparing notes....Nilesh Nimkar and Prashant Pandav



QUEST team + iLink team at the end of the shooting schedule

RESEARCH

Learning Loss due to School Closure

QUEST conducted a year-long study supported by NSE Foundation in Government Ashram Schools in the tribal regions of Nashik district in Maharashtra. The objective of the study was to measure the learning loss among the children, formulate a plan to mitigate this loss, and pilot test the implementation of the plan with a sample set of children.

Learning levels of children in February 2020

In the ongoing project at Nashik, QUEST had conducted a test in Ashram Schools in February 2020 and the children had achieved 46% in Language and 41% in Mathematics. This preceded the nationwide school closure due to the pandemic. Thus, the data of children's achievement just prior to the lockdown was available for use as a baseline against which children's learning loss due to school closure could be measured.

Learning Loss in January 2021

The results of the assessment, which are given in the table below, show that children suffered the greatest loss in Language – a drop from 46% points to 34% points.

Subject	Feb-20	Jan-21	Percent Backslide
Language	46.6	34	27.2
Mathematics	41.2	36.4	11.7

Our study also showed that the **loss was more in complex reading comprehension tasks**. If the children were asked to read a story or simple text and answer questions based on that, they were able to do so. But answering inferential questions based on a news report, which did not include a direct answer in the text, proved difficult for them.

Possible reason for backslide

Majority of the children in our study did not come from a 'literate environment' at home. In school, they had access to a library and storybooks. However, in their homes, these rural and tribal children did not have access to printed material like daily newspapers or books. They also got pulled into household work or working in the farms, and had little or no interaction with written text.

Our plan for mitigation

Initially we planned **11** units of input on comprehension of **5** genres (Dialogue, Narrative, Advertisement, News Report, and Expository passages) for about **200** children.

Our team started the work in **5** villages and **2** schools. Each mentor from QUEST visited two villages, often travelling about 100 kilometers every day. The mentors interacted with the children for about 90 minutes.



However, the plans had to change because of the second wave. We had to shift to an online mode with 60 of the original 200 children. The team tried to work rigorously with these children using various online options – sending videos & worksheets via whatsapp, making follow-up phone calls, trying out video conferencing etc.

What were the challenges?

- ☐ Prolonged input time
- ☐ Irregular attendance
- ☐ Limited teacher-children interaction in an online mode
- ☐ Issues of access to devices
- ☐ Difficulty of taking follow-up

Results of the study

A marginal improvement in scores was observed in children who received the in-person learning inputs. In fact, the improvement in performance was marginal across all modes of delivery, even if these minor shifts are statistically significant. Online modes of delivery were not able to compensate for teacher interactions.

Studies in a developed country like Sweden have shown that online education has a limited impact. The expected progress in learning and learning outcomes were not achieved. The online medium can, at best, be used to keep the children in touch with what has already been taught. However, it is not an effective mode for new learning.

Implications and Recommendations

- ☐ Give priority to direct face-to-face instruction
- ☐ Plan a learning continuum – the loss cannot be recovered in a few days or weeks – inputs have to be planned based on children's learning levels and not as per their grades
- ☐ Adopt a level-based learning approach
- ☐ Orient teachers on how to use diagnostic assessment for planning their instruction
- ☐ Consider tech-based solutions as emergency response but not as an alternative

Administrative Suggestions

- ☐ Decentralize the reopening of schools
- ☐ In case of further school closure, focus on creating print rich environment at home rather than using online education

Learning happens through interaction between a child, the learning material, and the teacher. Merely solving worksheets and submitting assignments is not sufficient to impact the learning outcomes of children. Teachers will need a thorough orientation regarding level-based learning as a model, starting from administering of assessment to the implementation of classroom activities. Once the learning loss found among children is successfully bridged, classroom instruction can gradually transition to a grade-appropriate curriculum.

Nilesh Nimkar, Mitali Thatte and Pranjal Koranne



DEVELOPMENT

Let's Learn English Program

QUEST has developed a program to mitigate the challenges of teaching English in the elementary grades classrooms. The program was planned based on the insights of over 100 sessions conducted in 4 schools in Wada Taluka. The program also incorporates the essential features of the pedagogy suggested by documents like NIPUN Bharat and National Curriculum framework for learning English as a second language. These documents advocate :-

- ❑ Exposure to Third/ Other Language when children are literate in their first language
- ❑ Use of Bilingual and Translingual mode
- ❑ Use of varied resources apart from textbook for language learning

While designing the inputs of the program we have incorporated essential learnings from sound pedagogical practices in ECE and Early Literacy that QUEST has been implementing over a decade and a half. The broad competencies of language learning for which the inputs will be given during the program are:-

- A. Speaking & Listening – Consists of activities such as Poems, Action Songs, Picture Talk, Listening to Instructions
- B. Read Aloud – Reading aloud of story books for the children and carrying out the allied activities which introduce them to the language structure
- C. Independent Reading – Giving reading inputs through phonetically controlled text which orients children to the script of the English language. The children learn to read with comprehension.

QUEST has developed a series of books based on Phonics to teach how to read English. This series titled as 'Let's Learn English' will help the children to learn reading the script as well as basic sentence structure of the language. The vowels and the consonants are introduced gradually.

These books have the following essential features which address the major challenges faced while teaching reading of English-

1. It does away with the conventional practice of repetitive reading and writing of alphabets. This series allows children to quickly move to reading meaningful text making learning to read an enjoyable experience.



2. Phonetically controlled text is used which uses only specific sounds of each of the five vowels. In the text, the consonants are introduced gradually. The text also contains essential words which children learn through repeated use, such as like, she, them etc. This allows the text to be close to natural spoken language and reduces the child's decoding load while reading.
3. 'Let's Learn English' series is visualized as having 3 or 4 sets of books. Each set consists of two books- A Reader book and a Workbook. The Readers contain text in the form of a complete story written in short independent passages, accompanied by attractive illustrations that help children in the task of meaning making while reading.
4. The Readers can be used for phonics as well as comprehension related activities in the classroom. They can also be used for activities like picture talk, shared reading.
5. The Readers are complemented by Workbooks which should be used in parallel. The Workbooks contain activities in the form of worksheets. These worksheets meaningfully help the reading process of the child.



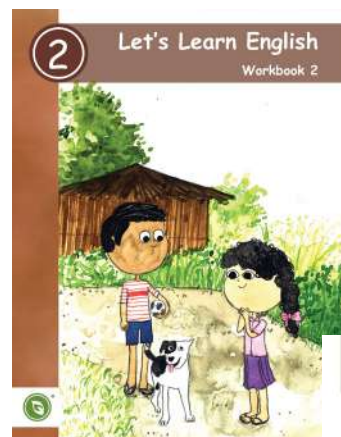
Sam has a big _____. Bob, the dog likes the box. _____ sits in the box.



Tam the rat ran in the big _____ - _____ jumped away.



39



Decodable Words

bed, net, peg, basket

big, he, near, sleeps, there

Sight Words

Sam's bed

Sam has a bed. The bed has a big net.

Sam likes his bed. He sleeps in the bed.

There is a peg near the bed.
There is a basket on the peg.

23

The Let's Learn English books will be tried out with children of 9 schools in the coming academic year along with the activities of Speaking, Listening and Read Aloud. We would be assessing the impact of the inputs through assessments which would be conducted at the start and end of the year long program. The books and the program as such will be made available for wider circulation later in the year, after incorporating teachers' feedback and our learnings.

- Rohit Choudhary



Shared Reading App developed by QUEST and Driya Interactive

‘Shared reading’ is an important activity in the early childhood classroom and in the journey of children’s literacy development. With this instructional technique, a teacher demonstrates ‘model reading’ by sharing the text in a large ‘shared reading’ books and children get an opportunity to observe the act of reading books. Teacher interacts with children by asking them specific questions which keep them engaged in the text of the book. Asking such question is a skill and needs thorough understanding of ‘Shared Reading’ concept.

Shared reading books generally have large illustrations and little but large-sized text. The subjects of such books need to be selected carefully. If the subjects are from their own surroundings, from their lives, children tend to connect with the text naturally. Nevertheless, subjects introducing them to the outer world could also be the good subjects for Shared reading books.

Unfortunately, in India, though there are plenty of resources available for children’s education, very few are appropriate for Shared Reading purpose. Since books need to have a local context and have to be larger than regular books, it is challenging to print these books at commercial scale. QUEST has decided to take on this challenge by developing an App which will help writers to develop Shared reading books, which will help educators to build activity plans for different books and will help teachers and parents to use this facility for Shared reading.

The App will be open-sourced and free to use for all the users. Currently, the minimum viable product of the App is ready, along with a small library. QUEST is planning to build a repository of Shared Reading books along with activity plans. Soon the App will be open for use to all relevant target audiences.

The app can incorporate the activity plan for the book with the help of planner module. Academicians can develop a plan for a book with particular objectives. The prompts in the plan are revealed to users with the help of animated character ‘Koro’. Koro provides the prompts to the teacher or parent by asking specific questions at specific points in the text. Koro is a formless, shapeless character like a friendly reading ghost who is very curious and always has questions. This entices children and makes them think actively while reading.

Aniket Motale & Rohit Choudhary



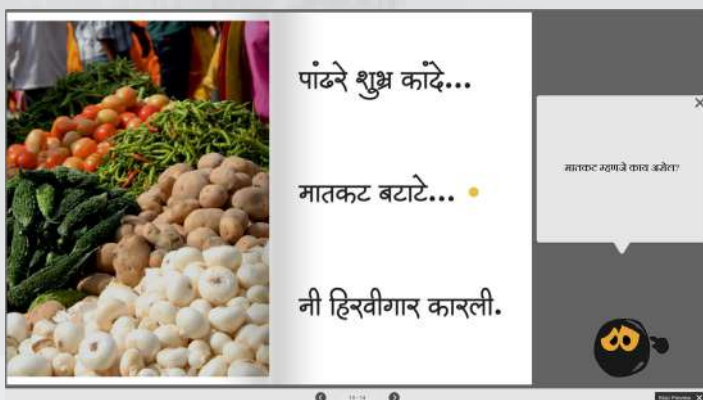
Screenshot of a page in the App.
Notice the placement of Koro.

How we developed 'Koro'

In the ideation workshop for the app, the team had shortlisted a few characters. Majority had liked an idea of a curious friendly ghost who is formless and can switch to many shapes. But the exact looks of this character were inspired from an interesting product called 'magic gel' which is a formless gel used for cleaning up of unreachable micro gaps in electronic devices. We actually captured the moments of dropping that gel and taking various shapes to imagine how our 'ghost' character would look!



Dropping the 'magic gel' to see what form it takes



Koro takes various forms!



Testing the app in a classroom

Developing Saksham Banu Ya 4+ series

“We have to work on the ‘Saksham Banu Ya 4+’ books, and we need two teams to work separately on Marathi and Math,” announced Sukhada, the Academic Manager, in February 2022. The education team is quite accustomed to such sudden announcements and quickly decided the teams, as follows:

Language (Marathi) team – Shalini, Pranjal, Meena tai, Rohit, Sharduli, Aniket, Vrushali, Anupamaa

Math team – Mitali, Roshana, Nitin.

And of course, one name common to both teams – Nilesh Nimkar!

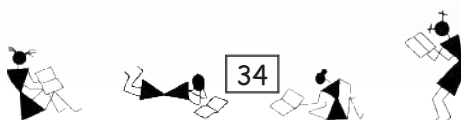
The plan was to prepare the books over a series of three workshops. In the first workshop, we decided the content of the books. The book on language would contain 5 units - poems, articles, book reviews, articles on science & technology and life skills. The book on Math would cover 3 main topics - integers, data collection & interpretation and algebra.

In QUEST, the work of the education team is never limited to writing the content. We have to also work on the ‘look’ of the book. So there were endless discussions on what kind of illustrations will be there, who will draw them, what software will be used to design the books etc. The illustrators attended the second workshop and worked with the teams as the text was being finalized. It was important for them to participate in the process of content development, to get a clear idea of the contribution expected from them. In the third workshops, the designers who were going to put everything together were also called in.

The layout of the book on language was somewhat simple, and it followed a particular style. But the chapters of the book on Math were visualized as a ‘comic strip’ or a ‘stroyboard’. This work needed several discussions and intense involvement from everyone!

As the chapters were being finalized, they were being shared with the designers and illustrators, with several comments and instructions. This was a crucial stage. Mitali and I were quite new to the whole process. We were learning from our seniors at every stage and learning from our mistakes as well!

Once all the text and illustrations for all the units were ready, the team worked on the layout and proofreading the content, checking the spacing between words and visuals and making sure that the illustrations were a proper fit to the text. Another important part was to actually solve the problems, writing answers for the comprehension questions – to ensure that enough lines were provided for children to write their answers in the books. For every book or educational material that is developed by QUEST, this kind of rigour is followed every time!



The Saksham 4+ books have been developed for students of grade 8-9, for schools run by the Dept. of Social Justice, with financial support from Tata Trusts.

About the 'Saksham Banu Ya' series

QUEST has developed a series of books titled 'Saksham Banu Ya', for the Anupad Level Based Learning (LBL) program. They are used with children in secondary school (grades 5, 6, 7) who are trailing behind their grade level. These books provide inputs on the basics which were covered up to grade 4, to prepare children for their grade appropriate level.

Three books for Language (Marathi) and three for Math have been used quite successfully in the Anupad program over the years.

This book includes a variety writing formats for students of grade 8-9. It is expected that they have already been exposed to formats such as expository passages, news, poems and advertisements. The '4+' book contains complex writing formats of literary prose, *abhang* by Marathi saints, book reviews, articles on life skills etc.

Saksham 4+ Marathi



Saksham 4+ Math



This book includes different representations of numbers, integers and basic operations with integers (addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division), introduction to algebra, basic statistics useful in our daily lives, data analysis and interpretation. Visualized as a 'storyboard', it uses four student characters and a teacher in every chapter. The concepts are revealed through conversations between all the characters.

Written by Sharudli Joshi

Translated by Anupamaa Joshi



OUR SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

TATA TRUSTS



DUFF & PHELPS



Virgo Foundation



Indira Foundation



Several individuals, organizations and foundations have supported us over the years and many of them continued to do so in 2021-22.



GOVERNANCE

Board of Trustees

President – Manoj Karyekar

Director – Nilesh Nimkar

Trustees - Aparna Bhole, Ketan Gala, Kailas Kulkarni, Nitin Nimkar, Dr. Jayashree Shinde

The Trustees meetings were held online, six times in 2021-22, on the following dates :-

18-04-21, 25-07-21, 2-10-21, 28-10-21, 16-12-21, 19-02-22.

Transparency Disclosures

No remuneration, fees or compensation was paid to any Board Member in their capacity as Board Members, except to the Director, as the Director of the organization and for his academic contribution to the work. The costs for his domestic travel and lodging-boarding for workshops and other activities during the year were borne by QUEST through project grants and QUEST's funds.

There was no international travel during the year.

Legal Compliances

QUEST complies with all statutory requirements of the Income Tax act and Foreign Contribution Regulation Act. All donor requirements are duly complied with.

We are Accredited by **Credibility Alliance** under **Desirable Norms &**
awarded **Platinum Seal** for transparency by **GuideStar India**



Honorarium Distribution as on March 31, 2022

Monthly Payment + allowances to persons working Part-Time/Full Time (in rupees)	Men	Women	Total
Below 15000	7	4	11
15,001 - 25,000	10	5	15
25,001 - 50,000	19	15	34
Above 50000	4	2	6
Total	40	26	66



FINANCIALS

Quality Education Support Trust Balance Sheet as at 31st March 2022

PROPERTY AND ASSETS	Amount (Rs)
Land (Corpus Fund)	4,861,696
Immovable Properties (At Cost)	
Building and infrastructure (Resource Centre)	1,027,296
Building and Infrastructure (Dadhare)	494,071
Container Classroom	1,715,407
Fixed Assets Funds	5,843,250
Investments	82,936,094
Advances	1,081,098
Cash and Bank Balances	4,898,966
(Total Rs)	102,857,879

FUNDS & LIABILITIES	Amount (Rs)
Trust Funds or Corpus	58,575,138
Other Earmarked Funds	
Building and infrastructure (Resource Centre)	1,027,296
Building and Infrastructure (Dadhare)	494,071
Container Classroom	1,715,407
Fixed Assets Funds	5,843,250
Unspent Project Grants	8,414,715
Liabilities	384,587
Income and Expenditure Account	26,403,414
Total Rs.	102,857,879



Quality Education Support Trust
Income and Expenditure Account for the year ended 31.03.2022

INCOME	Amount (Rs)
By Interest accrued/realised	3,459,365
By Donations in Cash or Kind	3,343,368
By Grants	49,521,487
By Unspent Grants Brought forward	20,746,829
By Income from other sources	364,364
(Total Rs)	77,435,413

FUNDS & LIABILITIES	Amount (Rs)
To Establishment Expenses	4,126,666
To Remuneration to Trustees	1,664,604
To Audit Fees	70,800
To Contribution and Fees	106,964
To Depreciation	2,257,634
To Amount transfer to Reserve to specific grants	8,414,715
To Expenditure on Objects of the trust	49,178,717
To surplus	11,615,312
Total Rs.	77,435,413





Contact us

Quality Education Support Trust (QUEST)

233, Vadavali Road, Sonale, Taluka Wada,

District Palghar, Pin 421303

Website: www.quest.org.in

Email: quest@quest.org.in

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/QUESTorg/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/QuestorgQuest>

Instagram: https://www.instagram.com/quest_ngo/

