

CLASSROOM PROCESSES :

COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES

Kerala

Regional Institute of Education

MYSORE - 570006

National Council of Educational Research and Training

Sri Aurobindo Marg, New Delhi 110016

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CLASSROOM PROCESSES- COMPARATIVE CASE STUDIES: PALAKKAD IN KERALA STATE

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Context: Palakkad is one amongst the three districts chosen for the first phase (expansion) for DPEP and the programme is being implemented since 1997. Block Resource Centers (BRC) and Cluster Resource Centers (CRC) have been established under the DPEP. Apart from these, there exist plethora of structures in the district like, of PTA and MPTA (Mother Parent Teacher Association), School Welfare Committees, School Resource Groups, Village Education Committee at the School Level, the Lead School and the Cluster Resource Group at the cluster level, Block Resource Group and Block Advisory Committee at the block level, the District Resource Group, the District Monitoring Cell at the district level and the State Resource Group and State Advisory Committee at the State level. The duties and responsibilities of the BRC are:

- to conduct training programs for teachers, CRC heads, Head Masters, VEC Secretaries
- to pay academic visits to at least five schools every week for providing on the job support to teachers in academic activities of the class.
- to convene VEC/CRC/school level meetings of functionaries including teachers, whenever necessary in consultation with the BRC Coordinator
- to identify innovative learning/teaching practice in school/class, consolidate them and motivate other schools to adopt/adapt them
- to attend the weekly review and planning meeting at BRC
- to identify the training needs of the teachers
- to give academic support to teachers for undertaking action research
- to try out/experiment innovative classroom practices identified/developed at the school which is adopted by the BRC.

Since the inception of the programme the district has witnessed several training programs and the sequences of training provided to the teachers have been as follows:

- Five day initial training on pedagogy and activity based curriculum (ABC) approach
- Three day training, separately for classes I and II and for III and IV on language approach, integrated approach, projects, etc.
- Cluster meetings of one day per month for review and planning
- Three day training on approach to evaluation and grading indicators
- Kingnikootam training-I of 5-day duration for capacity building
- Kingnikootam training -II of 5-day duration in summer vacation followed by 7-day field experience
- Evaluation training for developing evaluation tools of 1-day duration

The year 1997-98 witnessed the introduction of a variety of inputs for making the classroom process “activity based and experiential for facilitating learning by children. The Kingnikootam training is currently being implemented in the district and has been designed on the observations made by the internal academic support mission held in the month of March, 1998. The objective of this mission was to study the process involved in and the impact of the various activities taken up under the District Primary Education Programme from the year 1997-98 in order to design training inputs for the year 1998-99. The Mission has observed a few lacuna with respect to the classroom which are given below:

1. Common activities were forced on all children without arigid time frame with predicted results are still going in the classrooms
2. Slow learning children do not get sufficient time to successfully complete the tasks in comparison to those who learn faster
3. The teacher could not give sufficient help to the slow learning children or get another task of a lesser difficulty
4. The school atmosphere continues to be unattractive and uninteresting to the children.

The Mission observed that there exists a need for upgradation of skills and concepts among teachers and for development of a favourable attitude in them. For doing so the Mission suggests that the training programme must be made more interactive, experiential and the methodology of training be made more problem focussed with sufficient hands on experience (field experience).

As a result the Kingnikootam training is designed to address the issues of classroom learning processes and teacher competencies to handle the multi level and multigrade issues, develop and try out strategies for managing poor learning in multi level learning context and try out new teaching strategies like team teaching. The expected outcomes of this training input are to enable teachers:

1. To develop clear work strategies to make the classroom process activity based and child centred.
2. Design and try out strategies, activities and management techniques for addressing the issue of multi level situation in the classroom
3. Support professionally applying their understanding about the children and the learning process in all classroom situations.

Need for the study of classroom processes: After the advent of DPEP in Kerala, there has been an intense debate in the public discourse about the project. The culminating objective of the DPEP is the improvement of classroom and school practices to ensure equity in educational outcomes especially in government schools serving common people. Most of the interventions aim at this over riding objective and hence it is felt necessary to develop an benchmark of the processes at the initial stages of the project. This would not only provides inputs for shaping the interventions. but also would provide basis for future evaluations of their efficacy

Design of the Study: Since the study emphasizes the process, the data needed for the study require primarily qualitative to be supplemented by quantitative data. Therefore the design followed that of case study approach. The objectives of the study are as follows:

- Generation of descriptive categories of classroom processes based on observations in schools having different structural and contextual characteristics.
- Know and categorize the attitudes of the teachers toward the factors associated with goals, support provided to them for teaching, students, materials, supervision and monitoring etc.
- Relate teacher's attitudinal categories with the classroom process categories.
- Measure the quantity of learning experiences in term of **opportunity time** provided to children in schools having different structural and contextual characteristics.
- To examine the interventions introduced with a view to influence the process leading towards targeted levels of school outcomes **in the light of the emergent classroom process categories** under the study. (The intervention to be focused are training, TLMS, monitoring and supervision etc. for quality improvement in terms of their implied school characteristics and classroom practices.)

Methodology: The study has adopted case study approach of social anthropology as applied to study educational institutions and organizations while generating the data. Usual tools of such studies are observation, in-depth interviews of teachers, non-obtrusive measures, records and documents etc. Studies of this tradition record detailed observations in descriptive fashion to reflect the reality and later content analyze them to generate categories in specified contexts.

A broad framework was evolved in a workshop in which the field workers and faculty associated with project participated. The purpose of the framework is to maintain a common uniformity of focus in all field sites. Field workers are expected to internalize the framework before starting their systematic observation. The description of the classroom processes and the contexts should be captured in their natural flow and the aspects identified in the framework given below should emerge out of the analysis of the

descriptions. One has to bear in mind that the activities do not take place in the real classroom in a discrete way and many aspects under consideration are embedded and enmeshed with each other. Same observation can lend itself for analysis to identify different aspects or one aspect may emerge out of several observations. The study is about deconstructing the observations to derive the categories representing different aspects and reconstruct the same to provide the underlying basis and manifestations of meanings. Therefore application of the framework is not mechanical.

The Sample

The present study is undertaken with the purpose of establishing bench mark to evaluate changes in the classroom process resulting out of DPEP interventions. Hence the study was planned to provide a descriptive picture of classroom process and interactions in diverse school/community contexts in the form of comparative case studies. The study is expected to reflect the diverse contexts in each primary school in the district of Palghat. For representing the diverse context it was necessary to include different types of primary schools under the study., In consultation with the District Project Office of DPEP at Palghat the following 5 schools of the district were selected:

1. Government Moyan Lower Primary School, Palghat City.
2. Kallapully Upper Primary School
3. Vavulliapuram Government Lower Primary School
4. Attipetta KMMLOP School
5. Vechapadi Lower Primary School

The study followed indepth observation with a descriptive frame of reference spread over three rounds of field visits. Each field visit consist of two days duration during which a few classes were observed and interviews with the head master, the teachers and the community members were conducted. A summary of the observation in terms of days and classwise teaching learning episode (periods) is given in table 1.

Table 1: Number of days and total number of class periods observed.

	VGLPS	GMLPS	AKMML OPS	KUPS	VTLPS	Total
No. of days	6	6	7	6	6	31
No. of periods observed	30	28	34	26	6	124

The class period in a school or across schools is not the same. To obtain the correct picture of the observations made in terms of the duration across categories the following table has been provided. Of the class periods observed some were fully spent of evaluation and hence such periods have been separated out and given in brackets.

Findings

Starting of the School: It was found that all primary schools do not follow the same time either for starting or closing. The government schools start at 10.00 a.m. and close at 4.00 p.m. whereas the private schools had longer duration and sometimes started as early as 9.45 a.m. and worked even beyond 4.00 p.m. The intermittent breaks provided to the children were also not the same across the schools. Usually a 15 minute break around 11.30 a.m. and a one hour lunch break between 12.30 p.m. to 2.30 p.m. were provided. This however does not apply to the tribal school covered under the study which had no definite starting or closing time. At least on four occasions the school did not start before 11.00 a.m. This however does not mean that the teacher was not available since they were provided with residential quarters by the Government which was very near to the school building.

It is expected that all teachers including the Headmaster and the children are available at the time that the school starts. It was observed in the study that most of the times the teachers and sometimes the Headmaster were not present at the time of the starting of the school. This was more often found in the government lower primary schools than in the private management schools. This did not affect the starting time of the school except in the case of the tribal school. Whichever teacher was present at the time of starting, undertook those routines and started the school. The attendance of teachers varies from school to school and in no case all the teachers were present either at the start of at the end or the school. This extreme situation existed among the remote

schools. Most teachers, except in the tribal school, reside at a distance of one to ten kms from the school. They use the public transport facilities for reaching the school. It is possible that on occasions they might be reaching the school later than expected even though they start from their home sufficiently early as stated by the teachers during their interview. The average distance traveled by a teacher was found to be 6.09 kms.

Combined Classes/sections: Kerala is a state which has provided one teacher for every class. Hence it is claimed that there are no multigrade primary schools in the state. There was not a single day in any of the schools observed when one or the other class/section was not combined with another. If on some occasions such a class period was one, on another occasions it happened through out the day. An attempt was made to find out which kind of combination was practised among the primary schools. A large number of schools practiced combination of different sections of the same grade. Also there were some occasions when the lower standards of I and II were combined. Depending upon the strength of students the size of class when combined varied from 44 to 144. This, however, was not true of the tribal school which had had a total strength of 49 students from class I to IV. On further analysis it was found that the average size of a combined class was 67.

Attendance of Children: The schools, both government and private, irrespective of their location were well attended by both boys and girls. It was found that the attendance figures in September and March were lower as compared to the figures in December.

Daily Scheduling of Teaching: The primary schools in the district of Palghat start with the teaching of Malayalam in all grades. The duration of this period varies from one to two hours. Even though there is no consistency, the forenoon is preferred for the teaching of EVS whereas the afternoon for the teaching of mathematics. But there are occasions where mathematics was taught in the forenoon session itself. Certain individual based work such as writing tables or solving problems are found to be done during the last class period.

Role of H M: It is found that due to her belief that she is an administrator and not an academic, the Headmistress knowingly or unknowingly adversely influences the functioning of the school and learning there in. For example, the class which is assigned to the Headmistress is generally found to be either looked after by some other teacher or is involved in rote learning and repetitive activities for a substantial time in the day since they do not require the presence of the teacher. The Headmistress also unwittingly, is an interruption to a class which is otherwise involved in learning. She peeps into or engages in talking to teachers in the middle of the class. This is primarily because of a thinking that the consultation which she is doing with a teacher is more important than the learning of the children.

Planning by Teacher: The teachers generally have no specific time when they undertook planning of instructional activities. It is done usually during the school hours thereby affecting instructional activities. In two schools, however, the teacher either undertook planning at the end of the day or were utilising after school hours for planning.

Pupil Participation: The learning experiences provided in the primary classes of Palghat are of three distinct types - individual, small group and whole class activities.

By individual activity, it is meant, that every learners in working by himself without any interaction with another learner. The individual activities are generally organised in the form of writing work by the children and are found either at the consolidation stage of a lesson or when a practice or the behaviour is thought necessary by the teacher. However, practice, drill and repetition do not form a part of the activity based approach where learning is more a 'construction' rather than 'a mechanical acquisition'. Teachers are not continually available to the learners from the start to the end of a school day due to absence. Therefore individual work in the form of repetitive practice where the task and its accomplishment are well defined seems to be a convenient practice. Total removal such drudgery seems to be extremely difficult as long as teaching is done as a job rather than practiced as a profession.

It was found that 4 out of 5 Schools are practicing Small Group Activity. The average size of a group is found to be 5-8 and duration of an activity ranged from 6 minutes to 30 minutes.

There is a general lack of concern, while practising the activity based teaching, or otherwise that pupil participation is necessary for pupil experiencing. Instead, the preference is one for completion of the activity. If the teacher observes that some students are unable to learn or benefit from the experiences provided, even then her efforts would be to teach only those students who are responding. This seems to be generally prevalent in the primary classrooms irrespective of their nature.

There seems to be a transition in the district with respect to the methodology of teaching at the primary stage from the conventional teacher centered verbal approach to learner centered activity based approach. This transition, however, is not complete. This is partially because of their perceptions of primary education which have not change much. The teachers and the parents think alike that the primary education must enable the learners to be able to read and write. This they considered as “serious teaching” as stated by one of the teachers. If it is generally felt by the Headmistress of a school and some parents that the DPEP approach brings in a lighter teaching. It is difficult to give up the so called serious teaching which is full of rote learning and repetition work to be done by the students.

The small group activities in the classrooms whenever used are not planned properly. The technique has not emerged from the need of the teacher. The practice is being followed because the teacher is instructed to utilize the technique.

Supervision of Classroom activities: Two most common ways of supervision and providing feedback followed in the primary classrooms of Palakkad seems to be moving around the class and sitting or standing in one place expecting the children to bring their work. Both these approaches have their limitations. In classes where the teacher is moving around, she is doing it more mechanically and does not provide the time that is required for supervision and individual feedback. When the teacher is at one place and the students have to bring their work, all students are not found to show their work after completion to the teacher. In both these some children who are not learning but are in

need of guidance get neglected. Those who can would learn and those who cannot would continue to lag behind in such classes.

Reinforcement Practices: There were a few instances when teachers used token incentives such as chocolates and chalk pieces. They declared to the students that the one who completes the task or the one who complete the task first would be given these incentives. However there was a general negligence of students who were not task oriented and were in need of a suitable reinforcement

When teacher encounters situations reflecting the inability of a learner to benefit from a given learning experience, she either turns a blind eye and proceeds further with what she has planned or advises such children to put in more effort, try again, practice at home etc.

They are used in the teaching of letters, words, etc. In teaching of Malayalam, and number concepts, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in mathematics and classification, comparison in EVS. Whereas the teacher uses this instructional material suitably in the class, they seem to be governed more by the suggestions of trainers and the way an activity is described in the teachers handbook than the adaptations required to suit their own classroom situations .

There seems to be a reluctance to preparing teaching aids and the teachers expect that the BRCs will provide them with teaching materials.

Availability of Textbooks: It was found during the course of the study that on no occasion did all children have textbooks with them. Mostly one or two copies were available for the entire class and there were instances when the teacher also did not have the textbook The role of textbook in activity based approach to teaching seems to be not very clear to the teachers. The tendency of using the textbook for mechanical and rote learning of its content still persists in the classrooms. This is extensively found in those classrooms where the teacher is not competent in using the activity based approach or is not convinced about the desirability of using it as the sole methodology. Reading from the textbook, making students read textbook and asking questions based on the textual content was still prevalent as a reminiscence of the pre-DPEP classrooms. Almost all

teachers were concerned that the textbooks are not supplied properly. Schooling and use of textbook are so strongly associated that some children and the parents who were interviewed during this study were also expressing their displeasure about the non-availability of textbooks.

Songs and singing by the children in the primary classrooms have become a common sight. Generally, children are actively participating in singing and are also found to be enjoying it. Topics such as school, home, animals form their content. Elephant is a favourite topic of songs. One also finds number songs involving counting, addition and subtraction. Most of the songs, it seems, are written by the teachers.

Songs are used in the primary schools of Palghat in five different ways.

1. At the beginning of the class
2. At the end of the class
3. While changing over to another activity
4. For attention seeking and disciplining
5. For keeping children occupied.

It can be seen that these items of evaluation are at best areas for the development of competence. They are not specific enough for an objective testing. It was not very clear from the teachers or the trainers as to why the items of evaluation should not be specific. This ambiguity in interpreting what should be the level of attainment for speaking, reading, writing or creative expression is found to have created a considerable amount of confusion among the teachers, children, parents and community. The general view held that “DPEP is singing and dancing and not learning”, probably stems from the vagueness in specifying the learning outcomes. The teacher, the child and the parents knew that the evaluation would be focussed on what is provided in the textbook. There is hardly any continuous evaluation practiced at the school level. Kerala has taken steps to orient the teachers and the parents about its philosophy of evaluation. It was noticed through the present study that the efforts made have not resulted in a general acceptance of the system. There are genuine questions raised, doubts expressed about its scientific nature, objectivity and appropriateness of the process and the practice of evaluation at the primary level. The fact that the English medium private schools still follow a system of awarding marks adds to the confusion existing.

Gender Discriminatory Practices Observed in the Classroom

- | | |
|---|-----------------|
| 1. Separate seating arrangements for boys and girls | - All schools |
| 2. Formation of Groups in the Classroom separately for boys and girls during activity | - All schools |
| 3. Teacher utterances that make children conscious of their gender belonging-ness | - Most teachers |
| 6. Providing greater opportunity for one group over the Other | - Many teachers |
| 5. Group leaders from one category only | - Some teachers |

The following instances of discrimination leading to inequality in opportunity to learn were found in the primary classrooms of Palghat district.

1. Children belonging to disadvantaged groups/communities were found to be seated separately in the classroom.
2. The teacher shows an implicit preference for children belonging to forward community/groups throughout the lesson starting from the formation of groups for activities, selection of leaders, supervising and providing assistance during learning.
3. Disproportionate expression of pleasure and praise towards the work done in reading, writing, oral participation etc. by the children belonging to well to do families/advantaged groups.
4. Remarks by a large number of teachers during interview that a certain category of children (belonging to disadvantaged groups) do not/cannot learn.
5. Expression by teachers in interview that they find it difficult to cope with the learning needs of children belonging to a certain category.

Comments by the teachers like, “the parents of these children don’t provide any help”, “these parents don’t come when we call them”, “if the mid-day meals were not given, they may not come to the school at all” etc, reflect their belief that certain category of children do not have any motivation/home background for learning

Pupils discipline and development of good behavior in them seems to be the most agreed upon goals of primary education among the teachers.

The community too seems to have an adverse opinion about the DPEP in general. They seem to find this as an effort to discriminate certain sections of the community. Children from the well to do family enrolled in the English medium private schools do not follow the DPEP curriculum or method. The children are taught in traditional method facilitating better performance of such children on the text book based board examinations. There seems to be a general dissatisfaction regarding the support received by the teachers from the BRC trainers. This is particularly more among the upper primary school teachers. The upper primary school teachers interviewed were very critical of the DPEP as a project and of the training support provided.

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Context

Palakkad is one amongst the three districts chosen for the first phase (expansion) for DPEP and the programme is being implemented since 1997. Apart from the BRCs and CRCs, the district consists of the additional structures like, PTA and MPTA (Mother Parent Teacher Association), School Welfare Committees, School Resource Groups, Village Education Committees at the School Level. The Lead School and the Cluster Resource Group at the cluster level, Block Resource Group and Block Advisory Committee at the block level, the District Resource Group, the District Monitoring Cell at the district level and the State Resource Group and State Advisory Committee at the State level. The typical structure of the a BRC is as follows:

Administrative Category	1
Academic Category (DIET faculty)	1
Trainers	10

The duties and responsibilities of the BRC are:

- conduct training programmes for teachers, CRC heads, Head Masters, VEC Secretaries
- Pay academic visits to at least five schools every week for providing on the job support to teachers in academic activities of the class.
- Convene VEC/CRC/school level meetings of functionaries including teachers. whenever necessary in consultation with the BRC Coordinator
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- Identify the training needs of the teachers
- Give academic support to teachers for undertaking action research

- Try out/experiment innovative classroom practices identified/developed at the school adopted by the BRC.

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The Sample

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2. Kallapully Upper Primary School
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4. Attipetta KMMLOP School
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A brief discription of these schools have been provided below.

Vavullipuram Lower Primary Government School

Vavilliapuram Lower Primary School is a rural primary school and is managed by the Government and has classes I to IV. It is a monograde school wherein each class is assigned to one teacher who is required to teach all subjects to that class. Since the school caters to Muslim population of the locality, it also undertakes teaching of Arabic, for which a separate teacher is provided. The school has a total number of five teachers. The strength of the school is 146 out of which 81 are boys and 65 are girls. The table below summarises the staff and student position..

Class	Student Strength			Teacher
	Boys	Girls	Total	
Standard I	16	10	26	Ms. Pankaj
Standard II	28	27	55	Ms. Laila
Standard III	17	12	29	Ms. Kamala
Standard IV	20	16	36	Mr. Rashappan
Arabic Teacher				Mr. Mustafa
Head Mistress				Ms. V.M. Janaki
Total	81	65	146	

Apart from muslims, the school has on its rolls children belonging to scheduled caste and scheduled tribe and OBC. The school is located on the main road in about 44 cents of land and the building which is 75 years old is almost in a dilapidated condition. The built up area is about 400 sq. ft, and falls short of 460 sq. Fts., which is the minimum area required for appointment of a sweeper for maintenance. It has a large hall of 80x20 feet and a room of 20x20 feet. The hall accommodates classes II, III and IV whereas the room accommodates classes I, HM's office, and staff room. Mid-day meal is also cooked here and the teaching aids and a cupboard are also kept.

The building was donated by a community member who did not have children, but now the relatives who are legal heirs want the property back due to its commercial value. Hence, the building has not been maintained for a long time and the walls and floors are badly damaged and the roof in a portion is likely to fall and has been declared unsafe by the public works engineers. One part of the building is dark and dingy with little ventilation. The building is under a litigation for 10 years.

The school has no toilet facility. Drinking water is available in the form of an open well and a borewell just outside the school. Some space in front and some behind is available for children to play.

Most children come from families of agricultural labourers. There are two English medium schools at a distance about 5 kms, of due to lack of popularity of government. Malayalam medium schools. The next nearest government school is closed. Children have to walk sometimes more than 2 kms, To reach the school. The school functions from 10.00 am to 4 pm. It has a Parent Teacher Association.

Government Moyan Lower Primary School

Government Moyan Lower Primary School is an urban primary school and is managed by the government. The school is one of the oldest schools in Palakkad district. It was a part of a larger school and was separated by a Government Order in 1961. The school runs classes I to IV, each having two sections, except for standard I which has three sections. This is probably because the school has started running a preschool recently under the PTA which is yet to be recognised. As per the norms of the Government of Kerala, it is understood that if the strength in a class is 96 or more, the school is entitled to have a third section. The strength of Standard I at present is 98. The school has two male and seven female teachers. The number of girl students is 15% more than the boys. The school caters to a predominantly muslim population with some SC, OBC and other categories.

The school is built on three sides of a rectangle. The upper primary block is like an auditorium and is built from the Mandal Panchayat fund is a large hall of 18x20 feet and has lights and fans fitted in it. It is a RCC building and so is the room in which standard II is running which is of 20x20 dimension. The other rooms though large and spacious are in buildings which have tiled roof.. The area of the play ground is about .75 acres. The school runs from 10.00 am to 4.00 pm. It has an active PTA several incentive programmes of the Government of Kerala are being implemented in this school.

Kallapully Upper Primary School

The Kallapulli Upper Primary School is a rural school run by a private management. The school started about 90 years back and draws children within a radius of 1.5 kms. The management of the school has changed hands in 1987. The school manager is the Headmaster and his wife the Assistant. The management runs three schools, namely, Lakshmi Sarejpu LPS which is 130 years old, Murugani LPS which is about 100 years old. The school has a total student strength of 936 out of which 253 are SC students. The other castes to which the school caters to are Ezhavas, Viswakarmas and Nairs. The school has class from I to IV and has five female teachers apart from the

manager who is a male. The nearest primary school is about 2 kms, from there. The school has got the award of DPEP as the best school that caters to the SC students. It is located in the Marathora Panchayat area. This Panchayat did not have a high school till last year. The staff room and the HM's rooms are in one block which is newly constructed. The lower classes, i.e., three sections of standard I is in one building and standards II and III are in another building which also has a library room. The IVth standard alongwith the Vth, VIth and VIIth are in another building. The buildings are close to each other having a bare minimum structure. The school building is an old one with a inner room and corridors on all four sides which are converted into class rooms. The staff and HM's room are a RCC roof whereas the other rooms are of tiled. Most children of this school are from families that are agricultural labourers. According to the school authorities 90 percent of the children who pass out go to the nearby high school. The school runs from 9.45 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. with a lunch break of one hour at 12.30 p.m. The school also functions on some Saturdays since a minimum of 200 working days is required per academic year according to the Education Department. Last year the school had worked for 196 days. It has a Parent Teacher Association which meets five to six times a year. The school play ground is about two acres. The rooms are spacious and confirm to the Kerala Education Act of 1959, according to which the classroom must have a size of 200 sq.ft., i.e. 20x20x12.

The classwise distribution in the school is as follows:

Class	Total Strength in the Classes Observed			
	Boys	Girls	SC Boys	SC Girls
Standard I	52	50	10	9
Standard II	59	57	21	18
Standard III	56	58	16	19
Standard IV	55	50	18	12

Of the 938 students about 80 percent of the children are OBCs, Ezhavas, Asharies (Carpenter) and Thattans (Gold Smiths). About 2% of the children come from forward community and 5% are muslims. Most children come from Marudarola Panchayat and specifically from Kalapully village.

Attipetta KMMLOP School

The Attipetta KMMLOP School is a private management school run by the Mangolta Kawa Trust. The school is about 1 km. away from the main road and the approach road is a mud road wide enough to allow autorickshaws to ply. The school was started in 1917. There were no private English medium schools or Government schools in this village till recently. The village also has an English medium school which is gaining in popularity. Due to a drop in the enrolment of this school, a section in class II was closed and a teacher who had paid huge amount for appointment lost his job. The school has a total of 340 children of which 162 are boys and 178 are girls. The school has I to IV standards with 2 to 3 sections per standard. It has two male and 8 female teachers. This school has got the award for the best VEC. The school timings are 10.. a.m. to 4.00 p.m. and the school has a reasonably good building which is spacious and an open well for drinking water, It has a reasonably good library containing about 200 books. The school has a PTA which meets about four times in a year.

Vechapadi Lower Primary School

This school is a tribal Tamil medium school situated in the Mannarkad Block. The school comes under Shloayar Panchayat, Ward No.7 and caters to the children coming from Vellagulam and Mulagangal villages. The first village is quite close to the school whereas the second is about 8 kms away. There is no motorable road that leads to this village and has no electricity. People in the village depends on a running stream for drinking water. The school has a bore well which has been under repair for a long time. To reach this school one has to get down at Kalalakandy and walk about 4 kms, across two hills. The school has a total strength of 49 of which 28 children belongs to Vellagalam village and 21 to the Mulagangal village. The majority of the first standard children come from the far off village. The school was built 25 years back and is managed by the Government of Kerala. It has classes from I to IV and the official timings of the school are 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. The school is yet to attract all the students in the

nearby hamlets since some are not yet coming to the school. The school also has no DPEP volunteers for the enrolment drive. The building of this school is an RCC construction which is quite spacious with four rooms for conducting the four classes. The school also has four residential quarters for the teachers since the approved staff strength of this school is four including the headmaster. The school has a PTA. It was reported learnt that the local panchayat has sanctioned Rs.4 lakhs for the construction of the road but no contractor is ready to take up the work. This school is one among the few schools run by the Government of Kerala in Tamil Medium for tribal children whereas in this block there is a Malayalam medium school also.

Tools of Observation

The study followed indepth observation with a descriptive frame of reference spread over three rounds of field visits. Each field visit consist of two days duration during which a few classes were observed and interviews with the head master, the teachers and the community members were conducted. A summary of the observation in terms of days and classwise teaching learning episode (periods) is given in table 1.

Table 1: Number of days and total number of class periods observed.

	VGLPS	GMLPS	AKMML OPS	KUPS	VTLPS	Total
No. of days	6	6	7	6	6	31
No. of periods observed	30	28	34	26	6	124

The distribution of the class observation across grades and subjects is as follows:

Table 2: Standards and Subject-wise Class Periods observed

School	Std.	No. of Periods Observed			
		Malayalam	Mathematics	EVS	Total No. of Classes
VGLPS	I	4	2	2	8
	II	2	2	2	6
	III	4	1	1	6
	IV	2	5	3	10
	Total	12	10	8	30
GMLPS	I	7	2	-	9
	II	2	1	2	5
	III	1	3	3	7
	IV	3	4	-	7
	Total	13	10	5	28
KUPS	I	4	2	-	6
	II	4	3	2	9
	III	4	4	-	8
	IV	3	3	3	9
	Total	16	12	5	32
AKMM-LOPS	I	4	3	-	7
	II	3	4	2	9
	III	4	1	-	5
	IV	2	1	2	5
	Total	13	9	4	26
VLPS	I	-	-	-	-
	II	2	-	-	2
	III	2	-	2	4
	IV	-	-	-	-
	Total	4	-	2	6

The class period in a school or across schools is not the same. To obtain the correct picture of the observations made in terms of the duration across categories the following table has been provided. Of the class periods observed some were fully spent of evaluation and hence such periods have been separated out and given in brackets.

Table 3: Duration of Observation across subjects and standards (in minutes)

School	Std.	No. of Periods Observed (in minutes)			
		Malayalam	Mathematics	EVS	Total Duration of observation
VGLPS	I	130 (45)	90 (45)	75	295 (90)
	II	60 (90)	60 (75)	60	180 (165)
	III	160 (15)	40	(20)	200 (35)
	IV	90	170 (90)	95	355 (90)
	Total	440 (150)	360 (210)	230 (20)	1030 (380)
GMLPS	I	300	70	-	370
	II	90	30	90	210
	III	45	110	120	275
	IV	135	165	-	300
	Total	570	375	210	1155
KUPS	I	150 (30)	75 (30)	-	225 (60)
	II	180	105	95	380
	III	165	160	-	325
	IV	135	110	120	365
	Total	630 (30)	450 (30)	215	1295 (60)
AKMM-LOPS	I	170 (30)	125 (30)	-	295 (60)
	II	110 (30)	180 (20)	85 (20)	375 (70)
	III	185	30 (45)	-	215 (45)
	IV	75 (75)	30	70	175 (75)
	Total	540 (135)	365 (95)	155 (20)	1060 (250)
VLPS	I	-	-	-	-
	II	90	20	-	110
	III	60	-	75	135
	IV	-	-	-	-
	Total	150	20	75	245

Starting of the School

It was found that all primary schools do not follow the same time either for starting or closing. The government schools start at 10.00 a.m. and close at 4.00 p.m. whereas the private schools had longer duration and sometimes started as early as 9.45 a.m. and worked even beyond 4.00 p.m. The intermittent breaks provided to the children were also not the same across the schools. Usually a 15 minute break around 11.30 a.m. and a one hour lunch break between 12.30 p.m. to 1.30 p.m. were provided. This however does not apply to the tribal school covered under the study which had no definite starting or closing time. At least on four occasions the school did not start before 11.00 a.m. This however does not mean that the teacher was not available since they were provided with

residential quarters facility by the Government which was very near to the school building.

Punctuality of teachers and pupils

It is expected that all teachers including the Headmaster and the children are available at the time that the school starts. It was observed in the study that most of the times the teachers and sometimes the Headmaster were not present at the time of the starting of the school. This was more often found in the government lower primary schools than in the private management schools. This did not affect the starting time of the school except in the case of the tribal school. Whichever teacher was present at the time of starting, undertook those routines and started the school. There seems to be an implicit understanding among the teachers in the school regarding the starting of the school and on occasions even when the Headmaster, who is the head of the school, was absent the school started on time. Usually the starting of the school was done with the ringing of the bell followed by a school assembly. Children sing a prayer and take an oath and sometimes the National Anthem in the assembly. Some important announcements regarding common functions or activities of the school or achievements of the school were made known to the children in the assembly. Children usually stood in class-wise lines and after the assembly went to their respective classes in lines. However, such a practice was absent in remote schools and the discipline shown by the children reduced as one moved away from the city to schools located in rural to remote areas.

It has been mentioned earlier that the DPEP envisages formation of School Resource Groups consisting of all the teachers and the Headmaster of the school. This group is basically constituted to ensure professional interaction among the teachers and instructional planning. In schools where more than one section of a particular standard existed the teachers were expected to ensure that the inputs provided to children in different sections were comparable since they were part of a single group. If this is not there then can variations be given in the form of inputs provided to children who attend the same class but belong to different sections. Whereas there are no free periods available to the primary school teachers such an interaction for planning instruction and

evaluation can happen either at the beginning or at the end of school time. The DPEP envisages that the teachers spend at least 45 minutes in a day in planning for the instructional activities of the next day and meet once in a month for longer duration planning or for discussing any other issues at the classroom level. The Cluster Resource persons who is a trainer and the Block Resource person are expected to organise this meeting as stated in the functions of the BRC. This would mean that the students and the teachers will not have the same time of closing. The classes are expected to be organised till 3.15 p.m. after which the children either play or go home whereas the SRG will meet from 3.45 p.m. to 4.00 p.m. which is the actual closing time of the school. It was observed that on most occasions the closing time for the children and the teachers was the same and ranged between 3.00 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. In other words even though the SRG existed on paper it did not exist in reality to fulfill whatever functions it was meant for.

Punctuality of the teachers was studied in terms of the attendance at the start and the end of the school.

Table 4: Teacher Attendance at the Start and End of the School

	VGLPS	GMLPS	SKMMLOPS	KUPS	VTLPS
At Start	52%	66.9%	85%	80%	0%
At the End	70.5%	90%	94.8%	92%	20%
Teacher Strength	4F+1M+1M Arabic	7F+2M+1M Arabic	8F+2M+1M Arabic	6F	2F+1M

It can be seen from the table that the attendance of teachers varies from school to school and in no case all the teachers were present either at the start of at the end or the school. This extreme situation existed among the remote schools. It can also be seen from the table that the lower primary schools in Kerala had predominantly female teachers which from the point of view of education is sound. However, the study revealed that there is a likelihood, as found in the case of two schools, that the female teachers could be on a long leave without any replacement on account of maternity. The Government of Kerala, it seems, has recently increased the maternity leave period from three months to four and a half months.

Most schools in Kerala also have an additional hand in the form of an Arabic teacher where the school caters to muslim population. There seem to be an ingenious use

of this teacher who is found to engaging those classes where teachers are on leave. However, the Arabic teachers are not trained under DPEP to use the methodology prescribed by the programme. They may not be able to provide the kind of continuity required in teaching. Even though it is generally true that due to unpreparedness the class engaged by this teacher may have to be repeated by the regular teacher. If trained they can contribute to the children's learning and may prove to provide a solution to the problem of short duration absence of a teacher on several grounds.

"I went to standard III 11.45 a.m. The regular teacher is on maternity leave and the Arabic teacher has been asked to teach the grade. The teacher began the lesson by asking the children if they have seen a circus. The children say "Yes", The teacher repeats the question. Have you really seen a circus? He says there are a lot of animals. Children nods. The teacher says there are so many animals in the circus. He continues and says that the circus troops also travels out of the country. This teacher is making an attempt to teach Malayalam. The teacher asks "do you know about the clown in the circus?" The teacher asks the children to describe the cloth of a clown....." (from the diary of the observer, VGLPS, R-I, D-I) The reason for teachers not being present at the start of the school seems to be the distance traveled by them.

Table 5: Distance Traveled by the Teachers (based on Teacher's Interviews)

	VGLPS	GMLPS	AKMMLOPS	KUPS	%
Less than 1 Km	-	1	-	-	5.26
1-5 kms.	1	3	3	1	42.11
5-10 km.s	4	1	1	2	42.11
10-25 kms.	-	-	1	-	5.26
More than 25 kms.	-	-	-	1	5.26
Average Distance	4.9 kms.	3.3 kms.	5.9 kms.	10.25 kms.	6.09 kms.

Most teachers, except in the tribal school, reside at a distance of one to ten kms from the school. They use the public transport facilities for reaching the school. It is possible that on occasions they might be reaching the school later than expected even though they start from their home sufficiently early as stated by the teachers during their

interview. The average distance traveled by a teacher was found to be 6.09 kms. Whereas in the tribal school the government has provided housing facilities near the school for all teachers. This should apparently mean that these schools should start right on time. This does not seem to be the case since on no occasions were all teachers present at the school and on most of the occasions they were likely to remain in their quarters even beyond the starting time of the school. The following field notes and the statements made by the community members during the interview illustrates the same. "I went to the school around 10.00 a.m. and was talking to the students. The school had not began the teacher was just getting up from bed. After sometime the teacher came to the school this teacher started the class at 11.00 a.m. The teacher reveals that they normally teach for about one hour. (R-1, D-1) on an average out of five days in a week this teacher is here for two days. Our children walk a distnace of 8 kms. (From Mulagangal) and may find that the school does not functions (Interview with the Community).

Kerala is a state which has provided one teacher for every class. Hence it is claimed that there are no multigrade primary schools in the state. Teacher absenteeism and teacher irregularity in fact makes it necessary that either their classes are combined with some other class or attended by some other teacher during the course of teaching in her class.

Table 6: Days when classes were not combined

Round 1	Nil
Round 2	Nil
Round 3	Nil

It is surprising to note that during the course of the field visit there was not a single day in any of the schools observed when one or the other class/section was not combined with another. If on some occasions such a class period was one, on another occasions it happened through out the day.

An attempt was made to find out which kind of combination was practised among the primary schools.

Table 7: Nature of Combination Classes

Monograde Combination	41 (83.67%)
Multigrade Combination	8 (11.33%)
Combinations involving Standards I/II	32(65.31%)
Combinations involving III/IV	17(34.69%)
Size of the class when combined	44-144 students
Average size of a combined class	67 students

A large number of schools practiced combination of different sections of the same grade. Also there were some occasions when the lower standards of I and II were combined. Depending upon the strength of students the size of class when combined varied from 44 to 144. This, however, was not true of the tribal school which had had a total strength of 49 students from class I to IV. On further analysis it was found that the average size of a combined class was 67.

Considering that the classes combined were more of lower grades and that the average size of a combined class was 67 meant that it was extremely difficult to practice activity based teaching in such classes. The teachers time and effort was spent in creating a learning environment or in maintaining discipline among the children. Even the teachers who were otherwise practising the approach suggested by the trainers in the DPEP programme, could not do so at least in the combined classes. The following is a situation which illustrates the same. “This teacher is finding it difficult to control the class. The first standard has three sections. The Headmistress is in charge of one section. She is always engaged with the office related work and hence her class is split and each teacher handles one and a half sections. The teacher shout to get the attention of the children. The children do not listen. Then the teacher asks all of them to stand and ----- Two kids were fighting amongst themselves. The teacher makes them to be seated near her. The rest of the activities of this class was done with the students standing. The teacher hits the stick on the table to get the kids to listen She repeats that all children should write but many do not do so. The teacher says frustratedly “I have never seen such children like you”. (R-2)

Student Attendance

It can be seen from Table 8 that the attendance of students varied from school to school. It was lowest in the case of the tribal primary school. The government schools which are urban and private schools irrespective of their location were well attended by both boys and girls. It is possible that the figures available on records, especially of remote schools might not be fully reliable if the situation was one as found in the case of this remote school. "According to the register there are 12 children. Seven of them have come. The last attendance was taken on the 18th of September. The date today is 23rd September, 1998.....The afternoon class started at 2.20 p.m. The attendance register was filled up and till the 22nd of this month. The teacher did this during the break time. The teacher seems to be unaware of the date. Today is 23rd and the attendance is marked for 22nd.

It can also be seen from the table that in the two government schools the attendance of girls was higher than that of boys whereas in the two private schools it was vice-versa.

Table 8: Student Attendance Across Schools (percentage)

	VGLPS	GMLPS	AKMMLOP	KUPS	TOTAL
No. of observations	8	15	12	10	45
Boys	70.80	76.22	88.37	89.79	80.05
Girls	72.55	88.03	81.52	82.86	81.24
Total	71.68	82.13	82.45	86.33	

Table 9: Class-wise Attendance (percentage)

	No. of observations	Boys	Girls	Total
Std. I	17	74.44	72.77	73.61
Std. II	16	81.89	77.21	79.55
Std. III	14	74.10	84.88	79.49
Std. IV	14	77.30	76.60	76.95

When the attendance of children was analysed class-wise, it was found that the attendance figures for standard I was the lowest whereas the average attendance was 77.30%. It is believed that the student attendance is influenced by the seasonal variations especially the period connected with agriculture and monsoon. Even though the present study was not conducted to represent all the seasons during and academic calendar, the data were analysed round-wise which happened over a period of seven months.

Table 10: Student Attendance during three Rounds

	Round I (Sept.)	Round II (Dec.)	Round III (Feb./March)
No. Of Observations	17	94	14
Boys	78.13%	83.44%	76.14%
Girls	70.97%	87.76%	77.04%
Total	74.55%	85.60%	76.59%

It was found that the attendance figures for September and March were lower than those for December. Even though it is difficult to confirm from these figures that the seasons influence school attendance, it may not be ruled out either.

Retention

Universalisation of retention of children in primary schools is one of the components of UEE. It is also an aim of DPEP. In Kerala there exists a wide spread awareness about the need for primary education and unlike other states, enrollment and retention are not the main concern of the programme. However, the programme has provided for volunteers for conducting enrollment drives. Such a drive is needed in remote areas where children are not yet enrolled. This is particularly true of the tribal areas of the district of Palakkad. Once enrolled, children are generally found to be completing their primary schooling. There seems to be a peculiar phenomenon of reenrollment after completion of the IV standard in the state, particularly in the tribal Tamil medium schools. There were at least four such children who had reenrolled themselves. If on the one hand, their poor competence in reading and writing made them unacceptable in school with higher classes

where they sought admission, the lure of incentive schemes, especially monetary gain, encouraged the parents to send them back into the primary school. This, however, was not done with great joy and the parents were concerned that their children are unable to complete their schooling and are unable to read and write even after four years of schooling.

It has been observed that there is a trend of children migrating from the government schools as well as private Malayalam medium schools to the English medium schools.

Illustration: “When I took over as the Manager of the school there were only 700 children. The strength gradually increased to 1400. However, with the introduction of this new method strength has reduced to 936 (from KUPS HM’s Interview).

School Time Table

As mentioned earlier all schools in the district do not have the same time for starting or closing the schools. If the government schools follow a 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. timing, the private management schools are found to start earlier than 10.00 a.m. and run some times beyond 4.00 p.m. However, for the sake of comparability a 10.00 a.m. to 3.15 a.m. duration has been analysed for finding out the internal time table of the school. Further, the schools were also found to differ in terms of the duration of a class period. A 45 minutes duration was considered for a class period.

Table 11: The time table followed by the VGLPS during the days of observation

	I	II	III	IV
10.00-10.45	Malayalam	Malayalam	Malayalam	Maths
10.45-11.30	Maths	Malayalam	Malayalam (Arabic Tr.)	EVS
11.45-12-30	-	EVS	Malayalam	Health, EVS
02.00-02.45	EVS	Maths	EVS	EVS
02.45-03.15	Singling	Maths	Arabic Tr. Writing	Maths

Table 12: The timetable followed by the GMLPS during the days of observation

	I	II	III	IV
10.00-10.45	Malayalam	Malayalam	EVS	Malayalam
10.45-11.30	Maths	EVS	Maths	Malayalam
11.45-01.00	Song Malayalam	EVS	Maths	Maths
02.00-02.45	Rhymes	EVS	Story writing	Maths
02.45-03.15	Singling	Maths	Maths	

Table 13: The time table followed by the KUPS during the days of observation

	I	II	III	IV
10.00-10.45	Malayalam	Malayalam	Maths	Malayalam
10.45-11.30	Maths	Malayalam	Maths	EVS
11.45-01.00	Maths	Malayalam	Maths	Health, EVS
02.00-02.45	Writing	Malayalam	Malayalam	Malayalam
02.45-03.15	Play, Song, Dance	Incl. Work	Malayalam writing	Maths

Note: School starts before 10.00 a.m. and runs beyond 3.15 p.m.

Table 14: The time table followed by the AKMMLOPS during the days of observation

	I	II	III	IV
10.00-10.45	Malayalam	Malayalam	Malayalam	Malayalam
10.45-11.30	Malayalam	Malayalam	Incl. work	-
11.45-01.00	-	EVS	Malayalam	Health, EVS
02.00-02.45	Malayalam	Maths	Maths	-
02.45-03.15	Malayalam	Maths	Maths	Maths

The primary schools in the district of Palakkad start with the teaching of Malayalam in all grades. The duration of this period varies from one to two hours. Even though there is no consistency, the forenoon is preferred for the teaching of EVS whereas the afternoon for the teaching of mathematics. But there are occasions where

mathematics was taught in the forenoon session itself. Certain individual based work such as writing tables or solving problems are found to be done during the last class period. This may particularly be true for those situations when the children are likely to be inattentive or non-participative for any other kind of activities.

Malayalam is taught for a relatively longer duration during the day followed by mathematics and environmental studies. If one examines the situation across the classes in standard I the children spend more time on Malayalam as compared to those in standard IV who seems to spend more time on mathematics. The later part towards the end of the forenoon and the afternoon sessions, one finds that the children are engaged in either lighter activity such as play, singing and dancing or are engaged in mechanical activities such as writing, problem solving or such other exercises. However, this is not followed uniformly either within or across the schools. It was noticed that the children are put on mechanical or repeated exercises when the regular teacher of the class is not available to them, if they belong to higher classes. On the contrary one finds that the children in the lower classes are likely to engaged in playing or singing or not doing anything if their teacher is not available. There seems to be a lower possibility of children present in their classes being kept totally idling if they are attending private management schools, whereas the children who attend the government primary school, through out their primary classes will find themselves to be sitting idle in the class on numerous occasions.

Role of the Headmaster

Headmaster of a primary school is responsible for all the activities that happen in the school. As a manager she designs the time schedule, supervises instructional activities, interacts with the community, arrange meeting of school and community organisations and administers the school officially and organisationally. The Headmaster is the most experienced among the teachers by virtue of here length of service as a teacher. The DPEP has envisaged a very active and supportive role for a Headmaster in ensuring Universalisation of Elementary Education in terms of enrolment, retention and achievement. Being a teacher the Headmaster is also to undertake teaching in one of the classes or sections of the class. It was noticed that with respect to teaching there are two

types of Headmasters working in the primary schools. Those who consider that administration is their primary responsibility and the others who want to but are unable to attend to teaching regularly. With respect to punctuality it was observed that the Headmasters are no different from the teachers. She also comes late, goes early or takes leave. When the Headmaster is present in the school she conducts assembly, allocates work other than teaching to other teachers, supervises arrangements for activities of the school such as meetings of PTA etc., undertakes liaison work with community in improving the school facilities and implementation of incentive schemes such as mid-day meal. It is found that due to her belief that she is an administrator and not an academic, the Headmistress knowingly or unknowingly adversely influences the functioning of the school and learning there in. For example, the class which is assigned to the Headmistress is generally found to be either looked after by some other teacher or is involved in rote learning and repetitive activities for a substantial time in the day since they do not require the presence of the teacher. The Headmistress also unwittingly, is an interruption to a class which is otherwise involved in learning. She peeps into or engages in talking to teachers in the middle of the class. This is primarily because of a thinking that the consultation which she is doing with a teacher is more important than the learning of the children.

Even though this is a general trend, there are exceptions as well. Such expectations come from the private management schools. In the private management schools the Headmistress expects greater discipline amongst children and teachers and hence is not found interfering with a class. She looks into the plans prepared by the teachers which is more often mechanically done. Following are some instances to illustrate the above.

“Reached the school at 10.00 a.m. Two teachers have come by 10.00 a.m. The Headmistress comes at 10.30 a.m. The Headmistress is just sitting and chatting with the third standard children The Headmistress disappears from standard III. The Headmistress return to class III and takes attendance..... The Headmistress is sitting with a stick. She has given some writing work to keep the children engaged. Later the peon comes and is in conversation with the Headmistress. She leaves the class and comes to her room..... The Headmistress comes back to class III and is asking each child in front

and tell something. The II standard is combined to relieve the Headmistress to attend to office work and also take charge of the III standard. The Headmistress again went back to her room..... The III standard are once again left along. The Headmistress is not supervising the work given and the children do what they want to. Some children are watching the IV standard where mathematics lesson was being taken (from the Observer's diary, VLPGS R-1, D-1).

Planning

If the Headmistress is responsible for the institutional planning, the teachers are to undertake instructional planning in teaching. Under DPEP it is envisaged that teachers will regularly plan the learning exercises to be provided to the children. The provision made to ensure this is the formation of the School Resource Group (it has been recently renamed as SSG since SRG can also mean State Resource Group). According to the trainers the last hour of the day is meant for planning and preparation for the next day teaching. Apart from this the weekly group meeting at the school level and monthly at the cluster level are used for planning. The BRC trainers have an active monitoring and guidance function to perform in such planning.

It was found that the sincerity in planning instructional activities was more prevalent among the BRC trainers who regularly visit the schools and undertake planning exercises with the teachers than the teachers. Except in two schools, planning was not regularly undertaken by the teachers and there were hardly any coordination between what happened in one section and the other of some grades on a specific school day. Even those for organizational reasons had are divided t students into more than one section if they belonged to one grade and the instructional inputs had some comparability if were not exactly similar. The following table shows the time when the planning is done by the teachers.

Table 15: Time when Planning is done by the Teachers

In between Class (Children given some mechanical work)	44.08
At the end of the School (Last period)	35.80%
At home	20.12%

It can be seen from the above table that the teachers generally have no specific time when they undertook planning of instructional activities. It is done usually during the school hours thereby affecting instructional activities. In two schools, however, the teacher either undertook planning at the end of the day or were utilising after school hours for planning. Even though it is an advantage to primary education to have lady teachers it is found that they are unable to undertake school related work at their homes since they have several types of tasks to attend to. Hence it may be necessary to ensure that the instructional interaction period with the children is little shorter than the actual school hours. It is also found that the trainers are unable to impress upon the teachers or the Headmistress for such a provision and some have adjusted to this reality by undertaking planning of the teachers concerned during the class hours itself. There are instances when planning and teacher work have assumed greater importance than effective use of instructional time for learning by children.

Starting of the Class

The morning first period of the school after the assembly is meant for taking attendance of the children. As soon as the teacher goes into the classroom she takes the attendance and passes on the information either directly or through a student to the Headmistress who needs to instruct the cook preparation of the for mid-day meal. This is followed by singing which varies from I to III, whereas on other occasions the teacher employs other ways of starting the class. It is found that songs are the most common ways for starting a class if what is taught is Malayalam or EVS. In some cases mathematics classes also began with songs. The children then have to read out the diary they have written about their experiences of the previous day. Some times the teacher goes round the class and looks into these diaries. The teacher gives instructions about an activity and organizes the same. This is when the teacher is implementing what she has planned. There are occasions, however, when the teacher uses some additional activities such as clapping, hand movement and sitting up for making the children ready. It was found that the teachers do not use songs or warm up exercises as a preamble to work which the children have to do if the teacher was the class and had no instructional plan to

implement. The following is an instance when the Arabic teacher was to teach a section of the students.

Table 16: Ways in which the learning episode begins

1. Question Answer
2. Teacher discourse
3. Small Group Work
4. Teacher Instruction
5. Writing Work
6. Reading work

Experiential Learning

Primary education till the implementation of DPEP was considered to be mechanical, full of rote learning and devoid of the life experiences of children. Hence, a motto of the methodology advocated by the DPEP is to make learning 'experience based'. This seems to be sound both ideologically and psychologically since it takes into account the 'environmental' and the 'developmental' contexts of primary education. 'Learning for life' and not 'learning for examination' is the concern.

In the DPEP methodology, the child is to be provided with the designed experiences, usually in the form of activities, to participate and learn. Emphasis is more on the 'doing' by the child and less on 'listening; and 'mechanical repetition' of an excepted terminal behaviours. Teacher's role here is not 'proactive' but 'facilitative'. The methodology of experiential learning is child centred and not teacher centred. Any experience and every experience may not be suitable for any child. Its appropriateness is assessed in terms of its 'content' and 'organisation'. It was found that the activities were generally suitable to the children to the content aspect.

While organising the activity based approach, every child has to undergo the experience intended. Learner is the unit and not the class. Experimental learning to be organised in the group context of a classroom seems to pose some problems. Some children tend to monopolise the participation's more than others which would not ensure learning by all. Teachers needs to resist the tendency of 'getting correct answers and moving ahead with the activity/session". If not done, the methodology may not be viewed

as much different from the earlier textbook based approach where ‘completing the lesson’ was the be all and end all of teaching.

Analysis of Pupil Participation

The methodology advocated by DPEP can be best described as activity based, experiential learning. It views pupil participation as paramount to learning unlike the earlier emphasis on teacher activity. The methodology aims at mastery learning by the children. Several competencies are identified for development among the children. The teacher is expected to plan and organise activities for children in order to help them acquire these competencies. Conceptually, the methodology considers every learner as a unit of learning rather than the classroom group. Participation of the learner during the course of a learning episode is considered important. An analysis of the degree of participation of children in a learning episode has been made as given below. The table provides the number of learning episodes observed during the course of the study with each category of pupil participation.

Table 17: Number of Learning Episodes with Different Degrees of Pupil Participation

	VGLPS	GMLPS	KUPS	AKMMLOP	VLPS	Total
None	4	8	4	3	12	31
Only Leaders	9	12	14	14	0	49
Less than 5 children	11	14	7	6	2	40
5-10 Children	5	4	5	7	0	21
Many Children	2	2	4	5	0	13
All Children	0	0	0	0	0	0

It can be seen from the table that the predominant category of participation in the classroom happens to be either of the leaders of groups formed by the teacher or of less than 5 children of the class. It may be mentioned that in most cases the children who are the leaders in a group activity are the ones who participate when the learning episode is not a group activity. This is followed by the instances when 5 to 10 children of the class are participated. The category of no participation by the children is exaggerated because a large contribution to this category comes from one single school which is the tribal

school. In this school the teacher most often is making a discourse, a monologue or is found reading from the textbook. There has been no instance when all the children of the class participated in an activity till its completion or till the learning occurred. Even in those cases where the teacher took extreme care to involve children could not do so completely because these were also the classes where the number of children in a class was large. However, an instance of participation by all children in individual work (writing) was observed in a class where team teaching was organised. This has been taken as an exception in a monograde teaching context where only one teacher is available at a time to any given class.

The participation by children happens in several ways. Broadly, they are classified as oral, written and doing (psycho-motor). Under these categories the following types of pupil participation have been observed.

Oral Participation:

- Repeating
- Answering to questions
- Conversation
- Composing/ Story telling
- Reading
- Reciting
- Singing

Written Work

- Copying
- Writing words/sentences
- Composing
- Problem Solving
- Drawing

Doing

- Counting physical objects
- Classifying physical objects
- Arranging physical objects

The learning experiences provided in the primary classes of Palakkad are of three distinct types - individual, small group and whole class activities.

By individual activity, it is meant, that every learner works by himself without any interaction with another learner. The individual activities are generally organised in the form of writing work by the children and are found either at the consolidation stage of a lesson or when a practice or the behaviour is thought necessary by the teacher. However, practice, drill and repetition do not form a part of the activity based approach where learning is more a 'construction' rather than 'a mechanical acquisition'. Working in a system where the teacher is not continually available to the learners from the start to the end of a school day due to absence of the teacher from the class, individual work in the form of repetitive practice where the task and its accomplishment are well defined, seems to be a convenient practice whose total removal seems to be extremely difficult to as long as teaching is done as a job rather than practiced as a profession.

However, individual activity has a place in the methodology of DPEP as seen in the following cases. While doing individual work, the participation of children is neither complete nor continuous. On the one hand there are instances when several children in the class are not doing the work/doing some other work/engaged in talking/fighting/copying from others. On the other hand there are the instances when the children are yet to complete an activity, but the teacher has proceeded to the next task.

Table 17: What children do during individual work

1. Doing the Intended work
2. Copying from other child
3. Talking among themselves
4. Fighting with another child
5. Doing an unconnected work
6. Doing task of some other competency/subject
7. Moving around in the class

The second type of activity is small group activity. Small group activities are a definite contribution of the DPEP. This is also an aspect of methodology shift due to the

DPEP intervention. DPEP encourages formation of small groups for the activities with a view to ensure “larger participation” and “saving of time”.

It was found that the schools in the district had been practising activity based approach involving small group activity.

Table 18: Small Group Activities in Class

	VGLPS	GMLPS	SKMMLOPS	KUPS	VTLPS
Std.I	5-6	6-8	8-12	4-8	0
Std.II	5-8	6-8	8-12	6-8	0
Std.III	5-8	5-10	8-15	6-10	0
Std. IV	6-9	6-8	8-15	6-10	0

Proportion of Schools Practicing SGA: 4 out of 5
 Average size of a group: 5-8
 Duration of an activity: 6 to 30 minutes

It had been observed that usually a group has a leader who organises the activity in the small group and reports to the teacher. This means that the leader has greater opportunity to participate and interact with the teacher. For providing equal opportunity, the leader should change from activity to activity. However, the practice is that an ‘intelligent’, ‘confident’ and ‘expressive’ child with fluency in speech is permanently chosen for the leadership. Even on those occasions when a leader is not required for the activity, teacher gives greater opportunity for this child by pin-pointing who should respond. Not only is that leader permanently chosen, such schools have gone a step ahead by even permanently forming the groups. Therefore many a times it has been observed that the students fall into ‘their groups’ the moment the teacher indicates them to do so. Such permanent groups are a restriction on learning interactions. In some cases, there seems to be an implicit thinking by the teacher that some are more capable than others. This gets communicated to the children as well. In heterogeneous groups, if the leader is ‘the favoured child’ there are instances of making homogenous groups where an entire group is of a lower ability. This affects the democratic structure of the classroom and as a value is not in tune with the philosophy of DPEP.

There is a general lack of concern, while practising the activity based teaching or otherwise, that pupil participation is necessary for pupil experiencing. Instead, the preference is one for completion of the activity.

The third category of activities is the large group activity when the entire class is one group. It is interactive and hence not individual work. The teacher plays a more predominant role.

Table 19: What Children do When the Teacher is Explaining

1.	Listening to the teacher
2.	Responding to the Teacher
3.	Talking among themselves
4.	Writing something
5.	Doing an unconnected work
6.	Fighting
7.	Moving around
8.	Sitting quietly - not listening
9.	Standing

It can be seen from the table that there is no way in which the children are responding to teacher's explanation. Teacher explanations are still present to a great extent in the primary classes especially in standard III and IV. At any point of time more than 50% of the children are not fully attending to the teacher what she is explaining. They are found to be either talking among themselves, fighting, moving around or doing some unconnected work. This was not the case, however, in the class where team teaching was employed by the teacher where the children were not moving around or talking among themselves. However, even in these classes children were engaged in some other work such as writing something on their own, drawing, etc. Many students, especially belonging to the "can't learn group" were found to be sitting quietly even though they were not listening to the teacher. Surprisingly many such children are boys. The last category was found in the tribal school where the teacher was strictly autocratic and did not followed DPEP methodology for classroom teaching at all. The teacher in

this class did not allow to be observed by an external person and was frequently scolding the children. In the beginning of the class, since the student did not response to his question, he made the entire class to stand and the class was kept standing through out.

It is not sufficient that the content of the learning experience must be familiar to the children or that there must be activities organised in the classroom. The teacher needs to ensure that all learners benefit from the learning experiences. If the teacher believes that some students are unable to learn or benefit from the experiences provided in the classroom then her efforts would be to teach only those students who are responding. This seems to be generally prevalent in the primary classrooms irrespective of their nature. It is claimed that under the DPEP the teacher should allow students to do whatever they want. This suggestion of the trainer is wrongly interpreted by the teachers to mean that they need not attend to all children.

Team Teaching

Team teaching is another approach which was advocated after the starting of DPEP in Palakkad. This is done in large classes where the number of children and sections are more. The senior most teacher undertakes the responsibility of leading the teaching. In the observed schools, the teacher followed a more conventional style of teaching with long explanations and repetitive work, three teachers were simultaneously present in the hall where three sections of standard IV were combined for learning mathematics. It was said that for teaching the sections are combined and they are supported for individual work. The role of the team does not appear to be very clear except for supervision and guidance when all the three teachers are helping the students to complete the activity of solving problems. If at all the need for team teaching might have been felt by the teachers and the BRC trainers is in mathematics where a single teacher was unable to provide individual guidance and feedback.

Combination of conventional and activity based approach.

There seems to be a transition in the district with respect to the methodology of teaching at the primary stage from the conventional teacher centred verbal approach to learner centred activity based approach. This transition, however, is not complete. In schools where the activity based approach is implemented earnestly by the teachers, they are found to use the conventional approach followed in a teacher dominated classroom. This is partially because their perceptions of primary education have not changed much. The teachers and the parents think alike that the primary education must enable the learners to be able to read and write. This they consider as “series teaching” as stated by one of the teachers. If it is generally considered that the DPEP approach brings in a lighter teaching as felt by the Headmistress of a school and some parents, it is difficult to give up the so called series teaching which is full of rote learning and repetition work to be done by the students. In several classrooms the teachers seem to have compromised by combining the conventional and the activity based approaches. In a first standard classroom, for example, at various stages of activity on addition and number concept the teacher was found to make the students repeat the answer five times in the form of oral drill. In some other classes on multiplication the teacher asked the students to recite the tables in chores. Such a mechanical exercise could only ensure a terminal response. In another class where the teacher was teaching Malayalam, the teacher wrote alphabets on the board and conducted an oral drill exercise in which the children repeated several times an alphabet following a student leader.

Organising Activity Based Teaching

The activity planned by the teachers are for small group work. 6-8 children form a group. Organising activities seems to be done sincerely but with an ingenuity shown by a teacher to understand its philosophy. In one of the classes of mathematics, for example, the teacher organised a role play in which groups of children were to act as shop keepers and customers. Using tokens and coins as money they were to undertake selling and purchasing of items which involved their knowledge of money, addition and subtraction. While doing this activity except for the children who were playing the role all the remaining were waiting for their turn. Gradually the students who were not acting or

those who had already enacted lost their interest which was very high at the beginning of the lesson. An ingenuous teacher who understands the philosophy of grouping would have probably thought of simultaneous role play by all children rather than by one group at a time. Further, the role play did not envisage that the children acting as shop keepers also needed to learn addition and subtraction because the children who were purchasing were only required to write and not those who were acting as shop keepers who simply were standing. Another reason for not organising simultaneous role play was that sufficient material was not available at that time to give to all the groups. While practising activity based teaching it is generally found that the teachers are not very keen on preparing instructional material and have even expressed that instead of given Rs.500/- the BRC must provide them with instructional material. One teacher said that she had used the amount to purchase a hanger for hanging maps.

There were instances when a teacher went from one competency to the other in the same class period such as from number concept to odd and even numbers to oral addition. Unless these were revision exercises it is extremely difficult to imagine that the students would proceed from one level of the ability to the other within that short time of a class period. In fact instructional time is a variable in the learning paradigm which underlines the competency based teaching.

Even the levels of experience provided change from one to the other in a given class period itself. In one class the teacher proceeded from the concrete level of working with sticks and seeds to semi abstract level of working with a number to the abstract level of oral addition in one class period itself. Interestingly the teacher reverted back to the concrete level when she found that the students were not able to respond to here questions by suggesting to add number of sticks given to them earlier.

There are also instances when a teacher used an inappropriate experience to the grade to which she was teaching. For example, in a first standard class the teacher wrote a poem on Jasmine flower on the black board and made the children repeat with her. When she asked the children to identify words usually found. many children were unable to read the words, leave a lone the sentences. Thus writing the poem on the blackboard hardly serves any purpose if the students had to memorize the poem. In another mathematics class of standard IV the teacher asked children to pick cards on which

numbers are written. The cards picked by four children were containing the numbers 679, 268, 1629 and 403. They were asked to multiply these numbers by single digits 6, 5 and 7. It can be seen that the implications involved did not fall at the same level of difficulty. It should have been ensured that the children carry out activity at the lower level of difficulty were takes care of first before they were taken to the first level of difficulty. This, it is needless to say, will not happen within one class period.

There are also instances when the speed with which the teacher shifts from one activity to the other is not accordance to the learning capacity of the children. This is particularly true of teaching of mathematics and is also found in the teaching of Malayalam and EVS. In such classes the teacher seems to be in a hurry to complete the activities planned with out much of an attention being given to learning. Experiential learning is more a philosophy than a practice.

Supervision of Pupil Activity

Most learning requires not only what individual learners indicated that of learning experiences presented in a sequential order but also a provision of continuous feedback and remediation need. The teacher role when the students are engaged in activities, be it individual or group, is to supervise and guide the learners. There seems to be several ways in which teachers undertake supervision in their classes.

Table 20: Types of supervision by teachers

Teachers goes around and provides individual help	- Rarely
Teacher selects leader to provide help – peer supervision	- Some times
Teacher moves around without providing any individual help	- Often
Teacher remains in one place expecting children to bring their work	- Most often

Two most common ways of supervision and providing feedback followed in the primary classrooms of Palakkad seems to be moving around the class and sitting or standing in one place expecting the children to bring their work. Both these approaches have their limitations. In classes where the teacher is moving around, she is doing it more mechanically and does not provide the time that is required for supervision and individual feedback. When the teacher is at one place and the students have to bring their work, all

students are not found to show their work after completion to the teacher. In both these some children who are not learning but are in need of guidance get neglected. Those who can would learn and those who cannot would continue to lag behind in such classes.

Reinforcement

Knowledge of results of performance is essential for learning to occur. Children do look forward to receive feedback and reinforcement in the course of their learning. Supervision by the teacher provides instances for reinforcing student learning. It is observed that teachers usually resort to ticking the written work of the students. In some instances this was done so mechanically that even wrong answers of students were routinely ticked as correct. Verbal reinforcements such as correct, good were used by the teacher. There seems to be a general tendency to suggest other students to emulate the work done by a student who has completed an assigned activity to motivate them. Competency based learning however should be devoid of a normative reference to another learner. The need to make the competency criterion as the reference for learning is yet to be practiced in the classrooms.

There were a few instances when teachers used token reinforcers such as chocolates and chalk pieces. They declared to the students that the one who completes the task or the one who complete the task first would be given these reinforcers. However there was a general negligence of students who were not task oriented and were in need of a suitable reinforcement.

Remediation

Competency based teaching of mastery learning does not presume that all children are at the same ability level. The activity is designed by the teachers or the supervision done by them does not seem to take into account this in principle because the activities are packaged programmes administered to children irrespective of their ability or interest. In such classrooms the two extreme groups of children who have master a competency ahead of others and those who required more time and activity to learn tend to suffer.

DPEP in Palakkad has not been geared to mastery learning paradigm as evident from its recognition of the need for individualised feed back and provision of remedial

help. Activity based teaching is more activity centred rather than learner centred in its organization. However, the trainers as well as teachers recognise the fact that all children cannot learn from all experiences. If the trainers and the training strategy has yet to find a workable approach to organising remedial learning experiences, the teachers are least likely to even realise the need for remediation since a majority of them have opined that all children can't learn, meaning thereby that there is no effort needed to make them learn. This is more of an attitude prevalent among the teachers. The training seems to have made very little impact on attitudes such as this which reflects itself in the organization of the activity based and experiential learning in classroom.

Almost every teacher observed in the study seem to know which students in his/her class are weak or slow in their learning. This usually is the group which lacks a learning environment at home, belongs to a lower socio-economic group in the community. When teacher encounters situations reflecting the inability of a learner to benefit from a given learning experience, she either turns a blind eye and proceeds further with what she has planned or advises such children to put in more effort, try again, practice at home etc.

Instructional Material Used

Instructional materials forms an integral part of the activity based teaching. Material which are locally available are procured by the teachers such as a teacher brings tamarind seeds while teaching counting and another brings a nest of a sparrow for teaching places of dwelling. Instructional materials are also prepared by the teachers in the form of cards and charts. They are used in the teaching of letters, words, etc. In Malayalam and in teaching of number concepts, addition, subtraction, multiplication and division in mathematics and classification, comparison in EVS. Whereas the teacher uses this instructional material suitably in the class, they seem to be governed more by the suggestions of trainers and the way an activity is described in the teachers handbook than the adaptations required to suit their own classroom situations . It is also found that instructional materials are generally understood as those which are handled by children. They are of low cost and can be made easily by the teacher. However, there seems to be a reluctance to preparing teaching aids and the teachers expect that the BRCs will provide them with teaching materials. In one class which was being recorded and the activity

being done was of story telling, children took a keen interest in telling stories because it was being recorded. The school also has a tape recorder which was used for providing learning experiences to the children and so was not considered as a teaching aid. There seems to be a need to expand the meaning given to the instructional material and teaching aids if a variety of learning experiences are to be provided to the children.

Textbooks

To most of the children in the primary schools of Kerala the textbooks are provided by the state. The children belonging to disadvantaged groups such as Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes and the Backward Classes are provided the textbooks free of cost. In another scheme, all girl children also get the textbooks free. This means that the boys belonging to the forward community are the only category of children who do not receive the textbooks from the state. Kerala has a system of distribution of the textbooks through the society. It was found during the course of the study that on no occasion did all children have textbooks with them. Mostly one or two copies were available for the entire class and there were instances when the teacher also did not have the textbook. It is not clear whether textbooks, if at all prepared by the state, serve any purpose in classroom teaching if it is not available.

The role of textbook in activity based approach to teaching seems to be not very clear to the teachers. The tendency of using the textbook for mechanical and rote learning of its content still persists in the classrooms. This is extensively found in those classrooms where the teacher is not competent in using the activity based approach or is not convinced about the desirability of using it as the sole methodology. A teacher in the tribal school, for example, used the textbook extensively despite the fact that none of the children had a textbook with them. Reading from the textbook, making students read textbook and asking questions based on the textual content was still prevalent as a *reminiscence* of the pre-DPEP classrooms.

Almost all teachers were concerned that the textbooks are not supplied properly. Schooling and use of textbook are so strongly associated that some children and the parents who were interviewed during this study were also expressing their displeasure about the non-availability of textbooks.

Joyfulness in Learning

A primary aim of the revised curriculum and the methodology of primary education under the DPEP is to make learning joyful. Learning through the earlier methodology was considered a drudgery and was full of uninteresting classroom work with its emphasis on rote learning. Children were hardly allowed to play and sing in the classroom unless it were a part of the textbook.

Under the DPEP, a child is to be provided with such content and approach that he/she is happy while undergoing learning. Songs, activity, stories and games form essential experiences provided in the classroom.

Songs and singing by the children in the primary classrooms have become a common sight. Generally, children are actively participating in singing and are also found to be enjoying it. Topics such as school, home, animals form their content. Elephant is a favourite topic of songs. One also finds number songs involving counting, addition and subtraction. Most of the songs, it seems, are written by the teachers.

Songs are used in the primary schools of Palakkad in five different ways.

1. At the beginning of the class
2. At the end of the class
3. While changing over to another activity
4. For attention seeking and disciplining
5. For keeping children occupied.

At the beginning of the class, the teacher usually invites children to sing by saying “come let us sing and have fun”. There are very few occasions when the children invite the teacher to sing. It is seen in some Malayalam and Maths classes that the children’s singing is a planned learning experience to develop a certain competency.

The last two categories mentioned above do not contribute directly to any specific learning. They are more tactical. There also seems to be a strong association at least in some teachers between the children singing and the expectation of the BRC personnel from the teacher.

The teacher has instructed children to undertake a written work children who have not completed are asked to sit on the floor and complete the writing..... children are restless as the lunch breaking is approaching one child asks the teacher to pronounce

one of the words written on the board “Murgaele” (drum stick leaf). The teacher reads it for the child..... The BRC jeep arrives to the school. The teacher immediately gets the children engaged in singing. Two kids on their own go up to the board and are engaged in addition of numbers 9 and 3, 8 and 2, 7 and 3. (from the field notes, Round -1 Day-1)

Despite the efforts of training the teachers to understand and follow the approaches and activities which are joyful to the learners, as long as the teachers do not feel the necessity for this change or the place of singing or songs in learning, apparently joyful activities may be organised so mechanically that they do not really contribute to the joyfulness of the learners. It is generally found that children enjoy singing and songs. But, there are many teachers who either do not appreciate its role or are not fully competent in organising them. This is also because of the belief in the teachers that school learning is a serious affair and cannot be predominantly done through lighter activities like singing.

Evaluation

The process of evaluation advocated by the DPEP is one of continuous and comprehensive evaluation. Like in the methodology of teaching, the earlier system of evaluation of awarding marks is replaced by a grading system. The criteria for evaluation are fixed for different classes. The criteria for evaluation at standards I & II, for example, are:

1. Speaking
2. Reading
3. Writing
4. Creative Expression - oral
5. Number Concept – I
6. Number Concept – II
7. Addition
8. Subtraction
9. Measurement
10. Problem Solving
11. Observation
12. Comparison

13. Classification
14. My Environment Book

It can be seen that these items of evaluation are at best areas for the development of competence. They are not specific enough for an objective testing. The DPEP in Kerala has kept the items of evaluation as areas of competency rather than items of competence as evident in the document of the Government of India on Minimum Levels of Learning. It was not very clear from the teachers or the trainers as to why the items of evaluation should not be specific.

This ambiguity in interpreting what should be the level of attainment for speaking, reading, writing or creative expression is found to have created a considerable amount of confusion among the teachers, children, parents and community. The general view held that “DPEP is singing and dancing and not learning”, probably stems from the vagueness in specifying the learning outcomes. One must remember that this system of evaluation replaces an earlier system which was specific in its evaluation though not acceptable. The teacher, the child and the parents knew that the evaluation would be focussed on what is provided in the textbook. Not only that a child could undertake self study, or a parent provide tutorial help; the teachers organised it meticulously. This however led to a tradition of rote learning which came to be viewed synonymously with primary schooling.

Evaluation is of the learning that has taken place through classroom experiences. Learning by all children is an aim of DPEP. Evaluation hence has to be criterion referenced and diagnostic rather than norm referenced. The frequency at which evaluation is undertaken is also important since it reflects the extent to which a child has approximated the goals. It is found that continuity in evaluation is advocated by the DPEP in its training. However, there is hardly any continuous evaluation practiced at the school level. Instructional experiences are provided as packaged activities with very little or no attention being given to evaluation. Questions asked by the teacher, the activities undertaken by the children are viewed to be different from evaluation. There is, for example, no recording of the attainment by different learners reflected through their participation in different learning experiences. Hence, evaluation hardly is diagnostic. In the absence of an emphasis on learning by all and need for remediation, evaluation is

organised more as for its summative purposes. Every teacher is provided with evaluation sheets in which she has to maintain a record of the performance of every child on the stated areas thrice in a year.

The system of grading student learning is advocated by the trainers and is practiced at the school level. The strength of the earlier system of evaluation was its ability to demonstrate objectively the extent to which a child had learnt. Even though, the present approach could also demonstrate learning, what is demonstrated is not viewed by the parents in general and by the teachers to a certain extent as learning that should happen through a specially contrived process called schooling. That is the reason why the DPEP in Kerala has taken steps to orient the teachers and the parents about its philosophy of evaluation. It was noticed through the present study that the efforts made have not resulted in a general acceptance of the system. There are genuine questions raised, doubts expressed about its scientific nature, objectivity and appropriateness of the process and the practice of evaluation at the primary level. The fact that the English medium private schools still follow a system of awarding marks adds to the confusion existing.

Evaluation, like methodology of teaching, is also undertaken by way of activities. The difficulty, however, is of organising it in a large class. There seems to be a general practice that evaluation must happen on an announced date and should be completed within a stipulated time such as one working day.

Another problem that has started worrying the DPEP personnel, the teachers and the parents alike is the relative position of the child evaluated on a grading system with the one who is evaluated on the marking system. When the child on a grading system seeks admission at a later date in an institution which follows the marking system, and if the seats are limited, what are his/her chances of being accepted and admitted. When there are two forms of evaluation simultaneously practiced, comparisons are inevitable. Mechanisms of converting grade positions into marks are not worked out. Given the fact that there is an apprehension about the accuracy and authenticity of a grading system among teachers and parents, it is difficult that this system becomes acceptable. Also apprehensions about the children evaluated on a grading system in Kerala becoming non acceptable in a different state where the system followed is of marks has started

surfacing. Questing such as “are all states practicing the grading system?” are heard more often in the discussions on evaluation.

During the course of this study, a total time of 690 minutes were on the observation of the practices of evaluation. It was found that the teachers generally follow the following criteria for grading the student performance during evaluation.

- Grade A - A child who performs without any support from the teacher
- Grade B - A child who performs with very little support from the teacher
- Grade C - A child who requires more support for performance
- Grade D - A child who is unable to perform

The following is an illustration of an evaluation session in standard I

The teacher picks a chart and asks where to hang it such that all can see. The children suggest and she hangs the chart with consensus of the kids. The teacher asked the children not to talk and pay attention. She says if you do well in the exams you can go to the next class. Today is an exam and hence keep quiet. She says don't get afraid. The exam today is fun. It is just what you have learnt. But what is necessary is that you must do it correctly and neatly. You will be awarded marks (habitual statement). She asks all children to look at the chart. All children look towards the chart. The teacher says “listen to me carefully”. I will ask you something and you must respond. She points to the picture of some animals. The children call out the names. For example, dog, buffalo, cow, elephant, squirrel, cat, crab, snake, fish, fox etc. This teacher has a chart in which she has stuck the feathers of different birds. The children identify the different animals and in case they are not able to, the teacher helps them to identify. She asks how does the snake move. The children say it moves slowly. The teacher asks how does the fly move. The children say that it flies. How about the crow. The children say that the snake crawls, the fly flies and the crow walks and also flies. The teacher says that in this chart I have mixed a lot of letters. Try and identify what are the animals hidden in this chart. Find out and write on the slate. Then the teacher suggests do you want to write all the names together or can we write it according to the way they move. The children agree to write it according to the movement of the animals. The teacher say do it as you like. But what will look better, do it that way. At this point the teacher asks the children if they know the song of any animal. The children say that they know the song of an elephant. The

children sang that song. Apart from the chart, the teacher also draws the columns and writes the letter on the black board for the benefit of the children. The teacher asks the children to count the number of squares in the chart. The count and say it is 25.

The teacher writes each letter by allowing the children to call out the letters. The teacher repeats the instruction. She clarifies that one alphabet can be used as many times as they want. The teacher also explains to the children about the grading system. She also asks the children to bring their parents and she would explain to them about their performance. Further, the teacher clarifies that you can use the letter with the appropriate sign that is given on the chart like for example, if THI is given you cannot use THU. One child Sunitha starts crying because there is a caterpillar on her blouse. The teacher asks her not to cry but remove the caterpillar using a stick. She throws it outside. The teacher asked the children what is it and the children replied that it is a caterpillar. She throws the insect out and consoles the child. The bright children go on asking her various clarification. The teacher responds with patience. Sunitha stops crying and the children go to their places and start writing. The teacher also tells the children don't draw the square but only start writing the names. The teacher asks the kids to erase their slates well. She also instructs children who have more than one pencil to lend it to the child who does not have one. She scolds one child and asks her why can't she ask her father to buy her a pencil. She instructs the whole class to bring the slates and pencil since they have exams. Some children have started writing and call out the names loudly to check if they are right. The teacher says sorry, I can't confirm them today since it is your exam. So go ahead and write. The teacher tells that you have time till the afternoon. One child is drawing the squares. The teacher observes it and asks her to start writing the names. The children are finding it difficult to form the words. The teacher goes around and says that you have to write the names of only creatures and not any word. The teacher says that this activity is for differentiation. The children are expected to write at least 10 names and classify them according to the way they move. Next, the children are expected to select a word from this group and frame a simple sentence. The teacher gives hints about different animals. For example, can you think of a bird which flies very high, an animal that is used during the temple festival, a bird that is seen in the night, the enemy of the cat etc. The teacher also says that there is one animal that lives in water and on land. This

animal jumps and swims in the well. The teacher says go on thinking of the names of animals and see if you can find the letters in this chart. The teacher says try and think. Think of an insect that spreads disease. This teacher becomes anxious as the children are getting confused. She discusses with the other teacher. The children who do not write anything are given D. the teacher helps Swapna to differentiate the birds and animals. The child who had not written the name, the teacher shows the picture of a cat. The child immediately recognises and writes cat (Pucha). The teacher asks him to write at least one word on his own. The teacher helps another child to identify the bird parrot. If the children classify the creatures with the help of the teacher, they are given D. C is given for children who are helped to form at least one or two words. The teacher goes around and says Swapna these words are not enough. She helps yet another child to classify. In spite of the good hints given by the teacher the children are not able to apply them. The teacher sits near a weak child and makes him write a letter A. Then she asks him to write LI. Then she says this is ALI which is a rat. The teacher asks the child to classify and write. She says if you do it on your own I will give you good marks. Go write and come. The teacher asks Sabira, who has not written anything. The teacher shows the picture of an elephant. Now she asks her to write "AANA" (elephant). The teacher helps another weak child to write "KAKA" (crow). The child writes and the teacher gives C Grade. The teacher helps Sunitha to write TAVALA (frog).The teacher asks the children to write one sentence using any word that they have written. The teacher goes round and checks the work of other children. There are 7 children who have got A grade and another children who have got B grade.

Equality of Opportunity to Learn

The children attending primary schools come from different socio-economic background. The efforts at the school must be towards minimizing the inequality feeling among certain sections of the population of children who are otherwise discriminated against. In the classrooms efforts could be made to ensure that discrimination of children is not made because of their belongingness to a particular gender group, community group or ability group. The essence of the methodology of DPEP is to ensure that every child is provided with necessary and sufficient opportunity to learn.

Gender discrimination is a predominant cultural practice. Teachers, administrators and the community who form the adult influences on the growing children need to guard themselves against practices which make children conscious of their belongingness to a particular gender category. One of the criteria for selection of districts under the project DPEP has been the literacy percentage of girls in the district. If it is low in many a districts in India, the major cause for it comes from the discriminatory attitude towards the girls. The following gender discriminatory practices were observed in the primary schools.

Table:

Gender Discriminatory Practices Observed in the Classroom

1. Separate seating arrangements for boys and girls	- All schools
2. Formation of Groups in the Classroom separately for boys and girls during activity	- All schools
3. Teacher utterances that make children conscious of their gender belongingness	- Most teachers
4. Providing greater opportunity for one group over the Other	- Many teachers
5. Group leaders from one category only	- Some teachers

The categories 3, 4 and 5 predominantly referred to the teacher attitude and bias. Instances of teachers telling “the girls will not be able to answer to this question because they don’t play football”, “see the boys have completed the work, you also should hurry up”, “why the girls are silent? I will ask some questions to you now” are statements that reflect such happenings in classroom which could be avoided. It needs to be said that in most of the classes observed in the schools in urban area and one school in the rural area the teachers were more favourably disposed towards girl children and they had to make special efforts to involve boys. This is probably not the case in other states. It could mean that due to its practice of matriarchal system of family, a girl child is never likely to be looked at in the same manner in Kerala as is found in many other states.

Another discriminatory practice in the classroom stems from the legacy of caste and community system in India. The children belonging to forward community or

economically sound families are likely to be attended to better than those who come either from disadvantaged families/communities and economically backward groups.

The following instances of discrimination leading to inequality in opportunity to learn were found in the primary classrooms of Palakkad district.

1. Children belonging to disadvantaged groups/communities were found to be seated separately in the classroom.
2. The teacher shows an implicit preference for children belonging to forward community/groups throughout the lesson starting from the formation of groups for activities, selection of leaders, supervising and providing assistance during learning.
3. Disproportionate expression of pleasure and praise towards the work done in reading, writing, oral participation etc. by the children belonging to well to do families/advantaged groups.
4. Expression by a large number of teachers during interview that a certain category of children (belonging to disadvantaged groups) do not/cannot learn.
5. Expression by teachers in interview that they find it difficult to cope with the learning needs of children belonging to a certain category.
6. Emphasis by the teachers that “the parents of these children don’t provide any help”, “these parents don’t come when we call them”, “if the mid-day meals were not given, they may not come to the school at all” etc. reflecting that certain category of children do not have any motivation/home background for learning.

The Teachers

The primary school teacher is a key functionary in the implementation of the DPEP. One of the major areas of transformation other than the curriculum is the competence and attitude of teachers. With a change in the curriculum, the methodology and the system of evaluation an effort to upgrade/develop teacher competence became essential under the DPEP. Several teacher training programmes have been undertaken in the district of Palakkad to equip the teachers.

Training provided to the teachers have been as follows:

- Five day initial training on pedagogy and activity based curriculum (ABC) approach

- Three day training, separately for classes I and II and for III and IV on language approach, integrated approach, projects, etc.
- Cluster meetings of one day per month for review and planning
- Three day training on approach to evaluation and grading indicators
- Kingnikootam training-I of 5-day duration for capacity building
- Kingnikootam training -II of 5-day duration in summer vacation followed by 7-day field experience
- Evaluation training for developing evaluation tools of 1-day duration

These trainings were aimed at developing an awareness about the inadequacy of the existing system and practices of primary education, a vision of the goals of primary education, an understanding of the methodology suitable for achieving the goals and of assessing its achievement.

The teachers including the headmistress were asked what in their view was the aim of primary education. The response have been as follows:

Table:

Proportion of Teachers Stating Different Goals of Primary Education

1. Children should disciplined behaviour	18/18
2. Develop good behaviour (Achadakkam)	18/18
3. Improvement economic status/Secure a job	15/18
4. Develop self confidence	12/18
5. Be independent	10/18
6. Able to read and write	8/18
7. Numerical ability	6/18
8. Understand environment	6/18
9. To live with others	6/18

Pupils discipline and development of good behaviour in them seems to be the most agreed upon goals of primary education among the teachers. Their perceptions about the need for discipline, what they mean by discipline are similar whereas some differences on the methods/approaches to achieve these goals exist. The following excerpts from the interview with teachers reflect this.

Illustration 1:

“Students must learn good habits, behave well and education must see that they bloom into better citizens. We tell this to the students both formally and informally. Teachers correct them when they go wrong. Children are advised when they fight among themselves, use bad language and also when they don’t follow any discipline. Discipline and essential part of education. Children are often taught not to be selfish, to be calm, not to be naughty, not to climb trees etc. I remember that a child had fallen from the gooseberry tree and this has created a lot of problem in the school.

It is the responsibility of the teachers to teach discipline. Children from different house holds. Hence we should take responsibility to train the children. In the process of showing them what is right, the teacher may resort to scolding and sometimes even using the stick. The stick is used not necessarily to pain the students but more as warning for the other kids.” (Interview of a teacher in Round 2)

Illustration 2:

“We educate children so that it is helpful for them in their lives. It helps them to gain ability to live and to secure a job. Education must teach them how to live in the community. There is a need for discipline which have to be taught in the classroom. Discipline is required among the children so that we can teach them in the way that we want to. Discipline must include punctuality, concentration in what is being taught in the class, to imitate the good in other friends and respect and interact well with the community. The child must learn to be humble and respect older people.

There is no particular coaching with respect to discipline. However, this can be done during classroom teaching, interacting with children informally and observing their individual behaviour inside and outside the class.”

Child’s personality and social development, hence seems to be the over-riding concern among the teachers in the course of their teaching. Even while accepting them to be the nurturant effect of schooling in general, the direct effect of classroom instruction seems to be not the concern of several teachers. This may partly be due to the lack of specificity in defining the objectives in the framework of evaluation.

The DPEP advocates an activity based experiential learning environment in the classrooms which are joyful. The teachers were asked about their reactions to the methodology advocated by the DPEP, the training support they received and their

competence to follow the methodology in the classroom. This must be viewed in the background that the primary classrooms are yet not out of the structured, textbook oriented instruction and that many teachers implement the activity based approach rather as package without necessarily having an ability to modify/enlarge the activities such that all children in the class attain the desired outcomes.

There seems to be a general acceptance that the method is useful in that it makes the children participative. However, a large number of teachers interviewed were of the opinion that the method by itself is not sufficient, that it hardly helps in ensuring discipline among children and that it is too demanding.

Table
Teacher Reaction to the DPEP Approach to Teaching

1	The method is useful	18/19
2	The method is not sufficient because the children are required to memorise through writing certain abilities	12/18
3	The method is not practical in the classroom especially because all children cannot be included in it	13/18
4	It is rather difficult to plan and undertake this approach to teaching in the class	9/18
5	It is not feasible because there are no sufficient teaching aids provided to the teachers	7/18

A few illustrative reactions of teachers have been given in the following:

Illustration 1:

The DPEP scheme is good but the method has more problems than strength. Weak students are not able to cope with this new method. The entire activity is concentrated on the teacher. The method hardly gives the teacher any time to help the weak students. The opportunity to help the weaker students either by myself or with the help of the bright kids in the class is very less.

Illustration 2:

The method is introduced for the past one and a half years. Students are learning but are not making satisfactory progress. It takes too much of time. This method is against the interest of the poor sections of the society. The children are not taught the alphabets clearly. The teachers are protesting. With this new method the children are well versed with the basics. The methods gives more importance to oral skills. Writing is not

given due importance. The children are not given any practice in writing. Many teachers are apprehensive of the usefulness of this method. They believe that the children's capacity increased but this could be used only in certain instances. It also takes more time for the child to learn through this method. It requires constant supervision by the teacher. The children are happy. In this method the parent cannot help the children so there is a confusion.

Illustration 3:

DPEP scheme is good but the teachers also feel that the method is not efficient. Their main problem is that the evaluation is not connected to the actual classroom learning. The textbooks are not issued in time. The Syllabus with the present method is light.

There seems to be a general dissatisfaction regarding the support received by the teachers from the BRC trainers. This is particularly more among the upper primary school teachers. Even though they are not required to use the methodology, they seem to have developed an opinion. It could also be due to the fact that they too could have become BRC trainers if selected. The teachers are having several reasons regarding their dissatisfaction. A few main reasons expressed are as follows:

1. The trainers are not able to demonstrate sufficiently
2. The trainers adopt advising
3. The trainers supervise and tend to criticize the teachers
4. The trainers come to find fault

The upper primary school teachers interviewed were very critical of the DPEP as a project and of the training support provided. Their reaction to the methodology is not a studied one because none of them are trained in it. It may be necessary to note that while bringing about a change in a school efforts must be to include all the functionaries so that there is no discordant note or demotivating influence on those teachers who practice the method.

The community too seem to have an adverse opinion about the DPEP in general. They seem to find an effort to deprive certain sections of the community through this project because many children from the well to do family are not required to undergo this

programme since they are enrolled in the English medium private schools which do not follow the DPEP curriculum or method.

According to a teacher the community views with suspicion the DPEP and feels that there is a differentiation to split the community among rich and poor. Some feel that it is not for the states like Kerala. It may be useful for backward states like Rajasthan or Uttar Pradesh. (?)

Kerala is a highly politically aware state. Most teachers have their political affiliations to one party or the other. So is the case with the community members. Certain political parties have opposed the implementation of DPEP in Kerala. This is reflected through the voices of the teachers as well as community members.

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I went to standard IV in the afternoon..... The teacher draws nine squares on the blackboard and asks each child to write a letter in each of the square..... The teacher says "in the next ten minutes all of you have to write words using each of these letters with 'Dhirgas'. The children seek clarification if they are supposed to make a word using each of the letters as the starting letter. The teacher clarifies and the students start writing..... The students were asked to count the number of words they have written. This is a group activity in small groups. The first group has written 50 words, the third group 54 words. The fourth group leader says that they have written 127 words..... After this the children are asked to frame five questions using the words, they have written..... The children have started writing..... They also have to write the answer to those questions..... All children are instructed to write five questions and their answers. (From the diary of the observer, KULPS, R2, D1).

"One child who understood the instruction said that we need only one seed since we already have 10 seeds with us. $10+1=11$. This the child does on his own and tries to explain to the other children. The teacher repeats the same with 10 broom sticks and one tamarind seeds = 11. The kids are made to repeat $10+1 = 11$. Repeat about five times.

The teacher does not attempt to find out the difficulty of the other children who have not followed the instruction. Instead, she makes one of the two children speak loudly $10+2 = 12$ and this is repeated by all of the children about eight times.

Again the teacher says she is going to give more oral problems. "I saw two scooters and ask the children to show two with the help of sticks. Children shows two sticks. She says " As I was moving out I saw two buses". The teacher asks to show two. After this she asks them to add and tell how many vehicles she saw. The children add and say it is four. The teacher repeats and says $2+2=4$. This is repeated six times.

The teacher calls Vinay and says that Vinay had 3 mangos with him yesterday. Vinay comes and places 3 sticks. Next the teacher calls Anil and he too had 3 mangos with him Anil comes and places 3 sticks. Now the teacher asks how many mangoes are their together. She calls out Raj to come and add. Raj adds and says there are 6. The teacher repeats $3+3=6$. This is repeated by children 8 times (from the field notes of the observer, KU, R-1, D-1).

The teacher repeatedly read the lesson for more than 6 times. The teacher asks the children to move their fingers along the lines. He reads lesson..... Teacher ask a question. Children do not answer. Teacher gives the answer. Children have to repeat the answer 3 times..... Teacher repeatedly ask the same question and repeats and makes the children to repeat their answers, (from the diary of the Observer, ULPS, R-1, D-1).