MICRO IMPROVEMENTS
MEGA IMPACTS

A Guide For State Leaders To Transform Schools

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INTRODUCTION

> "Nothing is particularly hard, if you divide it into small jobs"
>
> -Henry Ford, Industrialist

India's education challenge is complex and unique. How might we provide quality education to our children at such a scale and amidst the diversity of contexts across states? Our school outcome indicators need strengthening, especially as the COVID-19 pandemic has led to learning loss. To arrive at solutions is an urgent need, and requires us to shift perspectives.

Research suggests that school management and leadership are key levers for improved student outcomes. Capable leaders can solve the challenges in their context and can improve learning environments for our children in communities, schools, and classrooms. For leaders to become capable, however, they have to be supported by policy and programs.

The National Education Policy, 2020, has highlighted the need for leadership capacity building, mentorship, and professional development as ways to improve student outcomes. Such policy guidelines encourage Sarkar, Samaaj, and Bazaar actors to design programs for educational leaders like leaders at the cluster, block, and district levels and school leaders like Head Masters, and Principals. The question before such actors, thus, is how programs around these are best implemented.

Recent theories of learning suggest that adults are motivated to learn and act when they find relevance in the engagement. Similarly, school leaders are motivated to learn and improve upon their practices when they actively assess their situations and find areas for improvement. This is not a one-time process but needs to be engaged in repeatedly to create significant improvement in schools. Each repetition in this process is what we call a 'micro-improvement'.

A series of such micro-improvements creates the impression of improvement as a journey. Each step of the journey is a small, achievable, and visible step. The achievement of small goals creates quick wins and keeps the education leaders motivated. It also helps them adapt to changing situations quickly, without getting tied down to big, conceptual programs whose final goals are often not in sight. Importantly, this approach makes school leaders, agents, who solve the challenges in their own context. Leaders, thus, feel empowered because they can drive improvements in the learning environments successfully.
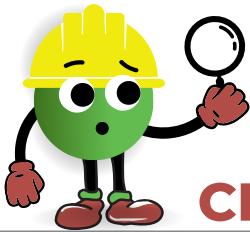
INTRODUCTION

At the systemic level, the micro-improvement approach notifies all actors of small successes. Cycles of improvement, with each cycle leading to visible action, allow systematic progress, with measurable improvements sustained over time.

The idea, therefore, is to break an improvement journey down into a series of micro-improvements that are *simple, tangible, aspirational,* and *relevant* for educational leaders. This would make leaders feel supported and can bridge the distance between a job well imagined and a job well done. Education officials in states can design micro-improvements in a way that promotes collaboration between different actors in the system. Such improvements are designed for continuity to enable cycles of improvement. They are transferable by design and can be adapted for different contexts.

The micro-improvement approach can be embedded into existing structures and processes, such as capacity-building programs. The incorporation of the micro-improvement approach in capacity-building programs will allow school leaders to apply what they learn in workshops and online courses.

These positives move us to recommend the micro-improvement approach at all grassroots levels in educational initiatives. We introduce this handbook to kickstart this conversation. We encourage state leaders to think about this approach with us and explore how it can be adopted in their context to bring incremental changes.

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CHAPTER 1: DISCOVER

1.1 What is at stake?

In 2022, we are halfway through the timeline we set for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals–2030. From among these goals, we are yet to realize quality, inclusive education for all. Learning outcomes in India are poor, with no more than half of the students at grade-level literacy and numeracy levels. While we have near-universal enrolment, by high school, 42% of students drop out. School lockdowns amid the COVID-19 pandemic has only made these statistics worse.

Our primary challenges still remain those of scale and diversity. In the big, complex network of institutions and actors that we call our education system, we have over 1.5 million schools, with 8.5 million teachers and 250 million children. And within the next 10 years, over 200 million young people will enter the workforce.

Our concern, therefore, is to imagine good solutions that work immediately and everywhere.

1.2 What is the need of the hour?

The World Development Reports list levers that scalable solutions need to stress upon. Capacity building, says the 2021 report, is a pressing need for all actors in the space of education and education policy. The 2018 report traces lagging student outcomes to poor management capacity and lack of leader autonomy. A pressing need, thus, is to develop school leadership.

This focus on school leadership is justified. Currently, 4.5 million school leaders: administrators, pedagogical coaches, school principals, and parents, enable the learning environment of communities, schools, and classrooms to drive student outcomes. They prioritize goals, support teachers, employ resources, and track progress. Leaders are best suited to identify their contextual needs and solve them.

Leaders, however, need to recognize their agency to solve their issues. This capacity emerges when leaders have access to continuous development opportunities. Thus, the scalable solution that we envision is to elevate and enhance leadership capacity across all levels of schooling. We believe that each leader's ability to learn and improve in their contexts will lead to systemic change in India's education ecosystem.

1.3 Who is thinking about improvement?

The idea of leadership development is already in public view. Policy documents have highlighted the need for capacity building of education leaders. Of these, the National Education Policy (2020) emphasizes some key areas. It advances the NISHTHA(National Initiative for School Heads' and Teachers' Holistic Advancement) program to develop the capacity of education leaders and the National Mission for Mentoring to support teacher educators with continuous mentorship. It also recognizes the need to drive school quality standards through the SQAA(School Quality Assessment and Assurance) framework. These programs align with the final goal of improving student outcomes.

The NEP 2020 also recognizes that Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of school leaders around leadership and management as well as content and pedagogy will directly impact the learning levels of students. As a result, the NEP proposes that they participate in over 50 hours of development modules every year.
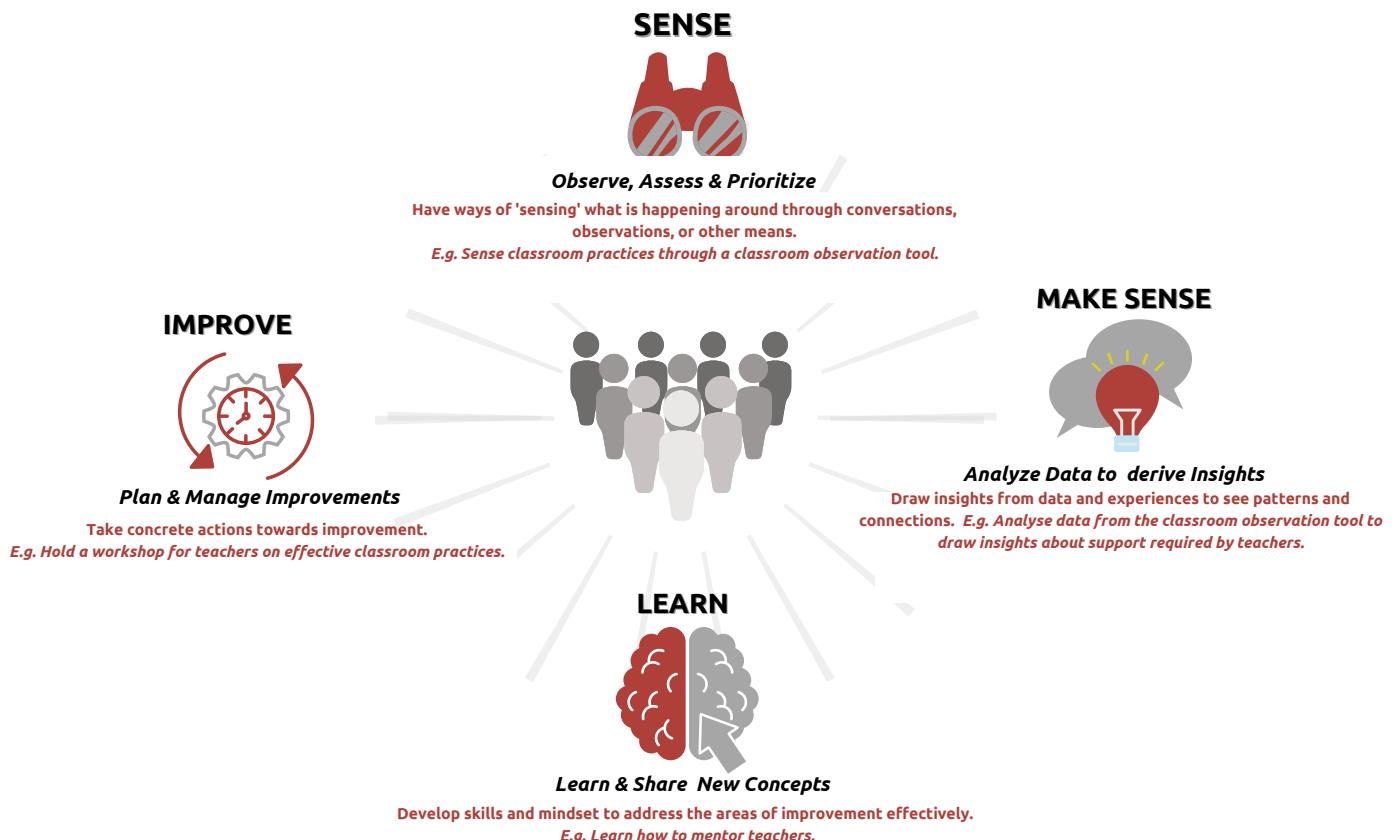
1.4 How are we thinking about improvement?

An empowered leader has the potential to transform the system by playing a role of an active change agent.

There are different ways of thinking about improvements, but few address the needs of quality, urgency, and scale. To this end, Dr. Anthony Bryks (2020) suggests that we shift the way we understand improvements: from one-shot thought experiments to cycles of implementation and review. School leaders too need to develop a similar approach to problem-solving and innovative thinking.

This cycle of improvement begins with school leaders actively assessing their situation. They identify what needs to improve and learn how to implement these improvements. The cycle closes when the leader actually takes steps to improve their situation.

When this continuous cycle of SENSE—MAKE SENSE—LEARN—IMPROVE gets activated, we say that a leader performs small acts of micro-improvements in their context.

SENSE

Observe, Assess & Prioritize
Have ways of 'sensing' what is happening around through conversations, observations, or other means.
E.g. Sense classroom practices through a classroom observation tool.

MAKE SENSE

Analyze Data to derive Insights
Draw insights from data and experiences to see patterns and connections. *E.g. Analyse data from the classroom observation tool to draw insights about support required by teachers.*

IMPROVE

Plan & Manage Improvements
Take concrete actions towards improvement.
E.g. Hold a workshop for teachers on effective classroom practices.

LEARN

Learn & Share New Concepts
Develop skills and mindset to address the areas of improvement effectively.
E.g. Learn how to mentor teachers.

This cyclic approach is supported by research. Malcolm Knowles (1978) has identified that adults learn through a self-directed approach. They use their experiences to assist their learning and like to apply new knowledge in their lives. They are relevancy oriented: they need to see the reason to learn something, and internally motivated. They prefer a practical approach, focusing on aspects which are most useful to their work.

Malcolm Knowles (1978) has defined several ways in which adults learn through a self-directed approach-

1
Draw on life experiences to assist with learning

2
Apply new knowledge to real-life situations

3
Are relevancy-oriented and need to see the reason for learning something

4
Take a practical approach & focus on aspects which are most useful to them at work

5
*There is a tendency to be internally motivated rather than externally*
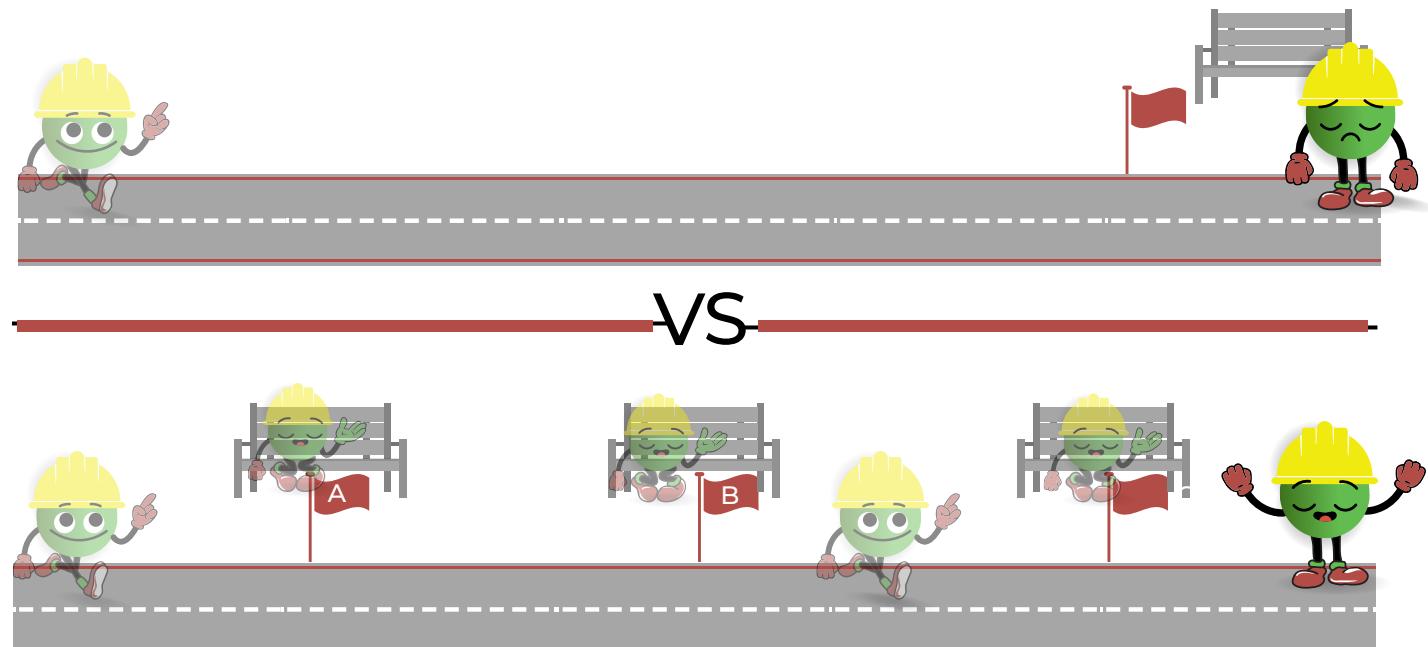
The micro-improvement approach takes leaders on such a journey. Such leaders continuously learn and build skill-sets through guided practice. These skill-sets help them adapt to the ever-growing complexities of the education system. At the systemic level, this approach moves away from initiatives which come with little practical know-how. It converts good ideas into solutions which are repeatable and scalable across diverse institutions, geographies and communities. It demonstrates progressive shifts in behavior and practices.

1.5 What is a micro-improvement?

All improvements require action. Improvements, however, are those actions which have objectives that lead toward desired changes. Improvements often have defined actors: those who perform them, and timelines: how long they take.

For example, people today believe that regular exercise helps maintain good health. Those who aspire for a healthy life regularly find time to exercise because of its ample benefits. The objective, in this case, is to develop a sound mind in a sound body. One achieves this by taking small steps, such as regular exercising, that leads to a desired change: improved health.

Another way to think about improvements is to consider it as a journey. A series of improvements during this journey helps us make processes better than they were before.

Improvement V/S Series of Micro-Improvements

We usually think of improvements as time-consuming, long-term processes which are quite overwhelming for any one person. But when we break improvements into small action steps, we create short-term achievable goals, called micro-improvements. This series of micro-improvements can lead to larger, more-sustainable change.

Further, because the world is ambiguous and constantly changing, achieving short-term goals is a smarter approach. It helps school leaders continuously modify their actions by what is immediately required, rather than locking into a long-term plan which may be irrelevant when the final goal is due.

> *Ask the question-*
>
> *What can I do to make things 1% better today than it was yesterday?*

In the next page, we present the story of Auniatin High School in Majuli, Assam to understand how small improvements over a period of time can contribute to a desired goal:

ENROLL, RETAIN & SUSTAIN
A SCHOOL LEADER'S STORY OF IMPROVEMENT

Objective:

To lower the dropout rates & improve academic performance of students.

School Name:

Auniatin High School in Majuli

School Leader's Name:

Prasanta Dolaksharea

Series Of Micro Improvements

The school leader along with his staff members implemented a series of small improvements in the school. Here is the list of projects in the order they were undertaken-

- He conducted an enrollment drive with the help of teachers.

- He organized a school foundation day which helped improve the community relationship.

- He organized remedial classes for the newly admitted students.

- He conducted a regular morning assembly where all the students would participate & engage in various activities.

Auniatin's story shows how a series of small improvements can contribute to a desired outcome. If school leaders are to become agents of change, they have to develop healthy practices and attitudes that will help them continuously strive for quality in all aspects of teaching and learning. The key to enabling visible improvement is to first become conscious of one's strengths and weaknesses and accordingly form habits that help enable a change.

1.6 Why the micro-improvement approach?

When we think of systematic progress, we think of measurable progress sustained over time. Temporary, short-term achievable goals, whose success is visible, notify everybody in the system about such progress. What we call the micro-improvement approach, thus, enables systematic progress.

This systemic view is mirrored in individuals too. Jodi Spiro (2015) calls change a personal experience. While change is incremental and continuous, its effects are long-term. Evidence at each stage of change nudges actors in the right direction, convincing them that the goals they foresee will eventually be attained.

'Early wins', such as tangible pieces of evidence in the first couple of months of any improvement journey, inspire confidence. They do not stress the actor with changes that are too big to be conceived. They empower leaders to drive regular improvements on the ground. Over time, they build upon other improvements to compound growth.

> "...it's the hundreds, thousands, or millions of little things - micro improvements made consistently - that separate the ordinary from the extraordinary. Small daily improvements are the key to staggering long-term results."
>
> - The Compound Effect, Darren Hardy
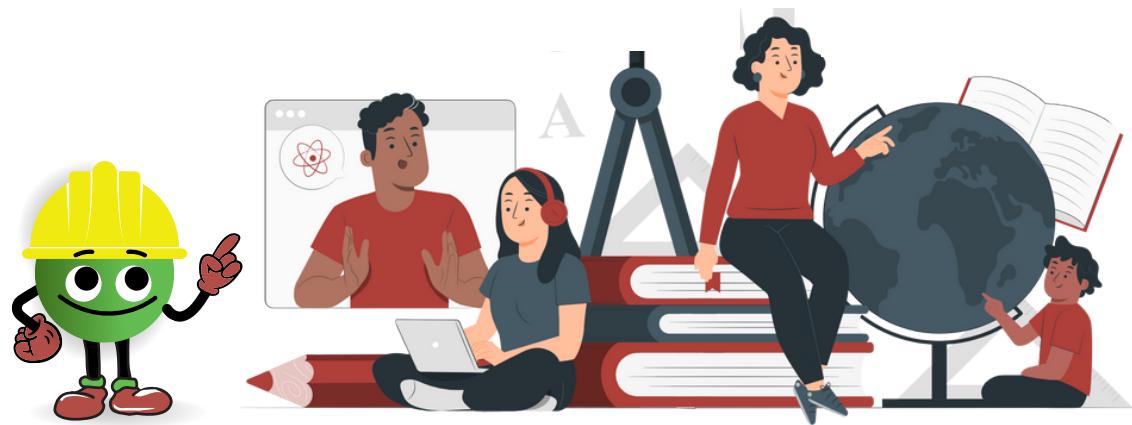
1.7 How do we leverage the micro-improvements approach today?

With NEP 2020, a unique opportunity has arisen for Samaaj, Sarkaar, and Bazar actors to design and implement programs together. By foregrounding the narrative of improvement, it is possible to energize programs that the NEP proposes. The micro-improvements approach also makes it possible to make these programs visible to everyone in the ecosystem.

A change from 'Learning' initiatives to 'Learning to Improve' initiatives can be a new paradigm shift for the entire education ecosystem

We recommend that the practice of micro-improvements be initiated at the grassroots level. We recommend that individuals, community leaders, and institutions, including NGOs, participate and enable improvements in schools in their vicinity, so that we can all derive a sense of accomplishment and celebration.

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CHAPTER 2: DESIGN

In order to make meaningful changes to the way we work, don't start with a mammoth challenge. Start small.

The micro-improvement approach is based on the learning-by-doing concept. When leaders continuously 'do' micro-improvements, they also learn continuously and apply their knowledge to the improvement tasks. Since these tasks inform their daily hustle, school leaders are also motivated to learn.

This approach makes the process of improvement easy, simple, and achievable for leaders. It helps them break down an idea into clear, actionable tasks which are flexible enough to suit their contexts. It also presents data-based evidence, affirming their progress toward success. When small improvements happen, the wins feed into a continuous, habitual cycle of improvement across the system.

2.1 What are the characteristics of Micro-improvements ?

Inspired by Jody Spiro's book Leading Change Step-by-Step: Tactics, Tools and Tales, here are 4 main characterstics of Micro-Improvements

- Simple - They are easy to understand and implement in a short time.
- Tangible - They have the visible and measurable outcome(s).
- Aspirational - They are perceived as important and ambitious within the stakeholder's context.
- Relevant - They cater to the immediate need of the stakeholders and fits organically into their existing processes.

2.2 What are the guiding principles of designing micro-improvement?

A designer should keep in mind the characteristics of micro-improvements while designing them.

Apart from these few other design principles include -

- **Design for Collaboration** - A micro-improvement should be designed so that all school stakeholders can come together to execute these improvements. This will create positive energy and excitement amongst the stakeholders. It should include a mechanism to communicate the goal, acknowledge the progress and celebrate the goal achieved with other stakeholders.

- **Design for Continuity** - Plans are created, implemented, revised, and then implemented again, resulting in a process of reflection and revision. Micro-improvements should be designed so that they become a part of the stakeholder's regular work. They start applying it to their work at a set frequency.

- **Design for Transferability** - The micro-improvement should be designed in such a way that it can be adapted by any stakeholder to suit their context.

Let's look at an example of Micro-Improvement

EXAMPLE OF MICRO - IMPROVEMENT
CONDUCTING RETELL THE TALE

Description: An example of Micro-improvement that was used to facilitate the National Reading Campaign issued by the Department of School Education and Literacy, Ministry of Education.

Guiding Principles for Design: Design for Transferability, Design for Collaboration

Characteristics: Relevant, Simple , Achievable

Objective: HM will enable teachers to help all students.
a) Get access to different reading materials having stories and pictures
b) Retell the stories using different communication methods.

Duration: 4 Weeks
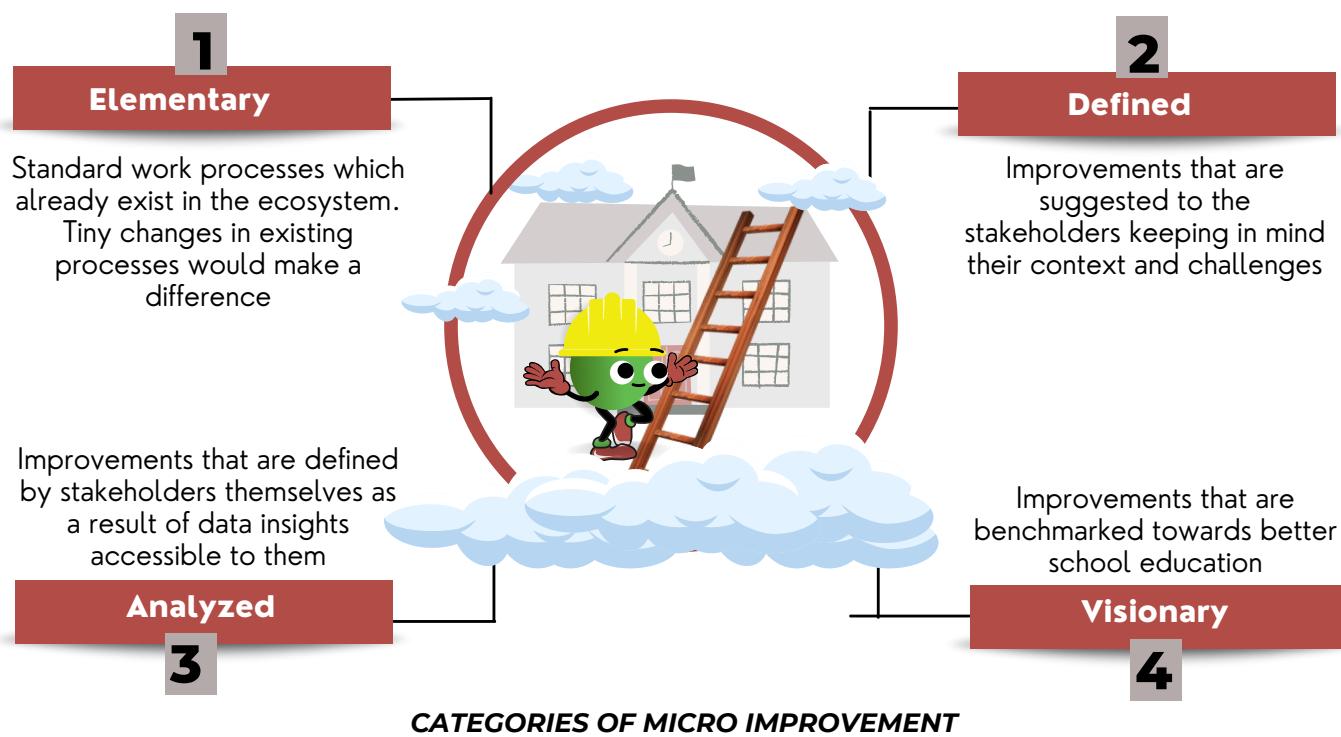
Tasks	End Date	Assigned To	Status
1. Conduct a meeting with teachers to brief them on Retell the Tale			
2. Discuss with teachers about parents' role to support the implementation of the project.			
3. Assist teachers in identifying stories from various digital and printed media for children to read			
4. Discuss with teachers different ways in which students can Retell the Tale			
5. Ask teachers to track student participation in Retell the Tale by collecting artifacts			
6. Ask teachers to keep an open communication channel with parents to ensure continuous children participation			
7. Plan an event with parents, students & community to appreciate and showcase students' work			

2.3 What are the different categories of Micro-Improvement?

This approach can be leveraged by the state to drive sustainable school improvements. In our experience of working in the education system, we have seen states planning the micro-improvements keeping in mind the following parameters - the audience, their context and constraints, their ability, and their level of motivation to pursue these micro-improvements.

Hence, we are classifying the micro-improvements under the following categories -

1 Elementary

Standard work processes which already exist in the ecosystem. Tiny changes in existing processes would make a difference

2 Defined

Improvements that are suggested to the stakeholders keeping in mind their context and challenges

Improvements that are defined by stakeholders themselves as a result of data insights accessible to them

Analyzed 3

Improvements that are benchmarked towards better school education

Visionary 4

CATEGORIES OF MICRO IMPROVEMENT

Let's look at the below-given examples to understand the categories better-

- Elementary Improvements-

  Objective: Enhancing the already existing structures and processes for effective implementation.

  A Library set up by a school principal; ways in which a Parent-Teacher meeting is made effective by a school principal; a lesson plan made by the teachers in

the school; a monthly review meeting held by District Education Officer for all School Heads etc.

- Defined Improvements-

  Objective: Nudging stakeholders to get into the routine of driving simple micro-improvements which are relevant in their context.

  The state department conducts a baseline assessment in the state to measure the student learning outcome. Based on the assessment results, the state suggests a list of improvements that the school leader can do. A school leader can select the improvement from the list and act on it.

- Analyzed Improvements-
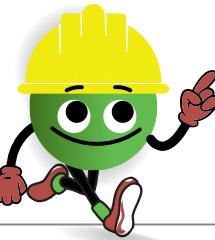
  Objective: Restoring the agency of stakeholders at all levels of the ecosystem to define and lead improvements in their context.

  A school HM has developed a clear understanding of the micro-improvement approach and wants to apply it to their work. They analyze the current situation, prioritise the areas of improvement themselves and then carry out the tasks using the micro-improvement approach.

- Visionary improvements-

  Objective: Creation and sharing of proof points of excellence and innovation (successful micro-improvements/a resource repository) done by the stakeholder with everyone.

  A school HM sets up grade-level learning circles in school to aid teachers' skills and capabilities.

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CHAPTER 3: DO
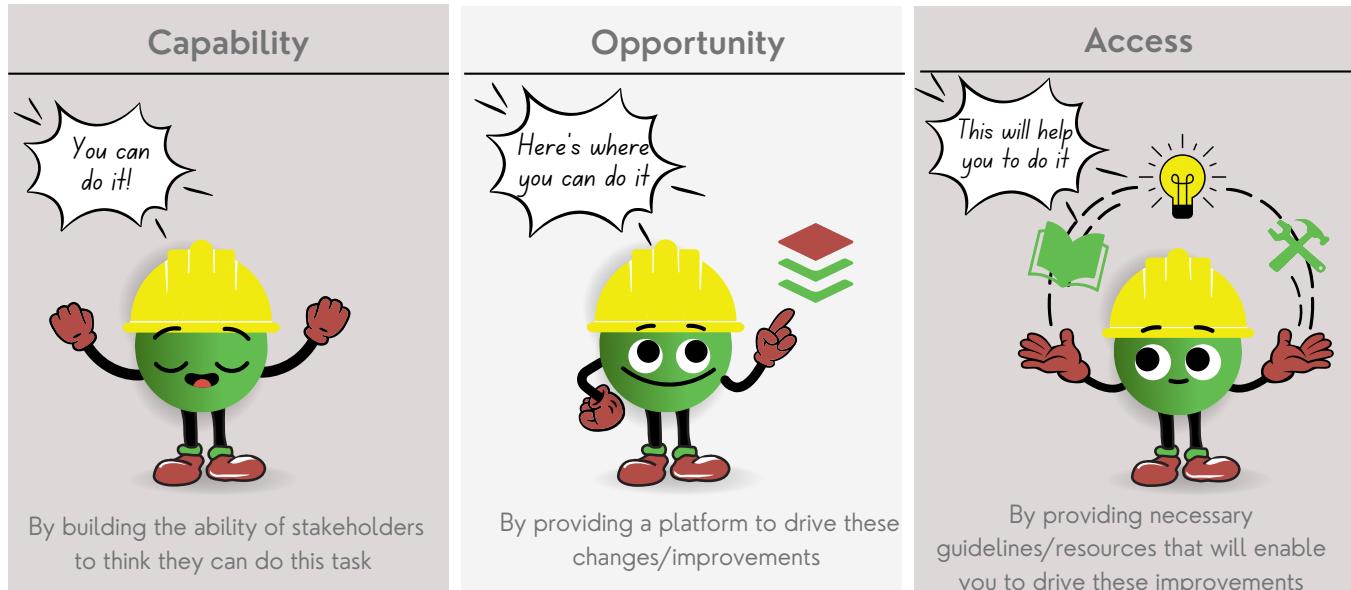
## 'Restoring Agency of Stakeholders to Enable Them to Drive Change'

Choice architecture, coined by Thaler & Sunstein, is a practice of influencing choice by organizing the context in which people make decisions (Thaler et al., 2013, p. 428). This is to say a teacher can make better choices in the classroom to teach (improve the teaching-learning practice in the classroom) if they are provided with the right environment (continuous mentoring by CRCs or School Heads, knowledge of the usage of TLMs, etc.)

Our work shows that when given an enabling environment, school leaders can solve problems on their own. An enabling environment is where the state solves the barrier that might demotivate the school leader to lead the micro-improvements in their school. It provides the school leader with an opportunity, access, and capability to drive these micro-improvements, thus restoring the agency of the stakeholders.

Agency is the 'capacity of an individual to act independently and to make free choices'

Let's see how we can create this environment in our education system -

Capability	Opportunity	Access
You can do it!	*Here's where you can do it*	*This will help you to do it*
By building the ability of stakeholders to think they can do this task	By providing a platform to drive these changes/improvements	By providing necessary guidelines/resources that will enable you to drive these improvements

Once the school leaders have gained the opportunity and access to this enabling environment, the micro-improvement approach can be utilized to build the muscle to take action in the school and get better at work.

Problem Statement

Sometimes a school leader is required to execute multiple projects in a school as suggested by different education departments in a state. For instance, last minute it was conveyed to school leaders that they have to organize a science fair for students. This was followed by a circular that mentioned that they have to attend state-level capacity-building training. The PTM was also scheduled for the same week in the school. These strict timelines and last-minute information, sometimes leave the school leaders feeling helpless and demotivated to carry out these tasks effectively.

Solution

This type of burnout can be reduced if the state calendarises the activities and projects of the school. The state will also have a clear idea of what is happening at the school level, what has improved and what needs to be improved.

Leaders will start taking ownership and drive improvements on their own if the state leadership provides them with a better environment. With the sense of agency and belief to make a difference, stakeholders will be able to carry out the transformation they need to attain in 5 years, and what milestones they want to achieve for their class, school, block, district, etc.
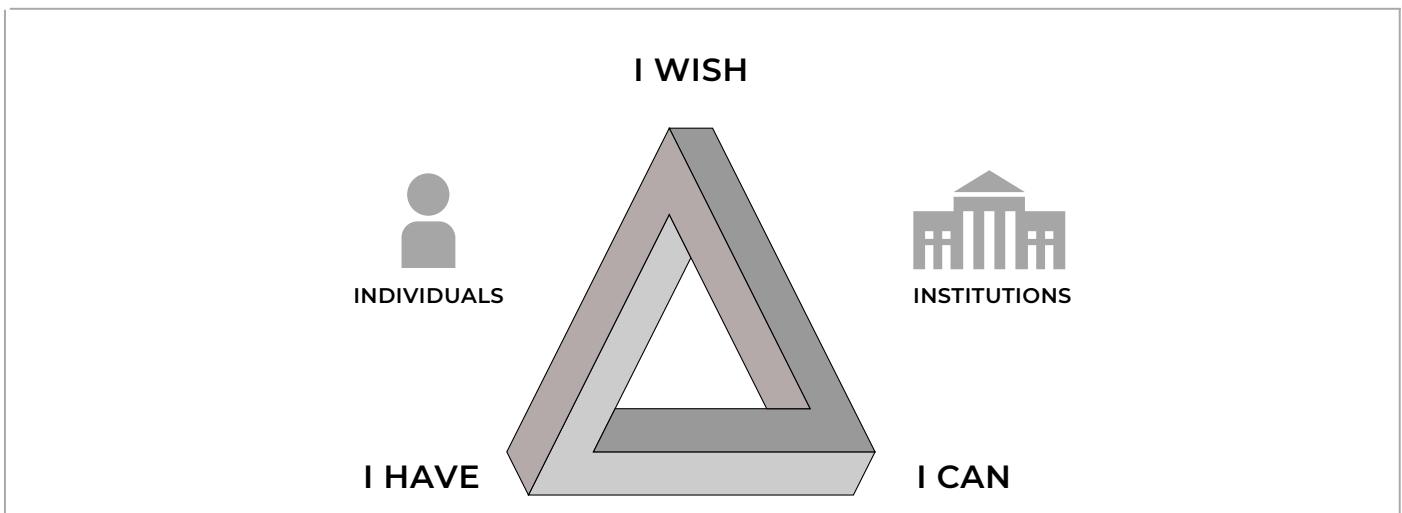
Agency in Action :

Assessment-led improvement demonstrates the value of the agency.
Once the school leaders take up the self-assessment, they identify and prioritize developmental areas based on the available data and finally work towards taking up a series of small improvements to rectify the issues. The opportunity of taking up the self-assessment in the first place itself is by choice.

Similarly, when Block Education officers go to the school, a +1 to their usual inspection of collecting mid-day meal data would be to sit down with the headmasters to understand their situation and make suggestions. A block education officer should feel as accountable for the improvement in their block as the school leader feels for their school. These micro improvements in practices can go a long way.

DO

When stakeholders have access to improved resources (I have), they develop confidence in their ability to drive improvements (I can), and finally the two translate into the want for more (I wish). This triad of 'I have - I can - I wish' is the manifestation of the agency. This attitude triggers the virtuous cycle of continuous improvements in school leaders even in the face of challenging circumstances. Hence it is important to restore the agency of the leaders.

I WISH

INDIVIDUALS

INSTITUTIONS

I HAVE

I CAN

RESTORING AGENCY

What will restoring the agency of leaders do?

It will enable the feelings of-

I can make a difference

Restores the belief that leaders can bring about the change through small actions

I can see the change

Makes improvement visible. Leaders can track & celebrate improvement that has happened over period of time

We are in it together

Inspires collective effort through collaboration in making things successful

I aspire to do more

Once improvements are visible, it inspires leaders to take up more such kinds of improvements

Thus, a micro-improvement approach is a step toward a guided execution of ideas on the ground to nurture a sense of agency among the stakeholders towards their learning and application of knowledge; the belief that they are capable of transforming the system while bringing people together.

The execution of micro-improvements depends on the coordination between the actors of the system, and the leadership that anchors it. It also requires a motivated actor with access to the right resources. A micro-improvement approach is a guided execution of ideas, one that nurtures agency among school leaders. It makes them capable to learn and apply their knowledge, and believe in this capability to transform systems and bring people together.

3.1 How can the micro-improvement approach be embedded in the system for sustainable school improvement?

Below listed are the two most effective ways to achieve that-

1. Integrated with State level reforms :

> **School improvement is a culmination of both in-school changes & changes in the supporting environment.**
>
> -Baines, 2019, Manna 2021

In-school changes are when a school leader sets minimum standards to improve their school given their context & constraints. They also chalk out the progression for all their school actors. However, for schools to improve sustainably and school leaders to excel, a supportive environment should be provided which is backed up by continuous mentoring and academic supervision.

Therefore, for school improvement to happen at scale and sustain, all stakeholders (community, teachers, middle managers like block & district officials, CSOs, and the government) should establish a consensus on what school improvement means, and align their efforts towards it.

> Many school improvement programs often fail to sustain as they tend to focus only on changes in a school in a given context without any system-level reforms to support it.
>
> — **Baines, 2019, Manna 2021**

School improvements(Manna, 2021) should be supported by state-level reforms based on setting standards like better governance structure, leader standards, systems of support, setting a common vision towards improving student outcomes, quality in-service training for all stakeholders, evaluation, higher standards of teaching-learning practices, and others. Setting such standards at a state level would provide the school leaders with a common language & qualitative benchmark around which they can plan their school improvement plans. This would enable and provide choice to school leaders to take up improvements in their context with adequate resources and guidance from the state.

2. Integrated with Capacity Building Programs:

> Every school leader and teacher has to spend at least 50 hours a year on their professional development.
>
> —**National Education Policy, 2020**

The states organize workshops, and in-service training yearly for the same. This is usually done through a cascading model of training where a pool of instructional leaders is capacitated and then the training is delivered through a cascading model.

Research(Dichaba et al., 2012) suggests that even though this model is most commonly accepted and utilized by the states it sometimes results in loss of learning due to the nature of cascading. There might be a loss in communication and transfer of knowledge from one layer to another. Here the micro-improvement approach can be utilized to improve the existing processes. The trainee doesn't get to measure their growth after attending a certain workshop.

Two ways in which the micro-improvement approach can be incorporated into the existing capacity building programs are-

2.1. Micro-improvements as part of online courses:

Often education leaders take up online courses to build their capacity in a particular subject. A micro-improvement approach using a project can be integrated as part of these courses to translate the knowledge into action.

Case Study :

In Uttar Pradesh, in September 2020, as part of the Mission Prerna program an online course, Teachers in Action, was suggested to all the leaders. The objective of this course was to ensure that school leaders get access to the required concepts and tools to improve their knowledge of school leadership. A project using the micro-improvement approach was given in the end as an assignment to translate their knowledge of improving the school's environment into action. As it was near to the day of Teacher's Day, many schools took up the project of celebrating the efforts of their teachers with the help of students and the community. Teachers were felicitated by the parents and SMC members for their monumental work in the schools. Students distributed greeting cards to their teachers.

2.2. Micro-improvements as part of workshop assignment:

Education leaders often get post-work as part of their workshops or training. A project using the micro-improvement approach can be suggested to them to translate their knowledge into practice.

Case Study :

In **Punjab**, a workshop was held for a group of 2658 principals and school heads on the topic of the role of school heads in *building a positive culture in their schools*. As part of this session, school heads analyzed a few case studies and exchanged ideas about how a positive culture can be set in a school. In the end, a template for designing and implementing a school-level project idea was shared with a few stakeholders. School heads made use of the template to plan their project in a guided manner. A few projects that they undertook in their schools included potlucks, movie day for the students and teachers, staff meetings which included reward and recognition & peer circles to learn more about each other informally.

This also suggests how the micro-improvement approach can be used to bring about **+1 additions** to the already existing processes in the school like staff meetings, staff lunch, school gatherings, etc.

3. Integrated with Technology:

In India, **4.5 million school leaders** are responsible for improving the quality of education across **1.5 million schools** catering to **250 million children**. Technology helps bridge the gap and makes it possible to reach the last mile user. The states also in the past have utilized technology like WhatsApp groups to communicate with all the stakeholders in the system. The circulars are sent through these groups.

Often we have heard the last mile express the challenge that they know what has to be done but the how to do part is unclear. At different levels, stakeholders share a different understanding of the project and the work to be
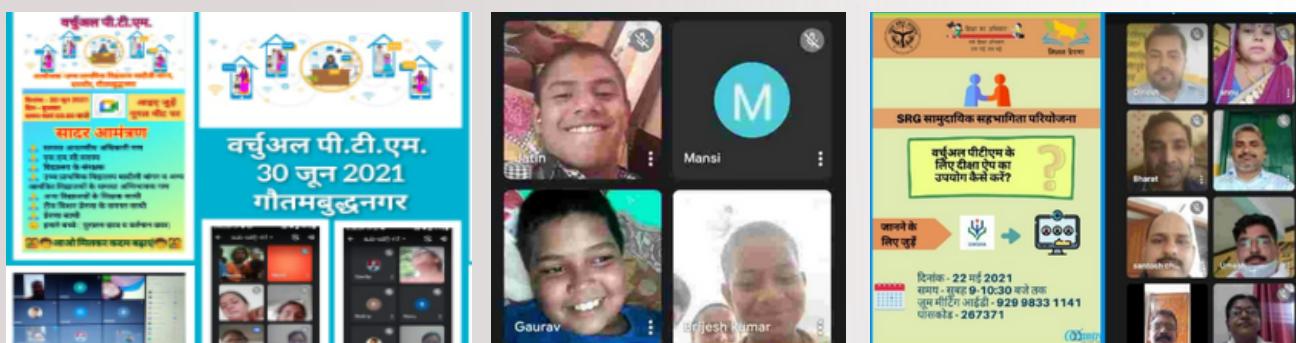
done towards it. This often leads to misunderstandings.

What if a platform existed, that clearly states how the improvements are to be carried out on the ground?

One that lets the school leader contextualize given their context and constraints. This will ensure there is no loss of information, everybody gets a similar set of resources no matter which geography they are in, in a quick manner. Currently, a feature of **DIKSHA** called **projects** uses the micro-improvement approach. It helps one to set the objective/goal that has to be achieved in the school within a particular time. It helps one to share details of how to do the project. It lets one customize their project to suit their context moving away from the notion of one size fits all.

Case Study :

During the Covid times, Uttar Pradesh launched a program called *Virtual Parent Teacher Meeting. A*s part of this program, school leaders reached out to the parents of their schools and invited them for a PTM. They made use of the technology platform DIKSHA to roll out this project at scale for **225 HMs** in the state. All information was shared with HMs in the form of easily doable tasks, the HMs had the choice to add steps to their projects or modify them. For example, certain HMs chose to conduct V-PTM as most of their parents had access to mobile phones while some chose to conduct in-person meetings based on the geographies they were in and the background of their parents. One of the tasks of the project was to invite the parents - some school leaders designed online invitation cards and sent them via WhatsApp others went door-to-door to invite them. Some used Google Meet, others used Zoom or even WhatsApp video conferencing.

Even though there was flexibility in terms of tasks to be done by different school leaders all 225 HMs achieved the same goal of conducting PTMs in their school. The success criteria for all of them were parent participation, and parents' voices being heard in meetings even though the mode of engagement was different. The HMs could also share their projects online with other government officials. This helped HMs be recognized for their efforts and also the state got instant data on the number of PTMs happening on the ground and the number of parents participating in these meetings.

3.2 What can micro-improvement look like to different stakeholders in the education system?

Micro-improvements are not a finite state of being but a continuous process. Anyone in the education system who would like to bring their knowledge into action one step at a time can use this. They can be-

Teachers	School Leaders	Leaders at cluster/block/district	State Leaders

At a personal level, it can help you with keeping track of your learning journey. Whether you are a teacher, a marathon runner, or any other professional we all set goals for ourselves & perform tasks to achieve them within a stipulated time. One can use the micro-improvement approach to build their ability by taking actions on the ground, analyzing them, and then doing them again.

What are those actions that will take me from place A to place B?

On the next page, read the inspiring story of a school leader who with a series of continuous micro improvements at her school was able to change the perception of teachers, students, and their parents towards government school.

ENVISIONING AN IDEAL SCHOOL
A SCHOOL LEADER'S STORY OF IMPROVEMENT

Ms. GurdamanPreet Kaur

Objective:

To improve the perception of teachers, students and their parents towards government school

School Name:

Govt HGS Badai Mai Ki, Fatehgarh Sahib, Punjab

Series Of Micro Improvements
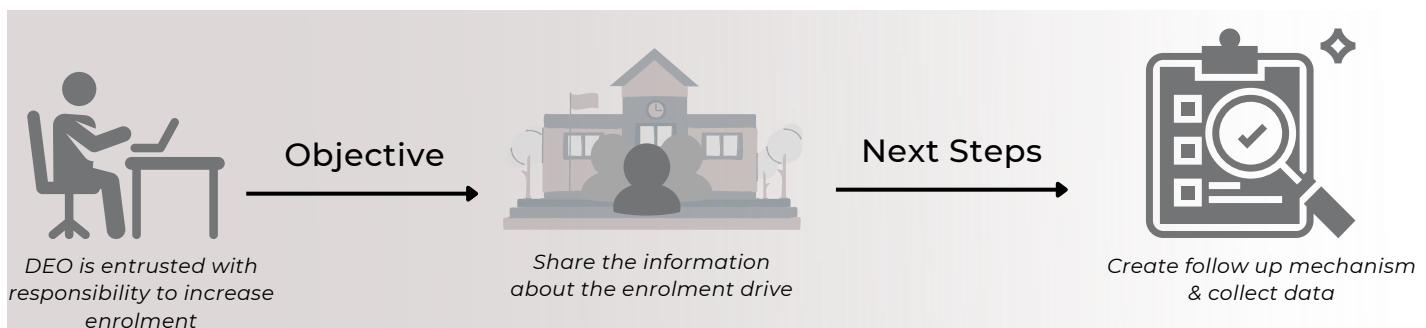
- Creation of **activity room** to provide exposure to student regarding various extra curricular activities like music, playing instruments, reading, dance, sports and doing experiments etc.

- Establishment of **Stationery Corner** to make resources readily accessible to the students and also teach them about the basics of money and transactions

- Made **staffroom more lively** to improve standard of work environment for teachers by supplying basic amenities (like personal lockers for the teachers, microwave etc.)

- Creation of **fruit break period** to improve the physical health of the students and inculcate good eating habits amongst the students

- Formation of **student council(Bal Sansad)** to inculcate the value of leadership and democratic decision making amongst students

DO

For others, these micro-improvements can become an inspiration. A sense of possibility that such improvements can be driven on the ground with the help of other stakeholders. It helps one attain a sense of pride, get recognition in the state, and a chance to share & celebrate their achievements with others. It will help build the repository of best practices on the ground which can easily be contextualized by any stakeholder.

For the state, it helps keep a track of how many schools can meet the standards set by the state and align their efforts to make them happen on the ground by allocating resources and support.

Let's see through an example. If a DEO has to share about the enrolment drive program with HMs. Ideally, they would hold meetings with HMs of all schools in the district and share the information. Then they would create a follow-up mechanism to track the progress and collect data from different sources.

DEO is entrusted with responsibility to increase enrolment

Objective

Share the information about the enrolment drive

Next Steps

Create follow up mechanism & collect data
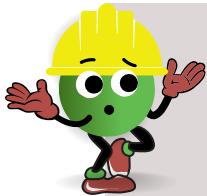
The micro-improvement approach allows the DEO to leverage technology to drive enrollment campaigns with all HMs on the ground. This ensures that program details reach the last mile users without any loss of information. With this approach, a DEO is able to get visibility of on-ground implementation without any dependency. Ready access to data assures that actions are pivoted on the ground at the right time & leaders are encouraged for the innovations and improvements across the district.

The school leaders have the clarity of what needs to be carried out on the ground, when it is to be done and how it should be done. They also have the agency to modify actions for their school after having discussions with their staff members. They don't have to maintain multiple documents and can easily share the progress of their data directly with the district. They have access to relevant resources that will help them to execute and manage tasks at their school level.

3.3.What are the challenges in implementing the micro-improvement approach?

1. Competing Priorities -

An education leader at a point of time is juggling multiple projects. There is a tendency to get caught in these day-to-day chores and lose sight of the bigger picture. This also results in a lack of sustained motivation and enthusiasm to pursue micro-improvements.

> *Questions to ponder:*
> - *How does an education leader keep focus & discipline in times like these?*
> - *How can the state support education leaders in being both 'visionary' & 'implementers'?*

2. Human Competency or Capital-

The approach requires some deal of understanding if the change has to lead to improvement. An education leader should have the necessary skill set of understanding and analyzing the challenges in their context, applying the right solution, and using the data effectively for improvement and course correction if required. Jody Spiro(2018) in her book Leading Change Handbook categorizes this state readiness under three categories - previous experience, attitude and skills.
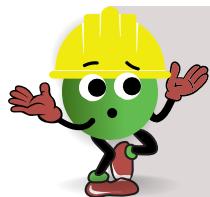
> *Questions to ponder:*
> - *How can the state create an environment for investing in teachers and leaders to lead micro-improvements?*

3. Standardised Plan or Standard Expectations-

Schools are a highly dynamic place, a standardized plan might not work. The micro-improvements should be adaptive and responsive to ongoing successes, challenges, and failures of implementation.
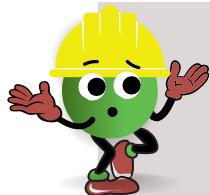
Questions to ponder:

- *How can the state build a conducive environment for launching micro-improvements that cater to the diverse needs of the school?*

4. Building a continuous momentum-

Micro-improvements are a continuous process and not a quarterly process. There should be continuous communication with all the stakeholders. The leaders should be engaged at all steps starting from creation, to the implementation and ongoing monitoring of the plan, and course correction, in order to complete the project successfully.

Questions to ponder:

- *How can progress reporting and frequent celebrations become an integral part of the system?*

3.4 What has happened so far in the education ecosystem using the micro-improvement approach?

Following pages showcase case studies on micro improvement adoption in different context across the nation.

3.4.1 Micro-Innovations Award:
A use-case of the State conducting an event to celebrate and share the stories of school improvement
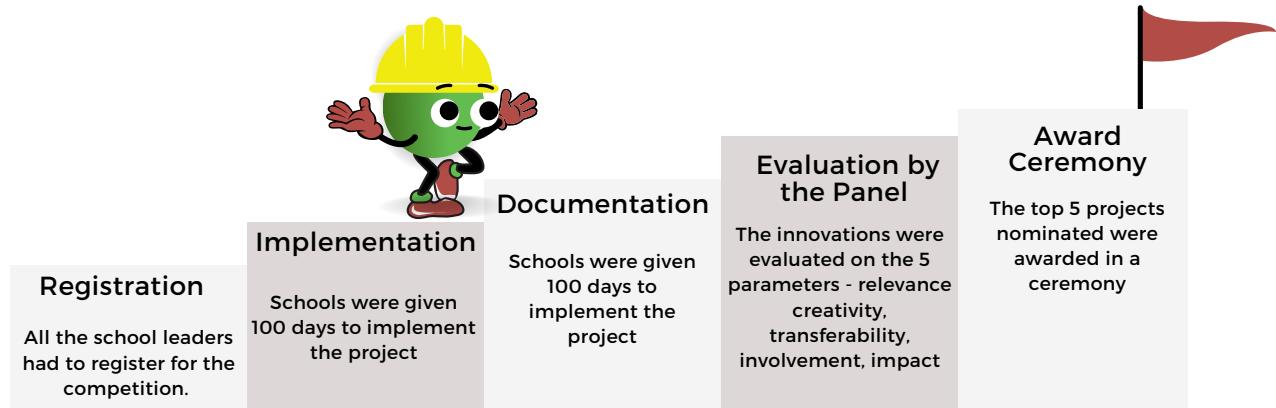
Target Stakeholder: Head Masters

Program Objective: To celebrate the unique stories of improvement done at the school level by school leaders and document the best practices that aid improvement journey

Department: Andhra Pradesh Social Welfare Residential Educational Institutions Society (APSWREIS)

Process:

Registration

All the school leaders had to register for the competition.

Implementation

Schools were given 100 days to implement the project

Documentation

Schools were given 100 days to implement the project

Evaluation by the Panel

The innovations were evaluated on the 5 parameters - relevance creativity, transferability, involvement, impact

Award Ceremony

The top 5 projects nominated were awarded in a ceremony

Highlights : -
- 80+ schools participated with 166+ stories of improvements from the ground.
- Successful project implementation saw participation from all stakeholders like headmasters, teachers, parents, students, and community members.

Scan the QR code or click the link to read the detailed case study

3.4.2 Virtual Parent Teacher Meeting:
A use-case of State driving elementary improvements to improve standard work processes
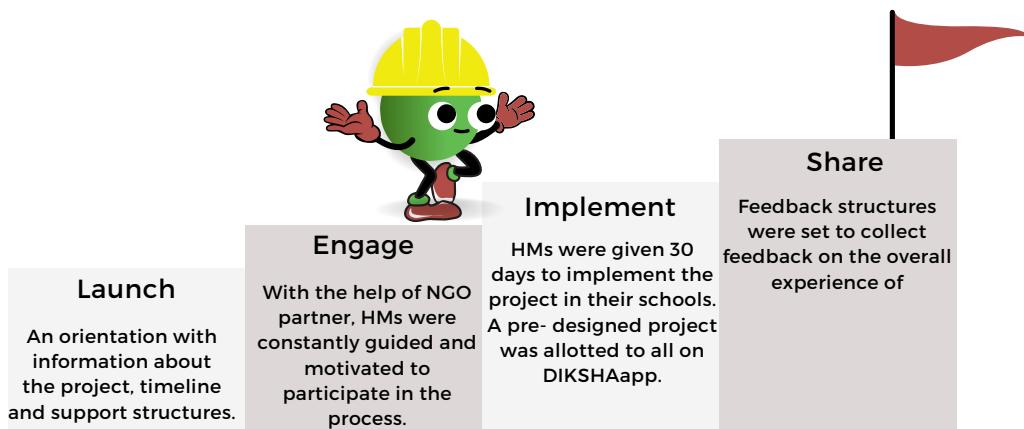
Target Stakeholder: Head Masters

Program Objective: To bridge the gap between the schools and community under the backdrop of physical distancing and school closures because of COVID-19 pandemic

State: Uttar Pradesh

Process:

Launch

An orientation with information about the project, timeline and support structures.

Engage

With the help of NGO partner, HMs were constantly guided and motivated to participate in the process.

Implement

HMs were given 30 days to implement the project in their schools. A pre- designed project was allotted to all on DIKSHAapp.

Share

Feedback structures were set to collect feedback on the overall experience of

Highlights : -
- 96% HMs felt that they should have done the PTM earlier and found it to be fruitful.
- On average 26% of parents from each school were reached through virtual PTMs.
- About 72% of parents who attended were happy with the online mode of PTMs from home and felt empowered.

Scan the QR code or click the link to read the detailed case study

3.4.3 Guided Reading Campaign:
A use-case of States contextualizing & implementing a national initiative using micro-improvement approach
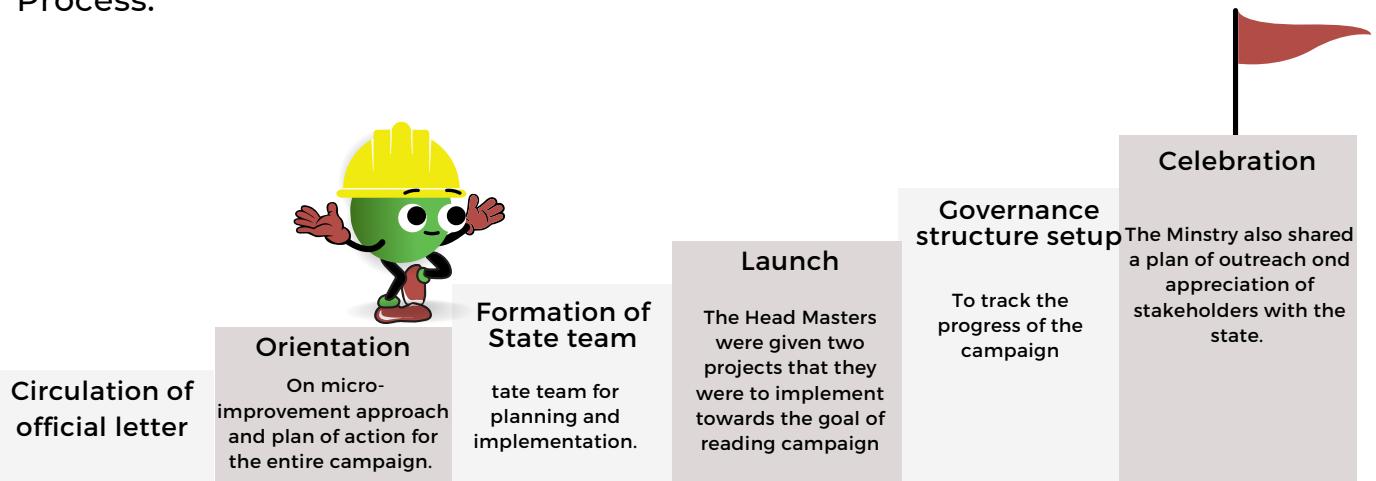
Target Stakeholder: Head Masters

Program Objective: To successfully implement the activities of the Reading Campaign in the state

State: - Bihar, Gujarat, Karnataka, Odisha, Puducherry and 10 other low performing districts in India

Process:

| Circulation of official letter | Orientation On micro-improvement approach and plan of action for the entire campaign. | Formation of State team tate team for planning and implementation. | Launch The Head Masters were given two projects that they were to implement towards the goal of reading campaign | Governance structure setup To track the progress of the campaign | Celebration The Minstry also shared a plan of outreach ond appreciation of stakeholders with the state. |

Highlights:

- 26,171 schools across states organized and completed the reading campaign in their schools using the DIKSHA project capability.
- Gujarat was one of the first states to adopt and complete the campaign implementation in the state successfully with minimum support.
- Chhattisgarh has contextualized the project from Reading Mela to Ganitotsav in order to include the aspects of numeracy as well.
- Bihar leveraged media to constantly mobilize & inform the headmasters and other district officials regarding the Guided Reading Campaign. They also used it to appreciate the efforts of various HMs in the districts.

Scan the QR code or click the link to read the detailed case study

3.4.4 School Vision Exercise:

A use case to leverage the platform of online peer learning circles (PLC) for driving action towards school improvement
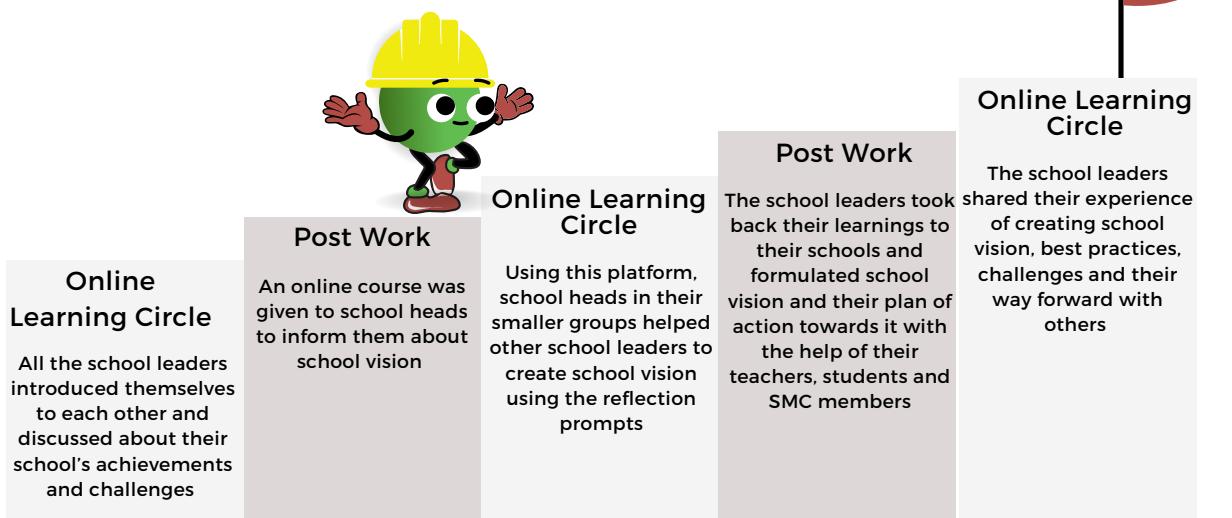
Target Stakeholder: Head Masters/Principals

Program Objectives- a) To create a shared school vision by bringing all stakeholders together in the school

b) To enable school leaders to make use of shared spaces like these to discuss their learnings & challenges with their peers.

State: Punjab

Process:

Online Learning Circle

All the school leaders introduced themselves to each other and discussed about their school's achievements and challenges

Post Work

An online course was given to school heads to inform them about school vision

Online Learning Circle

Using this platform, school heads in their smaller groups helped other school leaders to create school vision using the reflection prompts

Post Work

The school leaders took back their learnings to their schools and formulated school vision and their plan of action towards it with the help of their teachers, students and SMC members

Online Learning Circle

The school leaders shared their experience of creating school vision, best practices, challenges and their way forward with others

Highlights : -

- 60% of school heads & principals completed their post-work.
- 78% of school heads & principals attended the online learning circle.

Scan the QR code or click the link to read the detailed case study

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