

Impact Assessment Briefing: Zero Investment Innovations for Education Initiative (ZII EI)

1. Executive Summary

The Zero Investment Innovations for Education Initiative (ZII EI), a core component of HDFC Bank's CSR initiative "Parivartan," represents a significant intervention in India's primary education sector. Launched in 2015, the program focuses on empowering teachers to adopt innovative, student-centered pedagogical techniques—such as arts, sports, storytelling, and project-based learning—without requiring additional monetary investment. The impact assessment, conducted by Sambodhi Research and Communications, indicates that the program has reached over 25 lakh teachers and 3 lakh students across India. Key findings demonstrate a transformative effect on both teaching practices and student outcomes:

- **High Engagement:** 93% of surveyed teachers participated in regular training, with 84% rating the sessions as "excellent."
- **Methodological Adoption:** 99% of teachers have integrated at least one form of art into their lessons, while 88% have adopted storytelling techniques.
- **Student Satisfaction:** 100% of students in Grades 4 and 5 reported excitement about attending school, with 93% stating they understood the concepts taught.
- **Holistic Development:** Beyond academic performance, the program has fostered critical life skills, including teamwork, leadership, and emotional intelligence.
- **Infrastructure Gaps:** Despite high success, challenges remain in ICT (Information and Communication Technology) integration, infrastructure, and the consistent distribution of resources like the Innovative Pathshaala booklets.

2. Project Background and Objectives

Education is identified as the cornerstone of nation-building and socioeconomic transformation. The ZII EI program aligns with India's National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 by promoting creative and joyful learning environments.

2.1 Core Objectives

- **Pedagogical Innovation:** To foster an innovative mindset among teachers to enhance techniques without monetary investment.
- **Upskilling:** To provide teachers with modern pedagogical tools and networking opportunities.
- **Student Engagement:** To create dynamic, student-centered classrooms that improve attendance and learning outcomes.
- **Scalability:** To identify best practices for competency-based learning (CBL) pathways that can be replicated across diverse geographies.

2.2 Evolution of the Program

ZIIEI initially focused on on-ground activities such as training sessions and exhibitions. In 2020, following the COVID-19 pandemic, the program successfully transitioned to online platforms, utilizing virtual training and e-exhibitions to maintain outreach.

3. Impact Assessment Methodology

The assessment employed a **retrospective pre-post design** using a mixed-methods approach (quantitative and qualitative). The evaluation was guided by the **OECD-DAC framework**, focusing on six criteria: Relevance, Coherence, Effectiveness, Efficiency, Sustainability, and Impact.

3.1 Sampling Frame

Metric,Details

Geographic Reach,"10 States across 5 regions (North, South, Central, East, North-East)"

Schools Covered,130 schools

Quantitative Sample,"840 students (Grades 4 & 5), 130 teachers"

Qualitative Sample,184 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Semi-Structured Interviews

4. Demographic Profile of Respondents

4.1 Teachers

- **Gender:** 56% male, 44% female.
- **Education:** Highly qualified workforce; 42% hold postgraduate degrees, 34% are graduates, and 16% have achieved a PhD or higher.
- **Religious Composition:** 81% Hindu, 9% Christian, 6% Muslim, and 3% Buddhist/Neo-Buddhist.

4.2 Students and Families

- **Age:** 88% of student respondents fall within the 9–11 year age bracket.
- **Gender:** Nearly equal distribution (52% girls, 48% boys).
- **Maternal Profile:** 68% are engaged in household work; 37% studied up to Class 10.
- **Paternal Profile:** 36% are non-agricultural wage laborers; 37% completed secondary school.

5. Key Findings: Training and Pedagogy

5.1 Teacher Training Participation

Participation rates are exceptionally high at 93%. Most teachers (40%) attend sessions on a half-yearly basis, while 16% engage weekly. **Training Components and Adoption Rates:**

- **Foundational Language and Literacy:** 91% coverage; 84% implementation.
- **Integration of Sports:** 88% coverage; 88% implementation.
- **Integration of Arts:** 75% coverage; 68% implementation.
- **Storytelling:** 80% coverage; 77% implementation.

- **ICT Learning:** 47% coverage; 40% implementation (lowest adoption rate).

5.2 Perception of Training Effectiveness

The feedback regarding ZIIEI training sessions is overwhelmingly positive:

- **Quality:** 84% rated sessions as "excellent."
- **Relevance:** 74% found the sessions "highly relevant" to classroom needs.
- **Empowerment:** 66% found orientation sessions "highly effective" in providing practical strategies for immediate application.

6. Innovative Teaching Methodologies

6.1 Integration of Arts and Sports

- **Arts:** Teachers widely incorporated dance, music, theatre, and visual arts (99% usage). These methods are credited with boosting student confidence, imagination, and communication skills.
- **Sports:** 85% of students agree that physical activities helped develop self-motivation, time management, collaboration, and leadership.

6.2 Storytelling and Project-Based Learning

- **Storytelling:** 88% of teachers use techniques like role play, dramatization, and flashcards to improve empathy and memory retention.
- **Experiential Learning:** The program moved toward "learning by doing" through nature walks and problem-solving activities. This has fostered a sense of independence and ownership among students.

7. Impact on Student Engagement and Learning

The program has significantly improved the classroom experience and student performance:

- **Conceptual Clarity:** 93% of students understood the concepts taught. To ensure clarity, 95% felt comfortable asking teachers for help, while 56% interacted with peers.
- **Real-World Application:** 69% of students can connect classroom lessons to real-world scenarios.
- **Attendance:** 80% of teachers reported improved attendance, which they attributed to more engaging and joyful teaching methods.
- **Tools for Learning:** Students identified the most impactful activities for connecting lessons as:
 - Poems (75%)
 - Sports & Games (68%)
 - Painting (53%)
 - Stories & Comics (51%)

8. Resource Utilization and Accessibility

The **Innovations Handbook (Navachar Pustika)** and **Innovative Pathshaala Booklets** are the primary tools provided to teachers.

- **Usage:** 86% of teachers use the Innovations Handbook; 31% use it daily and 49% weekly.
- **Utility:** 64% rated the handbook as "very useful."
- **Accessibility:** 44% found resources "accessible," but 54% found them only "moderately accessible."
- **Challenges:** Teachers noted that the print size in booklets is often too small for students, and some content is misaligned with the specific understanding levels of different grades.

9. Challenges and Limitations

Despite the overall success, several barriers prevent the full adoption of inquiry-based and ICT learning:

- **Infrastructure:** Limited access to computers, projectors, and reliable internet, particularly in rural schools.
- **Time Constraints:** Administrative responsibilities leave teachers with limited time for resource-heavy planning.
- **Technical Skill Gaps:** Teachers reported a lack of confidence in integrating digital tools due to inadequate hands-on workshops.
- **Logistics:** Inconsistent distribution of Innovative Pathshaala booklets and small font sizes hinder effective use.
- **Assessment Limitations:** The study noted limitations such as recall bias in the retrospective design and connectivity issues (e.g., Lakshadweep) that prevented some interviews.

10. Conclusion and Way Forward

The ZIIEI program has successfully demonstrated the potential of low-cost, creative approaches to revolutionize primary education. By upskilling teachers and providing them with zero-investment tools, the program has created more dynamic, student-centered environments that foster both academic and life skills. **Recommendations for Future Scaling:**

- **Enhance ICT Support:** Address infrastructure gaps and provide more robust digital training for teachers.
- **Refine Resources:** Update booklets with larger print sizes and grade-specific, culturally relevant content.
- **Consistency:** Ensure timely and consistent distribution of all pedagogical materials.
- **Mentorship:** Transition from one-time training to ongoing mentorship and experiential workshops to support complex methods like inquiry-based learning.