



SHIFTING MINDSETS IN NORTH EAST DELHI, INDIA

November 2019

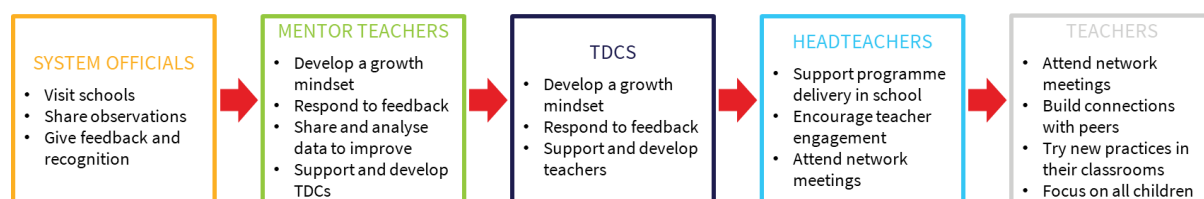
THE SITUATION

North East district is one of the most populated areas of Delhi, with very slow development compared to other districts. When STiR started work in the district in 2015, many schools lacked basic infrastructure, and pupil:teacher ratios often exceeded 80:1. In recent years, the Delhi government has made tremendous progress to improve facilities and support, but these challenges still persist in several schools.

| District fact file | |
|---------------------------|---------|
| Year STiR started working | 2015 |
| Start of system-led model | 2017 |
| # secondary schools | 127 |
| # secondary teachers | 4,953 |
| # secondary pupils | 168,402 |

In 2015, North East district was considered to be the most challenging district in Delhi, so STiR selected this district for our first intervention in government schools (in collaboration with the education department). In 2017, as part of the adoption of STiR's system-led approach across Delhi, we started working in every secondary school in North East district. Every school appointed a Teacher Development Coordinator (TDC), responsible for supporting the teachers within their school and for implementing the strategies suggested in the programme. Mentor Teachers (MTs) were also introduced in each district to provide support to 5 or 6 TDCs each.

The STiR District Lead works with each actor in the system to help them to understand their roles in successful programme implementation, and to improve their motivation and mindsets, as below:



The role of the District Lead is to identify the most important priorities at each stage of the programme, and to focus on the right actors so that the overall quality continues to improve.

OUR APPROACH AND CHALLENGES

ENGAGING OFFICIALS

The support of senior officials is critical to programme success. We set up quarterly meetings with the Deputy Director of Education (the most senior official in the district) with a small number of MTs and TDCs, to share success stories and challenges from the field and request support. We also encouraged officials to visit schools frequently, share observations and give feedback for further improvement. A calendar was agreed to ensure that these visits took place. The visits had an unexpected impact on schools and teachers, who were additionally motivated by the interest of senior officials to show off good practice in their classrooms.

GAINING HEADTEACHER SUPPORT

One of the biggest challenges was engaging headteachers. Despite support at state and district levels, we still needed buy-in from headteachers to ensure that programme activities could take place in schools. We found that many headteachers considered the MTs and TDCs to be a parallel authority assigned to supervise them. Others considered the TDC role to be purely administrative in nature. The monthly network meetings were seen as an improper use of teacher time, and some MTs were not even allowed to enter school sites.

It took time and effort to make headteachers realise that MTs and TDCs were there to provide support. We held a training session for MTs and TDCs to reinforce the expectations for their work in schools – their focus was to support rather than monitor the teachers and headteacher, and not to interrupt the school administrative processes. They were encouraged to establish and strengthen their connections with headteachers by inviting them to attend network meetings and support with classroom observations.

At the same time, we worked at district and state levels to try to leverage the support of headteachers. In some cases, senior district officials visited schools alongside MTs to explain the programme objectives and build support, which increased headteacher motivation and buy-in. We made clear that the positions of TDCs and MTs are not part of formal school hierarchies – they aim to support teachers and headteachers, and to strengthen the academic environments in schools. These sessions helped headteachers to see a new perspective, and increased their acceptance of the programme activities. We also showed headteachers that they are integral to programme success, which helped them to feel more included.

MOTIVATING MTS AND TDCS

The initial resistance from headteachers was demotivating for many MTs and TDCs, especially as they were still building their understanding of their new roles. In particular, some TDCs were criticised by their fellow teachers for reducing their teaching responsibility, and received no recognition or appreciation for their work. STiR therefore sought to create mechanisms to showcase their efforts and identify areas for further development.

We made changes to our monthly progress check meetings, encouraging Mentor Teachers to share their success stories and discussing data which showed the positive trends in teacher motivation. Senior officials were also asked to share their own observations from school visits, and stories of change from individual teachers. We worked to identify skills development areas in both groups, and designed sessions to support these. Regular discussion sessions and follow-up calls were held with the Mentor Teachers and TDCs after each school visit, network meeting and classroom observations to reinforce their belief that they were making progress. This helped to improve their motivation and built a shared purpose to support teachers.

ENCOURAGING DATA SHARING

STiR uses Google forms to collect data from teachers, TDCs and MTs about their experiences of network meetings, but these stakeholders were initially very reticent to share their feedback, and our team had to chase MTs individually to ensure their submission. Some had concerns about how the data would be used, and considered it a monitoring mechanism of their own work; while others resented another task on top of their regular workload, especially where they were less comfortable using technology.



We held data-based training sessions with Mentor Teachers to clarify what this data is for and build their engagement with the process. We also discussed the data with them, asking them to identify discrepancies and infer the reasons behind these. This helped us to identify multiple factors which were hampering authentic data submission, including fear of rebuke or disclosure of the data, and an ignorance from some teachers about the importance of the data. In subsequent meetings, TDCs were able to address these factors with teachers and show how correct data helps our decision making, which improved the data we received.

SIGNS OF SUCCESS

Over the past two years, we have seen a positive mindset shift across Mentor Teachers, TDCs and headteachers. Senior officials have also significantly increased their involvement in the programme; having previously supported with logistics and facilitating some sessions, they now help to decide the agendas of meetings and share their own data on our progress. Even those officials who had previously avoided involvement with the programme are now enthusiastically co-facilitating sessions and interacting with Mentor Teachers. Similarly, headteachers not only support the network meetings but are keen to attend them where possible.

As observed and as shared by the stakeholders, STiR has helped in strengthening connections between different system officials, and between teachers and students. An academic environment has been created where teachers come together, meet and share their classroom experiences. Earlier there used to be resistance in classroom observation and giving feedback to each other, but now gradually teachers have begun to realise the importance of peer learning and have begun to develop their growth mindsets.

Our priorities for the next year are as follows:

- To further develop the facilitation and coaching skills of Mentor Teachers and TDCs.
- To strengthen the culture of appreciation at all levels of the district.

ACADEMIC YEAR DATA

In September 2019, 53% of teachers planned peer classroom observations (up from 9% in July 2018).

93% of MTs and 92% of TDCs attended the latest training institutes in July 2019.

100% of TDCs have engaged in additional training and developmental opportunities.

In September 2019, 86% of TDCs submitted Google forms (up from 40% in September 2018).

TESTIMONIALS

“The TDC programme has given a platform to teachers and teacher educators to discuss their different academic concerns and issues leading towards self and professional growth. This programme has given a different meaning to the teacher training conducted by the district.”

Dr. Kanwaljeet Kaur, Facilitator, Dilshad Garden District Institute of Education and Training

“The TDC programme is results-oriented. In most schools, it helped teachers to think beyond the ‘chalk-and-talk’ method and motivated them to try different teaching strategies based on their classroom dynamics. Network meetings helped to improve the teaching skills of teachers, which ultimately resulted in better learning outcomes.”

Jaspal Singh Negi, Mentor Teacher

“The regular academic discourse led by TDCs with all teachers has helped to strengthen a peer learning culture, and provided teachers with a platform to discuss their challenges and collaboratively strive for possible solutions.”

Sanjay Prakash, Mentor Teacher