



Transforming lives through education

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kusuma  
trust

## Research in Education

### Supporting teacher professional development

On 30 March 2015, Kusuma hosted the first in a series of planned seminars on key topics in education in India. The seminar, which was held in Delhi, focused on the professional development of teachers in government secondary schools. The aim of this seminar series is to promote dialogue between researchers and practitioners on topics of common interest.

Experts from a range of organisations attended, including delegates from the Azim Premji Foundation, Pratham, Pravah, STIR Education, Ignus ERG, Digantar, Central Institute of Educational Technology (CIET), Doosra Dashak, Kaivalya Foundation and the Ministry of Human Resource Development.

Presentations covered the assessment of teaching practice, how to support and empower teachers through in-service training, the role of teacher networks and other strategies for improving teaching practice, and the potential for open resources to improve access to multi-lingual e-text books and other learning resources. Professor Rajaram Sharma, Joint Director at CIET, reported that over 20,000 teachers are registered with CIET's e-library and the plan is for every State in India to become a partner agency. Such developments support the development of online training and teacher professional networks.

Participants reported on key trends, including a perceived shift towards a more sympathetic understanding of the

constraints faced by teachers in government schools. Teacher professional development programmes often fail to take the specific needs of teachers into account and, as a result, teachers feel frustrated, demoralised and low in confidence. Ishani Sen, Director of Teacher Training Interventions at Pravah described a recent training event where she started by asking participants how they felt. A teacher in a government school responded by saying: "I don't want to attend this training because I am tired of being told that what I have been doing for the past 15 years is wrong. My confidence has been crushed. What I need is someone to understand my specific problems in my classroom and my school."

This story resonated with other seminar participants who felt that teacher professional development programmes would be more effective if they were tailored to meet the specific needs of participants, and were developed *with* and not just *for* teachers. Training programmes could be co-led by teachers rather than being delivered solely by external experts. In this way, training programmes could capitalise on the strengths of teachers rather than focus on assumed weaknesses.

In her closing remarks, Sunisha Ahuja from the Ministry of Human Resource Development in India, highlighted the need to support teachers to believe in themselves and their capacity to make a positive difference. Research plays a central role to inform improvements in teaching practice. Finally, although teacher unions have a key role to play, Sunisha's view was that teachers could benefit from a professional body that represents their views and interests on a broad range of topics related to education.

*"Research is central to every aspect of the Trust's work. By bringing together experts in the field of educational research we can better understand issues in education, create opportunities for collaboration and develop strategies to improve the quality of education in India."*

Dr Balwant Singh,  
CEO Kusuma Trust UK



Participants at the Teacher Professional Development Research Seminar  
Photo: Kusuma Trust UK

**Our mission is to facilitate and increase access to education and other life opportunities for children and young people**

## Kusuma supports innovation champion

Mr. Sanjay Pandey, a Science teacher from Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh, has made the professional journey from being a teacher to becoming a teacher trainer with the support of Kusuma. Inspired by his father, who was the Principal of the village primary school, he knew from an early age that he wanted to become a teacher. After graduating, his teaching career began close to his village home so that he could give something back to his community.

Mr. Pandey participated in the Udbhav<sup>1</sup> teacher professional development programme, launched by Kusuma in 2012. His



Mr Sanjay Pandey speaking at a teacher professional development meeting  
Photo: Kusuma Foundation

## Kusuma India programme review

Over three days in March, staff from the Kusuma Trust UK (the Trust) and Kusuma Foundation's offices in Delhi and the 2 focus districts of Sambalpur and Hardoi met to review the India programme and identify ways to strengthen it, drawing on evidence of what works. Staff participated in interactive sessions to discuss work on improvement of school facilities, school governance and management, teacher professional development, student preparedness for secondary school, research and evaluation, Kusuma Resource Centres and the Kusuma Fellowships and Awards.

The workshop emphasised the importance of building closer partnerships with schools, particularly around community involvement in school governance and empowering head teachers to be more innovative and effective leaders. In addition, Kusuma will continue to advocate for improvements in the quality of education, teacher recruitment and reduction in teacher vacancies. Research will remain an important part of the work, with local communities becoming more engaged in monitoring the progress of teaching and learning in schools.

## Twitter



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enthusiasm and potential for teaching was recognised by Kusuma who supported him to develop and implement his innovative ideas. With further encouragement, Mr Pandey became a member of the District Resource Group<sup>2</sup> and now trains other teachers to use innovative science teaching methods.

*“Mr. Pandey is a dynamic teacher who really enjoys teaching and using new methods to encourage and enhance student engagement. His training is really good and he applies the content to real life situations. As a result, it becomes easy for any teacher to grasp the idea and apply it in the classroom.”*

B.K Rathour, Principal,  
R.R. Inter College Hardoi.

His work with Kusuma keeps Mr Pandey motivated to introduce new teaching techniques. He has been recognised as a teacher innovator by STIR Education for his practice of linking science concepts to real life situations, and he was awarded a certificate of innovation from Roehampton University.

## Looking forward

The Trust has engaged the London School of Economics to undertake longitudinal research on the impact of the Kusuma Excellence Fellowship (KEF) on Fellows, their families and social networks. KEF supports high-achieving students from poor backgrounds in Hardoi, Uttar Pradesh, to complete their secondary education and pursue higher education. Fellows receive mentoring and career counselling to develop the 'soft' skills required for success in a highly competitive job market.

Over the next five to ten years, the research will track the 'journey' of Fellows through the secondary and tertiary education system and their entry into the labour market. Comparisons will be made between Fellows and a similar group of students who have not received a fellowship, on a range of measures including educational attainment, progression through the educational system, career choice and income.

The Trust funds research to inform its grant making and better understand the impact on beneficiaries. Evidence generated from research is used to shape its strategy and influence the practices and policies of implementers, other donors, government and policy bodies. The Trust publishes its research and evaluation findings on the Trust's website.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 'Udbhav' means to rise from

<sup>2</sup> District Resource Groups are made up of senior teachers who observe teacher standards and provide mentoring through on site school visits

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.kusumatrust.org/about-us/publications/>