

Impact Assessment of School Support Programme

Apple India

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
1. Introduction and background	3
1.1 About Akanksha Foundation	3
1.2 About the School support programme	3
1.3 About the study	3
2. Akanksha School – Overview	5
2.1 What makes the Akanksha Schools stand out?	6
3. Approach and methodology	7
3.1 Our approach for the study	7
3.2 Methodology of the study	7
3.3 Stakeholder consultations and tools used for data collection	8
4. Key findings	10
4.1 Students	10
4.2 School staff	12
4.3 Parents and School Management Committee (SMC)	14
5. Stakeholders speak	17
6. Caveats	19

Executive Summary

Apple India partnered with Akanksha Foundation to provide students with quality school education through a school support programme. The Akanksha schools focus on holistic learning, thus, working towards the creation of a safe environment for its students and parents.

The programme aimed to increase the accessibility for underserved students. The focus was on three key components of Academic achievement (use of innovative teaching methods and curriculum); Student wellbeing (physical and mental wellbeing) and Community engagement (integration of parents). There are a total of eight (08) schools under the programme in Pune and Mumbai.

Apple India engaged Grant Thornton Bharat to conduct an impact assessment of the school support programme. The objective of the study was to assess the impact of the programme activities.

The study was designed and executed using the Theory of Change approach. The areas of enquiry aimed to understand the perception and feedback of the stakeholders. The study used both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. A mix of focused group discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interview (KIIs) tools were used with the stakeholders. As part of the study, field visits were conducted in three (03) schools in Pune and Mumbai along with interactions with students, parents, School Management Committee (SMC) and school staff.

Key findings of the study:

- Discussions with students indicated that 100% of them liked coming to school. 53% of those students mentioned it was because of friendly teachers, while 39% chose the interactive sessions in class.
- Further, 100% of the students agreed to using tablets / mobile phones for their classes. 71% of those students mentioned they liked using technology in class since it made learning interactive and interesting with visual aids.
- Discussions with the school staff highlighted that the activity-based teaching methods of Akanksha schools was the standout factor as it focused on teaching through exciting but educative games or activities. The teachers and principals also considered the emotional and ethical learning provided in the schools as an added benefit for the students.
- Further, a 100% of the teachers responded that they received training on various aspects of socio-emotional ethical learning, new technology usage, smart board usage, blended learning among others. This gave them the ability to support a child holistically.
- Discussions with parents highlighted that 68% preferred Akanksha schools over others due to the pedagogy used, 20% chose technological facilities and remaining chose infrastructural facilities.
- Further, the parents also mentioned that they found the admission process of Akanksha schools to be unbiased since every child got the opportunity to be

part of the school. They were also highly appreciative of the teachers and their level of involvement in their children's lives.

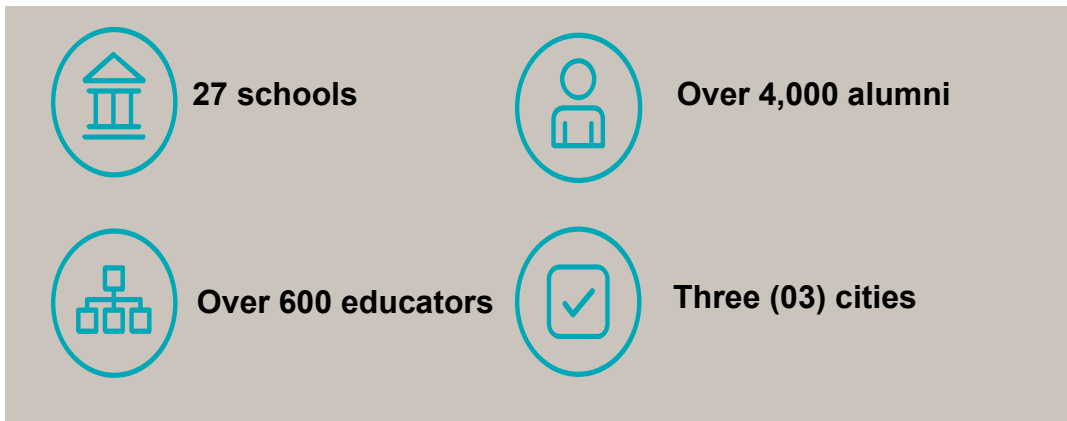
Overall, basis interactions with various stakeholders, it was highlighted that the school support programme helped students gain access to quality education. They were provided with an interactive learning experience, a unique curriculum along with technological support. The schools also tried to increase the involvement of parents in the educational journey of their children. Parents were appreciative of the efforts of the school and the ability to provide their children an equal opportunity towards holistic education.

1. Introduction and background

1.1 About Akanksha Foundation

Akanksha Foundation established in 1991, with the aim “To deliver a high-quality education to each child, no matter his or her background”. It began with 15 children in 1991 and has grown into 10,000 children by 2021. Akanksha Foundation focuses on providing quality education to under privileged children through English medium schools.

Organization reach



1.2 About the School support programme

Apple India has supported Akanksha Foundation for their school support programme. It focuses on creating scalable models of quality schools for the less fortunate communities. The model works both within and beyond the classrooms to provide the children a holistic learning experience.

The three key components of the programme are:

- **Academic achievement:** Focus on encouraging schools to use innovative teaching methods and curriculum along with the use of proper technology for the students learning experience.
- **Student well-being:** Focus on the physical and mental well-being the of the students using innovative programme and co-curriculum activities to support the students.
- **Community engagement:** Focus on integrating parents / community to be part of the school and the overall learning experience

1.3 About the study

Grant Thornton Bharat LLP was appointed by Apple India to conduct an impact assessment study of school support programme. To conduct the assessment, a Theory of change approach was used basis which key areas of enquiry were developed for each stakeholder group to obtain a holistic understanding of the programme results. The study was executed by interviewing the beneficiaries of the

programme to gauge an overall understanding of the outcomes and impact. The assessment included discussions with stakeholders to document their perception and feedback on the programme.

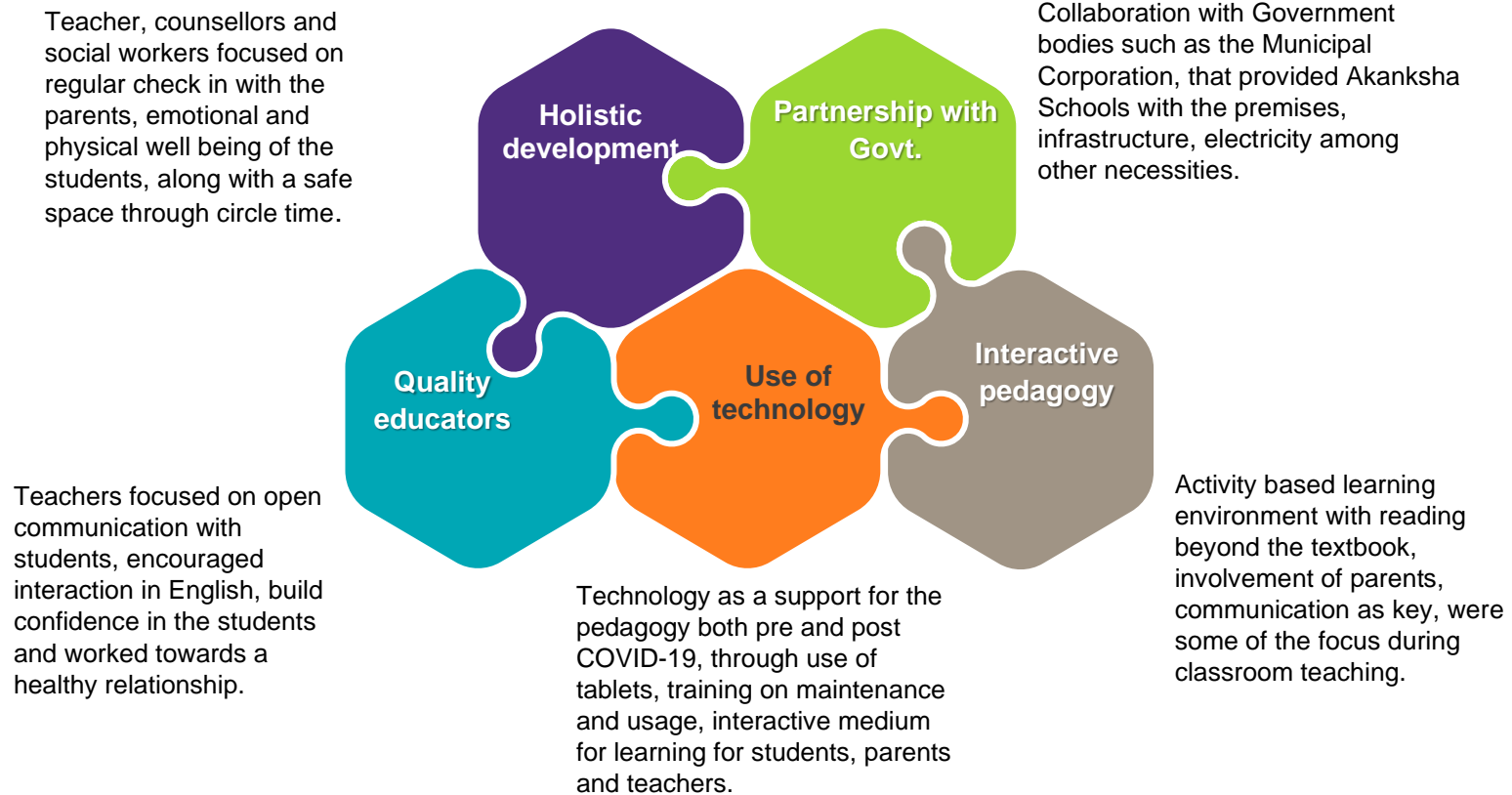
The key objectives of the assessment:

- To assess the impact of the school support programme
- To gather feedback of the stakeholders and beneficiaries on the programme
- To analyze and report the data collected through interactions with the beneficiaries

The study aimed to understand the overall process of the programme through analysis of the data collected and further corroborating it with inferences from stakeholder discussions.

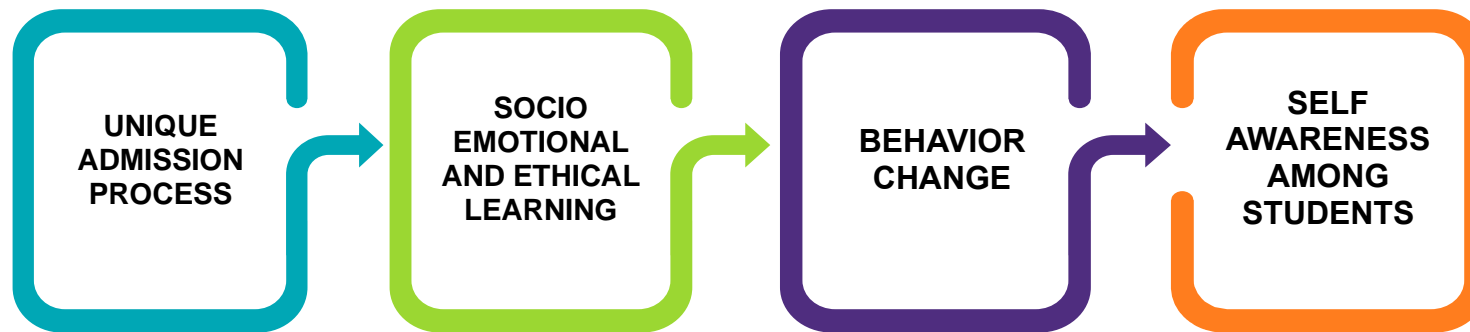
2. Akanksha School – Overview

Basis our observation and understanding at the field, below are the key components that highlights the Akanksha Schools.



2.1 What makes the Akanksha Schools stand out?

As observed during the field visit and secondary research, some of the unique factors of Akanksha Schools are as follows:



Akanksha Schools conducted lottery-based admission process, where names of students were collected via application forms. The lottery was conducted live in front of parents to ensure non-biased decision making.

Some activities under SEE Learning included participation in circle time (for students to share their experience/ challenges) along with well-being calls to the parents to check in on the emotional and physical health of students.

Interaction and exposure among students and parents, led to behaviour change with increased focus on hygiene, health, communication, involvement, and participation.

Students were comfortable in voicing their opinion and the school provided them special classes on Personal Safety Education. These classes focused on teaching students' crucial safety issues and how to address them.

3. Approach and methodology

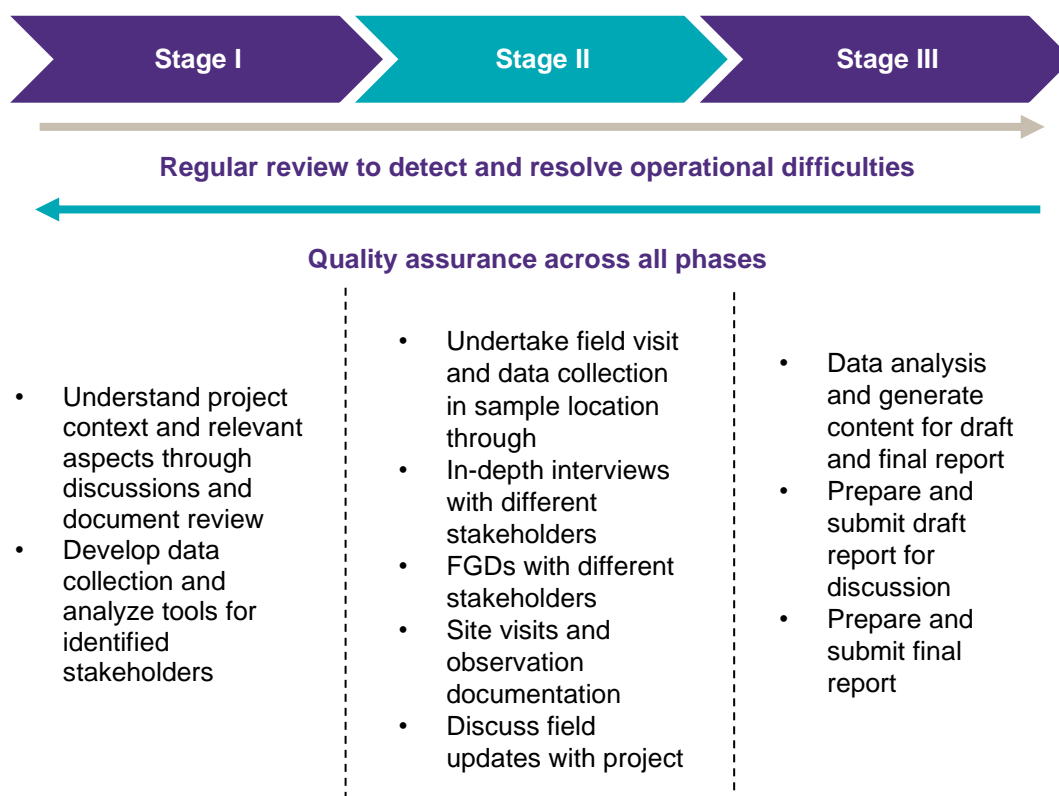
3.1 Our approach for the study

The study was executed through a predefined approach to assess the impact of the programme on the target beneficiaries. The study relied on the **Theory of Change** for developing the approach and methodology. The Theory of Change maps the process of the study through identification of the goal or impact of the program and subsequently mapping backward for finding requirements.

Problem	Activities	Outputs	Outcomes	Impact
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited access to quality education for children from low-income families Inadequate access to technology (especially during the pandemic) Limited access to quality socio-emotional development support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Lottery system for fair admission procedure Use of technology for blended learning Learning devices to students Train teachers to act as facilitators Conduct well-being calls to students Use of SEE curriculum Awareness for parents as co-educators Awareness sessions, govt. schemes / job opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No. of students admitted No. of students retained No. of students with access to devices No. of teachers trained No. of well-being calls made No. of parents reached out No. of meetings held with parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved admission of students from low-income families Improved retention of students Improved passing percentage of students Better access to counselling for students and parents Improved engagement of parents with children and school activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved access of low-income family children to high quality education Improved opportunity to maximize potential of children

3.2 Methodology of the study

The methodology adopted for the study was based on both qualitative and quantitative indicators and was spread over three stages. The figure below highlights these three stages of the study:



3.3 Stakeholder consultations and tools used for data collection

Basis the approach and methodology of the study, specific stakeholder wise tools were developed. For each stakeholder either Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) or Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) were held. The below table highlights the areas of enquiry and tools for each stakeholder.

Stakeholder	Areas of enquiry	FGD	KII
Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Understand students wrt the usage technology, impact of covid-19, outlook towards education and life 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perception of students wrt the curriculum, teachers, improvement in learning among others 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ ✓
Parents & SMC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement with school wrt Parent-Teacher meets, regular interaction with the teachers, involvement in schoolwork, wellbeing calls Feedback on school/teacher wrt extra-curricular activities, curriculum quality, teacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engagement wrt the SMC with the school authorities, participation in everyday school decisions Feedback wrt to the SMC on the changed behaviour wrt education 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓

	quality, improvement in students' academic progression	in the community, students, parents		
School staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About the students wrt to improvement in attendance, retention, academic, involvement in extracurricular activities • Feedback on the changed behaviour wrt education in the community, students, parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback on school / wrt to existing pedagogy, areas of improvement, major challenges, resource availability • Feedback wrt available infrastructure, teachers, key operational challenges, recommendations 		✓

4. Key findings

This section highlights some of the key findings of the field visit, based on different stakeholders.

4.1 Students

The field team visited three (03) schools and interacted with 193 students in total. The table given below highlights the division basis the schools.

Students were the primary stakeholder for the study and interactions were conducted with standard 1 to standard 10. With students from standard 1 to 5, the interactions were based on a Focused Group Discussion (FGD), while those from standard 6th to 10th, consisted of both FGDs and In-depth interviews.

Figure 1: Interaction with students



Table 1: Data collection: Students in three schools

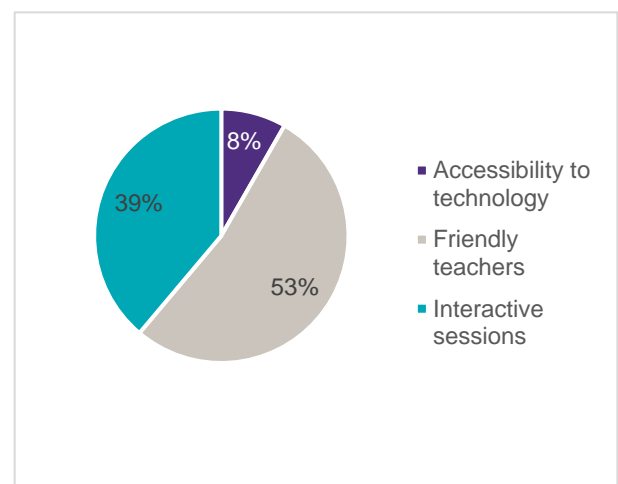
School	Students
PCMC English Medium School – Bopkhel	49
Late Anantrao Pawar Memorial English Medium School	91
Sitaram Mill Compound Mumbai Public School	53

A. What do you like about your school?

During interaction with students, the field team discussed a range of topics to understand their opinions regarding the schools, its teachers, and the overall environment. Keeping the above in perspective, students were asked if they liked coming to school, to which a **100% of them responded in the affirmative.**

Further, the students were also asked to choose what they liked most about their school the most. As per figure 2, **53% of the students chose friendly teachers, while**

Figure 2: What do you like about your school?



39% chose interactive sessions with their teachers, and the remaining chose access to technology as the primary reason

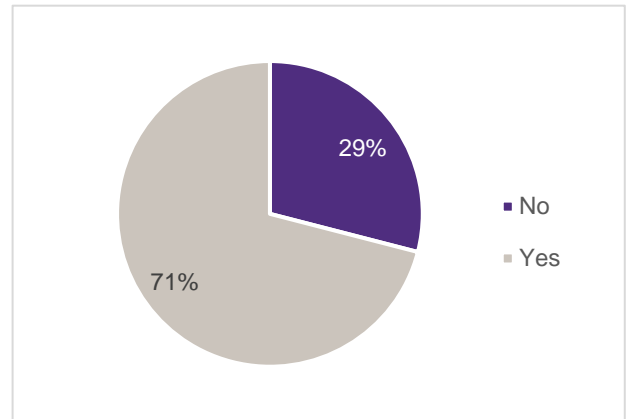
B. Use of technology

Technology was considered as an added support for better learning/ teaching experience, in the Akanksha schools. Post COVID-19, the usage of technology to impart education, became crucial. However, gaining access to laptops, tablets, cell phones for disadvantaged communities was not easy. Akanksha schools provided its students with required devices to continue their education.

The students were asked if they used tablets / mobile phones for their classes, to which **100% of the students responded in the affirmative.**

They were asked if they liked using technology in class, to which **71% responded that they did** because it made learning interactive and interesting with visual aid. The remaining responded that they did not, because of the continuous exposure to screens and preferred interactions in person.

Figure 3: Do you like using technology in class?



C. Overall feedback

The students were asked to provide their overall feedback on the school, its teachers, curriculum, quality of technology, use of interactive learning and technology in class. Some of the key highlights were:

- The students were very appreciative of their teachers and were eager to come to class every day.
- They found the interactive learning methods with the use of activities and play, not just beneficial for education but to broaden their horizons as well. Students were able to interact with their peers/ teachers openly and helped enrich their critical thinking abilities.
- They found the curriculum unique since it focused on holistic learning and not just academic excellence. Students also enjoyed the regular opportunities for extra-curricular activities.
- They believed that technology supported system made education more efficient with visual representation and they could use it as a medium for creative thinking. However, senior grade students also mentioned that one-on-one discussions with their teachers was more interactive in nature.

Figure 4: Interaction with students



4.2 School staff

The Akanksha schools employed teachers, social workers, counsellors along with the administrative staff. As part of the study, interactions were held with each stakeholder group. The table below highlights the interactions with each stakeholder under school staff in both Pune and Mumbai schools. Interactions during the discussion, focused on understanding the operational aspects of school, teaching, and learning methods, gaining feedback among others.

Table 2: Data collection: School staff in three schools

School staff	Pune	Mumbai
Teachers	12	8
Social Worker	2	1
Counsellor	2	1
Admin	5	4

A. Teachers/ principals on pedagogy

During the teacher interactions, the pedagogy style of the curriculum was discussed extensively. The pedagogy focused on the use of activity-based teaching, motor skill development, project-based learning, enhanced problem solving/ critical thinking skills, regular discussion along with sharing time with students.

Basis interaction, it was noted that the teachers considered the activity-based teaching methods of Akanksha schools as the standout factor. It focused on teaching using exciting but educative games and activities. Further, they also considered the emotional and ethical learning provided in the school as an added benefit for the students. Followed by the focus on critical thinking in the pedagogy which helped students be more analytical in their problem solving along with motor skill learning as well.

“The education model in Akanksha school is different and allows students the space to experience quality education”

Teacher in Sitaram Mill Compound
Mumbai Public School

B. Teachers/ principals on training

Every teacher in Akanksha schools had access to training on all subjects. They were equipped with the skills to conduct classes on a range of topics. Teachers were asked if they received training, to which **100% of the teachers responded that they received training** on a various aspect of socio-emotional ethical learning, new

technology usage, smart board usage, blended learning among others. This gave them the ability to support a child holistically.

The teachers/ principals were also asked to provide feedback on the training sessions. Some of the key highlights were as:

- They found the trainings relevant to the everyday life of teaching and learning. A range of topics were covered including technological usage, SEE learning among others. This enabled them to learn from the training while also spread the message further with parents as well.
- The impact of the training could be seen directly in the classroom and with the students as well, with the use of new teaching styles/ methods. They were able to inculcate the learnings into their everyday classroom teaching.

C. Counsellor, Social Worker, and school administrative-

Discussions were held with the school Counsellor, Social Worker, and school administrative as well. The key highlights of the interactions were as follows:

- The Counsellor elaborated on the bond between the team and the students as the real essence of Akanksha Foundation. The friendly behaviour enabled students to interact, share and express themselves. Amidst these tough times, many students would share their issues with them. This was a massive change according to them.
- The Social workers mentioned that they act as a medium between the school and community. Most of the students were from lesser privileged families. The orientation of family members, especially parents changed significantly over a period time as they do not have to bear the financial brunt of private schools, and most importantly have access to the holistic learning environment of Akanksha school.
- The school administration mentioned the constant demand from parents to increase intake of students in Akanksha schools. This is because they saw the difference of education along with the overall learning opportunity that was given to students in Akanksha schools.

Figure 5: Students and counsellor interaction



4.3 Parents and School Management Committee (SMC)

Akanksha schools aimed to increase the involvement of parents in the educational journey of their children. Several activities are conducted to ensure parents participation including interactive Parent Teacher Meets (PTMs).

To enhance the role of parents in the everyday operations of the school, some parents were also part of the SMCs. The SMCs worked as the medium between the school and the larger community of parents for garnering permissions, conducting activities and events.

Figure 6: Interaction with parents



Table 3: Data collection: Parents and SMC in three schools

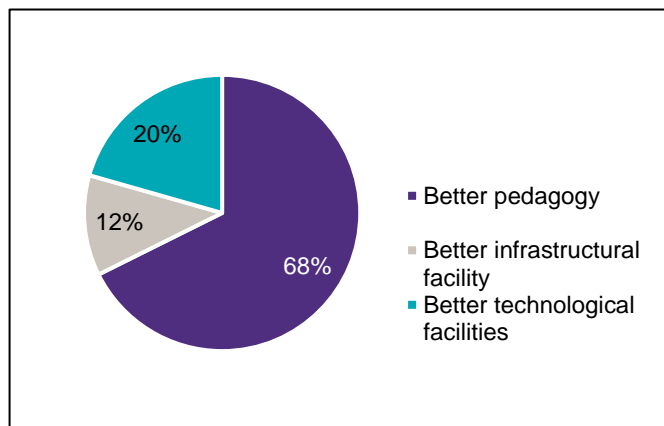
Stakeholder	Pune	Mumbai
Parents & SMC	19	15

A. Feedback on Akanksha schools

During interactions, parents stated that the school focused on keeping them updated on the progress of their children. Discussions were also held with parents by the school on key aspects of how to better understand or listen to the needs of their children, educating them on the importance of a 'beyond textbook' learning among others.

As shown in the graph, during interactions, parents were asked, why they preferred Akanksha schools over others, to which **68% of the parents responded to the better pedagogy, 20% responded to better technological facilities and remaining chose better infrastructural facilities.**

Figure 7: Preference of Akanksha schools over other



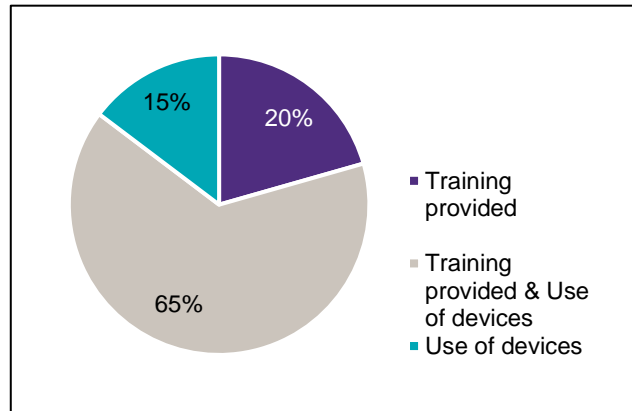
B. Technological enablement

During interactions, parents highlighted the significance of technology and its usage in the everyday lives of their children.

Parents were asked to explain how the school enabled their children to use technology. As per the graph, **65% of the respondents attributed it to both training and use of devices.**

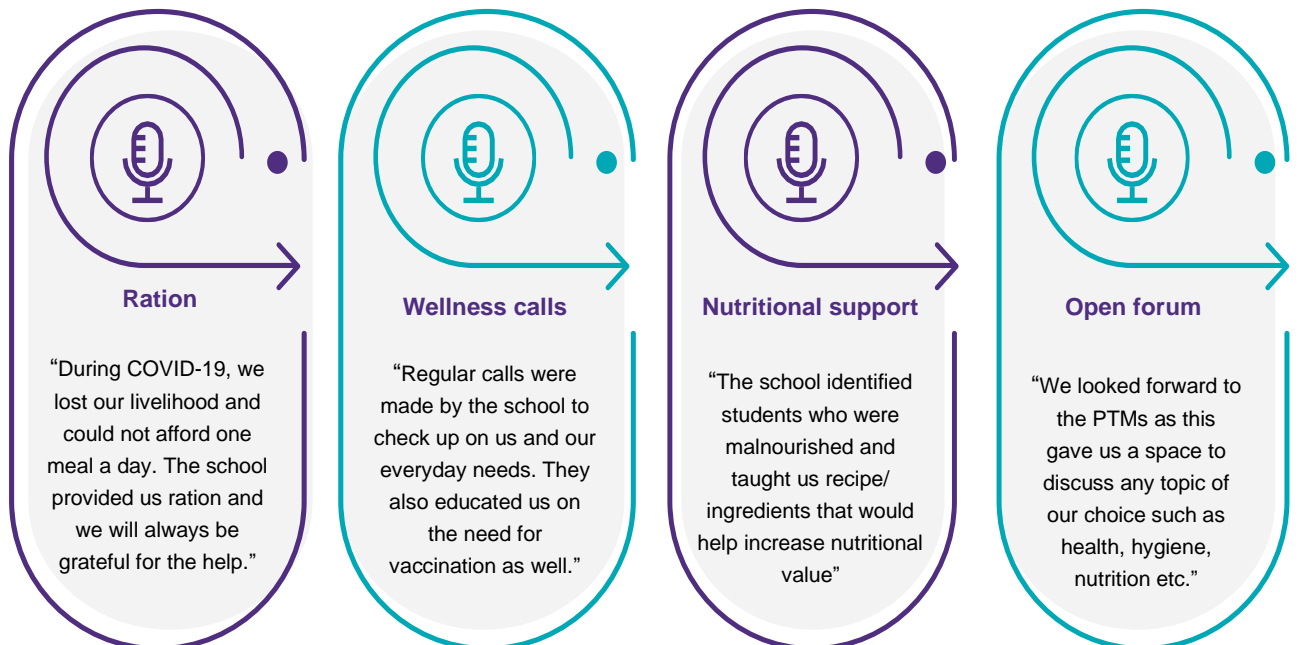
Further, even parents were trained on the usage of technology. For instance, on how to log-in to classes/ download applications to help support their children. This also enabled them to access digital platforms such as Government / banking applications etc.

Figure 8: Technological enablement



C. Support beyond school

In addition to support for students, Akanksha Schools also tried to improve the involvement of parents. During discussion with the parents, certain key points were highlighted as shown below.



D. Overall feedback

Basis interaction with parents, they were asked to provide their feedback on certain aspects of Akanksha Schools such as selection & admission process, teacher quality and technology usage. Some of the key highlights are as follows:

- They found the admission process to be truly unbiased since every child got the opportunity to be part of the school. The sessions happened publicly which added to their belief in a fair system.
- They were highly appreciative of the teachers and their level of involvement in their child's life. Teachers often guided the parents to understand their child's limitations along with their skills and uniqueness.
- Parents appreciated the use of technology not just for the devices but for the training provided. These trainings helped them provide support to their child in their everyday learning and use it for their own benefits as well.

"We trust the teachers and the school as well to give our children a positive and safe space for learning."

-Parent, Late Anantrao Pawar



5. Stakeholders speak

This section highlights the experiences of students and parents.

A. Students



Currently in class 9 in Late Anantrao Pawar Memorial English Medium School, Pune. She started her journey with Akanksha School in kindergarten.

The school allowed her to embrace her leadership and people skills. She walked the field team through the premises and introduced them to the school from the point of view of a student.

The school helped her gain confidence in communicating with people freely and to put her opinions in the forefront as well. With teachers that are receptive and easy to approach, she felt she had the space to express herself better.

“My school and my teachers helped me gain more confidence, which helps me interact with people better”

-Class 9 student



She was awarded first prize for her short film LOCKDOWN at the Kala Ghoda International Film Festival. Using the tablet, she captured how sparrows searched for food and were trapped in the net. Through her film she represented the idea of togetherness and how it can help overcome biggest of hurdles.

“With the constant support from teachers and interactive sessions at school, I discovered the creative side of me. I want to explore more”

– Class 9 student

B. Parents



Deepika is a parent in the school and often conducted classes as a substitute teacher. Her child began studying in Akanksha school since kindergarten.

Through interactions with the school and its teachers, she was motivated to embrace her skills as well. This helped her transition from a housewife to a substitute teacher.

She no longer restricted herself to only household chores but utilized her time to build her skills. The school helped her realize her potential.

“The teachers understood my desire to teach, they guided me and often provided opportunities to teach in the school as a substitute teacher”

-Deepika, Parent, PCMC English Medium School – Bopkhel

6. Caveats

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- The information collected for this study is through field visits, meeting with various stakeholders, information shared by respondents and backend data provided by Akansha Foundation and Apple India. We have relied on the information shared by these sources. The scope of work here does not constitute an audit or due diligence of the information shared, hence information received from the various sources was believed to be accurate. Grant Thornton Bharat LLP holds no responsibility on accuracy or sanctity, or authenticity of information provided.
- The report should not be considered as an expression of opinion on any form of assurance on the financial statements or on financials or other information of Akansha Foundation or Apple India.
- The recommendations provided as part of the assessment exercise may be implemented after an analysis of prioritization. The decision to implement the recommendations is the responsibility of the management of Apple India.
- Field visits were conducted in cognizance with Apple India, the implementing partner and field teams with prior acceptance on approach, methodology, coverage plan, survey tools and indicators.
- Project and Result frameworks were not available for the programme for evaluation study, in absence of which, the study was conducted basis information and understanding provided by programme team.

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