

CARVING LEARNING SPACES THROUGH CAM



SANJHI
SIKHIYA

The Experience of an Elementary Teacher- Ms. Parampreet Kaur



Parampreet Kaur has been teaching at the Government Primary School Bhattian for the last 15 years. Bhattian is one of the schools in the Nogawan cluster of Block Bassi Pathana in Fatehgarh Sahib district. Self-motivated and energetic, her zeal towards providing quality education to students is commendable. In one of the Cluster academic meeting held in Nogawan cluster, Parampreet ma'am shared about her love for playing volleyball, her aspiration of being a professor and how she could not fulfill certain dreams of hers. But she is proud of the fact that now as a primary teacher, she is contributing towards shaping the lives of her students. She also shared that she loves to learn new skills and gain new knowledge, but being engaged in various aspects of school operations, she seldom gets that space to learn.

In conversation with a lot of other teachers as well, this is a common sharing where they feel that while they wanted to achieve a lot during their initial days of joining as Teachers, with time, challenges in school as well as absence of any mechanism to share and learn has impacted their motivation. Especially the teachers, who do not share proactively in official meetings and whatsapp groups feel the dearth of space to express themselves. I remember one Teacher saying, 'Jungle mein mor nacha, kiske dekha?', that means that whatever efforts they do for their students, no one from the system really acknowledges those efforts.



The Cluster Academic Meetings organized every month by the Sanjhi Sikhiya team have provided this very space of co-learning to the teachers. Skill building also forms a part of these meetings after assessing the needs of the teachers. Five Cluster Academic Meetings (CAM) have been organized in the cluster Naugawan in District Fatehgarh Sahib within the duration of 20 months which were attended by mostly all the teachers. The team was struggling to set CAM as a monthly process due to multiple problems like frequent lockdowns, administrative permissions, etc.

But in August '21, when the team finally started CAMs again at the Cluster center and continued them for the next 2 months, positive feedback was received from the teachers. What really worked to organize these CAMs successfully in subsequent months was an approach to listen to the needs of the teachers carefully. The idea to learn new skills in each CAM along with with academic discussion worked. The teachers started looking forward to these monthly meetings.

Parampreet ma'am shares her experience of these Cluster academic meetings as *"When I learnt Canva, I tried to make worksheets and posters of my students. Earlier I used to see these beautiful posters shared by other Teachers and 'Parho Punjab' team in the Block groups. I did not feel confident to share whatever I created. But after doing hands-on practice in the teachers meeting, I could create better designs. Learning some tangible skills helped me to understand that this space is designed to benefit teachers. Unlike other meetings where we only hear what other officials have to say".*

She also shared that *"I was skeptical during the first two CAMs because it was a new process and I could not fully understand the objective of these meetings. The discussions were generally around how to improve learning, planning, etc. With so many problems in the classroom, especially after Covid when students had almost forgotten everything that was taught in school, I could not actually relate to those discussions. During the initial CAMs my motivation to attend was learning a new technical skill as well as meeting my fellow teachers of the clusters. But later on, in the fifth CAM, the teachers discussed action plans to improve student learning skills. The targets and a timeline to achieve those targets was also fixed. That was interesting. We also discussed the problem one of the teachers was facing in teaching fractions and everyone shared their experience around teaching fractions to students. This is when I realized the meaning of this space. I also felt the happiness of having a comfortable space to discuss what works for me in my classroom".*

The flow of the CAMs was disrupted because of the lockdowns and the follow up CAMs could not take place. Parampreet ma'am said that, *"If the CAMs would have continued, we would have definitely seen some positive results."*

