

Project brief

Technical support for a micro-scholarship programme to improve learning

Scholarships play an important role in learning systems to support student motivation. The inclusion of scholarships in Sustainable Development Goal 4, particularly target 4.b, has resulted in the renewed prominence of scholarship programmes. But how do we ensure that the qualifying assessment of such programmes is of high quality?

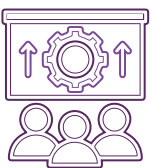
Large-scale studies show that there has been a steady decline in foundational literacy and numeracy skills of school students across the world including India, particularly in the primary and upper primary levels, during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sri Aurobindo Society (SAS), one of the largest Indian non-government organisations launched the AuroScholar, a micro-scholarship initiative for students in grades 1 to 12 in India. The scholarships are expected to improve student motivation and encourage positive behavioural patterns which are critical for improving engagement in learning, eventually leading to better outcomes.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (India) provided technical support in improving the quality of the 10-minute, daily, curriculum-aligned qualifying quiz for the scholarship. Students are awarded a micro-scholarship of INR 50 upon correctly answering 80% questions in each quiz.

ACER's role

ACER India collaborated with SAS to technically assist in three main aspects:



Capacity building of
SAS test developers



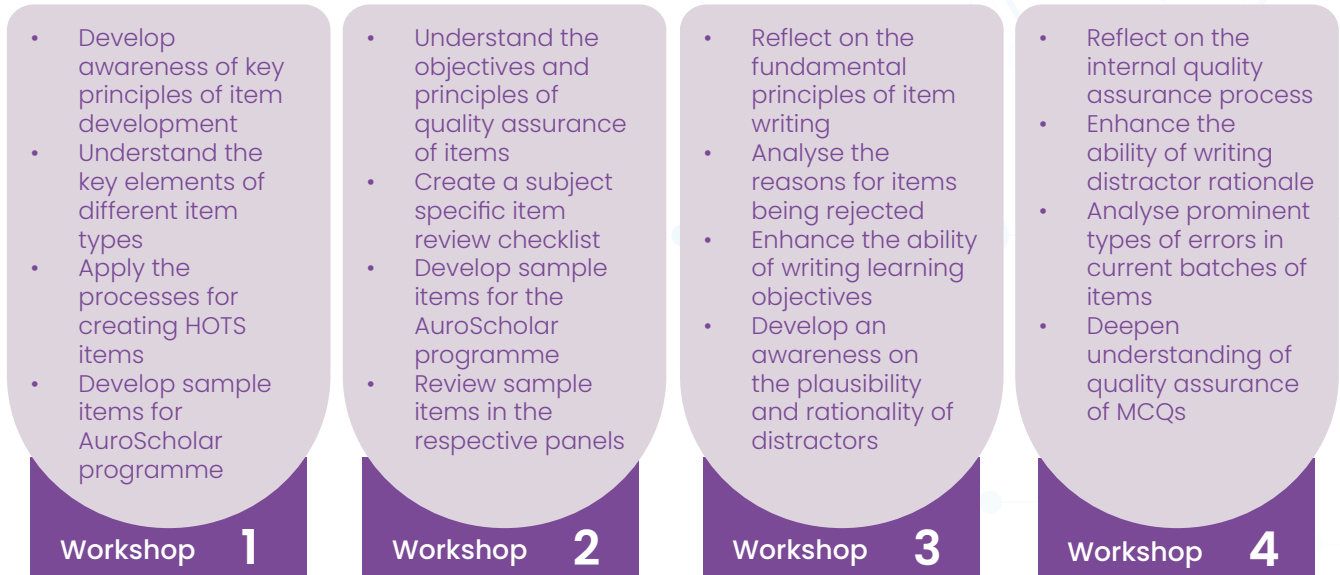
Quality assurance of
quiz items



Joint certification of
successful scholars

Capacity building

The programme began with the development of the assessment framework, followed by a series of capacity building workshops on item development for 50 participants. Based on the experience of these workshops, the SAS team developed 54,000 test items, for grades 1 to 12. In addition, 13,100 items were developed for grades 11 to 12 in 10 optional subjects.



Quality assurance

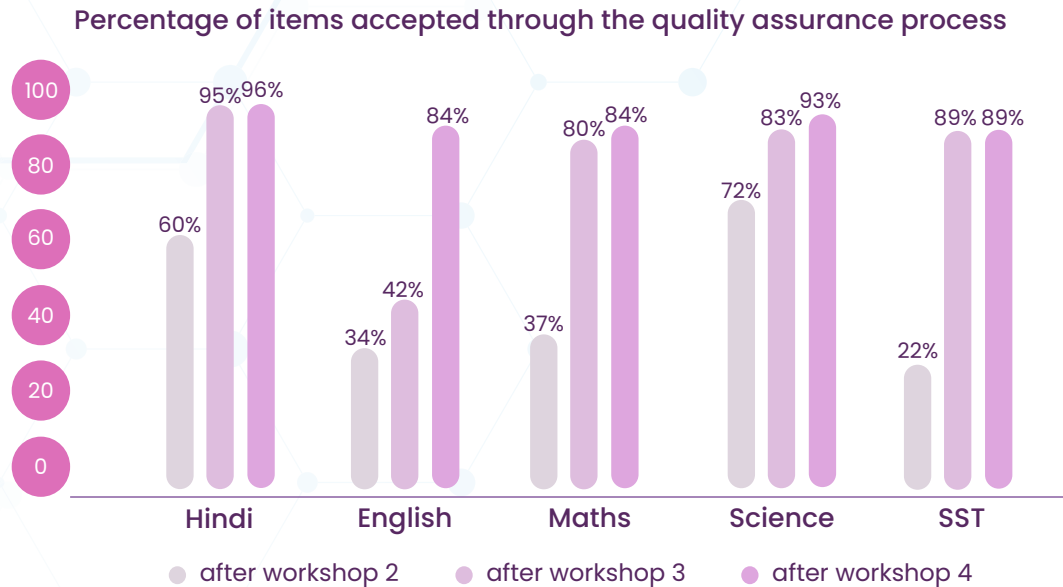
In the beginning, ACER and SAS team members jointly developed an assessment framework and a quality assurance checklist as a guiding document for item writing and review. The process of quality assurance was accomplished at two levels – SAS peer level and ACER subject matter expert level. Items were either accepted with or without modifications or rejected based on technical flaws or issues. Based on the review data, regular feedback was shared with the SAS team for improvements in item quality. The basic elements of each stage of the quality assurance process are presented below.



Results

Improvement in acceptance rate of items

There has been significant improvement in the quality of items in English, Hindi, mathematics, science, and social sciences, during this process. The graph below shows the progressive improvement in the acceptance rate for each subject.

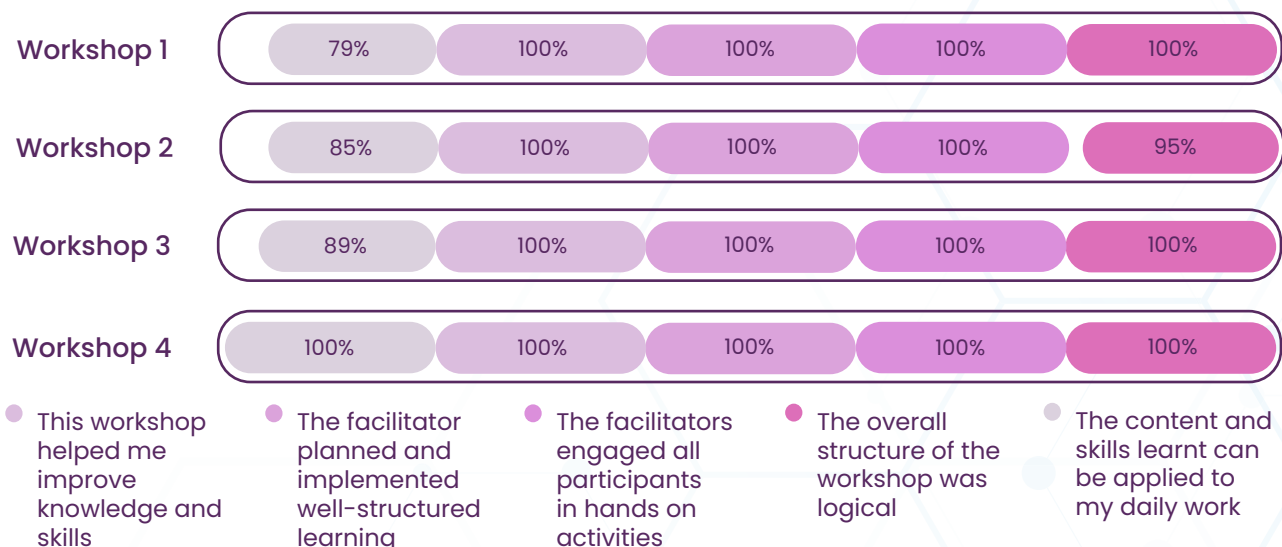


Participants' experience and feedback

All participants agreed that the workshops helped them to improve their knowledge and skills, and the facilitator planned and implemented well-structured learning and engaged all participants in hands on activities. More than 95% participants agreed that the overall structure of the workshop was logical.

There was comparatively less agreement about the application of learnt skills in their daily work, as many participants were curriculum developers who are not involved in frequent assessment development.

Feedback of participants



Potential outcomes

1. Teachers can identify the areas of strengths and weaknesses of students by analysing the AuroScholar quiz data. They can plan or modify teaching instructions according to student needs.
2. The scholarships encourage parents to let their children continue school education. Consequently, they help to reduce student dropout rates and increase attendance in schools.
3. When students fail to qualify for the micro-scholarship, they may reflect on their learning gaps and find ways to improve learning.

Adding adaptivity to the programme will help develop customised learning paths for each child, based on specific assessment responses. This will allow students to gain mastery over an educational concept incrementally.

Written by Bikramjit Sen

Published by
the Australian Council for Educational Research

© ACER 2023

