

Appendix 24

A Resource Unit for Educational Publishing

A note for discussion

'Parag' publication initiative of the Sir Ratan Tata Trust focuses on promoting children's literature and educational publishing in various Indian languages. The initiative supports: (i) development and publication of books and educational material in various Indian languages; (ii) professional development among illustrators, writers and grassroots organizations; (iii) dissemination of professional writing and learning resources; and (iv) networking among various stakeholders.

The Trust is exploring the possibility of setting up a resource cell / unit in partnership with Eklavya, Bhopal. The Trust and Eklavya would co-promote the unit, with close involvement from key institutions and individuals to identify with the cause. In last few years, there is increasing interest in producing material for children (curricular, fiction, non-fiction etc). However, for ensuring development of educational publishing and children's literature as a specialized field, focused attention and concerted action is needed, at various levels. The need for a common platform for networking and resource sharing has been felt by number of organizations, educationists, schools, and a large number of individuals. The purpose of the proposed resource unit would be to promote educational publishing as a field, with a special focus on children's literature.

It is hoped that the proposed unit would contribute towards the growth of this sector. The proposed entity would become an independent entity in due course, while drawing from expertise from key players in the field. Possible roles such a unit can play are outlined below for discussion:

- a. Undertake / commission / seed **research** on various aspects of children's literature in terms of children's response to various titles, understanding what appeals to them and why, how children interpret and analyse text and illustrations, trends or patterns in publications for children in various regional languages etc.
- b. Create an **active forum** for dialogue, sharing and learning between publishers, writers, illustrators, educationists, organizations working with children and running libraries. Hold regular networking / learning events on select themes and promote regional exchanges¹.
- c. Design and offer **fellowships** and **internships** to young illustrators/ designers in collaboration with design institutes and publishing houses.
- d. Institute **award for children's book writing and illustrations**, and promote **exhibitions** of original illustrations as ways to bring visibility to the field.
- e. Offer **residencies** for authors and illustrators.
- f. Offer **short courses** for librarians, organizations developing educational material on various aspects of preparation and use of educational/reading material.
- g. Explore ways of **marketing and disseminating** books / children's magazines / material developed by alternative publishers / non-profits. (possible role could be to pilot strategies, document them and make them available to others)
- h. Develop **resource website** that would provide information on existing publications, bibliographies, courses, research studies on children's literature.

¹ Based on the response received to the Seminar on 'Illustrations in children's books' organized by SRTT and Eklavya in December 2006 and other interactions, it was felt that such forums are needed and would add value.

- i. Provide **resource support** to publishing houses, organizations (Parag partners as well as others) in capacity building, technical support, reviews etc.
- j. Others: Suggestions are welcome!

The Trust does not directly implement projects in the field, but supports non-profit institutions, working in a given area (educational publishing in this case). For effectively addressing some of the key gap areas in the development sector and strengthen Trust's engagement with the field, in past two years, the Trust has / is in the process of seeding independent institutions for advancing various sectoral concerns². The Trust sees the potential and need for a resource unit that would focus on promoting educational publishing and children's literature in the country through regional partnerships.

Way ahead:

- Consultation with a select group of persons who are passionate about promoting children's literature.
- Initial planning phase can be explored to set up the team and define scope of the work and develop long-term plans.
- A steering committee / advisory committee can be formed to co-evolve the role and functions of such a unit.³

² For example, the Trust has seeded, Centre for Micro Finance in Jaipur to deepen and upscale the microfinance movement in Rajasthan. A Central India Initiative Cell has been set up for promoting livelihood in the tribal areas in the Central Indian region. As part of the education portfolio, a Higher Education Cell is being set up in Bangalore in Centre for Study of Culture and Society for advancing undergraduate and post-graduate level education.

³ Some of the persons who can be involved: Arvind Kumar, Mala Dayal, Paro Anand, Arvind Gupta, Radhika Menon, Bindia Thapar, Krishna Kumar, Subir Shukla, Rimli Bhattacharya, Ramakant Agnihotri. This is initial suggested list and more names can be collectively generated.