Chapter 6

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Ecuador

EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

Modern education develops the intellect and imparts skills but does not promote good qualities in any way. Of what value is the acquisition of all the knowledge in the world if there is no character? Knowledge has multiplied and desires have grown, with the result that one is hero in words but zero in actions.

— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Brief History of Quality Assurance of Sathya Sai Schools

Sathya Sai Schools are subject to the jurisdictional requirements of local education ministries. In some cases, such as the Sathya Sai Schools in England, the national schools inspection process is applied to the School. Sathya Sai Schools have a unique emphasis of spiritually-based character transformation of students. This is especially so when compared to the typical private, or public (government-funded) schools. Because of this, the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation itself monitors the quality assurance of Sathya Sai Schools.

Comparison of Sathya Sai School and Public (Government-funded) Education Quality Assurance

In many public education systems, only scientific, empirically verifiable information counts as knowledge, and the goal is that students become productive members of a workforce competing in a global economy. Measuring public education effectiveness in many countries is reduced to measuring quantitative academic student achievement test data.

In the United States, for example, public discourse, policy, practice, and measures of success in public education are dominated by an emphasis on cognitive skills and knowledge (Finn and Kanstoroom, 2001). Measures of public school success and student learning are framed by standardised test score comparisons at the school, state, national, and international levels. Concerns about low standardised test scores, safety, and job competitiveness in the face of economic globalisation contribute to the central theme underlying public education discourse: the economic life of man. The concerns are to maintain schools' and policy makers' principal focus on standards, assessment, and accountability within the public schools in order to produce a qualified workforce (Goldberg and Traiman, 2001). The resultant quality assurance of many public primary and secondary school systems is based, almost exclusively, on quantitative data from standardised academic achievement tests. While preparedness of students to be economically self-sufficient is

Character should keep pace with the advancement of intelligence. The development of intelligence without a corresponding development of character is an exercise in futility.

— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

undoubtedly addressed in Sathya Sai Schools, it is done so in the process of fostering inherent human values within students.

The use of quantitative achievement test data alone can not adequately monitor the quality of instruction and environment needed to foster human values and develop positive character traits in students along with academic excellence. This is particularly so because of the subjective or reflective basis of character and its integral, inseparable relationship to human spirituality. As the eminent scientist Albert Einstein said, "Not everything that can be counted, counts. Not everything that counts can be counted" (Einstein, 1941).

The concept of establishing standards for Sathya Sai Schools is therefore based on: (a) monitoring for quality by a combination of a school's self-review and a peer-review inspection visit; (b) deliberation of the results of the review process by an accreditation body; and (c) conferring of accreditation status on the school meeting the standards.

SAI 2000: Standards, Accreditation, Inspection

The first initiative to monitor quality assurance of Sathya Sai Schools was undertaken in 2000 with the development of *SAI 2000*, an extensive standards-accreditation-inspection document. In 2002, an Accreditation Commission was established. The *SAI 2000* document provided a set of standards for the operation of Sathya Sai Schools, and a description of a self-review, peer-review inspection, and accreditation process.

Standards

SAI 2000 addressed five areas:

1. Organisational atmosphere, including school mission, governance, partnership with the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation, freedom from government influence, leadership and management, school climate, school improvement process, and staffing, facility, and learning resources.
2. Finance and asset management.
3. The support and development of students' character and academic growth, including spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development; support, guidance, and students' welfare; and partnership with parents and community.
4. Instruction, curriculum, and assessment.
5. Outcomes in character development and academic achievement and progress.

Inspection and Accreditation

After completing the self-review documentation evaluating the school vis-à-vis the standards, the Sathya Sai School would expect a visit from an outside inspection team. The inspection team comprises primarily education professionals knowledgeable about the *Educare* process, most of them within the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. An inspection report is then developed and submitted to the Accreditation Commission, whose members are professional educationists also within the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. Inspectors and Commission members represent all continents of the globe.

During 2002-03, nearly all Sathya Sai Schools completed a self-review, documenting whether they were aware of the standards and supporting components, and whether the school had attempted or achieved meeting the component. In 2003 and 2004 six schools were accredited for
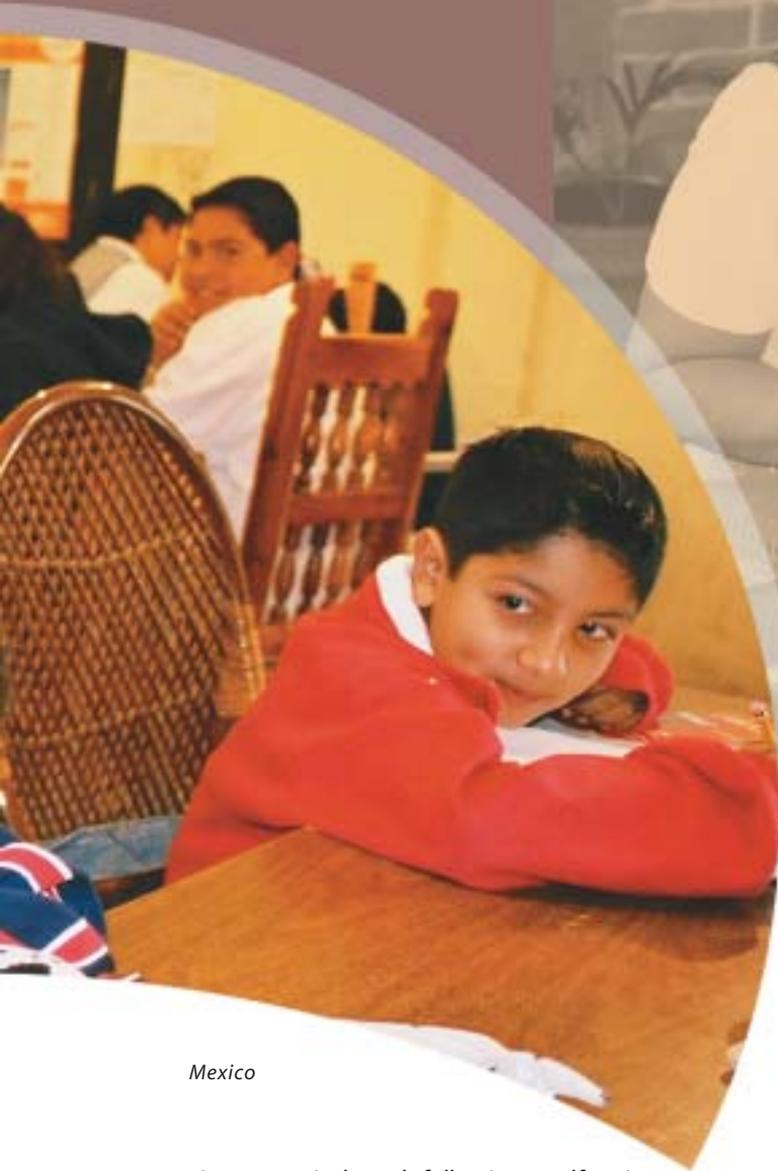
Mexico

Mexico

six-year periods each following a self-review evaluation, external peer-review visit, and Accreditation Commission review of related reports addressing each school's adherence to the standards of *SAI 2000*. The six schools were the Sathya Sai Schools of Thailand, Zambia, Murwillumbah in Australia, New Castle, Chatsworth, and Lenasia in South Africa. The Accreditation Commission also made recommendations for improvements in each school.

Global Level Accreditation Process

The Accreditation Commission met three times at Prasanthi Nilayam during 2003-04 to confer accreditation status on six schools and to address other global issues facing Sathya Sai Schools and Institutes. A process of global review of all Sathya Sai education programmes,

including Sathya Sai Schools' quality assurance, began in late 2004. In the light of the emerging experience with the global accreditation process, it was generally agreed that the accreditation process will be delegated to regional educationists with the knowledge of the region and local languages.

Current Status of Quality Assurance of Sathya Sai Schools

After a review of the global accreditation process, elements of regionally-based quality assurance began to emerge within the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation. The *SAI 2000* document had extensive influence on the early development of Sathya Sai Schools, and this influence continues in the absence of a formal global inspection and accreditation process. *SAI 2000* is yet to be adopted by all Schools. Nevertheless, schools in several countries continue to rely on *SAI 2000* to guide quality assurance in various degrees at the school level, among them, Sathya Sai Schools in Toronto, The Philippines, Zambia, Thailand, South

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What the mind thinks should be examined critically by the heart and the right decision carried out by the hand. This should be the primary product of the educational process.
— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

Africa, and Latin America. Also, the Institutes of Sathya Sai Education (ISSEs) are emerging as strong components in the Sathya Sai School quality assurance process.

In India, the ISSE in Mumbai has adopted *SAI 2002* to ensure that those schools which adopt the curriculum of Sathya Sai Education in Human Values, satisfy the requirements of quality standards developed by the Institute. *SAI 2002* provides the guidelines for compliance with the standards through a normalised procedure of systematic trials.

In Toronto, Canada, the guidelines of the *SAI 2002* standards are closely followed with respect to administration of the school as well as in learning and instruction. National test results of Toronto Sai students are much higher than the Provincial average, and the principal

uses those test results and *SAI 2000* standards to evaluate the success of school programmes.

South Africa

In South Africa inspection and accreditation continues to be based on *SAI 2000* standards organised by the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation at the national level. The ISSE in South Africa is integrally involved in Sathya Sai School quality assurance. An Inspectorate is appointed, and regular inspection visits are conducted. In order for a school to maintain the status of a Sathya Sai School, it must meet certain standards as laid down by the ISSE. The inspection process examines and evaluates the school to ascertain if the required standards are being met. When the school has cleared this inspection process, it is accredited with the status of being a Sathya Sai School. The inspector together with members of the Sathya Sai Education Council

'Look up and aim high' should be the motto. Low aim is actually a crime! If a student aims at 90 per cent, he manages to get 60 per cent. If, on the other hand, he aims only at 30 per cent, he may get only 15 per cent.

— Sri Sathya Sai Baba

and the ISSE assist the school in this process through regular inspections that offer advice and guidance.

Annual inspections are conducted by the Sai Inspectorate utilising a version of *SAI 2000* contextualised for use in South Africa to align with the national curriculum requirements. The four inspectors on the team undertake continuous individual monitoring of the schools, usually on a monthly basis. All aspects of school operation are assessed: administration and organisation, management, financial, curricular and extra-curricular matters. Inspectors make their findings known to the Chief Inspector. Each of the schools is then assessed by the full team on an annual basis. This inspection is an in-depth one and covers all aspects of the school. A detailed report is then submitted to the President of the Central Council of South Africa for forwarding to the International Institute of Sathya Sai Schools. These informal (monthly) and formal (annual) inspections and assessments ensure that the Schools maintain the educational standards for quality assurance.

South African Sathya Sai Schools are following a national curriculum that outlines the standards and outcomes that learners are expected to achieve at each grade. Learners at the Sathya Sai Schools are achieving these standards. To measure this, the South African Sai Organisation Education Council plans to run Common Assessments in Mathematics, Life Orientation and English in grades 3, 6 and 9, the exit grades of each phase. The older three of four South African Sathya Sai Schools were awarded a

three-year accreditation from an inspection coordinated by the Global Accreditation Commission in 2003.

Latin America

The growth of Sathya Sai Schools in Latin America has been rapid over the past five years. The Sri Sathya Sai Organisation of Latin America developed a systematic design for quality assurance of Sathya Sai Schools in the region based on *SAI 2000* with implementation in progress at the date of this publication. Revisions in the regional quality assurance document are done annually, based on experience. Planning for quality assurance of Sathya Sai Schools at the regional level began in 2002 in Latin America with a Congress of all Sathya Sai Institutes. Quality assurance guidelines based closely on *SAI 2000* were developed for the region, and qualified inspectors were appointed. The eleven ISSEs in Latin America were given responsibilities to maintain quality assurance in Sathya Sai Schools, and presently, the institutes of Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Mexico are actively involved in the administration and quality assurance of the Sathya Sai Schools in their respective countries.

Given the rapid expansion of schools over such a large region, the development of regional guidelines for quality assurance in Latin America is a work in progress. In the Institute of Sathya Sai Education in Argentina, for example, guidelines and expectations for establishing Sathya Sai Schools and teacher training are comprehensively described. An accreditation committee is part of the Institute working group there. The Brazil ISSE reports that

**The marks that students get in the examination are not true marks.
True marks arise from the heart.**
— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

informal qualitative evaluations of Sathya Sai Schools have shown clearer results than formal inspection visits, indicating the emerging nature of the quality assurance process. A two-member committee visited all Sathya Sai Schools and reported to the Institute, with a very positive view about the quality and management of all Schools. A member of the Brazil Institute was named as a permanent inspector and accreditation official for the five Sathya Sai Schools in the area. Each Sathya Sai School has a Permanent Supervising Board (mostly connected to the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation), independent from the School Board. The mission of the Supervising Board is to learn, support, understand, and guide in the development of the Sathya Sai School in accordance with the principles of the educational philosophy. Some of the Sathya Sai Schools follow standardised governmental tools to evaluate academic achievements, and show promising results.

The ISSE in Chile indicates that the Sathya Sai School is accredited by the Chilean Ministry of Education. The ISSE in Mexico reports that there is no formal accreditation process implemented at present; however, the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation schools' inspector makes frequent visits. In other countries, such as Guatemala, Peru, Ecuador, Chile, and Paraguay there is still no *SAI 2000* or equivalent accreditation process in place for the Sathya Sai Schools. However the quality of the education in each of them has been verified by the Latin America Sri Sathya Sai Organisation.

The Venezuela Sathya Sai School operates under *SAI 2000* accreditation, and it has its own continual process of improvement in all areas considered in *SAI 2000*. In Venezuela there is also an accreditation person as a member of the Fundasathya, the Sai Organisation Education Trust, which oversees the operation of the School. The School maintains high educational standards and a defined process of quality assurance; however, the Venezuela Sathya Sai School has no academic assessment comparison with other schools because the Ministry of Education has not considered such policy among the national schools. By 2006-2007 the Sathya Sai School will start an academic research programme to get comparable variables.

Worldwide, Sathya Sai Schools adopt respective national curriculums integrated with the human values. In most cases, national curriculum assessments or inspections by respective Education Ministries complement the quality assurance system in Sathya Sai Schools. For example in South Africa, the national accreditation requirements are that all independent schools are required to undergo an accreditation process based on national standards conducted by a national body, UMALUSI. At two of the South Africa Sathya Sai Schools the national evaluation has been completed and now they will undergo an on-site visit. The other two schools are in the process of completing the self-evaluation.

Chapter 8 gives examples of achievements of Sathya Sai Education programmes. In relation to quality assurance, it is common to see reports of Sathya Sai Schools exceeding their respective national curriculum assessment standards and their being viewed as model

Teaching is the noblest of professions; it is also the holiest *sadhana* (path) for self-realisation. For it involves the cultivation of selfless love and the showering and sharing of that love. The teacher moulds the rising generation into self-confident, self-reliant, *Atma*-conscious (God-conscious) persons.

— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

schools by public education officials. Examples include Sathya Sai Schools of Canada, Zambia, Thailand, The Philippines, Peru, and New Zealand Preschool. In July 2003, the Australia Sathya Sai School underwent an educational inspection by the New South Wales Board of Studies. The inspectors were most impressed by the school's education in human values programmes and its academic curriculum. They stated that the Sathya Sai School had achieved its goal of integrating human values into the general Australian school curriculum. The school was granted a six-year certificate, which was the maximum available. Other examples are given in Chapter 8.

Future Perspectives on Quality Assurance

The recent Task Force on *Educare* and the Ad-hoc Education Committee appointed by Sri Sathya Sai Organisation have observed that maintaining a quality assurance process is essential. The methodology of quality assurance is likely to be gradually developed within the scope of Sathya Sai Education rather than current governmental education systems. Accountability in Sathya Sai Education Programmes involves value-orientation of students, which is difficult to quantify. The methodology of quality assurance of Sathya Sai Education will continue to emerge and be refined as understanding of the *Educare* process grows.

While the main thrust of quality assurance of Sathya Sai Education programmes has been with the Sathya Sai Schools, there is awareness that the Sai Spiritual Education (SSE) and Sathya Sai Education in Human Values (SSEHV) programmes also require a carefully considered quality assurance process. Such processes have already been put in place by the Sri Sathya Sai Organisation in the United Kingdom for SSE programmes, and by the ISSE in Australia for SSE and SSEHV programmes.

Fiji

Chile

The actual syllabus is not as important as the creation of an atmosphere where noble habits and ideals can grow and fructify.
— *Sri Sathya Sai Baba*

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