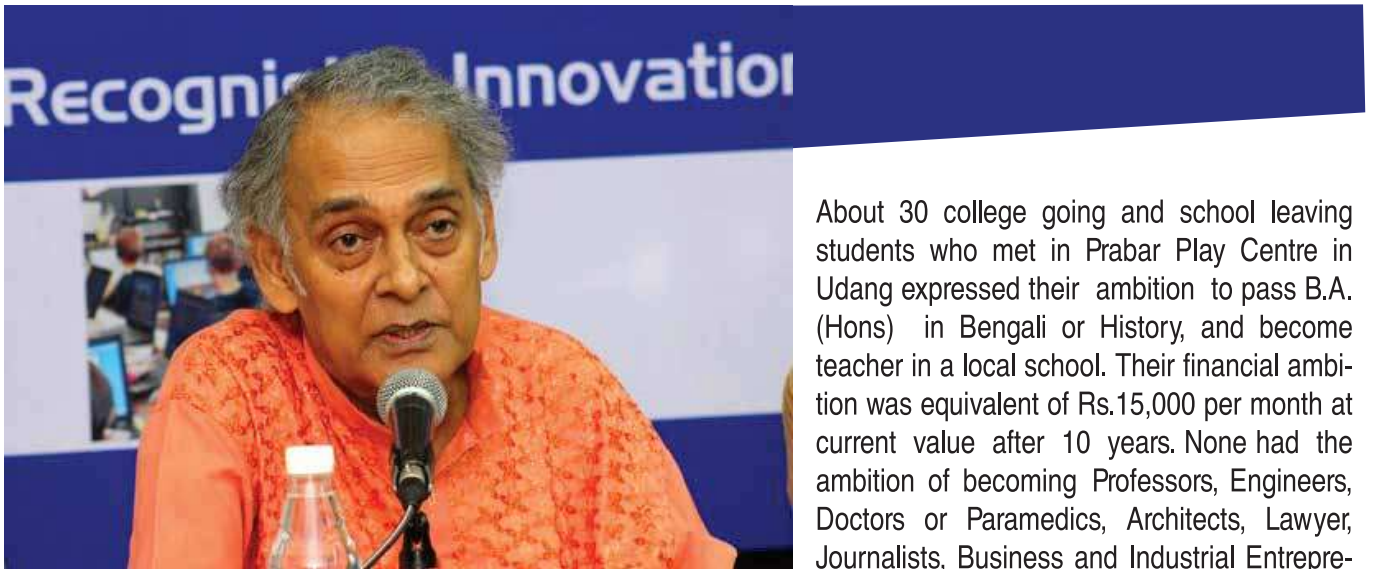


LEARNING

OCCASIONAL PUBLICATION 2



Editorial



About 30 college going and school leaving students who met in Prabar Play Centre in Udang expressed their ambition to pass B.A. (Hons) in Bengali or History, and become teacher in a local school. Their financial ambition was equivalent of Rs.15,000 per month at current value after 10 years. None had the ambition of becoming Professors, Engineers, Doctors or Paramedics, Architects, Lawyer, Journalists, Business and Industrial Entrepre-

neur, Painters and Musicians, Sports Persons, Executives, Civil Servants, etc. It is alarming but not surprising. Village children see only teachers as professionals and in secured jobs. Rest move out to cities as they have no scope in villages. A specialist doctor needs a hospital, a professor needs a university, an engineer needs a factory (depending upon the nature of specialization), and so on. There is no motivation; almost none to inspire in villages.

Social recognition in public is one of the most powerful motivators. We decided to honour 65 talented children from 33 SIP Schools on the International Day of Achievers on 24th March, 2018 in Udang. To put them face to face with professionals, we invited doctors, scholars, engineers, social workers, musicians and painters, government and private executives, industrial and business executives who grew up from the same cluster of villages overcoming barriers of poverty, social and educational deprivation common in rural society. They are live examples of success and achievement.

Our tiny achievers were honoured by established professionals. They interacted with the talented children, honoured them with gifts and inspired them with their encouraging words. A brief report follows.

Marmar Mukhopadhyay

10 year old Achievers honoured on International Day of Achievers

Twenty five achievers - doctors, entrepreneurs, executives, musicians, painters, scholars, social workers, technologists – alumni of local schools gathered in Udang and honoured 65 Grade IV school toppers, best in all round development and toppers in various items in inter school sports and cultural competitions on International Day of Achievers, 24th March, 2018 under the aegis of ETMA and HRTF (Forum).



ETMA and Forum have been working on improvement of quality of education in more than 30 government rural primary schools spread over a cluster of 20 villages in and around Udang under School Improvement Programme (SIP) since last two decades. Inspired and empowered primary school teachers worked innovatively, and achieved Zero dropout, no out-of-school children and improved academic performance. SIP was initially funded by MHRD; later by BEI and ETMA. Commissioned by MHRD, TISS, Mumbai evaluated the project. Later, MHRD flagged this successful experiment in its EFA 2005 document placed in HLG meeting in Brazil.



Celebrating International Day of Achievers is one of the responses to the challenge of dropping educational and career aspiration among the rural children.

Since appreciation and encouragement in public is the best motivator and inspirer, we decided to honour the achievers by those who have achieved. This also gave the young ones opportunity to meet the actual achievers nearer their villages.



Children gathered at Forum along with their parents and teachers. They dressed up in bright yellow designed Achiever T-Shirts. They went into a procession and march past through the busy village road and market place to reach Prabar Play Centre, the venue of the event. The Open park area in front of the centre was covered by an elevated colourful pandal. Children and all others were received with a rose and a printed souvenir. Souvenir carried photographs of all children and adult achievers.



Among the parents who accompanied the children, overwhelming majority were mothers. Children were made to sit together facing the parents on the other side. There was a brief but inspiring welcome of Young Achievers along with brief introduction to the Adult Achievers by the Chairperson, ETMA & HRTF. Some free time was provisioned for other invited guests and the professionals to interact and network as many of them met after many years.



Children were taken inside the hall and given a small game of writing two questions as a test of questioning skills that is key to learning. The questions were evaluated by the senior academicians.

Separate spaces were designated by colourful Flex Posters in the open area for scholars, doctors, technologists, artists, and entrepreneurs, executives, and social workers. Children engaged themselves in interaction and networking with these guests and professionals.

Students in smaller groups moved from one professional group to another trying to understand how to become a scholar or a doctor or a technologist or an artist and so on. The adult achievers happily interacted with the inquisitive bright young students inspiring, motivating and informing about their profession and preparations for the profession. This was the most exciting activity for both students as well as the adult achievers. Inquisitive parents also joined and cheered up.



Interacting with musician and painters



Children and Parents interacting with Doctors

Then was the lunch with a difference. Children served themselves at a specially designated counter for them with buffet lunch for the first time in their lives. Parents entertained themselves in another counter. Against the practice of squatting on floor and food served by elders, students decided what to eat and how much to eat. Adult achievers and guests were free to pick up their food from any counter they like.



Since Prabar Play Centre is unique with 43 translite large slides on the glass window and door panes bringing the world under one roof, children enjoyed this free time in playing and exploring.



Finally, it was time to honour the achievers. Initially, each adult achiever honoured two or three young achievers with a certificate and a gift bag.



Gift bag – a high quality school bag (Courtesy Sri Ramesh Mehra) contained a colourful Plastic Top with a chord, a Rubik Cube, Marbles, a

Tennis Ball, a fidget and Executive Notebook, a writing pen, biographies of Swami Vivekananda and Sister Nivedita gifted by Ramakrishna Mission. While adults occupied the chairs all around against the walls of the Hall;

Children sat on the floor at designated places for each school. Since parents and all other guests could not be accommodated in the Hall; CCTV coverage on large screen in the Pandal created another enriching experience to parents and all others present. First to honour the children was Janab Nazrul Haque Sipahi, District Inspector of Schools followed by each guest honouring two or three children from the same school.

A few of the adult achievers gave their impression about the event. The highlights of these observations were innovativeness of the event, opportunity for reconnecting with their peers, interacting with the children and multiple guests instead of one chief guest. Children also expressed their excitement and happiness about the whole event.



Who knew that a surprise was waiting! Prof. Mukhopadhyay was compeering the award ceremony. He did not figure in the list of achievers, by his choice; neither did he occupy any of the designated achievers' chairs. Rajkumar Pramanik gave the surprise by asking all the children to honour Prof Mukhopadhyay with Swamiji's Chicago Address.



Interacting with Enterpreneur

Young achievers and their parents were overwhelmed with the recognition. These children could never imagine coming so close to such eminent people. As children never met them before, they did not perceive themselves as inheritors of their icons. This separator between the adult and young achievers was removed today. Both came close to each other. Adult achievers happily engaged themselves with children and affectionately hold the children close to themselves while giving away the gifts.

Impressions

UDANG: An EduLab in a Beautiful Village



Dr. Jayanti Ravi

Dr. Jayanti Ravi is a senior IAS Officer, Principal Secretary and Commissioner (Health), Government of Gujarat, Gandhinagar. She is also a performing classical musician.



Ravi Gopalan

Mr. Ravi Gopalan is a technologist; Founder and CEO of Argusoft, Gandhinagar

Flanked by the Damodar flowing from bank to bank, quite possessively enveloped by the lush green foliage and peppered with small ponds and tanks brimming with water, is this quaint little village called Udang. As we drove through its red brick paved narrow but uncrowded streets we were completely bowled over. Little did we realize then that, that day, we would be doled one pleasant surprise after another, each competing with the previous to better it!



Here's a village with people of different communities, living together in harmony. Forward, balanced thinking. No wonder then when we saw the crematorium converted into an ashram, well kept and happily visited by people even when they are alive!

Then is this fragrant 'garden' of a village, we were welcomed by tiny smiling 'roses' with a little rose in their hands. Here was a truly 'flipped' classroom in the pre-primary section of the school. Children were sitting around in small circles doing their own thing,

Editor's Note

Udang Kalimata Ashram has turned out to be visitors' choice with temples of Kalimata, Lord Shiva, Sani Deva and Sri Radha Krishna -all with exquisite carvings and sculptures. On auspicious days like Shiva Ratri, Holi, Durga Puja, etc. Ashram attracts visitors in thousands. More than 100,000 visitor visits this Ashram Every year. Entire ambiance is enticing with beautiful roses, dahlias and chrysanthemums. An office, a free clinic, a large meeting/conference hall, small guest house makes it hospitable. It has set up a water processing plant that purifies and supplies water to the villagers at subsidized cost.

Please visit : www.udangkalimataashram.org

Nudged along by their non-imposing, nurturing teachers. They blended so well with the kids that one had to look carefully to identify them amongst the children. The glass windows all around them had pictures of historical places, animals, monuments, professionals and high-achievers – a constant source of inspiration to remain inquisitive, discover and learn.



A little later, as we stepped into the Sri Aurobindo Siksha Kendra, we saw a bunch of ten-year olds, boys and girls, singing 'Dhana dhanyapushpabhara ... amaar jonmobhumi'. The teacher was singing along and every child in the room was completely into it as they sang along. Music, in the least, has to be entertaining. When it's even better, one is enthralled. The ultimate is when we are elevated. Even as we intruded into this blissful setting, we were enthralled! And in the midst of this feast for the heart, mind and soul, the 'food-engineer' had woven his magic too. He had laid out a royal feast right there in the tiny village. He shared the recipe for preparing 'poshto' with the enthusiasm that had infected every one of them there.

What a beautiful way to set the settings for learning! Children brimming with enthusiasm, full of life energy, eyes lit up, fully focused. That's it! The school has achieved what it is meant to do. It has firmly established the foundation for the student to embark on the lifelong journey of inquisitive, explorative and creative learning! The Udang education experiment spearheaded by Prof. Marmar Mukhopadhyay, working on quality improvement in 30 government rural primary schools in 20 villages around Udang, is well on its way to uncover the learner in every child and hence as Prof. Marmar puts it, a school where there is NO teaching!



Dr. Jayanti Ravi herself is a well achieved musician who gives public performances. At the request of the children, she unhesitatingly joined them and involved them in singing with her.

Learning



**Prof. M. N. Palsane,
Former Professor and
Head of Department of
Applied Psychology,
Pune University, Pune**

You try to stand
You cannot
Trial and error
Finally you do.
You try to talk
You just babble
Again trial and error
You finally speak.
Now you are running
You are talking
Reading, writing
And doing
So many things.
You have to remember
lessons
You have to understand
You have to solve problems

You have to play games
You have to run errands
You have to communicate
Make friends
List cannot be complete!
All experiments
do not bear fruits
All arrows do not hit the
bull's eye
So no need to panic
If you have failed
It is not a failure
It is a trial
It is a stepping stone
If you keep climbing
You reach the Everest...

Learning alone is not enough

While we get education in schools and colleges, learning is a lifelong process. Learning happens both in classrooms and outside the four walls of a classroom. We learn from teachers, parents, books, situations, incidents, and above all experiences in life. Learning, as such, is a very personalized process that takes place within our brain. Access to educational opportunities has been increasing rapidly, but this has not resulted into increase in learning outcomes. We see personal success and development, where individuals can demonstrate evidence of learning. But, personal success is not enough as a society to live together. We not only demonstrate learning in examinations, but also apply learning in all that we do to live together. So, we must apply what we have learned. Respecting others, sharing knowledge, and caring for the environment are three key attributes of a learned person. If we go by the current standard of pollution in the country, especially in some of the big cities, will we be proud to call ourselves a learning society? Everyone who has completed some basic schooling has studied the importance of clean environment. But, each one of us contributes in some way to destroy the environment. Our learning is not enough.

We must act on what we have learned. Similarly, our respect for others (women, people with disability, transgender, people from different faith, ethnicity and country) is important to live harmonious life in the society. We know that it is important to respect others, but we do not behave accordingly to live together. So, knowing is not enough; we need to apply knowledge in personal behaviour. As a student in college, I learned early (due to one of my teachers) the importance of "learning how to learn" and sharing knowledge. The only thing that grows when shared is knowledge. When you have learned something, it is necessary to share, which can happen by teaching a peer, writing (reflecting) about it or applying what has been learned. If we do not share, our learning remains "fragile". So, learning is not enough, sharing of learning is necessary.



**Dr. Sanjaya Mishra
Education Specialist, Commonwealth
of Learning, Vancouver (Canada)**

Where do we go from here?

Few Points to Ponder



Dr. Sugata Mitra
Professor of Educational
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Tyne, UK

Hole in the Wall to School in the Cloud

- 1 Children in unsupervised and self-organized groups can learn to use the Internet.
- 2 They learn to find answers to questions.
- 3 Children can learn almost anything by themselves in self-organized learning environments
- 4 Their reading comprehension, searching skills and self-confidence improve quickly
- 5 The presence of a friendly, but not necessarily knowledgeable, mediator can accelerate the process.

The future of Assessment

- 1 Current assessment systems look for identical responses from learners.
- 2 Open-ended questions cannot be asked in such assessment. We need a new assessment system.
- 3 Use of the Internet should be allowed during assessment.
- 4 Fair evaluation of such a new assessment system is not possible by human examiners.
- 5 More research on automated and continuous evaluation of open-ended questions and tasks is needed

The Future of Pedagogy

- 1 'Spontaneous Order' is a new method in children's education, in the presence of the Internet
- 2 It is irrelevant to provide direct factual information, manually
- 3 Reading, writing and arithmetic are of newer and lower priority. Comprehension communication and computation are the new basics
- 4 The role of memory in education does not need emphasis, devices are playing that role

The future of curriculum

- 1 Curriculum of the big question of our time, the unknown.
- 2 All irrelevant knowledge and skills need to be removed.
- 3 'Just in case' skills and knowledge should be replaced by the skill of learning 'just in time'.
- 4 The Internet must be a subject as important as science or mathematics.
- 5 Networks, Chaos Theory and Emergent Phenomena should be introduced into schooling.

New Design for Schools

- 1 Schools should enable people to leave happy, productive and healthy lives.
- 2 The duration (years) of schooling needs to be reviewed.
- 3 The length of the school day needs to be viewed.
- 4 Schooling may be designed to last throughout life.
- 5 Schools and teachers should exist in physical and virtual environments
- 6 Not all teachers need to be human.

CONSTRUCTIONISM

A Theory Of Education



Dr. Samirranjan Adhikari
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A theory of learning is an array of ideas that tries to explain what knowledge is and how it develops. One such theory states that it is innate; while another theory states that it is a mere manifestation of experience. If it is thought that knowledge is innate, then learning consists of drawing this knowledge out of individual by asking him/her to perform tasks or to answer questions that require this. But alternatively, if it is thought that knowledge is simply a reflection of outer experience, and then education consists of furnishing individual with the “right” experiences, showing him/her the “right” way to do things, and telling them the “right” answers.

Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget states that an individual actively construct cognition out of his/her experience in the world. Piaget discovered that young children believe that liquid changes its amount when poured from a short fat glass into a tall skinny glass; but older children, who structure their knowledge in a different yet equally coherent way, say that the amount of liquid remains the same even though it looks like there’s more. For this reason Piaget’s theory is called as “constructivism”.

“Constructionism” is a theory of education developed by Seymour Papert of Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the USA. This theory is based upon the Piaget’s theory of “constructivism”. Papert’s “constructionism” focuses on the ‘art of learning’, or ‘learning to learn’, and on the significance of making things in learning. Papert is interested in how learners engage in a conversation with “artefacts”. These conversations improve self-directed learning, and ultimately facilitate the construction of new wisdom. Papert stresses the importance of tools, media, and context in

How to improve learning

My hand writing was absolutely bad and in a jocular fashion the teacher used to say ,Suman take an ink bottle ,put a cockroach into it and leave it free on the paper and I can get the content of your answer.It was a hurting comment.However,my father told me what to take from that comment. “Take only the positive part,you have to take efforts to improve your handwriting.Do it with all sincerity and your hand writing will be better than what it is.”

This advice from father is the key for me in improving my performance. To be different means one has to change oneself and changing oneself and being consistent in efforts to be better is a road to improving learning.

The sure shot for improving learning is to focus on the following :

- 1 Keeping a definite goal in view
- 2 Thinking and planning for the road to reaching goals
- 3 Getting ready for action
- 4 Not to stop action till the goal is reached.
- 5 Taking Continuous feedback on the road to reach goals.
- 6 Not to stop action till the goal is reached.

Be ready to sacrifice, Have a definite purpose and be determined and then one is always on the way to improvement, which in other words is changing oneself through learning to change. Improving learning is nothing but learning to relearn and Not to stop without reaching the goal.



Dr. Suman Karandikar
Founder of Aapnach and
former Professor of India
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Dr. Sudesh Mukhopadhyay

**Former Chairperson,
Rehabilitation Council of India,
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Teacher as Facilitator of Learning of Each Student

We as country are moving towards making schooling a Pleasant, Happy and Output oriented experience. As a result we search for the potential of each child in our classrooms and build up on that. It may be a challenging task for many teachers especially when we also talk about children who may have Special Education Needs. A heavy word but very simple if I draw your attention to the way your mother manages home and ensures that each of the family members feels welcome, happy and blooms as per his/her potential. Does she undergo training? Asks for more resources? She has only few attributes such as basic Concern and Commitment followed by her evolved competence to address each situation, and search for help when she has exhausted her resources. All teachers in a way represent that 'other role' irrespective of our gender, location and training. I am sure you all are committed and have competence but need a little help to FEEL, VERBALISE and WORK ON THAT CONCERN. Some concerns come easily, such as when we find child in our school who cannot see or have very powerful glasses or move/walk properly. You can further add to such

observable conditions that may need measures like seating arrangement, identifying physical education activities appropriate to him/ her or seating the child on a stool with table or such arrangement for mid-day meals. Parents are the best source to gain more information for all such facilitating measures.

But you also need to become sensitive to such conditions that may be persistently different than their classmates in the same age range. Few examples are given below:

- Holding the book/writing material very close to any one eye or both eyes as compared to other children. Try to explore for eye related issues such as low or partial Vision.
- Poor performance of tasks that require near point and distance vision.
- Peculiar (unusual) body postures.
- Too talkative or avoiding any communication.
- Immature behaviour in relation to age-related expectations.
- Delayed speech.
- Pronunciation problems.
- Difficulty in learning new words.
- Difficulty in learning to read.

- Trouble in learning numbers, the alphabet, days of the week, or colors and shapes.
- Poor concentration.
- Difficulty in following directions.
- Slow rate of learning and remembering (memory).
- Difficulty in generalizing.
- Slow language and social development.
- Showing better performance when seated in front row nearer to Black Board; or able to see you clearly.
- Frequent absenteeism from school.

Please remember, our role as teacher is not to diagnose and label students. As combination/ pattern and persistence of these conditions can imply so many disabling and health challenges and at times some of these may also be due to school or family related factors. Our commitment should lead first to what we can do with our own initiative and resources followed by consultation with fellow teachers, family and if need be referral to specialists.

Conclusion

Today Right to Education Act (2009) and Rights of Persons with Disability Act (RPED, 2016) provide framework for facilitating us to do our duty. When address these needs; it is not necessarily in one to one individualized action; rather All Students Benefit as we, in the process, start Planning, Generating Resources and Using Multi Sensory Approaches.

Open Education Resource (OER): Revolutionizing Education

Teachers and textbooks are almost the only resources for majority of students in most of the countries, said a World Bank study many years ago. Besides identifying and aptly describing the field realities, it also pointed out the importance of learning resources for quality learning. Open Education Resources (OER) is a revolutionary response to this nagging problem.

OER is one of the 21st century innovations in school as well as higher education. The OER movement started in 2002. Since then many agencies and foundations like William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, Andrew Mellon Foundation, World Bank, UNESCO, COL etc. are funding to investigate into promoting the OER movement.

A standard definition of OER, from Hewlett website, is and I quote "OER are teaching, learning and research resources that reside in the public domain or have been released under the intellectual property license that permits their free use or repurposing by others." OER includes full courses, course materials, modules, textbooks, streaming videos, texts, software, and any other tools contained in digital form from around the world.

Countries like USA (MIT Courseware), China (China Open Resource for Education), Japan (Japanese OCW Consortium), France (Paris Tech OCW), UK (OpenLearn) and many others have released thousands of courses and other resources which are being used by many educators to support teaching and learning in range of subjects and levels across the countries.

Many organizations in India (the National Repository for Open Educational Resources (NROER) an initiative of NCERT, National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS), Karnataka-Open Educational Resources (KOER), SHAKSHAT- an academic portal, National Mission on Education through Information and Communication Technology (NME-ICT), National Programme on Technology Enhanced Learning (NPTEL), OSCAR (Open Source Courseware Animations Repository), E-grid (E-Grid an educational portal - a project supported by MHRD at IIT, Kerala), National Science Digital Library (NSDL) etc. have initiated the use of OER. Some of the Indian universities, like Netaji Subhash Open University, Odisha State Open University and others have also set up their own OER



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There are open resources for almost every age, grade, and subject:

- Elementary, middle, and high school students
- Higher, tertiary, and vocational education
- Special needs and gifted students
- Public or private school students
- Homeschoolers or unschoolers
- Parents, teachers, and administrators" (Carolyn Fox, 2013)

Like any other innovation, educators are researching on its Usability, Accessibility, Awareness and learning outcome. Quite a few studies are conducted on the first three variables but there are few studies on learning outcome. Studies are divided on the impact; few show no significant change, other reveal students in the treatment group had a higher class GPA, a lower withdrawal rate, and higher scores on the department final exam, student learning appeared to improve.

Revolutionizing Education

So, how will OER impact our education and learning? In my opinion there are four major advantages:

- Will provide access to learning resources
- Will provide quality learning material
- Will reduce the cost and
- Will support collaboration.

Quality Learning Material

All OER material is quality assured and released under creative Commons License. The materials available on OER are texts, video, multimedia, etc. So, students and educators have large choices. 2017 Global Report on OER indicates existence of more than 170 OERs. These will supplement the existing learning.

Access to Learning Resources

Learners as well as educators will have access to a variety of high quality learning resources as OER resources are freely available on the web. Resources can be downloaded by learners and educators as they are better skilled in technology. These resources can be integrated into their learning environment as they are available from different parts of the world.

Cost Reduction

Accessing OER material will reduce the cost as learners need not purchase the textbooks/reference books. Also it will reduce the tuition fees which the learners have to pay due to lack of quality teachers, infrastructure and poor quality books. In other words, OER can dramatically reduce private cost of education making education more affordable to millions who stay out of educational portals.

Support Collaboration

Collaboration is one of the important 21st century skills which each one should possess. OER will generate collaboration in curriculum development across the geographical area, developing quality content, collaboration among the educators to enhance teaching approaches, creating new knowledge etc.

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Conclusion

OER is useful for teaching and learning, and resource development. This innovation backed by most of the international agencies seriously engaged in education holds promise for revolutionizing education.

Udang Forum A Catalyst for Women Empowerment



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Introduction

Quality education and skills development have emerged as essential tools for empowerment of women and girls. The plea to rethink education in rural areas and for the rural people was voiced by UNESCO INRULED in 2003, with the focus on rural transformation. To combat hunger, poverty, unemployment and gender inequality technical and vocational education and training and skills development are vital for building a sustainable future based on social inclusion and poverty reduction among rural communities.

Vocational Education and Training

Even though the overwhelming emphasis was on primary education Udang Forum undertook upon themselves the responsibility of providing vocational education and training for the rural, unskilled youth especially the school dropouts, girls and youth belonging to socially disadvantaged classes like scheduled castes, scheduled tribes, and minorities, and women. The course on 'Beauty and Culture' targeted girls and women between 19-35 years old and the minimum education qualification required was successfully passing Grade 8. It commenced from February/March and lasted for a year with examinations in April. The class is comprised of girls and women forming a group of 20-25. By collecting a monthly fee from its members of INR 200 each they are able to pay for the salary of the teacher including the raw materials

required during the course. Classes are held once a week and only on Saturdays to encourage girls to take it up as a hobby that soon transforms into a livelihood. Since its inception twelve years ago the course has gained popularity and almost 80 percent have revealed their dormant entrepreneurship skills by continuing to offer their services from home.

Methodology

A qualitative research and case study methodology was carried out. The semi-structured interviews and the focus group discussions questions were raised around socially constructed roles and power relations to provide valuable insights of the key issues to be discussed. The study was undertaken as part of a larger project within the framework of Education of Rural Transformation looking at education as a vehicle for women empowerment.

Empowerment indicators

To explore the linkages between vocational education and women empowerment based on qualitative research methodology the study took into account the context encompassing the formal and informal sites of education. Three indicators were selected 1) addressing poverty reduction through education 2) overcoming social norms and attitudes that block gender equality and 3) education as empowerment. Twenty women were interviewed between the ages 17-33 years old to investigate and understand the ways by which education has influenced and transformed their lives. The semi-structured interviews revealed the power of education to overcome the barriers that create gender inequality, poverty and prevent them from using their agencies.

Results and Reflections

• Addressing poverty reduction through vocational education

The respondents voiced their thoughts clearly by articulating the linkages between education and poverty reduction. They were of the opinion that partaking in the course facilitated them to find their own voice, become independent, contribute to family income or be in a position to finance their dreams. For married women the course provided them with the tools to an extra source of income. By contributing their share in household expenses gave them the bargaining power to take decisions for their child's future and increase their status in the family.

• Overcoming social norms that hinder gender equality

An important issue raised was whether girls would be allowed to continue their business after marriage. Nearly, all stated firmly that this question would be raised prior getting married. If their family showed their disapproval they would not get married to a person who will not support their dreams and hopes.

• Education as empowerment

Vocational education is vital for capacity building and skills development. The interviews showcased that knowledge and skills pave a way for economic independence that is intrinsic for poverty alleviation and engendering the gendered spaces created by traditions and culture.

• Conclusion

The key to the success of Udang Forum lies in its vision to recognize that it is imperative to have a vertical and a horizontal mobilization of resource people and the community. For initiatives to be successful and sustainable there has to be sustainable human involvement, sustainable community involvement, understanding the context and needs of the community and men must be brought into the picture. Along with social equity and inclusion the quality of the programs play an indomitable role and contribute to its longevity.

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SIP Innovations

Swachchha Vidyalaya: 2002

As a component of School Improvement Programme, Forum introduced two new concepts in 2002 – Swachchha Vidyalaya and Chanchal Vidyalaya. Modeled on Bala Krsna, Chanchal was meant to be activity based learning assuring childhood guaranteed to children in school with all their natural naughtiness and pranks. Swachchha meant clean and beautiful schools. **How would the Goddess of Learning walk through the dusty corridors of our schools and enter our unclean classrooms to bless the children with Vidya!**

Swachchha Vidyalaya implied clean classrooms, corridors, midday meal kitchens, staff room if at all there was one, clean toilets, clean surroundings of tube wells if there was one, clean courtyard, etc. Such primary schools do not have any supporting staff. Human beings in the schools are only teachers and students.



Swachchha Vidyalaya is implemented by both students and teachers. These villages are very dusty. Hence, during sweeping, huge dust rise making the horizon hazy. So sprinkling of water was the antidote. We sprinkled water and then swept.

In one of the schools, we found the 'classroom', without any door or windows, full of dust. We picked up broom sticks ourselves, so did others. And in no time, the space was clean for children though we could not make it sparkling. Beautification was done with plants and flower pots and classroom decors with colour papers.

Government of India launched Nirmal Gram Yojana (Clean Village Mission) in 2003, effectively in 2005. Almost a decade later that scheme was rechristened as Swachchha Bharat. Quite a few of our SIP primary schools won Nirmal Vidyalaya Award from the Government.

SIP: Annual Inter-School Cultural Competition.

Backdrop Short Report

Agenda of SIP is universal enrolment, retention, and performance. It deviates from conventional approach of training teachers how to teach and evaluate only. Forum designs a variety of activities. Happiness is one common thread that stitches all activities. All activities are designed to achieve the three goals of universalization. For the 30 rural schools, SIP goals have been achieved. Zero dropout, no child out of school and improved performance. SIP continues as Quality is a journey and not a destination.

Capacity building of teachers are usually seen as panacea. CRCs were set up for frequent interaction. This was a good idea that did not work. We invented our own way of CRCs. 30 schools in the 16 neighbouring village cluster is the CRC and Total Quality Management is the approach.

We design multiple innovative interventions. One of the interventions is interschool cultural competition. 2018 event was held on 20 February at Howrah Rural Teachers Forum, Udang. 32 schools participated in as many as eight items. These were: recitation, elocution, vocal music, clay modeling, go as you like, painting, storytelling, and reverse racing. As many as 139 children took part in the events. Each event had three judges. 24 judges including teachers, professional musicians, Graphic designers and others participated. Parents were in full strength to cheer the kids. And, of course, teachers of the participating schools. Every corner of Forum was agog with footprints of nearly 250 beautiful people.

The day was graced by Sri Dipankar Koley, the dynamic young Sub Inspector of Schools of Sirajbati Circle. He went round and observed every event himself occasionally interacting with children "Lest they may get distracted". He said, "Teachers talk highly about Forum. Forum has made a space in their mind. So, I decided to visit Forum. He felt that the quality and finesse of children's work here are much better than the award winning entries submitted to his office from circle level events. He asked, "Why?"

On the sidelines, this quality is because of intense engagement of teachers with their students for a prolonged period; and this event is organized by the teachers themselves.

“Divyastra” by itself is not enough. The warrior must remember when and how to call it, on whom and how to use it.



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