

PROJECT LEARN-LAB

MISSION

To create an innovative model of education that is measurable, sustainable and replicable, so as to provide quality education to all mainstream schools.

BACKGROUND

The education system prevailing in our country is the legacy of the British system introduced more than a hundred years ago. It still remains teacher-centric, syllabus guided and examination-oriented system.^[1] It is comprised of four distinct hierarchical tiers: The government, the educationists, the administrators and teachers. Their roles are briefly described below:

Government: It guarantees right of education to its citizens. To achieve this end it provides legislation, funds, and where possible, infrastructure;

Educationist: The educationist decides what a student should have acquired by way of learning, from the preschool to higher secondary level. A curriculum to fit this decision is designed for each level and textbooks are prepared in bits to accord with this curriculum. Textbooks with certain number of lessons in each textbook follow.

Administrators: They decide on a time frame for the teacher to teach all the lessons. A timetable is drawn according to which teachers teach their classes.

Teachers: These present day ‘gurus’ teach lessons according to the training they have received. Examinations are conducted based on these textbook lessons, and marks or grades given for the right answers. Thus, such question-answer based tests become the basis for assessing the learning of the student. The entire educational administrative setup, from top to bottom, is geared towards this end.

Over a period of time, education has become a culture of memorizing answers, and ‘preparing’ students to pass examinations. It has given rise to a parallel education system of private coaching classes, promoted profit making private ‘self-funding’ educational institutions rather than educating children. Against this backdrop, a modern trend is emerging in Alternate Education Models, where the focus of education is on children.

THE PROJECT

The Learn-Lab project is a not-for-profit, Non-Government Organization. It has integrated different innovative learning methods, and created a program which will be extended to schools. The methods used by this project are briefly described below:

1. Glenn Doman Method: Glenn Dorman is an American educationist. He developed a program to help children with challenging abilities successfully. He then went on to develop appropriate methods in educating normal children and got stunning results: 5 years old children were able to

read like an adult, learn several languages and recognize the notes of classical music and to distinguish between the paintings of great artists. His method is simple and can be considered as a systemized use of flash cards. Even though his methods are designed in such a way that the parents of the children alone can undertake it, it can be used in a classroom context.

2. In 1994, a dedicated young Tamil couple, Mr. Raghavan and Mrs. Aruna Raghavan, opened a primary school in Arasavanangkadu, which is an economically backward village in Tiruvarur district of Tamil Nadu. They successfully introduced some modifications in this method to enable a class teacher to impart reading skills to a maximum of 5 children at a time. The age of the children varied from 42 months to 54 months. A language session, whether it is Tamil or English, needed a maximum of only 15 minutes a day. In the course of 2 years these children learnt to read fluently in Tamil and English. Using the same method, the children learnt a lot of general knowledge which a 4th or 5th standard student normally learns.

The Learn-Lab project has integrated these methods in encouraging students to take initiative in discovering their aptitude, promote their inquisitiveness and with the help of innovative educational aids such as flash cards, videos and reference material, learn their subjects. The program is a self-sustaining community funded and community-based program. The important feature of the program is that the students, their parents, teachers and community leaders participate in the creation of community school.

OUR APPROACH

We aim to support primary and middle schools; that is, from kindergarten level to the 8th standard, which are affiliated to Gujarat Board of Education. Our primary focus is on the schools in villages. Ideally, such school should be run or managed by government/ community trust / foundation. Residential schools will also be considered for the introduction of the program. For the success of our program, the Project will need 100% support and understanding from school's teaching staff and management.

If school is located in any district other than Vadodara, school/management have to arrange of lodging and boarding and pay reasonable stipend to our community members.

If there is need of new teacher in the school, our community workers have the ability and qualification to work as teachers of science, mathematics, English or the use of computers.

[1]Educational Endeavours In Auroville Tamil Schools And Their Relevance To Indian Mainstream Schools - Subash And Lourdes: Article published in 'Alternate Education. See the following website: <http://www.alternativeeducationindia.net/alternative-schools/article-from-aurovillee>