

Our Obsession with Teachers: CSR at Government Schools

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Digital education for government schools definitely and rightfully seems to be the favorite target of major CSR spenders. But while reviewing the majority of the programs, one can clearly see one thing. It is that every program is majorly centered around the teacher.

Whether it is a teacher training program, a curriculum enhancement program, or a smart class/digital class setup, the entire focus of the program is basically to train, empower, or enable the teacher to believe that she will be the source of all learning for the child. We have observed that almost all of the investment, whether CSR or government spending at government schools goes to the teachers.

All this is happening on the basis of a fundamental assumption. It goes like "any learning that can happen to the govt school child will be via the teacher". Looking at it with some more bit clarity, we can easily see that it is indeed an assumption. From our individual experience, we all know that a true teacher can facilitate learning. But, real learning happens when the learner positively engages in the learning process. Maybe for our government school children, we have missed a student-centric approach. We forgot to consider it while planning all the investment and programs for these schools, we have basically overlooked those kids for whom all this exists.

We at iDream Education love those children. Therefore we like to observe whatever is happening with them at the schools. We keep on brainstorming and then working on how we all can make it better and more meaningful.

What can a teacher do?

Looking at it objectively, a teacher can just do four things for a pupil in the learning cycle:

1. Share information
2. Clear doubts during conceptual understanding
3. Inspire and Guide during exploration and application
4. Take tests and evaluate performance/understanding

With the advent of amazing and engaging multimedia, the teacher today is relieved from the task of just sharing information about topics with the children. Even at government schools, we can do this in a much more effective and non-judgemental manner. All that by leveraging technology and multimedia.

But it is a matter of great sorrow to see teachers facing the extra burden. They are asked to take over this process of leveraging technology to deliver conceptual information. We know very well that the students are 10 times better and quicker with technology. Also, it is a fact that the teachers there

never grew up with any technology. So maybe they fear it or are at least unfamiliar with it, and may end up never using it.

And we, the funders and the supplemental organizations are in parallel seeing all this with our own children in the best of private schools too. That is where we are emphasizing more and more engagement-based learning, facilitating experiences for our children via the best of labs, tools, computers, tabs, and activities, and not just making them sit in a classroom before a teacher in a one-to-many fashion for hours.

You can read little Nikhil's amazing TABLAB story.

It's the same for every child, and more so for the govt school kids. If they get a chance to play, explore, and learn, they do it way better since that becomes their only source of edutainment as compared to private school kids with all the luxuries at home too. Therefore, for some parts of the school timetable, we clearly see gaps with the need for playful and interactive, student-centric learning solutions in our government schools.

Activity areas and well-designed labs whether digital or hands-on, perfectly fill the space. Here the teacher becomes a guide and a facilitator whom the child can reach out to if needed. Otherwise the student has the facility to explore, enjoy, interact, and learn amazing things out of sheer experience. Isn't that how most of us have learned everything that makes us what we are today?

We find immense scope in injecting at least one hour of student-centric labs in the six-seven hours of schooling and testing happening at our government schools. We feel a great need for some student-centric CSR and government spending for our government school students. Further, we believe tremendously in the power of student-centric learning programs as CSR in government schools.

It would be great to have your views on the same and also discuss the possibilities around this. You can connect to us at share@idreameducation.org