Deenabandhu School, Chamarajanagar, Karnataka

Update from May/June 2020 (during COVID first wave)

Deenabandhu school on the outskirts of Chamarajagar town is a good quality school for children from surrounding villages. It has close to 300 students. This includes the 80 children who live in the Deenabandhu Children’s home, who are children who do not have parents or caregivers who can care for them.

Deenabandhu School’s focus is quality of learning, especially learning by doing Science and Maths. The emphasis is on understanding the concepts. The school has an excellent collection of teaching materials created as part of the Deenabandhu Teachers Resource Center using locally available materials. The Deenabandhu School teachers use these materials regularly in their classes. Because of these teaching-learning materials (TLMs), and the focus on understanding of concepts, the teachers have been able to move easily to a video mode of teaching. They create videos on various topics and share them with their classes. Deenabandhu is seeing a lot of creativity amongst teachers in using various apps.

After the strict Covid lockdown period Deenabandhu School teachers began collecting smart phone numbers for all their students. Every family did not have a smart phone or data plan, so they asked the children to identify a neighbor or relative who had a smart phone they could use. They collected all of these smart phone numbers into WhatsApp lists for each class. This is the primary way they communicate with the children.

Then they began posting videos on various topics on these lists, aligned with the material students in that class should learn about. Some teachers have even begun using google forms to ask questions and get feedback on how much students have learned. Though the videos are viewed “offline” (not simultaneously in a class), the teachers are regularly posting messages and soliciting questions on the WhatsApp group to create an interactive feel in the group.

For younger classes worksheets have been created. They asked the parents to come in batches of 20 (to enable social distancing), once a week, to collect the worksheets. Each set of parents have a designated day to come to the school to pick up the worksheets. Deenabandhu School staff is delighted that over 95% of parents are coming regularly to pick up the worksheets, showing the value the teachers have for the school.

Science Teaching for Teachers

Another Deenabandhu project is training government school teachers in more remote villages in teaching Science experientially, using the TLMs developed at the Deenabandhu Teacher Resource Center (TRC). As discussed above, the emphasis of the TRC is to create materials using locally available materials to teach Science. The TRC staff has recently come up with the idea of creating a telescope using PVC pipes, procuring only two lenses from outside. They have created a telescope that can see Jupiter’s moons and Saturn’s rings and will cost only Rs. 450 to make. Equivalent commercial models cost Rs. 6000-7000. They have conducted workshops for the government school teachers on Google Meet (virtually) to teach them to create such telescopes. Teachers attended these workshops from their home or from their schools, depending on where the internet connectivity was better. It has created great excitement among children in the schools to use these telescopes.
The lockdown period was also used to complete the building of a Science center at Deenabandhu. Now more and more teacher workshops will be conducted on Google Meet.

Deenabandhu Children’s Home
The Children’s Home is practicing strict monitoring of entry by outsiders to keep Covid outside of the campus. Children are learning many new skills such as carpentry and plumbing to take care of the campus themselves. In addition they are using their time in many creative activities like creating videos with their own story line and acting.

From the project:

*Covid time has enhanced creativity among children. I see adolescent boys are behaving with responsibility and togetherness to cope up with the covid period.*

*Small children have very quickly learnt to wear masks and sometimes remind adults who are going out without a mask.*

*We have rearranged the garden in front of our Gandhi statue and the sculptors made by Gowtham, our alumni are shifted to this park.*

*Our boy Shreyas has developed his own boat powered by the spare parts from a broken toy car.*

*Two of our girls developed fun masks for small children, their art and creativity is amazing.*

*Our high school boys do most of the small scale masonry to create an altar to place the Krishna statue or create a small span concrete flooring near the bakery. We cannot allow any outside worker into our campus, so children are picking up many skills like masonry and plumbing.*

Smugmug link for photos: https://asha4education.smugmug.com/DeenabandhuCovid/