

Sankalp 2018 Site Visit

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By [Ankit Kumar](#)

Summary

Visit to Sankalp was something which re-assures in us how important is primary education for children and why everybody deserves a quality education irrespective their economic background. Situated in the Chakkarpur Village area in Gurgaon, the school is catering to the primary education and mentoring needs of children from the economically struggling society of Chakkarpur. Though the school exist just besides the government primary school, we can easily see how dilapidated the condition of government school is. In one way, school has been able to fill the gap created by the lower quality of the primary govt. school.

Current Status



- Average attendance of children at 80%
- Approx. 300-400 children study in school in two sessions - morning and afternoon.
- Afternoon session also caters to open school candidates (especially from the higher age bracket who want to complete their pending education)
- The school has maintained good contact with secondary school in the vicinity where the pass out students move after 5th class thus able to help in smooth transition
- School also conducts saturday sessions for mentoring pass out students ("Vidyarthi"). They also support needs of these students in terms of fees and books so that they continue their higher secondary education without dropping out from schools.
- There are currently 8 active volunteers who manage the school's admins, infrastructure and support mentoring of students

- Staffs - around 10. Primary financial needs are staff salary.
- Support of corporate (mainly Expedia and Motorola) and individual donors from time to time help in aiding other financial needs.
- Meals for children: The government has currently disassociated them from the mid day meal program of ISCON which is only available for recognized govt. Schools. Hence after experimenting with a caterer (and failing due to lower quality), the school now provides fruits and biscuits to children as an addition to the tiffin which is brought by children from home.
- School has also taken initiative to provide sanitary napkins to girls and has taken initiative to improve awareness on health issues.
- In winter time, special welfare kits are given to students including shoes, scarfs, mufflers etc.
- School also supports extracurricular growth of children via various cultural activities and helps in bringing up talents of children.
- School also has taken security issues of children seriously and have kept CCTV and fire extinguishers in place including appointing a watchman at gate.
- School regularly conducts parents meetings too which has seen significant participation from mothers of children.
- Approx. annual expenditure for school - Rs 35-40L.
- Girls ratio is now up at approx 50% from earlier 20-30%
- Haryana board - hindi medium is taught as the secondary schools are also working in same medium thus helping in smooth transition of children.
- There are several other schools in the vicinity of this school (in a radius of 5 km) in similar model - Happy School, Saksham, Pragati, Lotus Petal to name a few. The school has good connection with all these schools.
- Dedicated staffs and children are excited to study in school. The quality is sometimes higher than the similar grade in a government school.
- Alumni students also say that the quality of education in Sankalp has been far higher than what they have been getting at senior schools.

[A small video of a class in Sankalp](#)

Schools major focus area for this year

- Quality improvement of teachers while controlling churn of teachers.
- Improvement of student dropouts especially with migrating parents
- Effectively improve the open school (i.e. NIOS based teaching) for overage students
- As most of the volunteers are very senior people, there is a need to figure out the transition of the leaders for schools

My own analysis of the challenges and way forward

The school is doing great job with current educational needs of the children in nearby society and with lot of experiments to expand (including mobile classrooms), they have decided to focus on the current area and improve the school quality.

But in some ways I feel that a saturation has happened in terms of growth, experiments and the zeal to reach out and help more such needy urban slum communities. I see that Sankalp has clearly replaced the government school as the “go - to” school in the area for the primary education. Sankalp has started with the focussed need of helping out education needs of children of construction labor migrants in Gurgaon area. But now, I feel that there is a need to revisit some of the core visions, missions and goals of organization to clearly define the way forward.

Some of my humble suggestions for future growth will be :

- Re-explore the possibility of english medium education. The learnings at the young age don't fade away fast and even if it is difficult to focus on total english medium schools, at least a support program needs to be created to help transition alumni students (“Vidyarthi”) for their college education which happens mostly in English.
- Need for digital records for easy audit and tracking of students who pass out so that mentoring and contact is possible in a structured way rather than one-off meetings.
- Possible need of structuring out a “ young volunteer base” driven activities to drive mentoring and other regular exposure workshops and activities for teachers and kids of school.
- Focus on building good base for science through science workshops and tie up with organizations/NGOs who can help in better computer, science and other co-curricular activities.
- If the focus is on only current area only, then it should also explore possibility of expanding to higher classes using the corpus amount which they have from earlier sale of school land.

Conclusion

In all aspects, Sankalp is doing a decent job at providing a quality primary education for children from weaker economic section of our society. Since they have been established for quite some time, they have learned that a focussed approach is working out great to create a stabilized way of working considering its an NGO and is dependent on funds to go about daily activities for a school. It is a matter of debate on what should be the future of Sankalp and I feel that it is important that this question is addressed along with transition of leadership. A possible influx of more young volunteers in the leadership might also be a welcome change to help aid this process.

NOTE:

Ankit was requested to conduct this visit by his friend Padmanava Sen and Neena, both Asha Volunteers. Ankit lives in NCR and works in OYO Rooms as Product Manager.