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Bhoomika Trust's Neighborhood Free Tuition Centre (NFTC) Tutors Training program - September 2007

A report

Bhoomika Trust's NFTC program is being implemented during the academic year 2007-08 in eight tsunami affected districts of Tamil Nadu with the support of six local NGOs. About 3000 students from classes I to VIII, studying in local village schools who are academically weak and whose parents cannot afford paid private tuitions benefit from this program. These students are provided regular supplementary educational support in the evenings by educated women within their neighborhood. The student-tutor ratio is maintained at 25:1 to ensure individual care and attention. This program also provides part-time employment to these unemployed and underemployed women.

To enable the tutors to refresh their concepts of Mathematics and English and to enhance their teaching skills, Bhoomika Trust organized a training program at Kanyakumari. The program was arranged for all 128 NFTC tutors, in two batches of three days each between 24th and 29th September 2007. Ms.Lakshmi Suryanarayanan of ASHA and her team from Olcott Memorial school, Chennai were the resource persons.

Training for the first batch was from 24th to 26th of September, during which 57 Tutors, from NGOs such as RICE, NAMCO and Village Vision participated, along with their coordinators and NGO representatives. The second batch of training for 60 Tutors of NGOs such as WORD, MALAR and RSEEDS and their respective coordinators and representatives was from 27th to 29th of September 2007.

The three day training covered the following topics:

English grammar (tense),
Phonetics (short and long vowel sounds),
Basic Math (integers, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, graphs),
Use of teaching aids & Bingo cards
Orientation on ABL method (Activity Based Learning)
Self-assessment
Motivation
Group games and Action Songs
General teaching Skills and
Orientation on maintenance of NFTC records (attendance registers, tutor's report book etc)

The interactive sessions were interspersed with thought provoking games and action songs. The training significantly contributed to improving the knowledge level of the tutors.

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English- phonetics and pronunciation: For children in rural areas one of the most difficult subjects is English basically because they do not have the opportunity to learn, speak and practice the language in the right way. This difficulty continues all through their school life and beyond. The fear of English language amongst the tutors was eased by enabling them to list-out large number of English words which are commonly used in every day activities, like Tea, Coffee, TV, Channel, Radio, Ticket, Bus, and so on. This was followed by practice in vowel sounds. Difficulty in English was remedied by a session to learn the correct way of pronouncing English words. Short and long vowel sounds were taught and was followed by simple words. To make it easier to learn, it was sung in the form of a song. The Tutors were able to follow the trainer and practice the sounds. They also enjoyed the rhymes and actions songs.

Moving from sounds and words, they were taught to form simple English sentences in the form of a game. The game also included changing tenses, from simple present tense to past tense.



Simple English sentences on pieces of paper were colored using rainbow colors and jumbled. The tutors were divided into groups, and were provided with a set of jumbled sentences. The challenge for each group was to form sentences and arrange them in order.

Clue was the order of the color, capital letters and full stop. With a little assistance, the tutors were able to comprehend the game and form all the seven sentences, and solve the puzzle.

Starting with simple sentences the game moved on to past and future tenses. The learning which happened during the hour long game is sure to remain with them for long.

This game not only taught them the elements of fundamental English grammar, but also taught them the methodology to teach this subject in an interesting manner.

Innovative Teaching aids:

To make teaching more interesting and enjoyable, the tutors were exposed to a host of teaching techniques which could be applied in their classroom settings. Techniques to explain number concepts, and operations were illustrated.

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Basic Math (integers, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, graph): Part of the training was dedicated to refreshing the basic concepts of Math (integers, arithmetic, algebra, geometry, graph). To begin with, a pre-test in Math was administered to all the tutors. Questions were based on basic concepts and a post-test was conducted to assess the impact of the Math training.

Interspersed with thought provoking games and action songs, the sessions were conducted interactively.



During the process of Math training, it was found that many had difficulty in fundamental concepts. Training was focused to remedy these limitations. Ms.Lakshmi taught them the basic concepts in a lucid manner and solved a few numerical problems, to enable the tutors become thorough in basics. Sessions were held individually and in groups to facilitate group learning and mutual help.



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To facilitate better learning Ms.Lakshmi and her Team had developed interactive power point sessions covering all basic subjects. During the training these slides were displayed on the LCD facility to make the sessions more interesting and lively.

Similarly a game called BINGO was played to help illustrate teaching using playway methods.



Orientation was provided on the much talked about Activity Based Learning [ABL] which is being introduced and adopted in many government schools in Tamil Nadu. Tutors were given an overview of this new system, and how it could be incorporated into NFTC.

Self assessment and introspection:



Mr.Suryanarayanan, one of the resource persons handled a few sessions on self assessment and motivation to help the tutors build their self esteem.

Feedback: At the end of each batch of training, tutors from all six NGOs shared their experiences about the three-day residential training.

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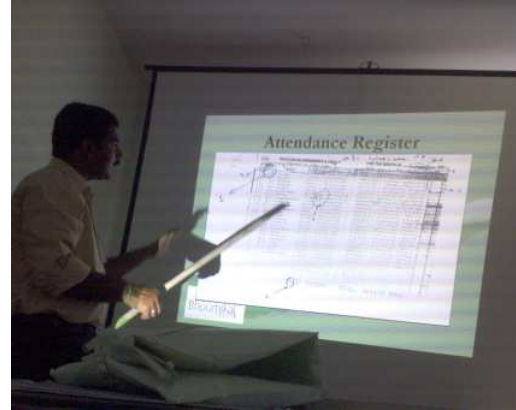


Along with the Tutors, NGO heads and coordinators also spoke about their experiences in implementing NFTC.

NFTC concept, activities and expected outcomes: Mr.Purushothaman of Bhoomika Trust explained clearly the concept and objectives of NFTC. Method of maintaining records were well explained and illustrated. Expected outcomes were also elaborated to enable tutors and Coordinators to strive towards the same.

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Group songs and games: Volunteers from MALAR conducted some games and taught the group a few songs which could be used while working in the community. These inspiring songs could motivate the children and the community.



Peace Trust: The location and venue provided the comfort for the tutors to make the best use of the training. The coconut rich south Indian food kept the Tutors nourished through the training.



Technology was used in all possible ways to maximize the training. Using a camera phone, happenings during the training were instantaneously projected on the screen using the LCD. This helped the Tutors to recapitulate on the previous sessions as the training was in progress.

Feed back from the participants: Participants shared their feedback in open sessions and also responded to a brief survey to enable Bhoomika Trust to improve the program. From the feedback we have been receiving from the tutors, it is evident that the training program was very beneficial for the tutors.

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