

RightStart 2016 Report

RightStart 2016, our annual teacher training programme took place from May 27th to May 31st at the IIT campus. Here is a detailed report.

Organisation

As we had done in the past we organized RightStart 2016 also at IIT. All the outstation teachers were provided accommodation at the IIT hostels. Local teachers were taken to the staff canteen for lunch. The training sessions were held at the Vanavani school inside the IIT campus. We were provided two classrooms at Vanavani for the sessions. The felicitation function could also be held at their auditorium. Their support throughout the programme was extremely good. Tea and biscuits were served twice a day at the training venue. This also worked fine.

On the first and last days the outstation teachers were hosted at local volunteers' places for their lodging. One of the teachers was travelling with her young daughter and mother to take care of the daughter. IIT hostel does not permit young children to stay there! Our staff Malliga offered to host the family during the 5 days.

On the 28th evening Srinivasan also organized a local sightseeing tour for the teachers. They went to the Marina beach. Some of the teachers travelled by themselves to other places like Pangal Park on other evenings.

Trainers and Sessions

We had planned 2 days of English sessions, 2 days of Maths sessions and 1 day of craft and teacher talent show. However the English trainer cut short her session by half a day. On that half day Rajaram and Venkat taught the teachers some basics of computers.

English Session: Mrs. Radhika Srinivasan has been running an NGO, Kamalalayam trust for the last several years. They run a home that houses young girls at Manjakudi village. Mrs. Radhika Srinivasan has been training these girls as well as working with the teachers from nearby schools. She is also a Cambridge certified trainer. She trained the teachers in phonics and basic English grammar.

Ms. Meena Suresh and Ms. Kalyani from Ramanujan Museum and Math Resource Centre have been working with Asha Chennai in training the teachers and other aspects of improving the quality of Mathematics education for the last two years. They had their Maths

sessions on the 29th and 30th of May. In addition to teaching the teachers how to teach the lessons in the first term, this time the focus was on activities to conduct in the class. They taught the teachers several games that can be played in the class to exercise the children's understanding of various concepts. On the second day Mrs. Meena Suresh also taught the teachers some Maths for themselves. She particularly dealt with how to handle problems which require second order thinking skills.

The computer session by Rajaram and Venkat dealt with understanding the basic hardware of a typical machine (like RAM, hard disk etc.), basic features of the OS (like folders, tasks etc.) and finally the different programs that form Open Office.

Mohana Sundaram is our computer teacher at the Besant Theosophical School that we are supporting as part of Project Deepam. He has also been running his own organization Pupa Life that teaches craft and traditional dance to children at various homes. He and his team from Pupa Life organized the craft sessions. They taught the teachers how to make interesting things from waste. They also showed them how they can make marble designs using oil paints etc. The teachers enjoyed the break from the monotony of learning curricular subjects.

Participants

The following teachers participated in RightStart 2016.

Project Sangamam 18 teachers and 2 coordinators. Two of the teachers joined us on the 29th as they had their degree tests till that date.

Project Pearl 4 teachers and the project coordinator came for the training. This is the first time they are coming in large numbers for the training sessions.

Sangamam Senji and FTC Seeyapoondi One teacher from FTC Seeyapoondi and the 3 teachers at Sangamam Senji came with the project steward for all the sessions. The two teachers at the tuition centre could not come as they had their degree exams and day-work.

Poorna Vidhya One teacher came. The other teacher couldn't come because of family commitments.

Project Manigal	Two teachers from Manigal came for the sessions. The others had various commitments and couldn't come for the training.
TEA Trust	Teacher from Little Flower Convent run by TEA trust have been regular participants at the RightStart. Three teachers from TEA trust came this year as well.
Navajeevan Trust	Even though we have never supported them, they have always been keen to get this training for their teachers. Five teachers came for the RightStart this year as well.
Thulir and Arivu Maiyam	Each of these NGOs sent one teacher for the training. Our volunteer Paripooranam was known to these NGOs and they approached Asha through her to have their teachers also participate in this training.

Talent Show and Felicitation Function

In a break from our usually staid RightStart, this time some of the volunteers wanted a talent show where the teachers themselves organized a small programme. Our volunteer Mrs. Vijaya Sundaram coordinated with the teachers to organize this and the teachers also participated enthusiastically.

The teachers had been sincerely practicing their dances and skits for many days. In particular most of the evenings at IIT went towards this practice. Mohan also trained the teachers in some of the dances.

On 31st we started the talent show by about 2:45. Vijaya Sundaram compered the program. The teachers put up a very good show. It started with the "thamizh thaai vaazhthu". There were several dance performances by individual teachers and by groups of teachers spanning across organisations and projects. A few people sang songs. Several teachers spoke about their experiences and their projects. It was moving to hear their perspective and the important roles these projects were playing in their villages. Teachers from Project Sangamam also organized a nice skit about feelings of self-worth that should be nurtured in a good classroom.

Mr M. Narendran from Hyundai Glovis was there to see the show. He also spoke a few words about the work his company is supporting. We were very happy to have our CSR partner participate with us in our activities. Hyundai Glovis has always been eager to participate in and help us with all our activities.

Rajaram thanked everyone who has helped us with this event including, IIT, Vanavani management and staff, the trainers and the teachers themselves. We didn't have the time to distribute the certificates on the stage as many of the outstation teachers had to leave to catch their trains and busses. We instead passed the certificates around during the show.

Financials

Budget Item - Details	Budget Amt.	Actual Expense
Accommodation and food for Outstation Participants - We had actually a total of 44 persons from out of station. But the cost ended up being a little lower than anticipated.	64,000	62,570
Resource persons and facilitators Honorarium and travel expenses - Most of the trainers did not take any money from us and did their work for free.	15,000	4,000
Travel Expenses for Outstation Participants - There was an increase in the number of participants and we had not factored in food / local conveyance in the mornings and evenings on the first and last days.	38,000	43,493
Lunch for all participants, volunteers, helpers and trainers at venue. There were fewer local participants than we had planned. Otherwise the costs were as anticipated.	17,000	11,633
Materials for participants and during sessions	10,000	6,016
Gifts for resource persons. The felicitation function ended up being a internal function for the volunteers and the teachers. None of the trainers attended this function. So we didn't get them the gifts.	5,000	0
Documentation and Administration - The salary of our administrative staff is apportioned to the project where she works the most that month. For May Rs 3000 of her salary was apportioned to RightStart. We had other minor expenses like payment of Rs 1000 to Vanavani staff, making of a banner etc.	11,000	5,782
TOTAL	160,000	133,494