Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement - Vivekananda Teacher Training and Research Centre. Virtual Site Visit

Date and time: Sunday, October 17, 2021. 8 AM PDT

Link to the recorded meeting on Zoom
https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1bYgCAsWJ5H1ivJ3-WvsLhO5G2MPdVVE

URL of SVYM-VTTRC Asha’s projects page: https://ashanet.org/project/?pid=910

Attendees:
1. From Asha San Diego:
   a. Vignesh Srinivasan, Chapter Coordinator
   b. Swetha Godavarthi, Projects Coordinator
   c. Sabareesh Ramachandran, Treasury Coordinator
   d. Aravind Rao Karanam, Project Steward, SVYM-VTTRC
   e. Melli Annamalai, Project Steward, SVYM-VTCL (from Asha Boston)

2. From SVYM-VTTRC
   a. Mr S Praveen Kumar
   b. Dr Vasudevachar, Vice Principal, VTTRC
   c. Ms Yogitha, Teacher trainer and coordinator of Future Teachers of India (FTI) program at VTTRC
   d. Ms Vedavathi, Mr Praveenraju, trainees at FTI program
   e. Ms Sahana, Mr Usman Ali, graduates of D.El.Ed program

About SVYM-VTTRC
Swami Vivekananda Youth Movement (SVYM) is a development organization started in 1984 and has been working in the fields of health, education, and community development, chiefly among the tribal population in Mysuru district in Karnataka. Vivekananda Teacher Training and Research Centre (VTTRC) was established in 2006 in Hosahalli to train teachers to serve the educational needs of the rural and tribal populations. Asha San Diego has been supporting the project since 2008. Two other SVYM projects, Viveka Tribal Centre for Learning (VTCL) and Vidya Kiran, are currently supported by Asha chapters at Boston and Silicon Valley respectively.

Progress in the last year
In the last year, VTTRC has run three training programs: a Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed), a certificate course in Early Childhood Education (ECE), and a Budding Teacher Program, now renamed to Future Teachers of India (FTI). In this virtual visit, we discussed the status and future of these programs. The virtual visit started with an introduction by Mr Praveen Kumar, followed by a presentation by Dr Vasudevachar, a Q&A session, and an interaction with the trainee teachers.

Diploma in Elementary Education (D.El.Ed)
28 students enrolled in this two-year program for the 2019-2021 batch. 23 continued to the second year after passing the first-year examinations. The second-year exam results are still
awaited. The program experienced a few dropouts, mainly because of family issues. Some of the female trainees in the program enrolled after marriage. Some get married mid-way and then drop out. Retention of women until the completion of the program has become a problem.

Trainees primarily received online classes from the second semester onwards. There was a gap of one month at the peak of the second wave of Covid cases; classes have continued through the online medium otherwise.

SVYM is planning to discontinue the D.El.Ed program because the New Education Policy (NEP), 2020, has not stated how this program will be carried forward. Thus, the 2019-2021 batch will be the last D.El.Ed batch. They plan to start a four-year integrated Bachelor of Science and Education (B.Sc.Ed) program. This will require prior permission from Mysore University. Instead, the plan is to partner with Anjuman College in Dharwad which runs a BSc program; SVYM would run the education part of that degree. The proposed starting date is the academic year 2022-23.

Another option is to enter into a tripartite agreement with the University of Mysore and the education department of Govt of Karnataka, which runs the DIETs. Per NEP, DIETs have to be phased out in the future, and the government is figuring out a roadmap to running the education programs in a university setup (along with a bachelor’s degree). SVYM is expecting a very low take-up to a four year bachelor’s degree at Hosahalli or at Sarugur. In order to be financially viable, higher education should be moved away from where it is currently provided. All of SVYM’s trainers have M.Ed or Ph.D. degrees in education. So they will all be eligible to teach in the B.Sc. program

This policy of discontinuing the D.El.Ed program may have been a result of lobbying by B.Ed. teachers.

**Certificate Course on Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

In the last year, SVYM ran an experimental certificate course in Early Childhood Education (ECE). Per NEP, in order to be an ECE facilitator, the facilitator should have completed a 6-month or 1-year certificate program. In the country, only IGNOU has an option to conduct such a program, and it is only in English. SVYM’s certificate course is not yet officially recognised but they are working with the University of Mysore and Karnataka State Open University (KSOU) to get it recognised.

This is a six month course with a lot of online and some offline sessions. It is primarily a weekend program. The entry criteria is 12th standard. In the pilot, 18 trainees completed it and all were degree holders; they were ece or elementary teachers. SVYM hopes KSOU will scale this program up at the state level.

**Future Teachers of India (FTI) or Budding Teacher Program**

This is a nine-month-long program with a focus on content enrichment, the role of teachers in schools beyond classroom teaching, and training the teachers for Teacher Eligibility Test (TET). Curriculum includes three certificate courses: in guidance and counselling, life skills, and ICT in education. FTI is a six-month classroom program along with a three-month internship in VTCL & VSOE schools.
In the first batch, twenty teachers were enrolled of which nine have dropped out. Of the remaining, eight have cleared TET (>50%). TET is like a teachers' license to teach in schools in the state. This is quite impressive, considering that the qualifying rates at an aggregate is only between 5 and 10%. Six trainees are placed in other educational institutions.

Testimonials from the trainers and trainees

Ms Yogitha: I have been working for 3 years at VTTRC after completing MSc in Mathematics. I am coordinating the FTI program. It was difficult last year to conduct the D.El.Ed program because most of the students were at home. That was when we started this program. This program was designed to be such that teachers get skills beyond just teaching. Getting teachers to a residential program was difficult. The certificate course is filling the gap between B.Ed. and teachers. The practical component was particularly useful to the teachers. There were 4 lecturers running the program last year. They are only the full time faculty. Besides there are some part time teachers.

Ms Vedavathi, FTI program graduate: FTI program is a good platform for us to grow our schools. I particularly liked being taught how to manage time over a day, life skills, content development classes. In the life skills classes we learnt about communication, patience, dealing with kids of different learning methods and needs. Currently schools require facilitators to be equipped with all skills -- this cannot just be teaching but also includes understanding the child psychology. I joined the program right after B.Ed. I hope to continue teaching after this, I’d like to teach in a SVYM school. I am also applying for government jobs. During the practical classes, we got to teach in a tribal school as well as in a CBSE school. I had a very different experience in these types of schools. All our classes were held in person. The peak COVID wave coincided with our holiday.

Mr Praveenraju, FTI program graduate: I had just completed my B.Ed before joining this program. I did not find a job after college. I learnt more here beyond what I learnt in my B.Ed, such as life skills and pedagogy planning. I missed practical training in my B.Ed. because of the pandemic. My experience of teaching in the tribal schools was the best life experience I’ve had. They had their own groups and students of all grades were mixed in the school and it was a challenge to teach all of them. I learnt a lot from the tribal children themselves-a lot about their local culture, the fruits you find there and so on. It was an experience very different from what I had before. In the Sargur school the thing I liked the most was the ‘akka-anna system’. Children address you as akka or anna and that reduces the fear in asking the teachers any doubts and builds a bond between the students and the teachers. My only suggestion would be to have a longer internship period. This time there were exams going on in the school during the internship so we missed a part of the internship to that. There was very good support for placements as well. I have been placed as a math teacher in a SVYM school. The staff helped us a lot during the placement process. There was an interview process during the placements.

Ms Sahana, D.El.Ed graduate: I joined this program because it was advertised in our PU college. I am now working in a school in Coorg. The teachers at VTTRC even used to play with us. They gave us very good constructive feedback on our work. We also got very useful training in how to make lesson plans and TLM. I had some difficulty during the online class. They tried to make it easy for us by sending us videos. Visiting AIISH was an experience on how to teach children with special needs.