

Creating the next generation of achievers

THE INITIATIVE

The Ernst and Young foundation Samarth program focuses on empowering these children with Life skills, Soft Skills and Career Guidance along with employ-ability skills to help them along the bridge from academics to Industry.

Thousands of students from government schools have been benefited from the scholarship program till date. Students were selected on merit-cum-means basis and were mostly from Indian language medium schools. About 60% of the students were girls and 16% were from the SC/ST communities. Students were offered English language and soft skills training as well as career guidance during this period.

Concept and Target audience

“Samarth” workshops with the “Ernst & Young Foundation”: Focused on Personality Development, Life Skills, Study Skills, Career Guidance and Employability Skills. My contribution was on building the Study Skills and the Career Guidance workshops from concept to competence.

Target Students: Students who pass class 10 are eligible and get accepted under the Ernst & Young Scholarship program. The program supports them through their PUC years /Diploma and degree as well. There have been students who have pursued the ACA course too.

Objective

- Build confidence and self-esteem along with pertinent life skills to help these students from economically weak backgrounds to adapt to mainstream colleges/professional courses.
- Provide them with insights on how to study effectively.
- Orient them on different career opportunities and the knowledge, skills and abilities required career wise.

Methodologies followed

Pedagogical knowledge and skills require an understanding of a child’s development involving biology, developmental psychology, cognitive psychology, linguistics, behavioural psychology, and cultural anthropology. That’s just to work with one child. When we place students together in groups, we have to consider socio-cultural factors, systems dynamics, learning histories, and relationship histories. I got down to the engineering of instruction: how to plan and deliver content to groups of students who enter the classroom each day or for half a day sessions. I spent time estimating students’ level of understanding and take an approach to teaching that would stimulate curiosity and engagement with the content.

Active Learning: Get students to open up and talk. Encourage learning through activities structured around getting the students to speak up.

Peer to Peer: There were many times we were tempted to provide solutions to problems/challenges that these students put up. However, we focused on getting students to suggest solutions to their peers and vice versa.

Social context (e.g., urban, suburban, rural): All children were here from economically weak families. We had to learn to be sensitive when we provided every day examples and references. We made it a point to use a blend of visual, auditory and kinaesthetic learning cues to connect to the social context of these children. A practical point of reference was movies that these children had watched and loved. Mostly with references to certain scenarios that a character in a movie faced and how they overcame it.

We looked at In Basket Exercises, Role plays, Clay Modelling activities and games such as shoe reach apart from use of acronyms, etc.

Outcome or impact: Children emerged more confident. They looked to the peer group for ideas to battle common challenges. Their approach to the world changed from guarded pessimism to a more proactive pragmatism. They also began to feel comfortable to ask questions and validate their own understanding of their perception of the real world.