

Support a unique education model in rural India

India is a land of contradictions. While a large part of rural Indian children struggle with academics and lack earning opportunities when they grow up, there are pockets of rural India that offer high quality academic and vocational education.

Tucked in the eastern side of rural Visakhapatnam since 1976, Bhagavatula Charitable Trust (BCT) operates one such model that works towards 'universalization of education'. Working for impactful education since 1984, BCT was able to increase school enrolment from 26.5% to 98.5%.

In 1996 BCT set up the BCT Residential Model High school, specifically designed for rural India. The BCT school offers a futuristic education model with focus on skills and personality development aspects. As a remarkable impact, over 80% its alumni continue to live and work in the villages.

Summary

Established in 1996, the BCT Residential Model High school caters to both boy and girl students from 12 to 16 years of age. Operating in rural Visakhapatnam, it offers **value-based skill-oriented and rurally-biased education**. Encompassing the aspect of academics through the state syllabus, students also learn vocational skills so they can earn from wherever they live. Right from the modern learning about computer technology and robotics, to the traditional wisdom of charkha spinning and rejuvenating folk arts, education here is all-encompassing.

Additionally, even the specially-abled children are taught academics and given vocational skill training, based on their competence and interest. This has made it possible for the once-labeled 'burdens' to become bread-winners for their families.

Challenges

The set of challenges faced in rural education are radically different from those in city-based education. These include:

1. **Cost of schooling:** Being small and marginal farmers usually, parents of children find it difficult to bear high schooling costs. This impacts daughters more than sons. As a result, girls are not sent to schools offering quality education.
2. **Infrastructure:** Schools in villages are poorly equipped. This translates to mean smaller classroom spaces, lack of playgrounds and absence of modern facilities such as computers. The situation is worse for remote villages.
3. **Health:** Children hailing from poor families are often malnourished. The lack of a proper diet at an early age diminishes their height and weight, leading to lesser immunity and growth.
4. **Quality of teaching and other support:** Surveys have shown that a large number of students from grade six do not know the alphabet and lack the knowledge of solving simple mathematical problems. Other major challenges faced include lack of facilities for specially abled, ill-equipped, unmotivated and limited teaching staff, lack of rural connect in education etc.

Solutions

The BCT school operates with a unique model, and addresses the above challenges in the following ways.

1. **Efficient model, spacious campus:** The school operates a rurally-biased, value-based education model. Here along with academics, children learn important vocational skills and also social animation skills. Set in a picturesque locale surrounded by hills and greenery, ample space is provided through a playground as well, where children gather for team sports like cricket, volleyball etc.
2. **Effective academics:** The school has a subject center oriented learning model, where students' books are kept in subject rooms, and they do not have the drudgery of carrying heavy bags to and from school. It is also providing STEM orientation to rural and tribal children.
3. **Education for the future:** Special emphasis is given on aspects of computer and technology education, such that robotics, IoT, drone labs and hands on science experiments are a part of the curriculum. School is now also working on building entrepreneurship for high schools and creating an ecosystem for "rural start-ups for rural India".
4. **Vocational learning:** Students also learn vocational skills like tailoring, embroidery, farming, electrical work and charkha spinning so that in the future they can either make a living or augment their income through these lucrative options.
5. **Community development learning:** Students also learn community building and social animation, so they can lead the change and development in their respective villages.
6. **Subsidised education:** The cost of schooling is highly subsidized. It is borne in a 75 : 25 ratio by the school and parents, while BCT bears the entire cost for the education of tribal children. However, in many cases parents are unable to raise that amount as well.
7. **Quality stay and food:** The school provides 20,000 sqft of hostel space for boys and girls, which enables them to stay in a healthy environment, access healthy food and cut down travel to zero.
8. **Education for specially abled:** Specially designed curriculum is implemented for the specially abled children, who learn academics and vocational skills based on their interest and competence. They are encouraged and supported to start their own enterprises as well.

Long term impact

Operational since 1985, the following impact has been seen.

- Over 200,000 children and adults have been made literate by the BCT model of education, through the High School and non-formal education models.
- 56.12% of alumni are pursuing higher education/technical education/job and 8.77% are self-employed.
- 82.87% of the alumni continue to stay and work in the villages.
- The school has created technology-oriented enterprising rural youth.
- It has also generated rural startups for rural India.

Success stories

Gorle Bharath, Appannapalem

Pursuing a diploma in electrical skill, Bharath hails from an agrarian family. Having completed his schooling at BCT Residential High School from class 6 to 10, this is where he began to play cricket. However, what began as a hobby, soon blossomed into a career. Bharath has been playing regular matches since the past 2 years, and has also played in 3 countries and 5 states. He has won 3 golds, 2 silver and 2 international and 4 national certificates.

Additional Resources

www.bctindia.org

<https://www.theweek.in/news/india/2019/06/11/the-week-archives-dr-parameswara-rao-a-trust-that-transformed-life-andhra-villages.html>

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mI3_gjHxDs

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5P81yJtvPHA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PlvOnGB7oOA>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wWY88UZhL4Y>