Initiative to equip rural school kids with key skills meets with success

Has A Marked Positive Impact On Students' Confidence

Basavaraj Kattimani
@timesgroup.com

Hubballi: Lack of adequate libraries and an equal lack of books in existing ones often stunt the growth of students, and in government schools, this rings truer. However, access to internet in many state-run institutions is looking to offset this limitation.

"Google is my best friend," gushed Jyoti Bommuru, a class VIII student at the Government Higher Primary School in Ballarwad village in Navalgund taluk. Jyoti has a tablet and is well-acquainted with all the apps on the device. "I get all the answers I need, and additional information along with it using the tablets," said Jyoti in fluent English, who also shared her aptitude in the use of email. The tablet helps her stay abreast of current affairs.

Jyoti is one of the many beneficiaries of an initiative, 'Skill-in-Village' undertaken by the Deshpande Foundation to enhance skills of schoolchildren in Dharwad, Haveri and Gadag districts. The programme envisages equipping students in rural areas with all the skills their urban counterparts are being trained in, in addition to which efforts are being made to turn them into effective, and more importantly, confident speakers.

Manager for the 'Skill-in-Village' project Harish MH said that improving communication skills of rural students was one of the primary objectives of the initiative. "Improving their English was the key to building their confidence. Our project also focuses on improving skills in computer and overall digital literacy. We have been working in 42 villages since the launch of the initiative in 2017. Some of the villages we have worked in are Karadiguda, Honnapur, Chabbi, Aabigeri and Bannikoppa. The initiative has yielded desired results with many students in these villages now seeming at ease in English, and very comfortable with operating tablets and computers," said Harish.

The foundation has roped in 42 teachers, who are deployed to rural schools in the three districts, where they conduct a survey, following which they confer with the elders in the village and parents, before hitting the ground. "We roll out the initiative in those villages where we are guaranteed of maximum support from the local governing bodies such as the gram panchayat," added Harish.

One of the teachers working in the villages is Laxmi Bhovivadda, presently working with students of a government school in Ballarwad. "We focus on teaching the kids English grammar and other communication techniques. We train them in essential skills such as introducing themselves, deliberating on subjects among others. We also teach them how to use computers, using Google, etc," she said.

Manjunath Baliga, another teacher working with the Deshpande Foundation on the project, said that the children were being taught other skills that help them in life before and after school. "We hold a workshop each month wherein students are called on to make a presentation to help us assess their skills. We also teach them lessons from their syllabus," said Baliga.