



Self defense coaching in progress at Vidyalaya.

Digantar Shiksha Evam Khelkud Samiti, in short Digantar, is a non-governmental, not for profit organization, working in the field of education. Digantar School (Vidyalaya) is at the Centre of the programmes and activities carried out by Digantar since 1978. At present, Digantar provide education to children through its two schools.

The Academic Resource Unit (TARU) is a significant unit of Digantar, distinguished by its commitment to enriching the quality of education for all children by developing a strong knowledge base and imparting training.

TARU: Courses under Bedrock Series

The nature of the most fundamental questions in education can be more or less understood by studying the philosophical perspectives on education, sociology of education and perspectives on learning and development. These three are considered Foundational Disciplines of Education. In the Bedrock series, TARU planned 3 courses on the mentioned subject in partnership with Wipro. Two courses as mentioned below on Sociology of Education and on Perspectives of Learning were held during November-December, 2023.

Course on Sociology of Education

The "Sociology of Education" course, was held from November 20-25, 2023, at Digantar campus, which was designed and facilitated by Prof. Amman Madan, Azim Premji University with co-facilitation by Pragma Srivastava, Coordinator, TARU. A total of 16 participants (10 from Wipro partners and 5 from outside) representing 10 different organisations across India attended the course. A newly appointed teacher in Digantar Vidyalaya also participated.



The course addressed fundamental questions in education, exploring what to teach, how to teach, and whom to teach within a social context. It introduced sociological perspectives on understanding and navigating this context, covering concepts, theories, and methods used by sociologists and anthropologists. The focus extended to the processes shaping our times, such as the growth of complex societies, changing forms of nationalisms and ethnic identities, and shifts in gender, caste, and class structures. The participants engaged in discussions on the implications of a sociological understanding of education, delving into fundamental debates and dilemmas of our times.

During the course, participants visited Digantar School with the specific questions given to them. The question aimed to encourage participants to reflect on and identify elements of formal organizational structures within Digantar School.

Course on 'Perspectives on Learning'



The 'Perspectives on Learning' course was held from December 11-16, was designed and facilitated by Prof. Rajashree S. from Azim Premji University, with assistance from TARU team. The course had 12 participants, including 10 from Wipro partners and 2 from other organizations, representing 8 different organizations across India. Newly appointed 3 members of TARU team also participated.

The broader aim of this course was to engage participants with constructs in psychological theory that educators have drawn up to understand and anchor the processes of teaching and learning. At the beginning of the workshop, a significant amount of time was devoted to establishing the necessity and relevance of the course on child development within the broader framework of education. The various sessions discussed different conceptions and debates regarding child and childhood and their implication for understanding the developing child in school and non-school contexts. The course took a life-span developmental perspective to emphasize the continuity of development and learning.



During the course, participants visited Digantar School, gaining insights into its functioning and understanding of child learning in connection with workshop sessions.

Digantar Vidyalaya Vision 2023 - Feasibility Study (FS)

The Feasibility study under the project 'Digantar Vidyalaya Vision 2023' supported by Monsoon Accessorize Trust, UK started in the month of November, 2023. To begin with, Digantar team was involved in completing the due diligence form, along with various other documents, for Phase 1, of the feasibility study. Three researchers were hired for the feasibility study. An Advisory Group was formed with 5 members, and one meeting was held for preliminary discussions. The entire study is divided into 3 phases, deskwork, fieldwork (school visits) and analysis and report writing. During November-December, the team was involved in desk research and gathering information from different private schools pertaining to their fee structure, staffing structure, facilities, curriculum, pedagogy etc. through online research and on-site visits, for the purpose of analysis. Salary structure of government teachers was also obtained.



The basic deskwork phase of the FS was nearly completed by the end of December. Seventeen schools were visited across different localities in Jaipur. Details from these visits were compiled into an Excel sheet for further analysis. The locations included Malviya Nagar, Pratap Nagar, Mansarovar, etc. To cater to the language preferences of the team members, three essential documents of the FS were translated from English to Hindi. Nine team meetings were conducted, including an online session with the Advisory Group (that includes Padma Sarangpani, Amman Madan, Rajesh Kumar, Dharendra Mishra, and Neesha Bhakar) for input on tasks and progress. Multiple visits to Digantar Vidyalaya provided insights into existing infrastructure, facilities, pedagogy curriculum etc.

On December 27, Rohit Dhankar, Secretary, along with the team, had a meeting with the teachers of Digantar Vidyalaya in the context of the feasibility study. In this meeting, the feasibility study programme was explained and discussed in detail.

New Staff

Three new members joined in the team. Mahesh Sharma joined as an Assistant Fellow at TARU, starting on November 28, 2023. Megha Gupta and Maria Edassery joined as Research Associates, specifically for the Feasibility Study, on December 1 and 8, 2023, respectively.

Vidyalaya : Workshop on Menstruation Hygiene

The onset of menstruation means a new phase, and new vulnerabilities in the lives of adolescent girls. Many adolescent girls face stigma, harassment and social exclusion during menstruation. Gender inequality, discriminatory social norms, cultural taboos, poverty and lack of basic services like toilets and sanitary products can all cause menstrual health and hygiene needs to go unmet.



A workshop on Menstruation Hygiene was organised on December 9, 2023 at Vidyalaya in collaboration with Princess Diya Kumari Foundation, Jaipur, under project Baala. Children were introduced to good Menstruation Hygiene practices to be followed, and provided a sanitary napkin each which can be used more than once and the usage was explained in detail. The last session was a question and answer session in which the students raised several questions which were answered in detail by the resource persons. Two resource persons, Aasha and Nipul coordinated the workshop. 45 adolescent girls and 3 female teachers of Digantar Vidyalaya participated in the workshop.

Screening of Children's Film



On November 24, 2023, the children's film "Dino King & Nil Battey Sannata" was shown to the children from pre-primary to secondary level in two sub-groups. After watching the film, all the group teachers talked about the film with the children and shared whatever understanding they had about the film.

Visit of Sudha Parthasarathy, Country Director of ASED

Ms. Sudha Parthasarathy, Country Director, ASED (Action and Solidarity for Education & Development) came to Jaipur and visited Digantar on Wednesday, Nov. 29 and spent the whole day with Digantar. Sudha is familiar with Digantar and in the past had overseen the ASED supported work during 2013-16. After brief introductory meeting at the Main campus, George Cheriyan, Executive Director accompanied Sudha and visited Kho Rabarian School, interacted with teachers, Manju and Surya Prakash. Thereafter visited school in Bhavgarh and had interactions with Rekha Jain and Raju Gurjar. Hemant Kumar Sharma, Coordinator joined in the afternoon. At both the places discussed the ongoing teaching work, enrollment and infrastructure requirements, verified the documents and had detailed discussions about the status of past work carried out with the support of ASED and future requirements. Agreed to look into the new proposal for the required construction and maintenance work at both the schools.



Internship

Three interns from Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai attached with Digantar during November-December, 2023. Preet Surana from TISS did internship at Digantar Vidyalaya from Oct. 30 to Nov. 8. Ritika Hazrati, from TISS, was attached with TARU from Nov. 15-25 and mainly provided support in the organizing of the course on 'sociology of education'. Ambily Sabu 2nd year student of MA in Education at TISS, Mumbai was attached with Vidyalaya from Nov. 17-22. During this period, she observed the teaching work at Vidyalaya, interacted with students and teachers, Coordinators, and had detailed discussion with the Executive Director, on the history and philosophy of Digantar and various schools providing alternative education.



Guest Visits



As arranged by Abercrombie & Kent (A&K), on Nov. 7, two guests from USA, Elizabeth Grand, Tracy Fuller, along with Vikram Rana, from Jaipur office of A&K, visited the school. On Nov. 30, two guests from Sydney, Australia, David and Michelle, arranged by A&K, visited the school. All guests interacted with the Executive Director and the Coordinators, and understood the functioning of the school and appreciated the

Digantar way of education. On Dec. 4, Amreen Ahmed from Ashvattha Learning Communities visited the school. She observed classes and had discussion with Coordinators.

John Singh Sports Academy

The football coaching started from Nov. 1, 2023. The coaching is for one hour, 5 days a week. The self defense coaching started on Oct. 16. The self defense coaching is 3 days a week. A total of 50 students are participating in the football coaching and 56 students are participating in the self-defense coaching. Both are progressing well.



New Year Get together



Marking the year end and arrival of the New Year, a get-together was organized at Digantar Vidyalay, Bhavgarh on December 30. All the staff members of Digantar, from Vidyalaya, Main Campus and TARU participated in the get together. Everyone was involved in the cooking of the food together, played Antakshari, and performed other cultural activities such as dance, singing etc.

Upcoming Courses

Digantar is offering an online course - "An Introduction to Philosophy of Education," as part of Bedrock Series. This course, conducted in English, will be delivered online over a span of 3 months. Course Start Date: 23rd February 2024. For further details, please visit

link: https://bit.ly/Registrationopen_POE