SHIKSHA Initiative in Action
October 2017

SHIKSHA⁺: An Active Learning

Active learning can be defined as a teaching method involving active participation of learners through numerous techniques of learning. It can range from conventional techniques i.e. reading, writing, discussing to modern ways of teaching i.e. ICT, project-based learning, gamification, or interactive learning methods. SHIKSHA⁺, which is an extension of SHIKSHA Initiative can be considered as one of the best example of active learning.

Conventional methods of teaching & learning is usually based on long term memory. However, depending on long term memory is ineffective with regards to SHIKSHA⁺, since majority of the learners are adults. Adults are fundamentally different from their younger counterparts in terms of retention. Hence, active learning through ICT based content proves to be the suitable method. The foremost aspect of SHIKSHA⁺ is mapping the content of the book "Nai Kiran" (Primer developed by State Resource Centre, Lucknow for adult literacy). Subsequently a needs-assessment of community and learners is conducted, wherein the development team is tasked to identify the comprehension capacity of learners and the type of technology to be used. Moreover, characters used in nuggets (clip) are shared with prospective learners to connect them with characters; thus establishing the learning cycle.

The exercises mentioned below is an example of Inquiry Learning for the development team.

- **Rural background and local attire:** A survey and photo shoot is carried out by the development team to comprehend the routine activities carried out by a particular community to be addressed.

Image 1-L-R: Illiterate Laborer, Illiterate Housewife, Daughter, Son, Accountant, and Village Chief

- **Social values:** Emotions, motivation and social values are emphasized to create the digital content in accordance with the social norms of the community, e.g. a teacher is shown in *image 2* seated facing an elderly lady (learner) on the same platform is a sign of respect. Moreover, the elderly lady addresses the teacher with respect '*Master Ji*' to pay respect, irrespective of his age.

Image 2-Teacher and an elderly lady seated on the same platform

- **Voice:** In order to ensure the accompanying narration is impactful, voice-over recording is executed with contextualised modulation. Thereafter, it is shared with the field team for further review so as to keep the narration aligned with the receptiveness of target audience along the lines of articulation and pitch.
- **Language:** Language is kept simple and local vocabulary used for unhindered learners' comprehension. This is one of the important factors contributing to the achiever of learning objectives.
- **Humour:** To uphold the interest of learners, humour is introduced at various intervals.
- **Motivation:** The verbiage used in the digital content is carefully selected to aid the instructors to uphold the motivation levels at the zenith.
- **Remembering**: Reading and writing activities after each segment contributes towards knowledge retention.

Instructions in native language along with ICT based activities is enabling learners to read, write and learn effectively. Hence, one of the latest tools of e-Learning i.e. *Active Learning* is being used to its fullest extent in SHIKSHA⁺.

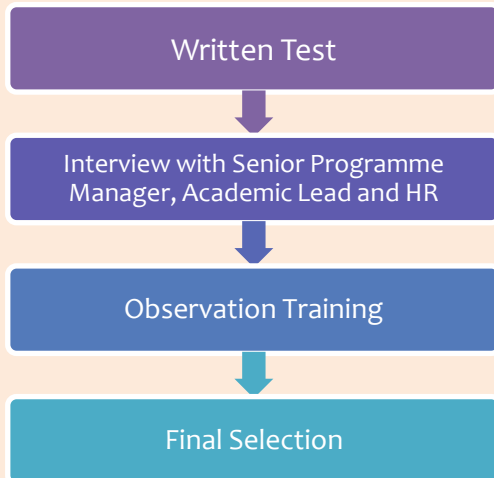**- Anuj Goswami (Instructional Designer)**

Recruitment and Selection of SHIKSHA+ Instructors for the 2nd Batch of SHIKSHA+ at Kasmanda

Instructors are the core enablers of SHIKSHA+. Thus, a rigorous selection process is followed in order to recruit suitable candidates with the right attitude and appropriate knowledge. On 15th September 2017, adhering to such a rigorous selection process, SHIKSHA+ at Kasmanda block of District Sitapur, welcomed 7 female instructors and 5 male instructors on board.

Image 3 - Newly recruited instructors with their mentors on extreme left and extreme right (front row)

Selection Procedure of Instructors

Written Test

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Interview with Senior Programme Manager, Academic Lead and HR

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Observation Training

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Final Selection

Training of New Instructors

With the intent to equip instructors with necessary skills, capacity building training program is conducted after final selection. The objective of the training is to give them clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities, acquaint them with the technology and develop their knowledge about the skills and practices involved in ICT based education. Furthermore, a session on teaching andragogy or method, documentation and soft skills is also conducted.

Image 4 - Training session

Along the aforesaid lines, a 10 day training for newly recruited instructors was being led by Academic Lead, Ms. Preeti Sharma at Kasmanda (*see image 4*).

Field Visit

As one of the significant facets of training, instructors are taken on a field visit to acquaint them with the community, as well. It contributes towards the fulfilment of community mobilisation, too. In view of above, the newly recruited instructors visited the communities of different villages at Kasmanda, wherein they shared information about SHIKSHA+ with the community. Thereafter, they participated in a village-mapping exercise with aid of the villagers. All such activities help in building rapport and in identifying the ideal location for the centre. Moreover, it upholds the transparency in our endeavours towards eradication of illiteracy among the community members. Subsequently, the instructors are assigned to their respective centres.

Image 5 - Village-mapping exercise

Chris Garrett's Visit to Centre of Excellence

Image 6 –Chris being acquainted with importance of assessment through tab

On 24th of August, 2017, SHIKSHA Initiative was privileged to facilitate a familiarisation tour in an effort to introduce Chris Garrett to various facets of SHIKSHA Initiative. Chris is one of the esteemed board members of Better World Ed (formerly reweave). The mission of Better World Ed is to overcome world's big challenges by disseminating empathy among youths. During his visit to Bhagat Convent School, he was informed about the technology that SHIKSHA Initiative uses in the ICT integrated class rooms. He had the opportunity to spectate live teacher-student transaction in the ICT integrated class room. Subsequently, he was provided a panoptic overview of various operating procedures. He was apprised about the impact-measurement of SHIKSHA Initiative along the lines of various aspects Viz. Literacy level, content retention, attendance rate. The ways in which teachers are constantly supported and engaged were explained by one of our resource coordinator Mr. Shailendra Yadav at Primary School Sarai Dula. Subsequently, assessment coordinator, Mr. Sumit Raha, informed Chris about the parameters on which assessments are developed by SHIKSHA Initiative. Later, he visited one of the SHIKSHA+ centres at village Chhaulas, and witnessed an adult literacy session. After completion of the field visit, he experienced an attributes enhancement training of newly recruited SHIKSHA+ field instructors being led by Academic Lead, Ms. Preeti Sharma. He was accompanied by Mr. Lalitendra Bhartiya, Operations Manager and Sayantan Sinha, Project Associate, SHIKSHA Initiative from the commencement till his departure. During the visit Chris learned about the impact of social change brought about by SHIKSHA Initiative through the prism of its employees. He has expressed his interest in collaborating with SHIKSHA Initiative.

Trainings

Training and capacity building are an integral part of the effective implementation of SHIKSHA Initiative. Thus, following trainings were organized in September 2017:

- *School Teachers Training (September 1-19, 2017):* Training of government schools teachers at Kasmanda was conducted in two groups i.e.

  o *Induction:* It was organized for teachers of newly selected schools and for those teachers who have received guidance from the field supervisors in their schools. A total of 54 teachers were trained during the training.

  o *Refresher:* Refresher training was conducted for the teachers who have already participated in the induction training. The main objective of the training was to revisit the concepts and focus on the assessment and augmentation process. A total of 66 teachers were trained during the training.

- *SHIKSHA+ Instructors Training (September 4-14, 2017):* Training of newly recruited instructors for SHIKSHA+ CoE was conducted at SNU.

SHIKSHA Initiative Data

Particulars	CoE	Expansion
No. of District	2	1
No. of Block	2	1
No. of Villages	50	132
No. of Schools	35	62
No. of Students	2257	3462
Student Attendance %	69.48 %	67.13 %
Total Staff	56	34

SHIKSHA+ Data

- *CoE:* 11 centres running in Gautam Buddha Nagar and Bulandshahr with 114 learners

- *Expansion:* 16 centres running in 9 villages with 165 learners enrolled

From the diary of SHIKSHA Initiative

Image 7 – SHIKSHA⁺ Learners with their younger counterparts of SHIKSHA Initiative

As a scheduled visit, I visited a SHIKSHA+ centre at village Jahangirpur of Gram Panchayat Dahawa. The centre functions from one of the rooms of Primary School (P.S), Jahangirpur. Being located within the premises of a school, students who are all agog about the centre are often seen peeking through the corners of the doors and the windows of the centre. Being seated in the corner while noting down my observations about the centre, I saw two students who entered the centre and quietly sat beside the learners. After the class was adjourned, out of concern I asked whether they were being late for their home. One of the girl student told me "I will go with my mother." I was engulfed with a sense of elation to discover that within the same premises, on one hand a daughter is receiving education form an ICT integrated classroom operated by SHIKSHA Initiative and on the other hand her mother is learning the signs, words and numbers in a SHIKSHA⁺ Centre. Further, I asked her how does she acknowledge the fact that her mother is attending a class at this age. To the aforesaid she responded "Indeed I feel good about it, because now my mother checks my school notebook and sometime we sit together to study at home." We at SHIKSHA Initiative, endeavour to ensure that people will recognise education as a way of life and not just as some sort means to be benefited in the short run. The revelations brought about by the brief interaction with the student, not only complement SHIKSHA Initiative's earnest and conscientious attempt to eradicate illiteracy, but also affirm the fact that education has been embraced as a way of life by both mother and daughter (*See Image 7*).

- Smriti Ria Patar (Project Associate)

Cheers to Dedication

Image 8- Simran, SHIKSHA⁺ Instructor (Left), SHIKSHA⁺ Learners (Right), Maleli centre

When Simran reached the centre in the morning to conduct a class, to her dismay, she discovered that learners were busy preparing for attending the ceremony of the family members of landlord where the centre operates. Simran never had any prior information of the ceremony and just when all the learners were about to leave, she said that she will come tomorrow. Subsequently learners requested her not to cancel the session and informed that they could leave for the ceremony later. Thus, the adult literacy class functioned as per schedule. In view of above, Simran recalls her experience of community mobilization drive when she went door to door explaining the importance of literacy and education, thereafter inspiring the community members to attend the centre. Thus, in a short span of time, situation has changed rapidly wherein learners are highly motivated to attend the class and postpone their personal engagements of their own free will. The level of motivation of learners and dedication of the instructor depicted by the aforementioned has been acknowledged by SHIKSHA Initiative.

Collaboration with Government Officials

- *Laptop distribution to new schools, Kasmanda (8 September 2017):* Laptops were distributed to new 29 schools by Mr. Griesh Mishra, Assistant Block Resource Coordinator, Kasmanda during the training. Appreciating the efforts of SHIKSHA Initiative, he asked teachers to cooperate and teach through laptop.

- *Basic Shiksha Adhikari's (B.S.A.) visit during the teachers training, Kasmanda:* During the training, Mr. Ajay Kumar Gupta (B.S.A) paid a visit in the training. Moreover, he encouraged teachers to use SHIKSHA smart class and appreciated SHIKSHA initiative in its endeavor to eradicate illiteracy.

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Story of Change

Image 9 - Jay, Grade 2, P.S. Khatana

He is Jay, a grade 2 student of P.S. Khatana who lives with his parents. His parents work as daily wage laborers. When he was enrolled in SHIKSHA Initiative class, he was quiet and was not responsive to any of the questions asked. It was a challenge for Ritu to engage him with the content and other students. In order to understand his situation better, she spoke to other teachers of the school to which all of them unanimously said that Jay doesn't speak nor does he interact with anyone in the school. Ritu was disappointed with such a response but she didn't stop learning more about the child. She researched and read materials to understand how to engage such children and what kind of activities will be helpful to involve him in the class. She found out that teaching through digital content play an important role in generating interest among students of his ilk. Being positive about her findings, she started using digital content provided by SHIKSHA Initiative on a regular basis. Subsequently, ICT content proved to be helpful in engaging him and activities, which were of interest to him was shown repetitively during augmentation sessions. This helped him in practicing words which further increased his confidence.

One day Ritu thought of reaching out to his parents to understand more about Jay. His parents came to school and shared that he is very quiet at home and doesn't speak to anyone in the community. Later, Jay expressed that he wants to study in a computer aided class. Everyone in the school was so happy to hear his voice since this was the first time he spoke in school. Currently, he is studying in grade 2, learning proactively and participating in all the activities of the class.

- Ritu Rana (Teacher)

Testimonial

Image 10 - Ms. Mridula

Education through technology facilitates the learning of P.S. Dhoom Manikpur students and boost their aptitude, efficiency and performance. ICT has a range of potential impact on students' learning outcome such as substantial increase in student enrollment, improved attendance, increased knowledge of school subjects, improved attitudes about learning, and the acquisition of new skills. Moreover, it supports classroom outcome by making class more interactive and learning enjoyable. Additionally, ICT has an impact on students beyond their knowledge of school subjects and has a positive effect on student motivation and their attitude towards technology. Students of our school also availed the opportunity to use modern technology such as tablets. Furthermore, it supports teacher in the development of their technology skills, knowledge of new pedagogical approaches, as well as attain mastery of content and improves attitudes towards teaching.

ICT based intervention for better learning outcomes

Meenu, (SHIKSHA Initiative representative working as a teacher in school) constantly makes an effort to engage students with ICT education leading to increased learning level. It has been observed that students studying in smart classes score significantly higher in tests than students studying in regular classroom.

P.S. Dhoom Manikpur School is thankful to Shiv Nadar Foundation for introducing SHIKSHA Initiative in grade 1 and 2 of our school and help integrate technology in the classroom.

- Ms. Mridula (Asst. Teacher, P.S. Dhoom Manikpur, Dadri)

For any queries, ideas and suggestions please contact (pavneet.m@shivnadarfoundation.org)