

## Combining Learning with Fun

Hatkarvadi is a remote village which is 36kms away from Manvat block head quarter in Parbhani. In March 2016, Sanchiti Umakanth Shettye started working as a teacher in the school of Hatkarvadi before which she had been working for 6 years in her native village called Alkooj in Solapur. She was the first female teacher in Hatkarvadi. This school has only 7 teachers to manage students from standard 1 to 8. Initially it was difficult for her to interact with the male teachers but with the positive support of the Principal of the school she gained confidence to share and implement her ideas. She volunteered to take the responsibility of the additional sessions that were required to be conducted in the school. After few sessions she realised that there is a strong need for quality education in the school. She thought that poor quality of education in school should not impact the life of the children. With the determination of creating a better conducive environment for the students she started her project.

She started identifying the gaps that were impacting the functioning of the school. She noticed that in the academic year of 2014-15 many first standard students were shifted to an English medium school in Rampuri nearby. Even in 2016, initially the students were irregular in their classes. The reason behind the poor attendance of the students



was not only the distance between the school and the village but also the bad reputation of the school among villagers. Parents preferred to take their children for work on fields rather than sending them to school. Even their participation in school activities was minimal. They hardly attended any meetings or events. Sanchiti realised that in order to achieve her goal, she should start with creating a better and engaging environment for the students which will make them to come to school regularly. For this, she started applying constructivism in the classrooms which not only engaged the students but also

helped them to improve their competencies. Students were divided into groups according to their competency levels which lead to active participation in the class. Through activities like identify the letters, word formation and sentence construction the students were able to improve their comprehension skills. It also enhanced their confidence as the students started reading loudly with more conviction. This holistic growth was visible to the parents and they too started encouraging their children to attend school. In fact 8 parents whose children were studying in the English medium school decided to shift them back here. She was happy to get such response and promised the villagers that within two months they will get to see their children transformed significantly. It was an opportunity for her because with the help of the senior students she was able to introduce English sessions among the students of 1st and 2nd standard. New teaching learning methods were introduced regularly in order to keep the students engaged.

Eventually the students were able to grab basic English and use some new words. They would not only frame new sentences but also use their motor skills creatively to do math and identify various objects and body parts. They were able to gain competencies and tap on their strengths and weaknesses. The brighter students were made to help their fellow mates which enabled inclusive growth in the classroom. Seeing the children progress, even the parents felt responsible to keep a record of their children's academic growth. They started attending the meetings

and contributing to the school. It changed their perception towards the school and made them believe that their children are growing in a good environment.

On 26th February, 2017 a cultural event was organised in the school for the first time. The students and parents both participated enthusiastically in the activities like dancing, singing and acting which were arranged according to the skills of the students. On the same day a total sum of INR 28,600 was collected for the school through community contribution.

In just one year Sanchiti's efforts have shown effective results in Hatkarvadi village. Her belief that every problem can be solved if approached constructively, is visible in the way her work has impacted the village. Today, at least 25 students are excelling in reading and writing competencies while other students are given more attention to improve their skills. Apart from doing basic math and other subjects students have developed a keen interest in English. Their speaking skills have improved and they feel confident while expressing themselves. This perpetual growth has raised parents' expectations from the school and has increased community involvement with the school management committee. In the month of February and March, the community contributed INR. 90,000 to support the school. Mothers have also started volunteering to help Ms. Sanchiti in her efforts to provide quality education to the students. Sanchiti has come a long way already and is continuing to create a better educational environment for the children of Hatkarvadi village