

An Explorative Study of the Role of a Don Bosco Institute in Empowering the Rural Youth

John Borg is the Vice Principal and Head of the Department of Mathematics at Don Bosco College, Yellagiri Hills, Tirupattur, Tamil Nadu.

Abstract

The importance of higher education for the rural particularly the disadvantaged youth is stressed much. While most of the educational institutions are becoming commercial, very few are continuously striving to create better educational environments for the rural youth. This explorative study is based on BICS InfoTech in Tamil which provides IT education for the rural youth. The factors that influenced development of the students is studied based on survey analysis. Further, the motivation factors towards achievement are compared with the conventional understanding. The study reveals that the motivation factors are distinct for the rural settings and special focus must be given to set environments that will rightly address the blind spots of rural upbringing.

Keywords: Personal Growth, Achievement Motivation, Conventional upbringing, Rural Environment.

Education is commercialized today and many individuals, societies, and trusts that provide quality education with the intention of making a profit through their service is rather a curse than a boon to the society. Although education is a basic right of every citizen and an essential prerequisite for the development, access to quality education is a distant dream for rural folk. Financial resource constraint pushes out the rural youth from the purview of good educational institutions.

One of the challenges of higher education today is to reach out to the rural sector particularly for the impoverished with best of education services. The Kothari Commission said, "The destiny of India is now being shaped in the classrooms". Our successes will depend upon the quality and the number of persons coming out of colleges who will contribute in the great enterprise of national construction. When the learning abilities of children and youth are impaired by poverty they are unable to complete their education, which limits their access to employment.¹

Education is a process by which people not only acquire knowledge, information and skill but also inherit the values and principles, ability to live and interact with social groups. It enables them to participate in cultural life and engage themselves in productive activities. The purpose of education is to make human beings capable, wise and competent to meet the challenges of life.² Education must strive to eliminate social, cultural and economic disparity besides creating employment opportunities for the youth.

¹ *International Journal of Adult and Life-long Education*, April 2005.

² *University News*, August 05.

Strenuous and unnoticed efforts are being made by many philanthropic organizations to bring the rural youth into the main stream of education. An in-depth study on the educational system of such institutions and its influence on the rural youth will add clarity in policy-making and evolution of practical education models for rural settings. Although the rural youth are having the aptitude, the right environment has not yet been nurtured for them due to their backgrounds.

This paper presents an explorative study on one of such rural Don Bosco institutions in Tamilnadu. The study presents the role of the institution in the development of the students. The study focuses precisely on the factors that motivated them towards achievement. The methodology and findings of this study is presented in this work.

Objectives and Setting

The general objective of the study is to highlight the transformation in the lives of rural youth educated by BICS InfoTech. The specific objective of this study is to measure the factors that enabled the development of the students and motivated them towards achievement.

BICS (Bosco Integrated Computing Services) is a Don Bosco Foundation for education, training and industrial exposure in information technology to develop target youth as industrialists and high-end technical professionals. The total number of students who gained access to BICS educational services as of today is 1051.

Research Methodology

This study is done using descriptive and exploratory methods. The descriptive method is used because no other earlier study on this institution has been done. Stratified disproportionate simple random sampling by lottery method is used for selecting the samples for study. It is stratified because there are two groups namely the trainees and the students, identified as samples in view of studying the facts from various dimensions, and who would provide an overall view of the educational system of BICS from admission till placement. It is disproportionate since the sample is not proportionate to the size of population in both the groups. Random sampling was used to give equal opportunity for the entire population to be included in the samples.

The population consisted of all the trainees and the students with minimum of one-year experience in BICS who were the potential respondents and can contribute to the research. The trainees were included in the population considering their field experience. The trainees do their professional practice in BICS after completing their graduation studies. The population was thus the trainees and the current students with a minimum of one-year experience and consisted of both the genders. The size of the population was around 200. From this set, 50 samples, which consisted of 25 trainees and 25 students, were selected.

The collection of primary data was done through a questionnaire with many open-ended questions. Various scientific tools like Single frequency, T test, Chi-square tests, and Co-relation etc. were used to prove the validity and accuracy of the findings. As per the data the youngest respondent was 18 years of age and the maximum age was 26. Two third of the respondents were between the age group of 18-21.

Role of the Institute in Personal Growth

The role of an education institution is very significant in terms of promoting leadership skill and personality development. In Table 1, more than one fourth (32%) of the respondents rated the role of BICS as very high while more than half the respondents (52%) feel the role of BICS as high. A few (16%) have rated average.

Personal Growth	Frequency	Percent
Very high	16	32.0
High	26	52.0
Average	8	16.0
Total	50	100.0

Table 1: Role of BICS for Personal Growth

84% of the respondents consider BICS has relatively very high role in shaping their personality. The few percent of those who had been already in the hostels earlier do not give total credit to BICS for their growth and development.

The Table below is significant as it highlights the factors that contributed to the personality growth of the respondents.

Factors	To Great Extent	To Some Extent	Very Little	Not at all	Total
Course Content	21 (42.0)	26 (52.0)	3 (6.0)		100
Co-education	11 (22.0)	23 (46.0)	12 (24.0)	4 (8.0)	100
Competitions	14 (28.0)	19 (38.0)	17 (34.0)		100
Cultural programs	13 (26.0)	21 (42.0)	14 (28.0)	2 (4.0)	100
Discipline	36 (72.0)	11 (22.0)	3 (6.0)		100
Entertainment	11 (22.0)	26 (52.0)	13 (26.0)		100
Exposure	16 (32.0)	15 (30.0)	14 (28.0)	5 (10.0)	100
Extracurricular activities	14 (28.0)	22 (44.0)	13 (26.0)	1 (2.0)	100
Games and Sports	11 (22.0)	14 (28.0)	18 (36.0)	7 (14.0)	100
Hostel life	19 (38.0)	18 (36.0)	13 (26.0)		100
Skill development	28 (56.0)	18 (36.0)	4 (8.0)		100
Work culture	19 (38.0)	20 (40.0)	11 (22.0)		100
English language	37 (74.0)	11 (22.0)	2 (4.0)		100
Music classes	11 (22.0)	18 (36.0)	17 (34.0)	4 (8.0)	100

Table 2: Influential factors for Personal Growth

The entire program schedule in BICS has been well planned to help the students to enhance their personal growth and character formation. There are many extra-curricular activities besides academic studies, which intend to help the students to develop their hidden talents and skills. The respondents almost all (94%) are happy with the course content as it has significant influence on them to develop their personality. Though co-education and competitions has helped them significantly (68%, 66%) respectively. Little more than one fourth (34%) of the respondents consider that it had very little influence on them. There is nearly two third (68%) of the respondents who feel the cultural programs does have a vital role in personality development while only 4% feel there is no influence at all. It can also be noted that 4% had never participated in any cultural programs either in BICS or in schools due to their lack of interest. The respondents have given equal importance to discipline as of course content (94%) in developing their personality. This factor has been given greater stress by the respondents in other variable self-discipline as one of the major behavior modification in BICS. Nearly two third (74%) feel entertainment has helped them as their participation is ensured here.

More than one third (38%) of the respondents feel exposure has not helped them much. The respondents in another variable have stated that exposure is very important but in BICS they have very little opportunity. Nearly two third (72%) of the respondents are happy having partaken in extracurricular activities which has greater role in developing their personality. There are however more than one fourth (28%) who feel it has very little influence on them. The hostel life again has good influence in personality development and only one fourth (26%) of the respondents who feel it has very little influence.

The above data signifies that the respondents are much satisfied with few a factors like course content, discipline, skill development, and English Language, which have contributed greatly to develop their personality. These are the main factors where above 90% have agreed upon unanimously. Sports and games are usually associated with the youth and interestingly the respondents are equally divided in their opinion. Half of them claim to have its influence while half of them state it has very little or nothing to do with their personality development. It is not because they give less importance to sports but feels in BICS they do not get much chance to develop this skill. Many of them have expressed that they get very little opportunity outside to display their competency and talents in sports. They want more and more competitions to be organized with other colleges. The respondents seem to have given more importance to academic studies and soft skills as their gain rather than talents and extracurricular activities.

Achievement Motivation

Without any previous record of achievement motivation, it was difficult to measure the influence of BICS in motivating the students. During focused group discussion, it was evident that many of the students did not have any idea of higher education or

any career option till they reached BICS. Many of them were recommended and sent by others who knew the future of rural youth could be carved in BICS. And so, it could be drawn that the students probably did not have any motivation or aspiration earlier and in BICS they developed higher Achievement motivation.

Gender and Achievement Motivation

There has been several research studies conducted to test if any possible relationship exists between gender and achievement motivation. Mostly simple independent t test has been used as a method. Having no access to those study results, the same test was conducted from the sample data to find out the probable relationship between gender and achievement motivation.

Gender of the Respondent	Achievement motivation of the Students			't' Value	Stat Sig
	N	M	SD		
Male	23	57.39	9.09	.455	P > .05
Female	27	56.26	8.49		

Table 3: Gender and Achievement Motivation

The mean score of the achievement motivation of the male respondents is (57.39) which is slightly higher than the girls' mean score value (56.26). However the slight difference observed in the mean score has no significant relationship with the t value at .455 levels. The result ($t = .455, p > 0.05$) shows that there is no relationship between the two variables gender and achievement motivation.

The finding however differs from the earlier findings done by Puran Chand Agraval (1989) and Gogul Nathan (1989) whose statement indicates that there is higher achievement motivation among the girls than boys. It needs to be inferred that while rural boys are geared to develop and become high-end professionals, the aspirations of the rural girls is not yet so high like their urban counterparts.³

Self-esteem and Achievement Motivation

Self-esteem and motivation both are interrelated and function as both sides of the same coin. One of the aims of the study was to find out if there is any significant relationship between self-esteem and achievement motivation of the respondents. The Pearson Correlation coefficient method was used as a tool to measure the probable association between self-esteem and achievement motivation. The test revealed, $r = .386, P < 0.05$ which means there is significant correlation between self-esteem and motivation at 0.01 levels.

³ Gokulanathan D.P, *Achievement - Related Motivation among Tribal Adolescent Pupils*, Bombay, Himalaya Publishing House, 1987.

Variable	N	Achievement motivation Pearson Correlation	Statistical sig
Self-esteem	50	.386	P < .05

Table 4: Achievement Motivation and Self-esteem

The Earlier studies conducted by the researchers like Rhonda and Benny (1990) have stated that the students with high self-esteem tend to have more achievement motivation. Another study by Dr. Nathani (2005) stated that motivation originates from self-esteem. The research finding thus confirms the earlier findings. It is noticed that higher the self-esteem higher the achievement motivation.

Background and Achievement Motivation

Though the respondents are homogeneous group with same socio economic background there are few (18%) with urban background. During a discussion with the head of the institute it was pointed out that the rural boys have more achievement motivation than the urban boys. An independent t test was conducted to verify if there is any association between background and achievement motivation.

Background of the Respondent	Achievement motivation of the Students			't' Value	Stat Sig
	N	M	SD		
Rural	41	55.93	8.85	-1.499	P > .05
Urban	9	60.67	7.18		

Table 5: Background and Achievement Motivation

The test however reveals the mean score of the achievement motivation of the rural students is less (55.93) than the urban students, which is higher (60.67). However the difference observed here has no significant relationship since p valued is greater than 0.05. ($t = -1.499$, $p > .05$). It shows the background has no influence on achievement motivation. The earlier research done by Gogul Nathan (1989) though found no significant relationship between background and achievement motivation in his research states that there is a tendency of rural boys showing more tendencies towards higher achievement motivation.⁴

This statement goes in line with that of the opinion of the head of the institute who voiced that the rural students show higher motivation than urban students. This could be matched with great personalities like former presidents of India K.R. Narayan, Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, and Dr. B.R Ambedkar etc. with rural background who have ex-

⁴ Ibid.,

celled in their life and career. And so, it could be drawn that the background does not influence the achievement motivation.

The Socioeconomic Condition and Achievement Motivation

Socioeconomic factors are clear indicators on which the policy makers frame the policy regarding welfare programs. There are also many relevant studies conducted on psychosocial problems in relation with socioeconomic index. This study positioned that socioeconomic condition do influence the individuals in their upbringing. The socioeconomic index was formulated based on the educational qualification of the parents, Family occupation, size of the family, and family income. To test if there is any correlation exists between the socioeconomic background and the achievement motivation, the Pearson correlation coefficient method was used.

Variable	N	Achievement motivation Pearson Correlation	Statistical Sig.
Socio Economic condition	50	-.079	P > .05

Table 6 : Socioeconomic Condition and Achievement Motivation

The test revealed 'r' value as -.076, $p > .05$. The 'r' value being higher than .05 indicates there is no correlation between socioeconomic condition and achievement motivation of the respondents.

The review of literature on Puran Chand Agraval (1989) has found significant relationship between socioeconomic condition and achievement motivation. However the research finding here contradicts the finding of Puran Chand. This may be due to the present study being conducted among graduates in a prestigious institution. Considering the above facts, there is no significant relationship between socioeconomic condition and achievement motivation.

Discussion

The study highlights that rural students are ready to involve if proper environment is created with good curriculum (course content), discipline and facilities. 94% of the respondents have acknowledged that course content helped them to develop their competencies. It is a sad reality that the curriculum of many academic programs given by the state universities is outdated and not appealing. The curriculum is irrelevant and not interesting to the students. The universities cannot be simply blamed because they are bound to address needs and levels of diverse students. The real gap is that there is no freedom for many education institutes to devise the curriculum according to the need. Educational institutes should address this by offering additional courses along with their mandatory courses. The institutes must ensure that these programmes are offered with good curriculum that exposes the students to develop their knowledge and

skill in their area of specialization. Developing an indigenous curriculum to address the needs of the students had been strength of BICS InfoTech.

Although the youth would like to have more freedom to be on their own, the respondents indicate that a disciplined approach to education helped in their development. This strongly indicates that the distinct characteristic of Don Bosco institutions where discipline is given a top priority is welcomed the students to develop themselves.

Studying the motivation factors for achievement, the state of rural students is different from the urban. The rural girls are not motivated due to social constrains and lack of exposure. If the rural students are given more exposure, the avenues for development will definitely widen.

Conclusion

This study focused on the contribution of BICS as a facilitator in empowering the rural youth through its educational services. Empowerment is a “process of enabling” the target rural youth to be self-reliant and economically independent. The factors that enabled this empowerment were studied with a special focus on achievement motivation. While some of the factors are in line with the conventional standards, there is a difference in a few when viewed from the perspective of rural setting. The study indicates if the right ambient is created (such as discipline, quality curriculum, opportunities to improve one’s communication skill etc), the students will respond positively. Of course, the initial orientation to motivate them towards a career and life is very important as their previous exposures did not fulfill this. The final inference from this study is that quality education methods and environment varies in every context of students. Every rural institute has to identify the strengths and weaknesses of their student community and bring out a model that will be effective. In this process, good curriculum and a constructive environment must be given a top priority.