

An Anthropological Impact Assessment Study on Eureka Superkidz Village Education Programme in Tamil Nadu

Dr. Pandiaraj. G
Guest Lecturer
Department of Anthropology
University of Madras, Chepauk Campus
Chennai – 600 005.
India.

Abstract

The impact assessment study was to examine how AID India's program in rural and tribal areas to supplement traditional school education impacted the academic achievements and overall development of students. The purpose of the study was to examine if the Eureka Superkidz program helped students improve their understanding of subjects such as math, Tamil and English along with improving their communication and social skills.

Introduction

The Eureka Superkidz village education program provides after school support to primary and middle school going children in marginalized communities. The primary aim of this program is to create a sustainable model to improve education quality in rural underprivileged children by providing attractive learning materials and inputs to ensure that those in standards 3-5 achieve basic competencies in Tamil, Maths, and English and children in standards 6-8, achieve basic skills in Tamil, Maths, English and Science through after school interventions. Interested teachers focus especially on children lagging in basic skills. Currently the program is running in 200 villages spread across 49 blocks in 12 districts benefitting 4,000 children.

The key beneficiaries of the program are children and young adults in villages. The children have been provided with attractive education materials. This program is designed as an after school support for critical skills. The program provides certificates and rewards as motivation. The program has also provided employment opportunities to women who are part of the local community. The program has primarily impacted 200 such beneficiaries who have been trained on education methodology. This has impacted their skills and they have a newfound status in their communities. There is also a tinkering lab in tribal villages, which has helped create a scientific temper and an aspiration among these children to pursue their higher studies in the sciences.

This study was carried out in twenty-five villages from ten blocks of six districts of Tamil Nadu. In addition to this, five control villages were assessed to know the educational status of the school-going children in the village. This report draws attention to the feedback obtained from the beneficiaries of the ESK education program. The recommendations from various project managers, Eureka block trainees and Eureka trainees of the village have been consolidated. Seven case studies, five Focus group discussions and one group interview have been conducted among the study population. The key points have been summarized below.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this impact assessment study is to understand the impact of ESK education program among the beneficiaries.

Methodology of study

This impact assessment study employs a mixed method approach, which combines qualitative and quantitative research. Both descriptive and non-descriptive data were gathered in order to gain a more comprehensive appraisal of the impact of the 'Eureka Super Kidz' (ESK) educational program. In addition, focus group meetings and in-depth interviews have been used in exploring the views, experiences, and perceptions of various stakeholders who are associated with ESK education program from different social settings.

Areas of study

This study has been conducted six districts of Tamil Nadu, namely Cuddalore, Kanchipuram, Thiruvallur, Trichy, Thiruvannamalai and Vellore. Among them thirty villages has been chosen as a representative sample to understand the objectives of the study.

Highlights of Stakeholders' feedback

Below are the key areas of feedback that was obtained from the stakeholders regarding the impact of the ESK program.

Feedback of ESK Alumni and Non - ESK Students (18-22 years)

The tutoring classes given at the ESK center helped in increase students' understanding capabilities. The individual attention, care and encouragement from the tutors made the students self-confident and inspired them to score good marks in secondary and higher secondary level. The friendly environment and the fun teaching methods aided in easy understanding of math which led to better academic performance. The Anatomy models displayed during ESK's after school classes aided in visual understanding. The after school program enabled a proper understanding of basics in English, Tamil and Math, which made it easier for the students to study the higher-grade syllabus of the schools. The students improved their English grammar skills due to ESK classes.

The conceptual learning of science with the use of experiments at ESK enabled the students to choose diverse fields for their under-graduate program. The students learnt Tamil and English enthusiastically with Flash cards and charts, for reading words and sentences. The exposure obtained from ESK have made the students bold and helped them overcome their nervousness in public speaking. ESK has promoted healthy competition among the students and molded their personality. The handwriting of the students has also improved. The center provides guidance regarding higher education and career opportunities.

Feedback of Tutors

The tutors stated that the community started treating them with respect as they felt that the tutors were doing a noble deed to society. The training given at the ESK center helped the tutors to come out of their own introverted attitudes and address a large audience. The program gave them confidence to interact with the students. The schools in the village were also interested in adopting some of the ESK materials and teaching methods in their curriculum. The experience of working as a tutor in the ESK center created an interest in them to pursue higher education. The training also helped them in acquiring knowledge and improved their speaking skills in English.

The training received at ESK has made the tutors adaptable and adjustable to various working conditions. Tutors developed leadership skills through group activities conducted in the center.

In some places such as Sethuvandai, both parents and children lacked awareness and interest in education. It was therefore difficult to persuade the students to join the center. The students were also bored because they had been taught the same syllabus since the 3rd standard. Tutors often found it difficult to make the students attend the classes regularly. The children also discontinue their education in the middle due to factors such as Economic constraints, less parental care, piling of household chores. Child marriage and child labor also contribute for discontinuation.

Feedback from Parents

Parents observed that their children improved in the subjects of Math and English. The center inculcated etiquette among the children. Walk 'n' Talk sessions broke inhibitions and made the students express themselves clearly. Due to ESK's after school classes, the students utilized their free time efficiently. The Government school students have also improved their English-speaking skills after joining ESK tuition center. Students also learn life skills such as plumbing, cycle repairing and solar light assembling. ESK plays an important role in promoting girl children education.

Monitoring of students is easy since the tutors regularly inform the parents about their ward's progress in English, Tamil and Math. Particularly in the Sethuvandai village, male students have stopped using swear words after joining the ESK center. Parents express road safety concerns for their children during Walk 'n' Talk sessions. As the students spend most of their time in ESK classes, they find it difficult to concentrate on the school syllabus.

Village Wise Recommendations

The table below gives consolidated recommendations for the various direct villages as suggested by the Eureka Trainees, Eureka Block Trainees and the Project managers of the respective villages.

S. No.	Village	Recommendation
1	Pudhukandigai	Extra space is needed to accommodate the growing number of children. Parents feel that the ESK practice materials can be given free of cost. Restroom must be constructed at the ESK center.
2	Ammanaguppam	The Center needs proper lighting, fan and proper electricity to introduce digital facilities. Center requires a compound wall to prevent trespassers from littering the place. ESK syllabus can include grade specific school curriculum. Drinking water facility is required.
3	Sethuvandai	The center requires an exclusive building for conducting of classes.
4	Mudinampattu	Drinking water and toilet facilities are required. The building needs renovation as the there are holes on the floor and the side walls can be raised to prevent rain from entering through the sides. Dedicated electric connection is required since the center has only one light bulb. Other language classes can be taken.
5	Polipakkam	Computers can be utilized to expose students to digital learning platforms. Another Eureka Trainee needed as the students' number is large. The center requires a bigger room to accommodate the

		growing number of children. Drinking water facility is required.
6	Thuraiperumpakkam	ESK syllabus needs to be updated. The ESK classes can be conducted in an accessible location so that ST colony students can also come and attend the classes.
7	Pakkumudaiyanur	The class room needs to be more spacious and well ventilated. Computers must be utilized in teaching. Tutors' salary must be increased. Extra – curricular activities need to be promoted.
8	Kunrendi	The center needs an exclusive building that is accessible to students from nearby villages. (long distance travel through rugged paths during nighttime and the fear of wild animal crossings makes it difficult for the children to attend the classes regularly.) Additional Eureka Trainee required supporting the growing number of children.
9	Karthikeyapuram	The center requires an exclusive building. Evening snacks can be provided to the ESK students due to occupational constraints of the parents. A well-qualified tutor is necessary.
10	Nehru Nagar	The center requires an exclusive building for conducting classes as the classes are conducted in the terrace of the Eureka trainee's house compromising the safety of the children.
11	Cherukanur	A well-educated tutor is needed since the present tutor has passed only 8 th standard, the maximum qualification in the village. (The long travel distance and lack of proper transportation facilities discourages teacher/tutors from coming to the village to take classes.) Anganwadi should be established or the nutritious food given at anganwadis should be provided to the children through ESK center. Center must be renovated to provide a comfortable space for teaching a large group of students. Lighting facilities of the center must be improved.
12	Lakshmapuram	The center requires an exclusive building for the conduction of the classes as the classes are conducted in the veranda of the tutor's home. Computers must be utilized in teaching. School syllabus must be included in the ESK syllabus. Additional tutor is needed for handling different subjects.
13	Poonimangadu	Awareness programs about education are necessary. The center requires an exclusive building for the conduction of the classes. Drinking water facility is required. Computer facility can be introduced. Extra - curricular activities must be introduced.
14	Mamandur	Knowledge about the ESK tuition center among the settlement must be promoted, as the community people are not aware of tuitions being conducted at present in the village center.
15	Pudhatoorpet	The center requires an exclusive building for conducting classes as the classes are conducted in the premises of the tutor's home. Students need classes for learning basic computer skills to improve their employment capabilities. The students want tuition classes to be taken for classes 9 and 10 also.
16	Kodivalasa colony	The center requires an exclusive building for conducting classes as classes are being conducted on the terrace of a building which does not have proper lighting facilities. Computer facility can be introduced.
17	Nathamangudi	The center requires an exclusive building for conducting classes as the classes are being conducted in the veranda of a house in the settlement. ESK syllabus needs to be updated. The students are very strong in basic math skills and perform mental math problems with ease. Hence, advanced math skills can be taught to the children of this center. Spoken English classes and General knowledge classes can be introduced.
18	Poovalur	Spoken English classes and General knowledge classes can be introduced. ESK syllabus needs to be updated.
19	Ariyur – 1	The center requires an exclusive building for uninterrupted conducting of the classes as the center is being shifted frequently due to rental issues. Grade-specific syllabus can be introduced.
20	M.C.Mangalam	Side walls of the ESK center must be raised to prevent rain water from splashing inside the center. Proper lighting facilities must be introduced in the center.
21	Vandayankuppam	The center requires an exclusive building for the conduction of the classes as the classes are being conducted at the veranda of the community leader's house. School syllabus must be included in the ESK syllabus.

22	Oragadam	The center requires an exclusive building for conducting of the classes as classes are conducted under a tree at present. Awareness regarding indispensability of education in the 21 st century must be promoted among the community members.
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CASE STUDIES

The impact assessment study includes numerous case studies which allowed us to gather more information about specific individual and community issues. There were a total seven case studies done in different villages to understand the needs, requirements and outcomes of the Aid India program. In addition, there were focus group discussions. The outcomes of the studies are given in detail below.

CASE STUDY 1

Name of the Village	Ammanagguppam
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	K V Kuppam
Name of the District	Vellore
Type of Study	Case Study
Type of Stakeholder	Head of the Community
Name of the Community	SC
<p>Mrs. Vasuki, a 50 years old, widow and single mother, is head of the household and Ex-Ward member of Ammanagguppam, a (SC) (Parayar) community area. She had no prior experience in the outside world as her husband never allowed her out of their home alone. For a few years after she lost her husband, she faced a lot of struggle with the outside world. During the period of struggle, she was approached by Ms. Sumathi, one of the project directors of AID INDIA, who encouraged her to come out of her shell by appointing her as the first tutor for the center. Later, owing to the influence she gained due to teaching in ESK center, she became a member in a ward of Ammanagguppam. Ms. Vasuki thus helped AID INDIA by organizing an area for the construction of an ESK center building through the village panchayat board. She also helped in gaining the trust of community people by propagating the organization's objective in the interest of children's education. She empowered herself to overcome her insecurities. She can now freely address any outsider and can face the outside world without any difficulty. During her period of being a tutor, she encouraged many students and helped them in improving their basic skills such as reading and speaking through her personal attention. She also suggested present-day graduates to take up tutoring in ESK tuition center, so that they can learn and also teach the children of their community.</p>	

CASE STUDY 2

Name of the Village	Cherukanur
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Tiruttani
Name of the District	Thiruvallur
Type of Study	Case Study
Type of Stakeholder	Community – Village
Name of the Community	Irular (ST)
<p>Cherukanur, an Irular community village with nearly 36 households, comes under Ramakrishnapuram panchayat of Thiruvallur District. The people are isolated, so they feel uncomfortable when approached by other communities. They are often considered educationally backward because they don't interact with main stream people and their children drop out of school after the completion of 8th standard. Due to their low literacy levels, the men in this community engage themselves with works like wood cutting, daily wage activities in brick kilns, rice mills and farming. The parents are afraid to send their girl children out of the settlement for secondary education; so the girl children are married off within the community after their primary education. AID INDIA reached out to the village through their flood relief program and involved this village in their Integrated Village Program by providing them 5 houses after getting required permission from the Panchayat board. They provide solar lamps for the houses and help in promoting personal hygiene with the co-operation of the community people. In 2017, AID INDIA established Eureka Village Center in order to develop educational level and to improve their basic skills in Reading, Writing and Speaking in the subjects of English, Tamil and Math. To attract children, the AID INDIA program provides toys through Toy-Joy Program as the children were playing with animals like rats, frogs and mice. They are also provided with evening snacks and fruits. In this community, Mr. Manikandan is appointed as a tutor for the center because he has the highest educational qualification of 8th standard among the people and the center is teaching basic skills required for the students from 3rd- 8th standard. The center conducts tinkering and plumbing classes for the children and also robot-making through the Expo held at Chennai. In addition to this, the center arranges mobile repairing classes to improve the tutor's skills. The center also conducts bag-knitting and bouquet making classes for women so they can earn on their own by selling the products in the nearby</p>	

market.

CASE STUDY 3

Name of the Village	Pudhatoorpet
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Pallipattu
Name of the District	Thiruvallur
Type of Study	Case Study
Type of Stakeholder	Alumni
Name of the Community	BC

Banu Priya, a 21 year old from a weaving family in Pudhatoorpet village, Tiruvallur district, joined the Eureka Center when she was in the standard I and continued the classes till standard VIII. She stated that she struggled even to read the English Alphabets when joining the center. After continuing classes, she improved her skills in reading, writing and speaking English. The tutors in the center helped in improving her handwriting and in developing self-confidence to speak her mind. The classes helped her in addressing seminars without any stage fear and also to make more friends in her class. The tutors provided a family ambience for the students, gave emotional support and encouragement which made her score high in secondary education. She passed her higher secondary with flying colors and scored 855 marks which helped her to get admitted for a B.Commerce degree.

CASE STUDY 4

Name of the Village	Manjakollai
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Bhuvanagiri
Name of the District	Cuddalore
Type of Study	Case study
Type of Stakeholder	Alumni
Name of the Community	MBC

Ramachandran.P, a 19 years old from a Agricultural laborer family in Manjakollai Village Panchayat of Cuddalore district, joined the Eureka Village Center in his village from 4th standard and continued till 8th standard. He is an enthusiastic and bright child in his village and was interested in learning from the tutoring classes and scored 958 marks in his higher secondary level. Apart from the classes for basic skills strengthening, he was also interested in extra-curricular activities and the center encouraged him to participate at the District level – Drawing and Speech competitions where he got first place in a Drawing competition. He also participated in State-level Science exhibitions with the help of the experiential learning program being taught at the Eureka center. Now, he is in the next stage of achieving his goal of becoming an engineer. He is a student in a Diploma program in Civil Engineering.

CASE STUDY 5

Name of the Village	Pudhatoorpet
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Pallipattu
Name of the District	Thiruvallur
Type of Study	Case study
Type of Stakeholder	Tutor
Name of the Community	BC

Miss. Shenbagam. L, 32 years old from Pudhatoorpet village in Thiruvallur District, is working as a tutor at the Eureka Village Center in her village. She started when the center was established. Though she has completed only her higher secondary education, she accepted the opportunity when AID INDIA approached her to teach as she and her family were interested in teaching their village children. They only enrolled the children who were lacking basic skills of reading, writing and speaking. They provided a family environment for the students so that they can learn better. The classes were scheduled so that students can complete the daily works allotted to them. Seeing her teaching potential, her family and the students of the center encouraged her to pursue her graduation. She completed her degree in B.A. Sociology. Apart from these, the students of the center gave emotional support to her and her family when she and her father were ill. Even after completing their course in the

village center, the students are still in touch with her and her family and the students feel grateful to have had her as a tutor, both for helping and encouraging them in scoring good marks in their academics and also in reaching their dreams.

CASE STUDY 6

Name of the Village	Manakkadu
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Bhuvanagiri
Name of the District	Cuddalore
Type of Study	Case study
Type of Stakeholder	Tutor
Name of the Community	SC(Parayar)

Mrs. Vasantha Devi. K, 42 years old, a graduate of B.A., D.T.Ed., is from Manakkadu village of Bhuvanagiri block in Cuddalore District. She is acting as the Headmaster – Incharge for the Government Adi-Dravidar Primary School in Manakkadu village. She is also a tutor in Eureka Village Center since the beginning of the center at the village 5 years ago. She holds the classes at the premises of the School during the evening hours. During school hours, she shows the materials of ESK programme to the students before starting the class so that they can understand better and learn easily. She also got the Best Teacher's Award from the Tamil Nadu Government.

CASE STUDY 7

Name of the Village	Manakkadu
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Bhuvanagiri
Name of the District	Cuddalore
Type of Study	Case study
Type of Stakeholder	Current ESK student
Name of the Community	SC(Parayar)

Vishalini. V is a 5th standard student from Adi-Dravidar Primary School in Manakkadu Village at Bhuvanagiri Block in Cuddalore District. She is an enthusiastic and confident girl among other children of the community. She joined the Eureka Village Tutoring center from Standard I. She became smart and spontaneous in replying the questions and also scored good marks in her academics after joining the center. She is going to participate in a District Level Entrance Exam for the Scholarship to study in a Convent School supported by the fund from the District Collector. By doing this, she is one step ahead in fulfilling her passion of becoming an IPS officer.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) 1

Name of the Village	Pakkumudaiyanur
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Jamunamarathur
Name of the District	Thiruvannamalai
Type of Study	Focus Group Discussion
Type of Stakeholder	Community women
Name of the Community	ST – Malayali

Key Findings

The response of the group was positive when asked about whether they think the students find the ESK programme beneficial. They also added that education is necessary for their children's future. They mentioned that children from Jamunamarathur also study at the same center, despite the distance.

It was observed that, the center was mostly identified by the tutor's (Varalakshmi) name.

The children of the village study in government as well as in private schools, but community people prefer government school for their children since the government school is also giving good education.

When enquired about whether their children spoke to them in English, they were affirmative but said that they couldn't

understand. “Enna aththa nonsense maari irukura?” was one of the statements a woman recollected her nephew commonly used. They were happy that their children at least scold them in English.

They emphasized that the students should also engage in sports apart from regular studies at the ESK center. This way, they believe either sports or education will help their children in their future.

They were of the opinion that ESK syllabus can also include the school syllabus. They told that the 2 hours class can also include some fun elements like games so that the students will not get bored.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) 2

Name of the Village	Karthikeyapuram
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Tiruttani
Name of the District	Thiruvallur
Type of Study	Focus Group Discussion
Type of Stakeholder	Community
Name of the Community	ST – Irular
<p>Key Findings</p> <p>Even though there are around 250 households in the village, many of the families have migrated to other places in search of employment. The community people feel that the school teachers also teach well. They also said that there is only one school in the village which provides education up to 8th standard. For further education the children have to go to Tiruttani. Few families of the village are involved in tree or rock cutting activities which require them to leave their houses for at least 3 months continuously. The children are either taken along with them or left at the care of their relatives in the village. This affects their schooling.</p> <p>There is another tuition center near the school called ‘hope center’. That particular center provides free after school tuition to the children. They also give snacks for the students for free in the evenings and provide free T-Shirts to them.</p> <p>The parents stated that their children are attracted by the evening snacks and other freebies and fight with them to study at hope center for the same reasons.</p> <p>Due to various extra-curricular activities being taught, in addition to teaching like karate and sports, the children prefer to go to hope center.</p> <p>Recommendations</p> <p>The parents feel that a permanent ESK center will be helpful to the students and also for keeping the teaching materials safe.</p> <p>Keeping the occupational constraints of the community into consideration, the parents suggest that evening snacks can be provided.</p>	

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) 3

Name of the Village	Vellakulam
Type of Village	Control
Name of the Block	Minjur
Name of the District	Thiruvallur
Type of Study	Focus Group Discussion
Type of Stakeholder	Community
Name of the Community	ST – Irular
<p>Key Findings</p> <p>Only one person by name selvi.Venkatamma has studied till graduation in the village. Eight students are studying in classes 3 to 8.</p> <p>There is no school in the village. One primary school is situated 1.5 km away from the village. There is difficulty in finding employment because of the isolated nature of the village. Men are involved in wood cutting and the women work in fields. The villagers do not own fields, they work as labourers on the fields owned by others.</p> <p>Parents are mostly uneducated and cannot help their children in studies. They take their children along with them to their workplace and don't send them to schools regularly. Students are also not interested in studying since there is no one to inspire</p>	

and no good teaching is available.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) 4

Name of the Village	Ammananguppam
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	K.V.Kuppam
Name of the District	Vellore
Type of Study	Focus Group Discussion
Type of Stakeholder	Alumni
Name of the Community	SC – Parayar
<p>Key Findings</p> <p>The classes held at ESK Village Center helped in improving the students’ basic skills in reading, writing and speaking in Tamil, English and also helped in easier understanding of mathematical problems.</p> <p>The individual attention and care given by the tutors and their patience in answering the students’ queries inspired the students to attend the classes regularly.</p> <p>The center promotes leadership capabilities and co-operation among the students through group learning.</p> <p>It also provides experiential learning by demonstrating science experiments using commonly available materials. The classes also helped the students in acquiring general knowledge. It also developed interest among the students to pursue under graduation.</p>	

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION (FGD) 5

Name of the Village	M.C.Mangalam
Type of Village	Direct
Name of the Block	Lalgudi
Name of the District	Trichy
Type of Study	Focus Group Discussion
Type of Stakeholder	Alumni
Name of the Community	SC – Parayar
<p>Key Findings</p> <p>The center helped in the understanding of English words and sentences by using songs and stories. They also encouraged students to perform in their ESK classes by awarding certificates in competitions and fests. The classes in Math were helpful to understand even at college level.</p> <p>The center also gave demo classes on science experiments which helped in better understanding of the concepts. The tutors provided a friendly atmosphere for the students which encouraged them to refer the center for their sisters and brothers. The Grammar classes given in this center were useful even in the graduation level.</p>	

Conclusion

The Eureka programs are doing great service for rural children. It has shown to impact their academic skills as well as their social and developmental skills in making them into confident people who have the capacity to handle their lives. While there are some difficulties based on poor infrastructure in some places, the vast majority of the tuition centers provide adequate facilities. Most importantly, the tutors seem very committed to their students and are truly interested in seeing them perform well academically. The affection the students have for the tutors and the confidence they have in themselves are all indications of a successful tutoring program.