
Title : Improving Perceptions and Practices in Health and Nutrition through Academic-Industrial Partnership

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Background:

Academic-Industrial Partnership (AIP) can be an effective tool to shoulder responsibility with the Government in improving schools in the rural set up.

Aim:

To assess the school environment, health and nutrition status of government school children and improve them using academic industry partnership (AIP) under Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR).

Methodology:

Under AIP between the public health nutrition group and the CSR division of a local industry two primary school of Padra taluka, rural Vadodara were purposively selected under the village developmental program. Selected schools were evaluated using a qualitative (semi-structured questionnaire/observations) and quantitative research methodology was used for assessing the health and nutritional status of all registered children (SES, clinical signs of nutritional deficiencies, anthropometric indices, Hb, and CRP). Based on these predata results, interventions such as playground development, health and nutrition education through play way method (wall paintings, poster making competitions, lecture, organic farming, skill development program and alike were conducted to improve the school environment.

Results:

The selected schools had well built classes (n=5), hand-pump installed for potable water and had a well fenced spacious campus. However the classes were devoid of bench and desk, toilets were not functional and the school had no playground and received free meals delivered by centralized kitchen of Akshay Patra 6d/week. School health checkups were not conducted under Sarva Siksha Abhiyaan and undernutrition (21-29%), anemia (75%) of varying degrees and infections (90%) indicated need for urgent interventions. Health camp followed by distribution of medicines, nutrition health education using various play way method and campus development (slides, swings in the playground including WASH (improving hand wash and sanitation practices) had a positive impact on the behavior and practices and each activity reinforced enhanced learning.

Conclusion:

Proactive Academic-Industrial Partnership brought measurable improvement in the school environment and involvement of university student's wisdom and industry's resources can be an effective way to improve the rural scenario in India.