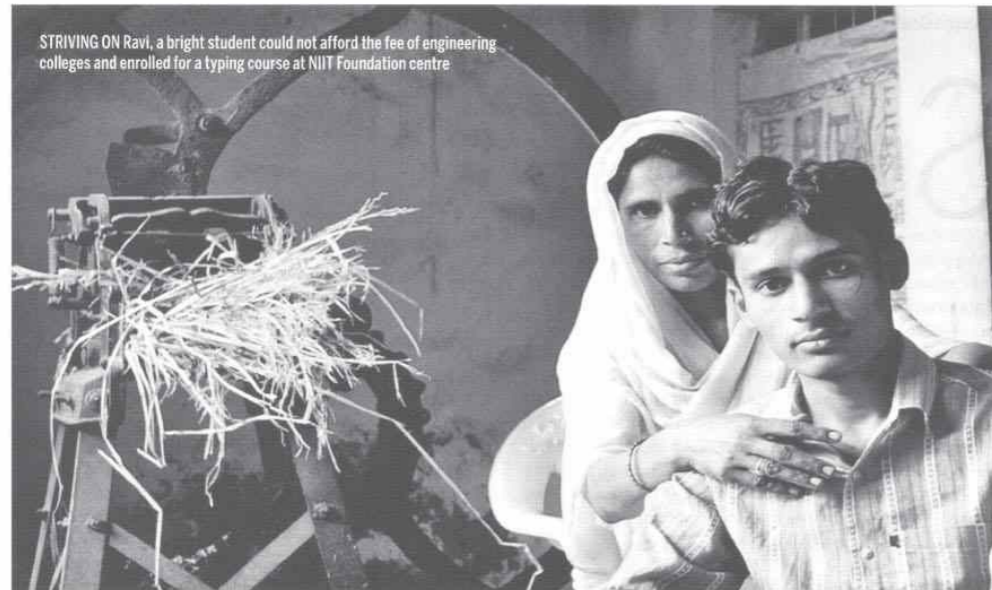




HOPE

NIIT FOUNDATION



STRIVING ON Ravi, a bright student could not afford the fee of engineering colleges and enrolled for a typing course at NIIT Foundation centre

INSTITUTIONS

Where there's a will there's a way

Boosting low self-esteem may be the key to improving job prospects of many a talented youth in urban slums and rural areas...

80 CAREERS360 | APRIL 2012

“Now, I can meet new people confidently, face any interview and talk professionally”

by Merrill Diniz

It took much courage for 17-year-old Ravi Mehta to set foot inside the NIIT Foundation Centre to know about courses offered, in hometown Dasna (Ghaziabad). Despite clearing the UPTech entrance exam he could not afford the fee for engineering colleges or polytechnics. Life was a hand-to-mouth existence for his father, a manual labourer supporting a family of five. A bright student all through school, Ravi finally joined a typing class. During his initial days at the centre Ravi was affected by a very common problem – lack of confidence. He could not bring himself to make eye contact, and shuddered at the prospect of speaking up in front of teachers and classmates. But such fears are now a thing of the past. Ravi got a job with KFC through the centre and wants to be a manager some day.

Building confidence

As in Ravi's case, confidence is the toughest hurdle for many a youth from urban slums and rural areas, shares Sapna Moudgil, Implementation Head of NIIT Foundation (NF). “The job

HOPE

NIIT FOUNDATION

FAST FACTS

NAME: NIIT Foundation
SET UP IN: 2005; gained momentum in 2007
DOMAIN: Train youth in urban slums and rural areas in English, IT, employability courses
BENEFICIARIES: 30000 youth impacted over four years; 85% eligible candidates placed in entry-levels jobs in retail, BPO, Data Entry, Teaching and IT; earn between Rs 5,000 – 18,000 pm
INFRASTRUCTURE: 65 operational centres - 21 Career Devl. Centres & 75 with Partner NGOs
INVESTMENT: Capital Expenses 2.4 Cr; Recurring Expenses: 3.5 Cr a year



GETTING JOB-READY Students in a class at their local Career Development Centre (above); Implementation Head Sapna with the first batch at a centre (below)

“It takes much effort to convince the youth that they are capable of working in a corporate set-up”

SAPNA MOUDGIL,
Implementation Head, NIIT Foundation



INSTITUTIONS

per se is not difficult, and NIIT has many industry linkages to facilitate placements,” says Sapna.

Career orientation

“We want them to enjoy learning by making it interactive,” says Sapna. Being asked to speak on a topic in front of the whole class is a common practice. Knowing English is not a must, but understanding it gives an edge. Target-based assignments are also geared towards preparing them for the professional world. Conducting surveys is a popular assignment where they need to seek out information from strangers. “On Day 1 they return saying people are rude. On Day 2 they make some progress. By Day 3, they have tears in their eyes as results start happening,” says Sapna. The importance of grooming and healthcare are also emphasised upon.

Money matters

The 4-6 month courses cost between Rs. 500-1000 a month. “We encourage them to pay something even if it's Rs. 50; we find that charity does not instil responsibility and pride,” says Sapna. Corporate sponsorships and scholarships are available, more so to encourage girls.

Roping in corporates

Coca Cola sponsored the Dasna centre. Jindal Stainless Steel set up centres at Jajpur, Orissa and Hisar, Haryana. “Typically, locations are where corporates have factories and manufacturing units, and they would like to impact those communities. We help them set up and run the centres,” shares Sapna.

Teachers-cum-counsellors

At least 50 percent have a corporate background. “They have attended good schools, are intellectually sound, and are committed to making a social change,” shares Sapna. The remaining are freshers, all of whom undergo a training certification before they can teach. Visiting slums, knocking on doors to counsel students, especially girls and their parents is a part of the territory. “Some teachers are uncomfortable doing it. We help them overcome this challenge,” she adds.

Convincing girls

Mahajabin, sixth daughter of a tailor in Tughlakabad, is the first girl in her family to work. A Class 12 pass-out, she did not understand a word of English but wanted to do a retail course. Also, she had no money to pay. Her persistence prompted the centre to sponsor her training. She joined without informing her family and all hell broke loose when they discovered where she was vanishing to for two-three hours a day! They feared how girls were treated in the outside world and asked her to discontinue the course. The centre intervened and convinced her family to allow Mahajabin to finish her course. Finally, she secured a job and inspired her two younger sisters to study more and seek employment. Interestingly, she still visits the centre for tuitions to help crack her distance mode graduation exams, alongside work. ☺

82 CAREERS360 | APRIL 2012