

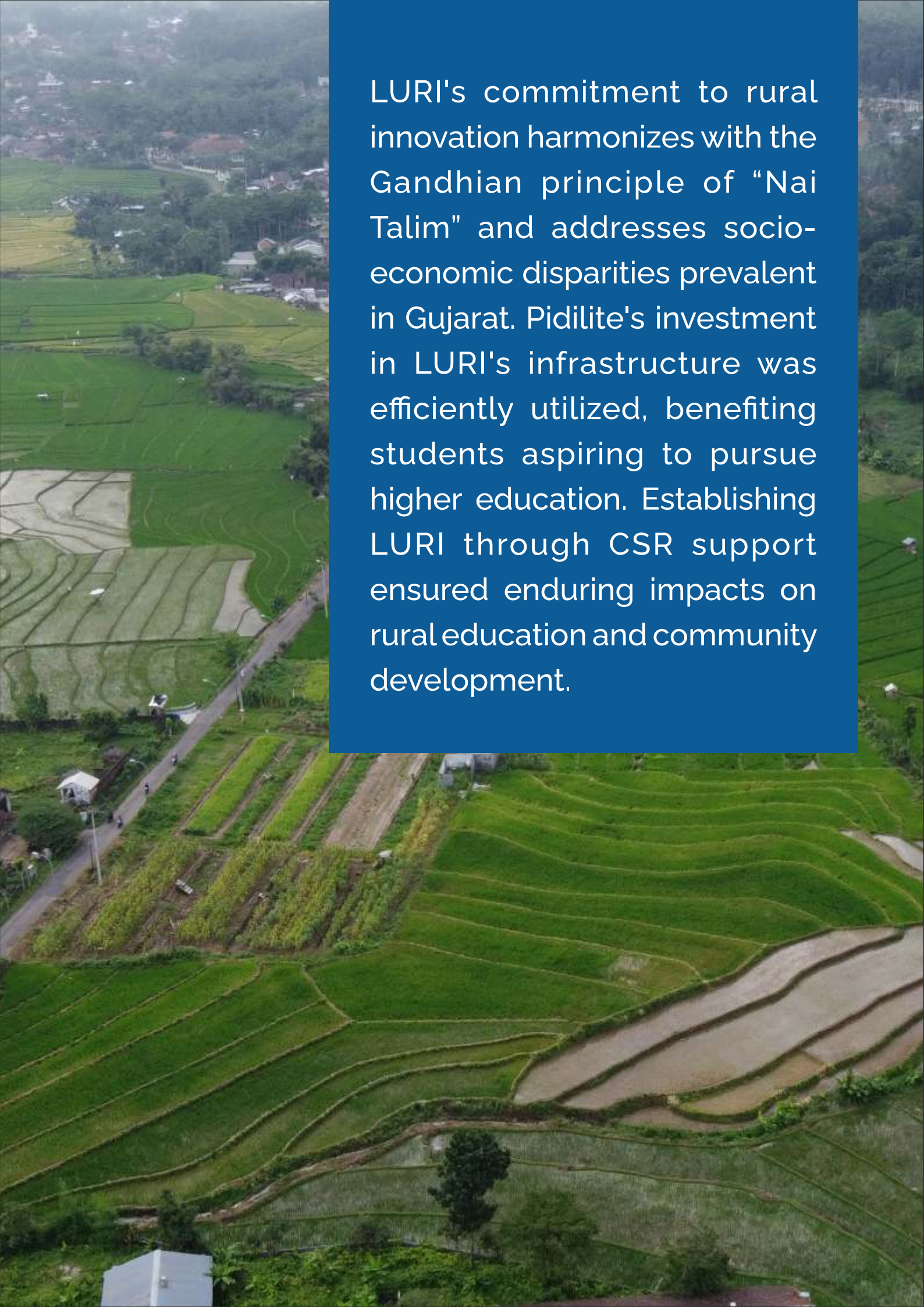


Impact Assessment of Setting-up of University at Lokbharti Gramvidyapth for Rural Innovation (LURI)

Submitted by



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An aerial photograph of a rural landscape in Gujarat, India. The foreground and middle ground are dominated by terraced rice fields, some of which are filled with water, reflecting the sky. A paved road runs diagonally across the scene, with a few small structures and trees along its edge. In the background, a small village with several houses and a prominent white domed structure (possibly a temple or school) is visible, surrounded by lush greenery and hills. The overall scene depicts a typical rural agricultural setting.

LURI's commitment to rural innovation harmonizes with the Gandhian principle of “Nai Talim” and addresses socio-economic disparities prevalent in Gujarat. Pidilite's investment in LURI's infrastructure was efficiently utilized, benefiting students aspiring to pursue higher education. Establishing LURI through CSR support ensured enduring impacts on rural education and community development.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Rural areas in India grapple with formidable educational obstacles, with limited access to quality higher education and skill development avenues. This educational disparity perpetuates socio-economic gaps between rural and urban regions, impeding the progress of rural communities, particularly in fields related to rural development and allied subjects.

Lokbharati University for Rural Innovation (LURI) was established in 2022 under the Gujarat Private University Act of 2009 to confront these challenges head-on. The university's mission is to offer specialized education in areas such as Sustainable Agriculture, Animal Husbandry, Rural Development, and more, equipping rural communities with the knowledge and skills needed for sustainable advancement.

With the generous support of Pidilite's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives, LURI was established as a private university. Pidilite's financial backing facilitated the fulfilment of legal registration requirements and the infrastructural necessities of the university, enabling it to provide a diverse array of courses spanning social sciences, management, agriculture, and rural and sustainable development.

The evaluation of Pidilite's CSR assistance showcased the following notable achievements:

- University Establishment : LURI attained private university status in Gujarat, marking a significant milestone.
- Educational Experience : The university enrolled 261 students over two years and started Master's and Ph.D. courses successfully.
- Pedagogical Innovation : LURI implemented an innovative teaching methodology centered on hands-on learning and real-world experiences, enhancing students' competencies and employment prospects.

LURI's commitment to rural innovation harmonizes with the Gandhian principle of "Nai Talim" and addresses socio-economic disparities prevalent in Gujarat. Pidilite's investment in LURI's infrastructure was efficiently utilized, benefiting students aspiring to pursue higher education. Establishing LURI through CSR support ensured enduring impacts on rural education and community development.

LURI emerges as a beacon of optimism for rural education in India, bridging the chasm between urban and rural educational opportunities while nurturing innovation, sustainability, and community empowerment.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

Education catalyzes the development of rural India. Given India's agrarian nature, education holds importance particularly in the agricultural sector as well. Access to quality education empowers rural communities with the knowledge and skills required to adopt modern farming techniques, mitigate risks, and enhance productivity. Moreover, education fosters entrepreneurship and innovation, enabling rural youth to explore diverse avenues for economic growth and sustainability. Investing in agricultural education not only strengthens the agricultural workforce but also contributes to poverty alleviation and overall rural prosperity, thus highlighting its paramount importance in driving rural development agendas.

However, despite the urgency of education, the lack of affordable yet quality options is a challenge often seen in rural areas. Here, non-profit organizations play a pivotal role in extending educational opportunities to underprivileged communities and contributing to their overall development. Such organisations often operate in areas where government resources are scarce or inaccessible, filling crucial gaps in educational infrastructure and resources. By offering scholarships, building schools, providing educational materials, and bringing in skilled educators, non-profits help alleviate the quality of education available to rural students. Their grassroots approach enables them to tailor interventions to the specific needs of communities, fostering holistic development.

Lokbharti : A Vision for Rural India:

In 1953, Nanabhai Bhatt, an Indian educator, writer, thinker, and Indian independence activist founded the Lok Seva Mahavidyalaya, a pioneering higher education institute aimed at uplifting rural communities through education. Influenced by Mahatma Gandhi's principles, the institute focused on empowering villagers with knowledge and character development, echoing the ideals of self-sufficiency and rural upliftment. Located in Sanosara village, Gujarat, the institute symbolized hope for rural education in India, embodying Gandhi's visionary concept of Nai Talim, which emphasizes holistic education. Rooted in Gandhian philosophy, Lok Seva Mahavidyalaya advocated for education that goes beyond academic learning to nurture the holistic development of individuals.

At the core of Nai Talim's ethos, the institute prioritized hands-on learning, integrating manual and intellectual labor, and fostering connections within the community and environment. This approach aimed to equip individuals with the skills, values, and knowledge necessary for meaningful societal contributions.

Recognizing the unique challenges of rural settings, the institute pursued an inclusive, empowering, and sustainable approach to education. Through a blend of formal education, vocational training,

¹https://www.researchgate.net/publication/265641104_Role_of_Extension_in_Rural_Development

²<https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000243824>

agricultural initiatives, and community engagement, it sought to develop well-rounded individuals who were academically proficient, socially conscious, environmentally aware, and economically self-reliant. Under the Lok Seva Mahavidyalaya, various courses, including diploma, undergraduate, and vocational training, were offered, focusing on rural studies and village development.

1.2. Project Introduction

In pursuit of the evolving times and educational requirements to meet the aspirations of the Lok Seva Mahavidyalaya's graduates seeking Master's and Ph.D. degrees, the Lokbharati Gramvidyapeeth Trust had outlined the vision and plan to establish Lokbharati University for Rural Innovation (LURI) as a private university under the Gujarat Private University Act, 2009, in 2021. It approached the Pidilite's Corporate Social Responsibility team with an ambitious proposal to establish a University that would:

- The transition from the 20th to the 21st century, moving from static physical space to dynamic digital space, leadership to collaborative work culture, qualifications to skills, Exploitation to Sustainability, Conformity to Creativity, and Education to Learning and Innovation.
- Diversify existing approaches by initiating Education 4.0 with a focus on community service on a global scale.
- Offer courses in applied sciences, management, design, AI, agriculture, healthcare, sustainable development, etc.

To help LURI achieve this ambitious goal, Pidilite, a renowned leader in adhesive and construction chemical products in India, with a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives across India, encompassing education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and skill development, has extended the funding for legal registration requirements and infrastructural needs of the university in the financial year 2022-23.

Towards the objective of providing quality higher education, fostering intellectual abilities for innovation, designing sustainable solutions through research, and collaborating with premier institutes globally, the University had set out to include disciplines such as agriculture, rural studies, vocational studies, sustainability, humanities, and social sciences, to produce job creators in rural areas through green startups and social entrepreneurship while emphasizing patent-based innovations.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Pidilite has entrusted NuSocia, an impact advisory firm, to undertake the Impact Assessment of the CSR support provided to the LURI for FY 22-23, within the research objective and scope as below.

2.1. Research Objective

To evaluate the effectiveness of CSR assistance provided for establishing a university focused on rural innovation aimed at enhancing education accessibility for rural communities and benefiting the public at large in rural areas.

2.2. Research Framework

The impact assessment evaluation will analyze the REECIS Framework of the OECD DAC (The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee). This framework employs a thorough and inclusive approach to impact assessment consisting of the following components:

- 1. Relevance** : This component assesses the project's necessity within context.
- 2. Effectiveness** : Effectiveness scrutinizes the extent to which the objectives of the intervention have been achieved.
- 3. Efficiency** : This element examines the prudent utilization of cost, time, and resources.
- 4. Coherence** : This ensures that interventions align with and complement similar efforts, fostering consistency.
- 5. Sustainability** : Sustainability primarily evaluates the enduring success of interventions over the long term.

The REECIS Framework provides a comprehensive lens for systematically addressing relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, coherence, and sustainability in the impact assessment process.



[OECD-DAC REECIS Framework]

2.3. Sampling

At the time of assessment, the university had 249 students enrolled in diverse courses, including BBA in Agri-business management, BA, BRS (Bachelor of Rural Studies), BVOC in Agro-processing, and Ph.D. Among the beneficiaries, the study engaged with 25 students selected through convenience sampling from different courses and academic years, as well as interviews with University Management, Trust Members, Faculty, and Administration to gather insights on the intervention and its impact.

Stakeholders	Key Informant Interviews (KIIs)	Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)
Lokhbharti Pro-Vice-Chancellor	01	0
Lokhbharti Trust Member	01	0
Students	-	01 ³
Teachers	-	01
Total	02	02

2.4. Data Collection

- 2.4.1. Desk research :** Desk research was conducted with the help of concept notes, newsletters, and other documents provided by implementation partners and the donor, along with open resources available on the Internet.
- 2.4.2. Key Informant Interviews :** In-depth interviews with the help of an interview guide consisting of open-ended questions were conducted in person with the Management, Trustees, and Education officer/Teacher.
- 2.4.3. Focussed Group Discussion :** Students selected through convenience sampling were formed as a group and asked open-ended questions to understand the project objectives and their impact on them.

³Data was collected from 25 students of LURI from various courses through one FGD

3. FINDINGS

The financial support extended by Pidilite has majorly contributed to the legal establishment of LURI and the construction of hostel facilities on the university campus. Thus, the findings section has focused on:

1. Impact of university establishment and sponsorship
2. Impact of educational experience on the students

3.1. Impact of university establishment and sponsorship :

According to the Gujarat Private University Act of 2009 and its subsequent amendments published in 2020 and 2022, an educational institution must meet specific criteria and guidelines to obtain Private University status in the state, such as:

1. Application Process :



Picture 1 :
Lokbharati University

- The sponsoring body (registered as a Trust/Society/Company) must have at least seven years of experience in running higher education institutions and a minimum of five acres of land.
- An application in Form I with specific details must be submitted to the State Government by the end of October of the relevant year, along with an Endowment Fund deposit.

2. Financial Requirements :

- The Endowment Fund amount based on the gross expenditure incurred during the first five years, ranging from Rs. 1 crore to Rs. 5 crore depending on the investment envisaged, needs to be deposited in the Gujarat State Financial Service as a corporate fund.

- An application fee of Rs. 10 lakhs, payable via Demand Draft in favor of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Gujarat State.

3. Scrutiny Committee :

- The state government constitutes a Scrutiny Committee to review proposals for establishing a new private university, which consists of various members, including government officials and educational experts.

4. Statutes and Dissolution :

- The Private University must submit its First Statutes within six months of establishment and provide notice of dissolution if needed, following specific procedures outlined in the rules.

5. Annual Reporting :

- Detailed information on students, faculty, infrastructure, financial status, assets, and liabilities must be provided annually to the State Government in Form II.



Picture 2:
Construction of hostel
facilities with the support
of Pidilite

These guidelines from the Gujarat Private Universities Act, 2009 outline the steps and financial commitments required to establish a private university in Gujarat.

To facilitate these legal and compliance requirements, Pidilite through its CSR has donated a sum of 3 Crore Indian rupees towards the Endowment Fund, which enabled the Lokbharati Trust to apply for private university status from the Govt. of Gujarat.

“Pidilite CSR supported financially to get the status of Lokbharti University from the University Grants Commission, for which Pidilite funded 3 Cr. to Lokbharti University to deposit to University Grants Commission for getting University status. Lokbharti University for Rural Innovation (LURI) has provided opportunities in enhancing skills and knowledge to understand rural challenges in both ways, personal and professional development of students in their best capacities.” - Vice Chancellor, LURI

The Lokbharati University for Rural Innovation was accorded its status under the Gujarat Private Universities (Amendment) Act, 2022, and currently undertakes teaching under three schools, and eight departments, and three additional cells, respectively.

S. No	School of Study	Department	Additional Cells
1	School of Skills and Entrepreneurship	Department of Natural Farming	NEP Implementation Cell
2		Department of Agro Processing	WGRC Cell
3		Department of Agronomy	Vocational Practice Cell
4		Department of Animal Husbandry and Dairy Science	
5	School of Humanities and Social Sciences	Department of Psychology	
6		Department of English and Communication skills	
7	School of Management Studies	Department of Agri-business Management	
8		Department of CSR Management	

Across the three schools, the University had enrolled 121 students in the academic year 2022-23, with Agronomy having the highest enrollment at 48 students, followed by Natural Farming and Agro-processing.

S. No	Course	No. of Students
1	Psychology	6
2	English & Communication	6
3	Agronomy	48
4	Animal Husbandry & Dairy Science	7
5	Natural Farming	28
6	Agro Processing	26
	Total	121

The academic year 2023-24 has the below new admissions, of which the Agronomy course has again attracted the highest number of students, followed by Agro-processing and natural farming.

S. No	Course	No. of Students
1	English & Communication	11
2	Agronomy	71
3	Animal Husbandry & Dairy Science	9
4	Natural Farming	21
5	Agro Processing	29
	Total	141

Out of the total admissions of 262, 249 students were continuing their studies at the time of assessment. They benefited from the new pedagogy and infrastructure due to the Pidilite’s contribution.

“CSR support has laid the impression of rural students to attract admission to Lokbharti University. Improvement is seen in the changing of Pedagogy, teaching pattern, learning through practical approaches, education with character building.” - Vice Pro-Chancellor, LURI

3.2 . Impact of educational experience on the students:

To comprehend the academic experience and impact of the infrastructural support at LURI, the study engaged with around 25 undergraduate students and 10 teachers through focused group discussions (FGDs). Students aged between 18 and 22 years and Teachers aged 25 to 45 offered valuable insights into their academic journey, expectations, and aspirations at LURI.

Student Background and Expectations:

Students at LURI represented diverse educational levels and majors, including BA in Psychology, BA in English, BA in Agriculture, and Agri-Business. Many students discovered LURI through friends' referrals, attracted by its simplicity and innovative teaching approach.



Picture 3 :
Group discussion with students

The university's residential facility accommodates students from various villages and districts of Gujarat, who often belong to lower-income backgrounds. The annual admission fee was Rs. 40,000 for tuition and Rs. 30,000 for food and hostel expenses.

Teacher Demographics and Teaching Experiences:

The meeting included approximately 10 teachers aged 25 to 45 years with mixed-gender representation. Many of these educators share their first experience teaching in a residential college setting, highlighting the unique learning environment at Lokbharati University.

Teaching Pedagogy and Methodology:

The teaching methodology at LURI stands out for its emphasis on rural innovation, prioritizing practical learning through lectures, internships, and workshops. Students benefit from a balanced blend of theory and practice, with 70% of the curriculum dedicated to hands-on experiences. Two-month internships provide valuable exposure to real-world challenges, fostering practical understanding and skill development.

Moreover, students can engage in various activities across the campus through the Sughad (Shramdan - Donation of Work) initiative. This initiative allowed students to earn a sum of 20 rupees per hour for up to an hour a day, which can help cover academic and personal expenses. The initiative is designed to help students manage their time, have ownership of the campus and realise the dignity of labour. However, despite these initiatives, students have raised concerns about infrastructure needs to be improved, particularly regarding hostel facilities and equipment availability.

Teachers also unanimously agreed that Lokbharati University's teaching methodology and pedagogy differ significantly from their past experiences.



Picture 4 :
Group discussion with
teachers on campus

They emphasize a practical-based approach to education, fostering hands-on learning experiences and real-world applications.

Impact and Development:

LURI's approach nurtured students' entrepreneurial spirit, empowering them to address rural challenges and contribute to local development.



Picture 5 :
Grasscutter prototype
made by Students

Students gained valuable insights and networking opportunities through practical learning modules and collaborations with external organizations. Many students identify with the Gandhian philosophy, aspiring to become "Rural Warriors" and drive entrepreneurship in their communities post-graduation.

Future Expectations and Recommendations:

As students look ahead to life after college, they stress the importance of English proficiency for navigating professional opportunities effectively. They also call for improved infrastructure and hostel facilities to accommodate the growing student population.

Despite the university's focus on practical learning, teachers acknowledge students' challenges securing internships and placements, mainly due to limited experiences and distance from urban centers. They advocate for hands-on activities and real-world experiences to engage students and enhance their understanding. Additionally, they highlight the importance of improving students' communication skills, particularly in English, to enhance their job prospects.

Both students and faculty have highlighted the necessity for digital classrooms and advanced digital labs tailored to meet course requirements. Additionally, there is a demand for support in acquiring advanced raw materials and establishing a Quality Check Laboratory for rural innovation purposes.

During interactions, both teaching and non-teaching staff have stressed the importance of prioritizing marketing efforts to promote their courses and programs. This will help to enhance outreach to students across the state.

Moreover, faculty members have emphasized the significance of collaborating with other institutions or fellowships dedicated to rural enterprises. This collaborative approach would facilitate mutual growth and development.

Interactions with various stakeholders underscore the university's crucial role in fostering rural entrepreneurship and holistic development. Despite initial challenges, LURI inspired students to drive change in their communities, aligning with Gandhian principles and rural innovation. Addressing infrastructure needs and promoting language proficiency will further amplify its impact and empower students beyond the campus.

Under the current intervention support, one hostel building was completed in 2024, accommodating 100 students from Jan 2024, with construction underway for a second one. The total availability of these facilities will address students' concerns and enhance their overall learning experience in the near future.

4. ANALYSIS

The observations and findings through primary research of Pidilite's CSR support for LURI has been analyzed on the OECD-DAC global framework REECIS as below:

Parameters	Description
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishing a specialized rural higher education university is crucial to bridge the widening socio-economic gap between rural and urban areas in India and cater to the educational requirements of rural communities. Such an institution would focus on practical learning in Sustainable Agriculture, Animal Husbandry & Dairy Sciences, Rural Development, and related fields. This initiative was vital for fostering rural economic development and upholding Gandhian principles, which emphasize the pivotal role of villages as the backbone of India.
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The funding support has successfully helped establish the Lokbharati University for Rural Innovation, with 262 taking admissions to various courses in the two academic years of functioning, and also enabled access to residential accommodation for 100 students from 2024, with provisions to accommodate more students soon. While the project achieved its intended results, it could have been more effective if the hostel infrastructure had been built before the start of the academic year.
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The three crore endowment submitted as a corporate fund to the Gujarat State Financial Services will earn interest for the University to continue operations. The hostel facilities will help accommodate more than a hundred students annually. With this investment, the University has efficiently used its resources in a timely fashion to benefit students seeking admission to higher courses and accommodation within the campus.
Impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The project has positively impacted 241 students enrolled in the university with a practical approach to rural learning in two years and provided accommodation for 100 students with provisions to accommodate more soon. The sponsorship and infrastructural support by the Pidilite CSR will continue for the existence of LURI, with the potential to directly impact students and indirectly their families and society in the future.

<p>Coherence</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Establishing a university dedicated to rural development in Gujarat is significant for addressing the state and India's developmental needs. This initiative directly tackles the persistent rural-urban disparities in Gujarat by providing specialized education and skills training tailored to rural communities' needs. By prioritizing rural-focused education, the university contributes to the socio-economic upliftment of rural Gujarat and fosters more inclusive development. ● Furthermore, in the broader context of India's development, such a university is essential for empowering rural populations with the knowledge, skills, and resources necessary for driving sustainable growth and prosperity in their communities. By aligning with Gandhian principles of rural self-sufficiency and community-driven development, the university honors India's cultural heritage and inspires a new generation of changemakers committed to rural empowerment and social justice.
<p>Sustainability</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The project invested in setting up a university through the endowment fund support and building hostels for the students' stay, with the potential to change thousands of lives through quality education and foster rural innovation and employment generation for future generations. Thus, the sustainability of the intervention will be long-lasting and will be aided by the University's focus on enabling affordable education through scholarships and Sughad (Shramdan) activities.

5. CONCLUSION

In an admirable effort to improve rural education facilities in Gujarat and meet the demand for higher education in Agriculture and Rural Development, Lokbharati University for Rural Innovation was established in 2022 with financial assistance from Pidilite's CSR initiatives. Pidilite has long supported Lokbharati Gramvidyapith Trust and has committed to further aid in the university's infrastructural development. This includes the construction of hostels, with one already completed and accommodating 100 students and another currently under construction.

The establishment of the private university has enabled the institution to offer Master's and Ph.D. courses and to adapt to the changing requirements in enabling Entrepreneurship, Social Sciences, Humanities, and Rural Management studies under three schools and eight different departments, in addition to the undergraduate, diploma, and training courses that have been offered from before.

In the two years of the LURI, 261 students have enrolled, and 249 among them are currently undergoing courses in Agronomy, Agro-processing, Natural Farming, English and Communication, etc. with a practical pedagogy that encourages 75% hands-on learning, and 25% theoretical teachings, complemented with internships and on the job training with future employers.

Overall, the learning experience at the university was greatly appreciated by the students and the teachers, as it was different from conventional education and easy to follow. The students expressed their satisfaction with the course curriculum and pedagogy and expressed an excellent bond with their faculty. However, the students also expressed a need for better accommodation facilities and more opportunities for improving their English communication to be able to cope with the global job market.

To help LURI achieve this ambitious goal, Pidilite, a renowned leader in adhesive and construction chemical products in India, with a strong commitment to corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives across India, encompassing education, healthcare, environmental sustainability, and skill development, has extended the funding for legal registration requirements and infrastructural needs of the university in the financial year 2022-23.





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