

Paper Title: **A GLOBAL CLASSROOM - LEARNING WITHOUT BOUNDARIES**

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Abstract: The trend of globalization with the increasingly popular internationalized activities indicates the need for nurturing global citizens with effective intercultural communication skills. Intercultural communication is not only a need, but a requirement for success in today's pluralistic society. The cost of being inadequately equipped with such skill is insurmountably high. Being able to communicate cross-culturally increases the success in international business, enables productive interpersonal contacts and decreases mutual misunderstanding.

Therefore in order to foster education in a plural society sharing a vision becomes essential. At The Indian Heights we encapsulate creative learning so as to become the center of critical and creative thinking and active learning where assumptions are challenged and learning from the world is adapted locally into the school system. The challenge as we see is not only to be forward looking but to prepare children to be in step and continually ready for the future.

Keywords: Global Citizens, Intercultural Communication Skills

Main Paper

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The revolutionary changes that have occurred in information technology and the ensuing phenomenon of the digital divide are important aspects of this process. They have intensified and delocalized social relations at a worldwide level; it has connected distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa. Local transformation is as much a part of globalization as the lateral extension of social connections across time and space.

Cross-cultural or intercultural communication occurs between people from different cultures. Therefore understanding diverse cultures is an essential capability in today's global workplace, where people from different countries, generations and backgrounds must communicate effectively and work together to keep projects on track. Looking at developing global citizens we have many different projects in our school. I would be like to talk a little about each one, each one done differently for different age groups but all lead to the development of a global citizen and each one uses technology extensively.

The use of technology in 'A Day of Colombia' celebrations at The Indian Heights on 3rd October 2008 is an example of international understanding that had allowed innovation and technology to come together. The event was presided over by H.E. Juan Alfredo Pinto Saavedra, Ambassador of Colombia. The event consisted of a inter school PowerPoint competition where 12 likeminded reputed schools of Delhi participated in a combination of IT and International Understanding. The students made PowerPoint presentations on a diverse range of subjects – tourism, culture, to the status of Colombian women. They provided the audience a glimpse of the enormous challenges and potential of this fascinating country. They used different forms of technology namely internet, Microsoft Office, Windows Moviemaker, some form of sound recording devices, digital cameras etc.

As a part of the student exchange programme with Xinghua Primary School, Singapore, a delegation of 8 students and 2 teachers visited the school from 5th to 9th November 2008, which was followed up by a reciprocal visit of The Indian Heights students and myself from 9th to 14th November 2008. The exchange aimed at giving a platform to students to take an active interest in others and to build bridges towards a harmonious coexistence and motivate students to explore and appreciate the cultural diversity of the two countries. This exchange was made possible by the extensive use of technology. The collaboration between the two schools started with simple communication between the two Principals using email followed by extensively planning of the two trips using simple technology internet, but the end result was huge learning experience for the Principals, teachers and students.

I am the Indian Coordinator for the Virtual Classrooms Initiative for schools in India, a pilot initiative of Global Nomads Group and Tony Blair Faith Foundation. This provides an opportunity for students to learn with and from their counterparts half way across the world and is designed with the recognition that given the standing of India on the global stage. The students would benefit greatly from greater communication and understanding with their peers. More specifically, the objectives of Virtual classroom are three-fold:

- Help students in India and the world learn 21st Century Skills together;
- Enable students in India and the rest of the world to develop an understanding and knowledge of each other and their countries and cultures;
- To deliver high quality, interactive, cost-effective educational programs

This would bring the world into the classroom. In doing so, its programs would be interactive, innovative, and global. The programme would focus on 6 thematic areas:

- * Global Development Issues
- * Health and Well-Being
- * Environment and climate change
- * Conflict
- * Community Development

* Religion and Culture

The School is actively involved with DFID Global Schools programme of British Council, which is a wonderful learning experience and reflects on the most effective way of equipping children with a sense of wider world and its issues. We are having a reciprocal exchange visit programme with R J Mitchell Primary School, Essex, UK. This again is a very interesting example of extensive use of technology. I attended a seminar at the British Council on the 20th October and the last date of submission of the form which had to be filled and then finally submitted by the UK school was 1st November. The form was with me so I filled my part and emailed it to my partner in UK and then he filled his part and emailed me back so that I could cross check and finally five days before the actual submission we were through with the form and it was sent by snail mail to the British Council office in UK. The form had to be submitted in hard copy instead of the soft copy. In the process there was so much of communication involved between the two of us.

The project about which I would like to talk now is the Collaborative online project with Lenah Valley Primary School, Australia entitled 'Merging Boundaries - Knowing Each Other' for the class 1 students being undertaken, where the little ones are doing photo stories on their school, classroom, family and hobbies. (The parts of the photo story will be part of the PowerPoint presentation). The little ones have a video conferencing session scheduled for 26th of November where they would be face to face with each other. (At the time of the seminar I would visual proof as a part of my presentation). As a part of the project we also look forward to the visit of the Australian teacher in January 2009.

In the end I would like to end with that cross cultural collaboration promotes interdependence on each other which leads to peace and tolerance and development of a global citizen and this is what we are trying to do at the Indian Heights through the above programmes.