The Influence of North South School Partnerships: Examining the evidence from schools in the UK, Africa & Asia

Case Studies | India

Funding
THE INFLUENCE OF NORTH SOUTH SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS:

Case Studies from School in India

2009

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Introduction
CASE STUDY REPORT

VIDIYA DEVI JINDAL SCHOOL

North-South School Partnership (NSSP) Research

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INTRODUCTION

In this school, interviews were conducted with the Principal, who has been with the school for the past year, and with the International Coordinator, who has been working in this position in the school for the past five years. In addition, a focus group discussion was held with six teachers. Classroom activities were conducted with students from the grade 12 class.

School profile
This school is a private school around three-and-a-half hours drive from Delhi and is surrounded by an army cantonment. It’s an all-girls’ day and boarding school. All students and staff stay on campus. The school is part of a large family’s corporate social responsibility project. The school is affiliated to the CBSE. It is said to be a highly accredited school. In addition to a strong academic orientation, the school has a National Cadet Corps (NCC) wing. The school does very well in sports, especially hockey. The school has a noteworthy Fine Arts and Dance department as well.

The student population is 850 girls, of whom 157 are day scholars and the rest, boarders. There are 69 teachers in the school. The school caters for the children of the upper middle class. It also provides scholarships for achievement at the national level, whereby 50 per cent of the tuition fee is waived for meritorious scholars in sports, performing arts and for academic achievement. In terms of the level of achievement and the school’s facilities, it is said to be far less. The reason given for this is the fact that the school was established as part of the corporate social responsibility project of a large family, as mentioned above.

International partnerships
The school is a member of Round Square, an international schools organisation, based in England. In India 12 schools are members of this body. The school also runs the IYP programme (i.e. the Duke of Edinburgh awards.)

The school is linked with one school in the UK. The partnership with this school began in 2003. Before 2003, the school had teachers visiting from the USA, and students from South Africa. The link with Round Square also started at the same time.

Last year 14 students went on visits to the partner country, and this year 13 students went on visits. For the last three years, there has also been a curriculum development programme which
has been sponsored by DFID. The themes have varied from year to year; covering Geography in the first year, followed by History in the second year and English in the current year.

Students at the school are in touch via letter, internet-chat and email with students from the partner schools.

**Partnership formation**
The first partnership was initiated in 2003 by the principals and coordinators of both the Indian and UK schools. The British Council helped the school to start a pilot project: the International School Award (ISA). The then ISA Coordinator went on to attend the accreditation programme in London and prepared the first dossier, following which the school received the ISA Award. A senior member of staff describes the formation:

*They picked us up. They visited six schools when they came to India; they were looking for a partnership in India. They already had partnerships in Africa. They came though our school basically through British Council.*

The partnership was formally initiated and built up by two former principals and one coordinator. The Coordinator says:

*The head teacher (of the partner school) came here to see the school and they were so touched by everything that they said 'I want to see this partnership happening, I want to work for it'. So, then, it was their effort also as well as that of the Coordinator on the other side. So both of them were equally keen.*

**Support for the partnership**
The school has received financial support from the British Council and the DFID for the past three years. The DFID funding is now over. The partnership, however, has continued in the current year with the schools fully funding the programme, as both the schools mutually decided to continue with the partnership, funded by their personal resources. The International Coordinator says:

*Despite the fact that the school’s grant was over, both the schools were absolutely very, very keen to have it going. They were not deterred by the low funding for the project. They wanted to carry on regardless. They'd understood, experienced the benefits of this programme at all levels so they were very, very keen to go for it and fortunately the coordinator there expressed their keenness.*

**PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE**

**Partnership objective**
The main aims of the international partnership programmes are to increase students’ awareness, broaden their horizons and to clear up myths and misconceptions about the partner country and its people that arise through misrepresentation in the media or through other forms of (mis)information. It also aims to enable students to recognise and appreciate diversity and difference:

*To bring internationalism, to enable students to understand their own role in the global arena and also to make them aware of the issues which concern the world as a whole, not only their own country.*

The international partnership in practice
The key to making the partnership work has been the interest and drive of two former principals and a former coordinator. The current Principal and Coordinator are also very committed to the partnership. The Principal says:

*As far as I am concerned I am very, very keen on the international dimensions to the school because I know the kind of impact it has. So my visit to the school added a further new impetus to it.*

The constant interest from the International Coordinator from the UK school has also been critical in making the partnership a success.

Communication between the schools takes place on a daily basis via email. Once in a while, phone calls are also made. Students communicate with students from partner schools using their own initiative. Beyond this the school makes sure that everyone is involved by acting as hosts to the UK team when they visit. The visits include sightseeing trips, visits to primary health centres in the locality and also interactive visits with famous Indian personalities. The International Coordinator describes the visits:

*When their delegation comes here they have the first hand experience of staying in a boarding school amongst girls (our students stay with families there) ... so it is quite an experience for them. They learn as well as our entire school participates.*

The Principal says:

*When they come here, there is very little indirect learning ... it is direct learning because these kids are a part of the routine of these kids 24×7. So, I think, they are a part of the entire thing. They do things like getting up at 5:30am in the morning very happily. I think the benefits that we derive out of this partnership far... surpasses the benefits that they derive from this partnership.*

**Curriculum initiatives**

The curriculum project reaches even further. Both the schools have jointly identified topics in subject areas like English, IT, Value Education, Geography, History and Environment that are taken up alongside regular teaching. At the next level, teachers from both schools communicate with each other, and the student exchanges take place. It is largely a three-level programme.

The major thrust area on which the project is focused is working with students from the partner school on projects like sustainable development, water, etc. The students are also taken for visits to villages where they interact with the local community where groundbreaking work has been carried out, for example on sustainable development projects. This year the school also plans to take up the topic of media as a new area of study and exchange. Students also make presentations during assembly on a very broad choice of projects and issues such as the ozone layer or AIDS. The purpose of these activities, according to the international coordinator, is so that the students can ‘**understand what their position is ... their role in the universe, in the global perspective**’.

The curriculum projects are planned in such a way that students who do not take part in the exchange visits also get a chance to participate and be a part of the project, albeit in an indirect manner. The principal says:

*We try to touch as many classes and as many children who are experts in their own fields so all of them get benefit like I’d mentioned earlier, of being a*
residential school, they are, anyway, living with them. So their contact, in sports field, in mess hall and everywhere does have extensive, passive learning.

The exchange of cultures and traditions is also a substantial part of the project. Activities are planned to help develop understanding of each other’s culture. The Coordinator describes some of the activities:

*India is known for its cultural traditions ... certain things are fixed for all the exchanges like henna-applying, rangoli-making, Indian dances, so whatever projects ... these are fixed for every year. Workshops on Indian cuisine, designing and dance apart from the academic projects we have.*

The exchange visits enable students to gain first-hand experience and understanding of each other’s diverse cultures, lifestyles and beliefs. They also help students to develop the ability to be sensitive to and to respect other cultures, according to the International Coordinator:

*It’s first hand experience when they stay with families there, they first hand see the culture there, see how relationships are different in India and in the UK and the concept of a family – it’s very different. So, they come to know similarities and differences…*

The Principal says:

*They come back appreciating a lot of things that they’d have otherwise missed in their growing years…*

Recognising the existence of and accepting different points of view are particularly important for students and teachers and helps to develop understanding of each other’s culture and value system.

**Student engagement**

A group exercise was conducted as part of the in-classroom participatory workshop with students in grade 12 in secondary section of the school. A total of 25 students participated in the workshop. The rationale for the class exercise was to ‘**give students an opportunity to work in groups to discuss their experiences with the link, including what they have done, what they have enjoyed, and what they think might make the link better**’. Student responses are as follows:

**PERCEIVED INFLUENCE**

**Students**

The workshops exercises highlighted the increased levels of awareness, understanding and appreciation of each other’s cultures that, according to the students, has come about with the student exchange visits to UK. Writing letters, emailing, exchanging cards and phone calls were the methods of communication between the students of the two schools. When talking about the activities they liked doing, students referred to visiting the UK, sightseeing/outings with UK students, interactions with UK students and their host families and attending regular classes, presentations and workshops on diverse global issues in their partner school.

The students also reflected upon the differences in the system of education of the two countries, perceiving the education system in UK to be more ‘**practical and technological**’. Students also feel that teaching-learning methodology in Indian schools could incorporate more of the ‘joyful’ learning techniques adopted in UK schools. The students referred to the positive aspects of the
behaviour and conduct of people in the UK, largely describing them as well-mannered and valuing personal freedom. They referred to an improvement in their own interpersonal communication skills as a result of the exchange visit. They also claim to have recognised and accepted the responsibility of representing their school, their culture and their country at an international level.

The students had suggestions on how to improve the student exchange programme. These included increasing the number of visits to the partner school, increasing the numbers of students participating, reducing trip-related expenditure, increasing the duration of visits, allowing home-stays for students from the partner school and also increasing the areas visited in UK. The students share some views on the exchange. One says:

If (only) we were allowed to take our partners home.

Another says:

It was awesome ... no more improvements required ... we all really enjoyed a lot and we will cherish these memories throughout our own lifetime. It was an enriching experience, love you... rock on!

Teachers and leaders
Teachers in the focus group point to the curricular project as having been of particular interest and importance. Topics of global importance are raised in parallel in both schools and joint curricular labs have been set up.

Teachers also benefit from the trips some of them have had the chance to make, as well as from the curricular projects. Experiences are shared and whatever they learn in the UK is shared through workshops back in India. The main areas of learning include IT/computer skills, communication skills and the inclusion of practical activities as part of teaching methodology. The differences in teaching methodology and the possibility of both sides learning from each other are pointed out in particular. One teacher says:

Theory is widely used and is the strength of Indian schools. Practical aspect, discussion and hands-on activity are the strength of schools in UK.

The Indian teachers have started bringing about changes in their teaching methodology in the classroom more frequently and with much more enthusiasm, as the Principal explains:

Benefits come after a visit there, they are full of ideas on how they can adapt, and adopt many of the things that they see there and are very keen to implement it here and they do it.

Teacher relationships have also improved as the programme has enabled teachers to use ‘better methodology’ and has also improved their interpersonal skills.

The programme is seen as also enabling teachers to become ‘more open-minded, to acquire greater satisfaction in the job and to grow and to become happier as teachers’.

Community
The programme supports the local community to the extent that the students who visit India visit the local community and learn about the local culture and increase their understanding of the working of public systems. For example, students learn more about health through visits to a primary health centre. Projects are designed around themes revolving around community
development in such a manner as to include the interaction of the students from both schools with the local village community.

**Impact of the international partnerships**

The impact of the partnership programmes has been in terms of broadening students’ IT, communication, comprehension and interpersonal skills. It is also seen as impacting upon personality development of students, primarily in building their confidence and a cosmopolitan outlook:

*Students have acquired phenomenal levels of confidence, an increase in openness, and an increase in acceptability ... receptivity and enthusiasm. They have actually become fans of the entire programme and it percolates down from them and to the others.*

*[The evidence of the benefits of the programme can be seen in] the happy faces of teachers and students – more people want to go and experience it.*

The partnership has impacted upon the teaching methodology of English, IT, Value Education, Geography, History and Environment. There has been a shift from traditional content-based teaching-learning towards a more critical learning and thinking, including devices like ‘concept-mapping’. The Principal explains:

*Our teaching methodology is one area where our teachers have had a lot of exposure. A lot of openness in and willingness and desire to improve the teaching-learning process is a very direct benefit arising out this partnership...*

The response of the students is very positive with a large number of them applying for the exchange. Because of the large number of student applications, however, the programme has become a ‘privilege’ that is available to a few rather than an ‘opportunity’ available to all. Student response has necessitated the filtering of applications, with many being rejected on account of the limited number of vacancies available. The Principal says:

*Because it is such a fantastic incentive, an opportunity – it has actually become a privilege and sometimes it becomes very difficult for the school to select children and say no to the others.*

**CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The school does not feel that anything in particular hinders the development of the partnership. The continuation of the first partnership (despite termination of DFID funds) is a clear indication that the schools are very committed to, and have been successful at, implementing international links. No members of staff discuss any challenges which have to be overcome. There are, however, suggestions for improvement of the programme enumerated below.

**IMPROVING THE PARTNERSHIP**

The Principal, teachers and the International Coordinator have several recommendations to improve the international partnership. These suggestions call for an increase in the numbers of students participating in the exchanges and in the duration of student exchange visits, for more teacher exchanges, and for advance planning of visits in accordance with the diverse academic calendars of both schools. There are also recommendations for training programmes/workshops for headteachers and teachers.
What has the partner school learnt?
Teachers and students all felt that the UK counterpart was particularly impressed by and had the utmost respect for Indian culture, art and architecture and the warm hospitality of Indians. The principal says:

*I think they’ve actually had a very fantastic exposure to the India culture and the thing that they always, always touched upon us was the hospitality. We would give the credit to the Indian culture itself ... they go back feeling pretty refreshed and looked after. For them, however hectic it gets here, the hospitality is very refreshing.*
INTRODUCTION

School profile
This school is a residential public school in Haryana, around one-and-a-half hours drive from Delhi, and is run by the government of Haryana. It is a co-educational boarding school that specialises in sports and is located in 300 acres of land. All students and staff stay on campus. The students in this school lead a largely secluded and routine life. They come from largely lower-middle class family backgrounds. The school is affiliated to the CBSE. In addition, they are also affiliated with the Indian Public Schools Conference (IPSE), an elite body that has 80 public schools members. The school is also an ISO 2001 certified institution. The school has outstanding sporting facilities, which include an Olympic sized swimming pool, a gymnasium of international standard, and offers hockey, riding, football, shooting and tennis. There are 850 students comprising 500 boys and 350 girls who attend Class 4 to Class 12 and are aged between 8 and 18. There are 300 staff, of whom around 60 are teachers. The school caters to the lower-middle classes, but the highly subsidised fees also enable children from more modest backgrounds to attend the school. According to the Principal:

_We have a different background from which the children are coming from because of the fee structure. It is so low here because it is all subsidized by the Haryana Government. We are charging peanuts. No school, no residential school in the country is charging less than us._

Selection takes place on the basis of an entrance exam and a Physical Efficiency Sports (PES) Aptitude Test.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Partnership formation
The school is a member of ‘Round Square’, an international schools organisation which has its headquarters in Scotland. There are 12 schools in India that are members of this body. The school was awarded the International School Award by the British Council for the years 2008-2011. The school is linked with two schools in the UK. The partnership with the first school goes back 25 years, which is the longest partnership between any two schools in the UK and India. Every alternate year, two teachers and fifteen students have visited the UK:
One year they come and the next year we go there. One trip for each side every two years. They come to us in March and we go there in June.

The first partnership was initiated in 1982 by the Indian and UK Principals. According to the current Principal:

The information which I have is both the schools were very keen and Mr. BG [UK] initiated from there and the principal here accepted it and took the request to the Haryana Government and the government accepted and the programme has continued.

The current Principal has developed this partnership beyond student and teacher exchanges to include a curriculum content programme. The second partnership, which is based around a sports programme, was started by him with the help of the British Council, who invited five UK schools to meet five Indian schools in Delhi. The school was linked up with another sports college. Together with the second link school, the school has developed a sports exchange programme called 'Dreams and Teams', which is sponsored by the British Council. It has been active for three years. In the first year, students took part in the exchange but now the focus is on the exchange of sports coaches. The school hopes to be able to send sports teams as well in the future.

Support and training
For the last three years a curriculum development programme, sponsored by DFID, has also been in place. The themes have varied from year to year, covering Geography first, then History and this year English. The programme is based on teacher exchanges, with two teachers from each school undertaking a 10-day trip every year. The school has received financial support from the British Council and the Haryana government. Half of the children’s airfare is covered by the government. The school has bought the necessary IT equipment out of its own budget (e.g. webcams, etc.).

PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE

Partnership objectives
The main aims of the international partnership programmes are to understand different cultures, historical backgrounds, educational and social systems. ‘It promotes internationalism’ (Teacher 1). In light of increased globalisation this is seen as a particularly important thing to develop. ‘It helps the world to get together and reduces prejudice’ (Teacher 2).

Communication between partners
Communication between the schools takes place at least twice a month via emails or letters. The students of the school are in touch via letter, e-mail and chat programmes with the partner schools. Webcams have been put up so that live communication can take place.

Student/teachers and staff/community involvement

The school makes sure that everyone is involved in visits by acting as hosts to the UK team when they visit. The visit includes sightseeing trips to Agra and Jaipur. The Principal says:

Everyone is involved. When the fifteen students and two teachers come and stay with us, the whole school is their host. In the sense that they are recognized here, they dine in the mess, they live in the hostel with the girls, boys live with boys and teachers live with teachers. They stay in the hostel as well as in the guesthouse also.
Key in making the partnership work has been the continuity provided by the Principal for a long
time. The current Principal is very committed to the partnership:

My heart and soul is in this partnership. I am physically, emotionally and mentally
involved in this partnership and I would like to tell you that I have been part of all
the programmes.

Local support from the Haryana government and the constant interest from the International
Coordinator from the UK school (who visits often and was there when we spoke) have also been
critical in making the partnership a success.

Curriculum initiatives

The curriculum project reaches even further. Both students and teachers learn that subjects are
taught differently in each country. As the Principal points out, this is the case across the board,
but is most visible in History:

[...] The way History is taught here that the East India Company, when they had
come, they had basically captured us and they had ruled us. India became
basically a slave of the British. This is the way it is taught to us. At the same time,
when History is taught there, it is taught that East India Company was basically a
trading company that had come here for trade and whatever problems they were
encountering they were trying to overcome that. 1857 is basically considered to be
an uprising of independence here and that is considered as a military rebel by the
Britishers.

Accepting different points of view is particularly important for students and teachers and helps to
develop understanding of each other’s culture.

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

Students

The exercise that was done with students highlighted the increased levels of awareness,
understanding and appreciation of each other’s cultures that, according to the students, has
come about with the student exchange visits to the UK. They felt they had learnt most by getting
to know more about the host country’s culture, language, lifestyle and food as also about its
levels of technology, civic infrastructure, environment and climate. The students also reflected
upon the differences in the two countries’ systems of education, perceiving the education system
in the UK to be more ‘rational and practical’ and ‘advanced’ (‘everybody has a laptop’). They
noted the existence of the grading system in UK schools and the fact that they it is not an
examination-oriented system (‘no exams’). With theirs being a boarding school, they noted that
if they also had the five-lesson-a-day classes, like their partner school, it would give them the
opportunity to go home and ‘spend more time with their families’. The differences in the
school calendar (‘They start their new term in September and we start in April’) were also
noted.

The students referred to the positive aspects of the behaviour and conduct of people in the UK,
and noted them to be self-reliant, friendly and hospitable as well as ‘environment and science
conscious’. An interesting point they noted was the respect for the disabled they found existing
in UK. Students noted that in the UK people regard ‘disability as an asset and a resource’. An
other interesting point noted by them was in terms of parenting - ‘Parent-child relations are
more frank’ - and socialisation.
The above student responses are significant because they reflect the impact the visit to the UK had on the thinking and the personalities of these secondary students. They shed light on the broadening of their outlook, based on an increase in awareness, knowledge and exposure to a country and to a school totally different from their own. The experience of the visit, of one-to-one interaction with the UK students, their families and school has also led to them remarkably challenging the stereotypes and myths that they held prior to the visit, many of which were referred to by them during the exercise.

Student Exchange Visits:
Breaking Prejudices & Stereotypes

‘… Their care and love, hospitality and respect towards me and Indians was against my thinking …’

‘My prejudices were broken … before I went there I felt that they must be thinking themselves to be superior … but it was not like that.’

‘The trip made a difference … now can see things, the way they are really, in life.’

Teachers and leaders
Teachers in the focus group pointed to the curricular project as having been of particular interest. Beyond exploring with the students how History is interpreted differently across different countries and cultures, topics of global importance are also raised in parallel in both schools. These included, among others, the waste disposal systems in India and the UK. Teachers also benefit both from the trips that some of them have the chance to make as well as from the curricular projects. Experiences are shared and whatever teachers learn in the UK is shared through workshops back in India. The main areas of learning include computer skills, communication skills and awareness about punctuality, working culture, hygiene and dedication towards work. The concept of a different working culture was pointed out in particular by the Principal:

Their teachers are highly committed and they are professional and got thorough knowledge of their subjects. This we appreciate. And they are putting a lot of hard work for taking their class. They prepare for the class. In fact, there no teacher takes class without preparation in UK.

The Indian teachers have started preparing lessons and started using teaching aids and computers in the classroom more frequently. Relationships between teachers have also improved as senior and junior staff work together and develop mutual respect for each other, despite the traditional senior-junior divide in Indian schools. The impact of the partnership programmes has been wide ranging, broadening horizons and allowing students and teachers to learn about different cultures and social systems, according to the Principal:

We learn about each other’s history, way of living, education system, communication skills, moral values-everything. [...] We are trying to learn from each other in every aspect of life. Not only knowledge.
Communication and computer skills have improved in this school, and the UK school has picked up sports skills. The Principal believes that the exchange provides a life-changing experience:

They get to see the world. They have only heard of river Thames, when they get to see river Thames in actual ... a child coming from UK sees only Taj Mahal picture, he sees Taj Mahal in reality, so ...

The students’ response has been so positive that now 150 students apply for the limited number of places available on each exchange.

The community
The programmes support the local community which involves the children who come to India in visiting the local community and learning about local culture. They are also taken to visit the local orphanage. The school also feels that its status and reputation has improved with other schools, placing it among the elite schools in India and abroad, most notably through Round Square. Other schools want to emulate the programme. The Principal says:

[...] in addition to that - our admission process has become so broad-based now that earlier, when few students were applying for admission, now three thousand students are applying for hundred seats.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The school did not feel that anything in particular had hindered the development of the partnership. The Principal pointed out that the administrative delays by the government of Haryana at times delayed the visit of the Indian students. It was felt that the British Council should help with bridging funds in this instance. Despite this, the duration of the first partnership is a clear indication that the schools have been very successful at implementing and maintaining international links.

IMPROVING THE PARTNERSHIP

The students had suggestions on how to improve the student exchange programme. These included: increase the number of visits to the partner school (‘The exchange should be held every year instead of alternate years’), increase numbers of students participating (‘more children should be given the chance to visit UK in exchange programme’), reduce trip-related expenditure (so that ‘more children can afford it’), increase the duration of visit (‘so that a good understanding relation can be made’) and also increase the areas to be visited in UK. They also called for exchange programmes with more schools in the UK and other countries. Lastly, they felt that more teachers needed to be involved in the programme so as to involve more teachers as well as the students.

Teachers and the Principal felt that the visits, which are conducted every second year, should be held every year as the current system means that a particular class group does not get the chance to travel. It was also felt that the numbers of students should be increased to thirty and the numbers of teachers to four. More aid from the British Council could make this possible. One teacher in particular felt that the minimum exchange period should be four weeks. The Principal also felt that linking up with a British boarding school would be worthwhile as there would be interesting things to learn from each other.
INTRODUCTION

In Schools 709 and 84, interviews were conducted with the Principal and the former International Coordinator (a science teacher). In addition, a focus group discussion was held with eight teachers, which included teachers who had taken on the responsibilities of the international partnership programmes. Classroom activities were conducted with students from Class 5 in the primary section and Classes 9 and 12 from the secondary section. The Principal has been at the school for 21 years. The International Coordinator worked at the school for 15 years before moving on to another school belonging to the same chain in the 2008 academic year.

School profile
Schools 709 and 84 are a primary and a secondary school located in Delhi and part of a wider chain of schools. They were established by the Child Education Society in 1944. There are 20 schools all over India managed by the society, all of which are private schools. Schools 709 and 84 were started in 1987 and are spread over an area of more than 200,000 square feet. The student population is 5,000 strong. There are around 200 teachers in the school. The school is a coeducational day school for students aged from 3 to 17, i.e. the school caters from the nursery grade to Class 12. The school is attached to the CBSE board, recognised by the Delhi state government.

The school has fantastic facilities, with swimming pools, horses and many sports activities on offer. It also has impressive art facilities that are home to a sculpture department and painting department. Children are made aware of environmental issues through the paper recycling facility which they learn to operate. The paper made by the students is then used for school cards and certificates.

This is said to be a ‘mixed’ school catering to children belonging to different classes: lower-middle, upper-middle as well as upper and higher classes. However, the school appears to predominantly cater to the urban, educated, upper and middle (largely professional) classes of Delhi.

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2 Dr Marie Lall is a lecturer at the Institute of Education, University of London.
International partnerships
Currently schools 709 and 84 are a part of the UKIERI cluster partnerships. This partnership is newly established (2007) and therefore the student data refers primarily to the partnerships which preceded this new arrangement. However, the staff's focus is largely on developing this new cluster partnership. Due to limited funds, the UKIERI partnership focuses on teacher exchanges as opposed to student exchanges. Prior to this partnership, the school had a relationship with a UK primary school and a six-year long relationship with a UK secondary school. Both partner schools were located in very different regions in the UK and were not related to each other. The partnerships were developed independently and supported by the British Council. The schools have also had international partnerships with schools in other countries such as the USA, Australia, Singapore and South Africa.

PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Partnership formation
The international partnership programme was initiated by the current Principal who had had experiences of international exchange programmes and partnerships in the previous schools they had worked in. During the early 1990s contact was made with a UK secondary school. This developed into a fully fledged exchange programme with teachers and students spending three weeks in the UK and their counterparts visiting India for three weeks as well. The international programme was developed through a close relationship between the Indian Principal and the UK Headteacher. The International Coordinator says of the exchange programme:

‘... The exchange had advantages but it had limitations [in] that it did not percolate to all the students, the ethos and everything. It remained one of the events in the calendar where students would see students coming and what they would be doing and those who were involved in the exchange were greatly impacted but the impact was not as much on the whole school. So [in] 2003, we and [the principal] were called to the British Council to introduce the project to the international school board.’

The school then worked beyond the simple exchange of students to develop an international curriculum for both the primary and the secondary section. This received the International Schools Award.

The primary section also had a long-standing relationship with a primary school in the UK. However, this was a very small school and there were, at first, some reservations about how the two schools could link up. The international coordinator explains:

‘But what we started doing was, we started on culture, folktales, traditions and when we were talking about it, after I came back, that particular year, we had spent only on exchanges... But children writing Christmas cards, that sort of a thing. [...] In 2004, I discovered that British Council was offering British school partnership with [the primary school]. Which was approved and we got a joint curriculum project grant from British Council.’

The international links extend beyond this to the International School to School Experience (ISSE), based in New York, which provides exchanges for children who are younger than 12. The students took part in exchanges with children from the USA three times, with Australia four times, with New Zealand once and with Mexico once. Ten students and one teacher were involved in those exchanges. The school is very well connected internationally. The school approached the British Council, Canadian Education, USEFI and became a member of ISSE.
The current cluster partnership was initiated through the UKIERI platform offered by the British Council. Schools from India and the UK were allowed to meet in one place to allow them to match up as clusters.

The school received the Joint Curricular Project Grant and the UKIERI grant and has benefited from monetary as well as professional development support.

**Support and training**
Support for the partnership has been mainly financial and received mostly from the British Council. The British Council has also facilitated the current programme by introducing the schools and bringing them together and giving them a forum to meet face to face. The financial support has also allowed for workshops and leadership camps to take place. The schools also support the programme financially, but there is no national or local government support.

**PARTNERSHIP IN PRACTICE**

The practice of the international partnerships varies from partner school to partner school, as the International Coordinator explains:

‘It’s a different kind of partnership programme with each school… It depends upon the shared vision between the two teachers and the head teachers and it also depends upon the nature of the communication that you have. If the nature of the communication is only through mails, then the nature of the project will be different and the impact also varies with it. The reach of the project will be smaller, if you are just doing the mailing kind of a thing and if you are facilitating exchanges, then the impact will definitely be greater.’

The current UKIERI cluster partnership involves six Indian schools. Principals from three schools have come for a visit and attended a leadership camp. Beyond this three teachers and two principals came for a very short stay to go around the cluster schools.

Meetings are held to chart out a programme which involves curriculum content to be taught in parallel as well as teacher exchanges. The school also hopes that student exchanges will take place in future.

Past programmes have had an important shared curricular focus, as a teacher explains:

‘[The students did a] comparison between river Yamuna and river Thames. They made a power-point presentation and we sent it to them and then we posted a lot of letters, explaining each others environment, pictures and all. [We were also] looking at activities like eco-watch, how your ecosystems look like, all the environmental practices that you appreciate and you don’t appreciate. That’s a comparison not only of the environment but also of the attitudes and value systems.’

**Partnership objective**
For both the primary and the secondary schools, the main aims of the international partnership programmes are to make the students more globally aware, understand that there is a world beyond the immediate environment in which they live and understand the culture in other countries. The principal and International coordinator, describe the aims:
‘Ultimately to realise the theme of global village... You sow the seeds now in the minds of children and you reap the fruit later. The basic goal is that to open up your minds to the world, not being narrow-minded.’

‘... Our school partnerships aim at bridging the gap between north-south, east-west. It aims in improving the understanding about each others values, policies, and systems.’

Beyond this, the programme allows the building up of an international network of friends, and the joint teaching of global issues such as the environment and health.

PERCEIVED INFLUENCE

Students

Primary school in-classroom workshop on ‘individual drawing in groups’. This workshop was conducted with 51 students from Grade 5. The rationale for the primary class exercise was to ‘give students the opportunity to draw a picture that reflected their perception of themselves and of their school link partners’. A total of 16 themes/subjects were identified on the basis of the children’s drawings. These were: buildings, historical monuments, family and home, school, national flag, pollution, cleanliness and hygiene, hobbies, dress, food, games, religion, nature, peace, cyber-friendship with UK students, technology and climate. These drawings shed light on the individual perceptions, the level of awareness and understanding of primary school students of the school about the UK and India as identified from the above themes.

Buildings: twelve students chose as their subject buildings in UK and in India. It is interesting to note that the buildings in the UK were seen as and labelled as ‘tall’, while those in India were seen as and labelled as ‘small’ and/or ‘medium’. This reflects on students’ perception of the UK as a land of skyscrapers.

Historical monuments and national heritage: the fact that a majority (18) of the children's drawings focused on historical monuments in both the UK and in India reflects a high level of awareness about the cultural heritage in both countries. Some of the subjects of the children’s drawings were: Big Ben, Buckingham Palace, the City Tower, St Paul’s Cathedral, St James, the London Eye in the UK, and the Red Fort, India Gate, Qutab Minar and the Taj Mahal in India.

Family and home: eleven students chose their families and homes and the families and homes of students from the partner school as the theme of their drawings. There seemed to be no difference in the two pictures. This seems to reflect upon their understanding of the fact that their families are largely the same as that of the students in the UK.

School: four students’ drawings took up the theme of their own school and that of the partner school. No major difference could be spotted in both these drawings and the fact that they had been drawn as largely identical reflects upon the perception of the students about the extent of uniformity and sameness of their schools.

The national flag and map: of both India and the UK represented another theme found in six of the students’ drawings. This reflects on the awareness and understanding of the symbols of nationhood and national identity.

Pollution, cleanliness and hygiene: was a theme that was touched upon by a total of nine students. It is interesting to note that all the students, except one, saw the UK as a ‘clean’ and ‘tidy’ country and India as a ‘dirty’ and ‘untidy’ country. They seemed to have made a link
between the number of cars and the level of pollution in India. The UK was seen as having fewer cars and therefore was seen as being ‘cleaner’.

Dress and food: two of the students’ drawings focused on food and dress in India and in the UK. Students’ perceptions of food in the UK is that it consists of fish and chips, chicken and hotdogs. Dress was seen in terms of kurta, pyjama and duppatta in India and skirt, blouse, shirt and trousers in the UK. The differences here are interesting as it sheds light upon the students’ perspectives on the issue.

Games: three of the students’ drawings took up the theme of games. While cricket was identified as the favourite game of the people in the UK, cricket, hockey and football were identified as the favourite games of the people of India. This reflects upon the awareness of the students about the games played in both the countries.

Religion: three of the students’ drawings seemed to depict themes related to religion, i.e. churches were drawn to depict the places of religious worship in the UK and temples were drawn depicting place of religious worship in India. While this reflects upon the children’s understanding that the people in the UK are largely Christians, the depiction of temples only as the place of worship in India does not reflect upon the socio-religious diversity of India.

Nature: three of the drawings had nature in UK and in India as their subject. One of the drawings was of the Yamuna River, Delhi. Others were of the ‘port city’ of the UK and of ‘nature’.

Peace: one student drew a picture of a handshake and a dove: the two hands were labelled as ‘UK & India’ and entitled ‘Peace Forever’. This reflects upon the spirit of internationalism and desire for world peace in this student.

Cyber-friendship: three of the drawings had as their theme the students’ cyber-pals in the UK. The drawings depicted a computer and Google Messenger. These drawings are very significant as they shed light upon the close friendships and bonding developing between the primary school students with their friends in the partner school in the UK.

Technology: only one student saw India as primarily a ‘village’ and the UK as a developed country. While the picture of the UK had a computer drawn on it, the picture of India was entitled ‘village’ and contained a picture of a house and a well. That only one student saw differences in terms of technology in UK and in India is also significant.

Climate: one student drew the difference in the climates of India and the UK. They saw the climate in the UK as cold, windy and cloudy and that of the India as hot and ‘nice’.

Significance of exercise in terms of the perceived impact of the programme
This exercise is important as it highlights the impact of the partnership programme in increasing the students’ levels of curiosity and information they have gathered about the partner school and country.

The curriculum taught at the school includes subjects on global issues and this is reflected in the pictures drawn (many of the students referred to their General Knowledge books as the source of information about UK, both the country and its people). At the same time, the role of teachers and the project work on international issues also seems to have played a role. In addition, some of the children’s drawings point to the fact that the role of the internet and media cannot be downplayed. Three of the drawings, as mentioned above, had as their theme their friendship with their cyber-pals in the UK.
Secondary section group exercise

A group exercise was conducted as part of the in-classroom participatory workshop with students from Grades 9 and 12 in the secondary section. A total of 42 students participated in the workshop. The rationale for the secondary class exercise was to ‘give students an opportunity to work in groups to discuss their experiences with the link, including what they have done, what they have enjoyed, and what they think might make the link better’.

Captions given by students on the written exercise are worth noting:

‘Exchange programme rocks!!’ This reflects on the sentiments and views of the secondary school students, some of whom had already been to the UK under the student exchange programme with their partner school. Interaction with the students’ shed light on their enthusiasm and desire for the school exchange programme to continue as well as for more students to be given the opportunity to travel to the UK under the programme.

‘Global vision through interactions’, ‘Global unity in our hands’. Students seem to understand their particular role in the school link programme as individual agents of action and change. They seem to see themselves as individuals who can play an important role as unifying factors, bringing harmony and the spirit of oneness in the diverse global community. They also seem to be willing to take on this responsibility with willingness and enthusiasm.

‘One world, one family, ‘India & UK: one family’, ‘Unity creates bonds’ The students’ views reflect upon the ideals of internationalism and global unity that the school link programme aims at developing among children. It is encouraging to know that students seem to have gained a greater awareness, understanding and appreciation of and desire to integrate the UK and India in the spirit of internationalism.

Significance of exercise in terms of the perceived impact of the programme

This exercise is important as it reflects upon the level of awareness and understanding of secondary school students about the partner country, partner school and its students. It also highlights, to some extent, the impact of the partnership programme in increasing their levels of curiosity, desire for acquiring more information about the partner school and country and also, more importantly, the desire to be a part of such programmes in future.

The activities that the students did, as a part of the programme, were: writing letters, emailing/chatting on online social networking sites, such as Facebook, and Orkut, exchanging photographs, interacting with UK teachers on their visit to India, discussing issues on the environment as well as freely interacting and talking to the students from their partner school. These were activities that they like doing and would like to continue with in future, on a more sustained basis.

The secondary school students have many suggestions for improving the student exchange programme and feel that the number and also duration of the student exchange visits could be increased. They call for more sports exchange visits, academic and co-curricular workshops, and competitions through exchange visits and also through video-conferencing.

They feel that staying in the homes of students from the partner school is a great idea, along with attending classes in the partner school, celebrating festivals and sightseeing, as these activities represent diverse ways of bonding with the students and with the partner country. The activities also allow for an integration of the local culture with that of the global.
The curriculum taught at this school includes subjects on global issues and is reflected in the students’ perceptions. At the same time, the role of teachers and the project work given on international issues also seems to have had an important impact. Ultimately, the student exchange visits seem to have played a major role in defining the students’ views on the exchange programme and their understanding of the importance of the spirit of internationalism in today’s world.

The programmes are seen to have impacted on pupils and teachers as well as their families. The analysis of the student exercises reveal that the UK schools play a big part in their daily reality.

‘In fact, they come back and their total attitude is changed. And they feel that other countries are doing better than us, the good points they have and we can adopt from them.’

The effects appear to be long lasting, as a member of staff explains:

‘The best thing that I like is that the old children who had visited UK in 1993–1994 are now 31-32-33 years old and now are with families, still exchanging letters with their partners in UK, been visiting their families for 5–6 days... so, this is the kind of long term impact that I look at. Out of 16 students you send, if you get even two students who maintain long term relations, I think the goal is achieved. [...] Distance is no barrier now.’

Pupils from both countries are seen to have become more confident as well as internationally aware, as the coordinator describes:

‘I can show you letters which I have received from very, very reticent, shy people who participated in it. She was a little English girl coming from an English village who won't speak in front of anybody. After going back, after she completed the exchange, came back to teach all alone in a south Indian school. And, you know, she travelled all over Kerala.’

The impact, however, is not limited to those students who travel, although evidently they are left with a lifelong impression. The internationalised curriculum and the teaching methods adopted by teachers have an impact on the whole school.

Teachers and leaders

The teacher focus group reveals that many teachers are involved through the curricular projects which had been developed as a part of the partnerships. In fact the exchange of teaching techniques, methods and lesson plans is seen as a major benefit of the partnership programmes. The international themes on environmental and other international issues are seen as a way to extend the debate beyond the frontiers of India. The school has adopted the practice of international assemblies and is consciously integrating internationalism into the wider curriculum. The teachers all feel that the pupils, as well as the staff of the school, benefit. A teacher says: ‘No one can ignore interdependence today. We are training the future citizens.’ Those who have travelled with the students to the UK feel that it has impacted their teaching methodology. It is felt across the board that teaching in India is less hands-on and that teachers from India could learn from their British counterparts.

Teachers who go to the UK through the programme grow closer and work together more because they are working for a common cause. Under normal circumstances teachers from the
primary and the secondary schools hardly meet, but through the UKIERI cluster partnership they meet more often, come closer, share more and relationships improve. The International Coordinator admits that such visits allowed them to learn more outside of the classroom. The partnership programmes further the professional development of teachers. But it goes beyond this as teachers have started to send their children abroad for higher education. Many feel that they benefit personally, as do their families, and in the process the whole school community is part of a capacity-building project. The International Coordinator says:

‘The most rewarding part of it is again my personal and professional growth and the benefits I have been able to bring to my entire school in terms of, you know, prestige, in terms of capacity-building, in terms of student development, so that has been the most rewarding part.’

Community
The parents of the students are seen to be the most affected part of the local community as they are involved through their children in both the exchanges as well as the international curricular projects. The principal says:

‘We send circulars to all parents so that they know that the school is having this programme. Then, those who are interested because money is required... read it and come back. So all 5,000 parents get involved into it. Whether [a] child can pay or not, we still send the circulars so that at least, parents are aware that school is having this programme. That is one way of involving them [...] Children who are going out – the parents themselves become interested and they socialise together. They come back, meet, discuss all these things together. That’s another important aspect.’

The wider local community outside of the school is not seen as being either involved or impacted largely due to the size of the school.

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES
The school also acknowledges that such partnerships pose challenges. Making the curriculum more international was the first challenge successfully achieved as a part of the International Award. But challenges also include choosing the right students and staff to take part in the exchange, as they represent both the school and their country. The Principal explains:

‘They will showcase India. So, you got to pick up right people, with right kind of attitude. If you pick up one bad person with a bad attitude, the whole thing is gone. So, one keeps one’s fingers crossed that the group that is going is carrying the right kind of attitude.’

Often, such partnerships also depend on the personal relationships between the heads of the various schools. Any change in leadership can mean the end of a partnership as was the case between both the school and their UK partners a few years ago. Matching similar schools is also important as shown by the original match between the much smaller primary school in the UK with the primary school. The partnership was lopsided as a comparatively greater percentage of UK teachers were able to visit the Indian partner. The difference in school calendars has also posed some difficulties as Indian and British schools have different holiday seasons. In the end, the partnerships tend to work mostly between September and December.
Geopolitics have also had effects as, during the Iraq War, parents felt uncomfortable with their children travelling across the Middle East. Between 2000 and 2006 exchanges were reduced and children started to go to Africa.

‘Most challenges are overcoming and unlearning, what you say, the conventional way of thinking. First you have to unlearn that. So the biggest challenge is to be open to new ideas.’

IMPROVING THE PARTNERSHIP

In the current cluster-based partnership there is a particular limitation on student exchanges, as the Principal explains:

‘When our teachers are going to [the partner country], they have a kind of rule that our children, parents or teachers cannot go and stay in a family. Their parents and teachers cannot come and stay here with a family... there are security reasons, that’s what we were told.’

This is seen as the main disadvantage as culture cannot be learnt in a hotel. The partnerships could be improved with more frequent and longer visits with schools that are willing and able to exchange students.