"Cultivating 3Cs of students through the school library": Turning theory into practice, 10 projects at G.D. Goenka world School, India

Madhu Bhargava
G.D.Goenka World School
Sohna-Gurgaon Road, Haryana
India
Madhu_bhargava@msn.com

Cultivating 3Cs of Students through the School Library

Communication, creativity, and collaboration are life skills that if honed well make our students better scholars and successful citizens in their lives. The web and its tools have created tremendous opportunities for global outreach and multicultural understanding. It is now more desirable and essential to share human experiences of teaching and learning and integrate the contents in all subject areas. In today's education context, global collaboration requires being embedded in the curriculum content so that "action learning in real world contexts" Kristi (1996) is encouraged and attained.

Year 2012-13 has been a year of extensive global collaboration and outreach for G.D.Goenka world School, India. Ten projects based on curriculum content were planned and launched during the year under British Council International School Award, involving whole school community. For each project connectivity was established with students from many countries and projects were jointly accomplished with evidence that school libraries develop student's life skills in a multi faceted mode. After each project evidence was collected by way of feedback forms from various stake holders such as students themselves, teachers, parents and visitors, pictures, e-mail exchange, newsletters, postings on web sites, wiki and blogs which prove in very many ways that School libraries can be that center of augmentation which not only build capacity of the students to connect effectively with global partners and learn collaboratively but also progressively develop life skills such as Cognitive, personal, and Inter-personal.

The workshop aims:
*   *Sharing evidence based practice with professional partners.*
*   *Develop further international links and collaboration and collaborative projects.*
Content:
*   *Participants study projects in groups.*
*   *Use technology/Internet to learn and register for the projects for their schools.*
*   *Discuss new projects with partners.*
*   *Each participant designs a project for students and finds a partner to collaborate.*
Outcomes:
*   *At the end of work shop each participant will know important organizations which provide secure space for international projects.*
*   *Participants will see live and completed projects.*
*   *Will be able to register for participation.*
*   *Will be able to find international partners for collaborative projects.*
*   *Will have innovative ideas for projects.*
*   *Will get step wise information on 'how to go about?'*

- *Will get a tool kit for future use.*

Part I   (15 minutes)
Contents of this part of work shop will be in the form of a presentation to the audience divided into at least 5 groups. This 15 minutes presentation will cover definitions of 'Life Skills' and why is it vital for educational institutions while imparting formal education, to imbibe in the curricula.

The Centre for International Scholarship in School Libraries (CISSL) at Rutgers University holds the belief, substantiated by five decades of research, that school libraries help young people learn. School libraries are learning laboratories where information, technology, and inquiry come together in a dynamic way that resonates with 21st century learners. School libraries are the school's physical and virtual learning commons where inquiry, thinking, imagination, discovery, and creativity are central to students' information-to-knowledge journey, and to their personal, social, and cultural growth. School librarians understand that children of the Millennium generation are consumers and creators in multi-media digital spaces where they download music, games, and movies; create websites, avatars, surveys and videos; and engage in social networking (National School Boards Association, 2007) Over the last 3 decades the approaches to literacy and education seem to be swinging away from literacy and education for its own sake to their potential and actual use in real life contexts. They need to help people develop better life skills and livelihoods (Oxenham et al., 2002).

Life skills defined in a general way mean a mix of knowledge, behavior, attitudes, and values and designate the possession of some skill and know-how to do something, or reach an aim. They include competencies such as critical thinking, creativity, ability to organize, social and communication skills, adaptability, problem solving, ability to co-operate on a democratic basis that are needed for actively shaping a peaceful future. A number of such lists exist which show a high degree of correspondence, though few lists are in complete agreement (Singh, 2002).

There are many different understandings of life skills but no definition is universally accepted. Different organizations attach different meanings to the term. The International Bureau of Education (IBE) derives its understanding from the Delors four pillars of learning - learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together - and defines life skills as personal management and social skills which are necessary for adequate functioning on an independent basis. (See: http://www.ibe.unesco.org/international/DocServices/Thesaurus/00003739.htm).

UNICEF has defined life skills as psychosocial and interpersonal skills that are generally considered important. The choice of, and emphasis on, different skills will vary according to the topic. For example, decision making may feature strongly in HIV/AIDs prevention whereas conflict management may be more prominent in a peace education program. According to UNICEF, it is ultimately the interrelations between the skills that produce powerful behavioral outcomes, especially where this approach is supported by other strategies such as media, policies and health services
(See: http://www.unicef.org…me/lifeskills/whatwhy/skills.html)

Why life skills?

It is not enough to ask how life skills are defined in general; rather it is essential to ask how they are defined in particular life situations and throughout life (Ouane, 2002; Goody, 2001). Life skills are developed as a result of a constructive processing of information, impressions, encounters and experiences - both individual and social - that are a part of one's daily life and work, and the rapid changes that occur in the course of one's life. The social dimensions are particularly important as they condition life itself and compel individuals to purposefully acquire skills, and develop attitudes and values in order to face and master real life situations (Ouane, 2002).

Life skills learning need not be confined to a specific age or stage in life. The idea of understanding life skills from a lifelong learning perspective rests upon integrating learning and living both horizontally across family, community, study, work, leisure, and 'life spaces' and vertically from birth to death. Lifelong or in this case 'life skills learning' is reflected in the knowledge, experience, wisdom, harmony, and self-realisation rooted in the practical affairs of ordinary men and women (Yeaxley 1929:165 quoted in Ouane 2002). From the Faure Report (1972) to the Delors Report (1996), it has been recognised that lifelong learning is integral to a meaningful human life.

In the future every educational endeavour will have to ask itself whether and to what extent it promotes learning activities that help develop life skills that are vital to coping with the key issues of one's life and survival, and to what extent it stimulates requisite attitudes and motivations (curiosity, interest, self-starting qualities) for lifelong learning. Learning to learn is itself is a basic need; one could say a life skill. In the Jomtien Declaration of The World Conference on Education for All (WCEFA) "basic learning needs comprise both essential learning tools (such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving) and basic learning content (such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning."

The critique on formal education is that it has concentrated too much on the instrumental and vocational skills and on the cognitive dimension (literacies) rather than on other dimensions such as the reflective and the psychosocial dimensions. On the other hand research has shown that life skills can be systematically acquired and reinforced through informal learning settings. Such learning occurs in families, communities, organisations and associations, the workplace and through the media. They focus attention on people's empowerment and on values and attitudes such as promoting a better understanding between individuals, active participation, and the capacity to negotiate, to live together, and to develop critical thinking. Life skills learning need to be included in curricula and not delivered as separate, stand-alone programmes except where conditions may require.

Part II   (20 Minutes)
Each group will get a copy of 2 projects which have successfully accomplished the objective learning life skills to study, and groups exchange the projects within groups, so that by the end of 15 minutes everyone has studied 10 projects. A presentation will accompany to showcase the projects. Real action plan and dossier of activities is shared with the audience.

G.D.Goenka World School, India is an international school, hosting students of about 39 nationalities. The school has many challenges in providing relevant international education which must address not only a holistic education approach but have value embedded internationalism at the core. It must be able to create unity in the diverse cultures of the world it is catering to. We as educators must accept the fact that our students are 21st century students who are born just a few years ago, are digital natives, and are used to rapid

technological advancements. We cannot expect them to be seated in front of the teacher taking notes with chalk and talk methods which cannot adequately prepare these young people for future.

In the process of self-evaluation to see how far the school embeds internationalism and international mindedness in the curriculum and beyond, we applied for the International School award to the British Council which is an authority to evaluate those elements. An action plan with a plethora of activities was designed, interwoven with the curriculum and submitted to the British council, which was approved in February 2012.

These activities were an incredible value addition….enriching… enchanting….catalytic and captivating….a truly international experience for the whole school community. I was appointed additionally as International School Award coordinator, with a laid out job profile to connect our students with international partners and accomplish activities of the action plan (Annexure 1). I was successful in establishing partnerships with school students in the USA, UK, Brazil, Egypt, Croatia, Portugal, China, Japan, France, Germany and many more. Every project opened myriad communication channels like epals, connecting class rooms, IASL list serve, wikis, blogs, emails, and Skype. These created a stir not because these are new to the students but these were used for curriculum projects. Our primary schools students were excited to the hilt when they shared Indian folk tales on Skype with their partner school in China. Their enthusiasm was also high when their partner school in the USA posted their pictures on Google Earth for another project 'Teacher in space'. E-pals have proved to be a super tool for classroom to classroom communication for teaching and learning this year.

Now we will look into the projects for better understanding. The whole school community collaborated to accomplish the projects which have left the school with echoing harmony and positivism. Student community has honed the number of skills which includes Communication, creativity, and collaboration. Our students have deployed management skills and have learned to appreciate multinational, multicultural, and multilingual differences. We have very successfully established long term partnerships in many countries and strengthened previous ties.

Part III   (25 Minutes)
In this session the audience will discover a tool kit of websites where they will register themselves and their school for collaborative projects with international partners. Sample activities and action plan template will be shared. (Annexure 2 for websites toolkit and sample activities with learning outcomes of life skills of Communication, Creativity, Collaboration and many more…).

At least two or three projects will be revealed to the participants who will use these as models to design new projects. The participants will also see evidence of the project development on following web sites:
http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/learn-to-preserve-endangered-species/project-space/exchange-area?page=5
http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/blog/58732
http://gdgws.gdgoenka.com/
http://iaslasia.pbworks.com/w/page/58688285/FrontPage

1. World Wild Life
2. Reading…a Life long journey
3. Jamboree

Part IV   (30 Minutes)

All workshop participants will be given a hard copy of the template to design a project. Group members discuss new projects adding more life skills and designing better evaluation methods and better use of technology. Each participant designs a project and will be given an opportunity to showcase one to all the participants.

Citations

American Association of School Librarians (2007) Standards for the 21st-Century Learner. Retrieved from
http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/aasl/guidelinesandstandards/learningstandards/standards.cfm

References

Daswani, C. J (2002) Evolution of Adult Learning Programmes in the Asian Region. In: UIE, Institutionalising Lifelong Learning: creating conducive environments for adult Learning in the Asian Context, edited by Madhu Singh, UNESCO Institute for Education.

Delors, J. (1996) *Learning: The Treasure Within*, Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century, Paris, UNESCO Publishing Press.

Kristi Rennebohm Franz, adapted from her article "Towards a Critical Social Consciousness in Children: Multicultural Peace Education in A First Grade Classroom". The Ohio State University College of Education Journal Theory into Practice. Vol 35, Number 4, 1996.

Ouane, A. (2002) Key competencies In Lifelong Learning. *Institutionalising lifelong learning: Creating Conducive Environments for Adult Learning in the Asian Context*, UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg.

Singh, M. (2002). Understanding life skills.

Todd, R.J. & Gordon, C.A. School Libraries, Now More Than Ever: A Position Paper of The Center for International Scholarship in School Libraries.

UNESCO-UIE (1997) Fifth International Conference on Adult Education, *Final Report*, Paris, UNESCO.

Yeaxley, B.A. (1929). *Lifelong Education*, London, Cassel.

Annexure 1

Project 1 (Title and brief description): Journeys of Rivers

The project will allow students across two Standards to explore facts about prominent rivers in 3-4 different countries and understand the similarities and differences in issues that affect the lives of people who live around the rivers.

Learning Outcomes (max. 3) - at the end of the project the students will be able to:

1. Explain key facts about the rivers they study and articulate the issues related to the rivers
2. Present in groups, a comparative study of life around different rivers and how it has changed over a period of time
3. Identify at least 3 other examples of issues related to sustainable development

	Description	Month & Duration of activity	Classes/ No. of students involved Countries covered	Subjects covered	Teacher(s) responsible	Evaluation methods
Activity 1	Research work and Picture-essays on prominent rivers like Ganges, Mississippi, Nile and Thames - students will do the research work independently and work in small groups to compare and contrast the features and issues. They will then present their work in the form of Picture-essays to the entire class. They will also use the Template Project on Rivers from Schools Online website.	2 weeks in Aug. 2013	Std. VII; 130 students India, Egypt, UK,	Geography English Arts EVS	Ms Vidya S.	Students' presentations Feedback questionnaire Peer assessment Teacher report
Activity 2	Student Panel Discussion (inter-section competition) on economic-social issues related to rivers and impact of modern day changes on sustainable development of places located around rivers studied	1 week in Aug. 2013	Std. VIII; 100 students One student panel from UK partner school via video-conferencing	Economics Geography English	Mr. Shankar Ms Sujata Roy	Student questionnaires Focus group discussion Teacher report Audience feedback

Project 2 (Title and brief description): English Language e-Week

The project will allow students across primary classes to practice English language skills, specifically comprehension and creative writing, through a range of online international projects. While developing language skills, students will also learn a few facts about the other countries.

Learning Outcomes (max. 3) - at the end of the project the students will be able to:

1. Explain key facts about the rivers they study and articulate the issues related to the rivers
2. Present in groups, a comparative study of life around different rivers and how it has changed over a period of time
3. Identify at least 3 other examples of issues related to sustainable development

	Description	Month & Duration of activity	Classes/ No. of students involved Countries covered	Subjects covered	Teacher(s) responsible	Evaluation methods
Activity 1	Students will be involved in different online projects (resources from British Council Schools Online) • Worksheets from LearnEnglish Kids website will be used to develop writing skills • Monster Exchange - students will draw their monsters and exchange written descriptions with link schools in Africa and Thailand. They will also learn 5 things about each of the countries.	1 week in Sept. 2013	Std. II & III; 200 students Africa, Thailand	English Arts Social studies ICT	Ms Rashmi	Students' actual work Feedback worksheets Class quiz Teacher report
Activity 2	• Using School Online Project Template - Shared learning in English literature, students in our school and partner UK school will study a Shakespeare play and exchange survey questionnaires to understand the characters from different points of view • 100 word short film - students will participate in a scriptwriting workshop and write film scripts in groups using only 100 words. Five films will be developed into short films by the Film Club of the school. Teachers to do online course English for International Exchange	1 week in Sept. 2013	Std. IV & V; 225 students UK	English Social Studies Drama ICT	Ms Kiran Singh	Feedback questionnaires Teacher report Partner school feedback Participants' reflection on the online course

....	....	....
(Principal's Signature)	Date of submission	Approval status

Annexure 2

Tool kit of useful web sites:
Schools Online- http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/regions/isl
Connecting Classrooms world wide- http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/programmes-and-funding/linking-programmes-worldwide/connecting-classrooms
100 words- http://www.100wordplay.com
http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/projects-and-resources/projects/100-words
World Voice- http://schoolsonline.britishcouncil.org/projects-and-resources/world-voice
ePals- www.epals.com
United Class Rooms- http://www.uclass.org
Oxfam Education- http://www.oxfam.org.uk/education/
World Info Zone- http://www.worldinfozone.com/
Teachers' TV- www.teachers.tv
Cyber School Bus- http://www.un.org/cyberschoolbus/habitat/index.asp
BBC- www.bbc.co.uk

Biographical note
Madhu Bhargava is currently Dean of Libraries with G.D.Goenka World School, a premier chain of schools in India. She is a long time school library professional with approximately 26 years experience. She also develops and coordinates International activities and connections of the schools. She is a teacher trainer for a chain Army Public Schools of India and has also developed capacity building modules for National Council of Educational Research and Training, India. She has also been honoured by Indian School Library Association and International Association of School Librarianship with "S M Ganguly Best School Librarian Award 2002-03", "IASL Ken Haycock Leadership Development Award-2005", "IASL Softlink Excellence Award-2008" respectively. She has presented number of professional papers at national and International conferences. Recently the school has been accredited with "British Council International School Award" under her leadership.