

## Global Schoolroom.

### Participant Evaluation of the Summer 2014 experience.

*Global Schoolroom (GS) 'seeks to promote the sharing of educational experience between communities worldwide to help eradicate poverty, promote economic development and build sustainable communities.'*

*The main activity of the organization is the sharing of teacher educational experience and training between Ireland and India<sup>1</sup>. Trained volunteer teachers from Ireland deliver a four week, face-to-face element of the Global Schoolroom Diploma in Teacher Education. For the Irish teachers University College Dublin (UCD) offer an MA qualification built around their mentoring experience. For the Indian participants the course builds over 3 years to a Diploma qualification. A key element of the experience is the exposure and insight gathered by the Irish and Indian teachers of issues which affect both education and the wider global issues which are the focus of Development Education programmes in schools today. (2011 GS evaluation).*

As part of its programme monitoring and evaluation process, Global Schoolroom (GS) holds a participant evaluation day in September, following the summer programme delivery visit to India. This focuses on the experiences of the participant Irish teachers in the summer placement programme in a number of centres in NE India. The 2014 evaluation took place with 16 participant teachers present. The evaluation process was similar to the previous 3 annual events, carried out by Patsy Toland. Participants met with GS team members but the body of the engagement, as per previous years, was a dialogue between PT and the Irish teacher participants without the presence of GS staff. This process is less to do with freedom to express issues related to the GS experience, but more to allow the day to cover a wide range of issues without the need to 'solve problems' as they arise. As in previous years, GS staff members were invited to address the group and deal with any immediate issues at the end of the formal evaluation.

This evaluation has included responses by GS to some of the issues raised. Following circulation of a first draft it was felt that certain issues raised did not fully reflect the preparation, training or information provided both in the course content and placement preparation. Issues raised by the participants may reflect the fact that 11 of the 22 participants missed at least one training session and 3 missed more than that.

These have been considered and are reflected in the recommendations section.

#### The Process:

Although there is a structured process for this evaluation, it must be recognized that the informal meeting and 're-union' element of the day is extremely important. This is the first occasion that most of the participants have met since

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Copies of relevant docs attached as appendices.

their departure from India and return to Ireland. Coffee breaks and lunch times are 'self-determined' by the group and a good balance is agreed to achieve both elements of the day.

1. Introductions and short 'get to know' ice-breaker. This was used to show that even though participants may have spent a lot of time during training and living together in India, there are many aspects to people we never get to know.
2. A personal evaluation tree exercise to focus the participants on their present level of engagement with the GS process. This is a self reflection process and is undisclosed in the evaluation process but helps bring attention to the experience as a personal development process.
3. A dialogue 'needs analysis' was carried out to establish expectations of the day.
4. An open forum feedback session based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Pyramid.
5. An individual ranking exercise of the value of the programme to each individual.
6. A group Diamond Ranking exercise on the value of the programme.
7. The final session included an information and Q & A session with GS staff.

1. Ice-breaker was carried out in pairs with people who had shared their time in India. It served to initiate a relaxed and fun atmosphere, as well as reminding everyone that it takes more than the GS experience to get to know people well.

### 2. Tree Self evaluation.

This exercise asks each individual to place the programme within their own context and life. It helps to carry the process of the day beyond the evaluation process and into each person's own life experience. Also a useful tool for teachers to use with their students with limited literacy skills.

### 3. Needs analysis.

Participants were open and shared both personal and collective needs for the day, showing respect for each other and the GS experience. Only a few participants expressed a need for issues to be dealt with there and then. These were taken up during the final session, but had been discussed and dealt with by the group themselves.

The 3 key areas of concern for the group were:

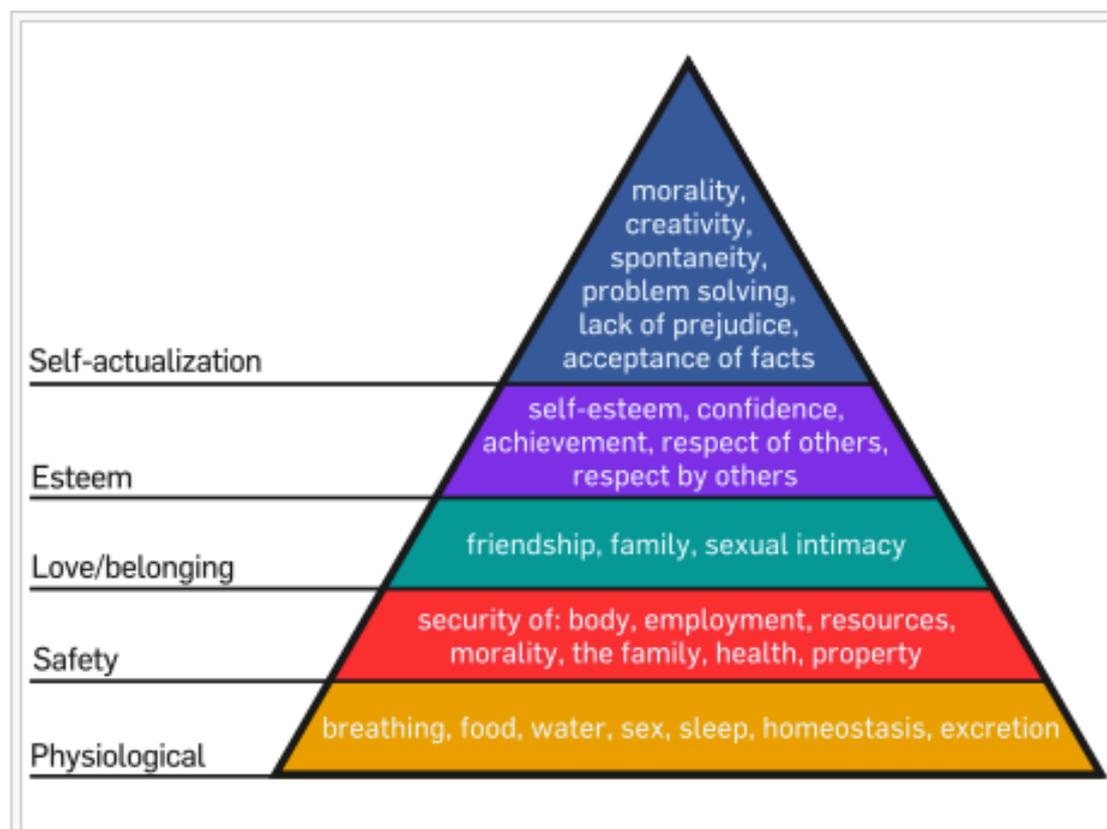
1. The training process and best use of that time.
2. The need for more 'local' information on the Indian training centres.
3. The format and relevance of some material in the training Manual.

The main areas of praise were:

1. The safe and secure experience all experienced through GS staff.
2. A very fulfilling and life-changing experience.
3. An experience of the 'real India'.
4. A great learning and refresher course for teachers in classroom methodology.

#### 4. Maslow Hierarchy Pyramid open forum feedback session.

To help structure the feedback session the participants are focused on increasingly higher levels of need and satisfaction through this hierarchy process.



##### a. Physiological.

Flights

- Balance between cost and comfort recognized.
- 8 hour stop-over on return in Mumbai was difficult.
- Request for flight details earlier in the preparation.
- Facilitating other travel plans – helps few but sends costs up and makes flight planning difficult and 'late information' to others.

*This is a key area for consideration both by participants and GS in the travel planning. It is not possible to accommodate the need for early travel information, avoid multiple flights and stopovers – if participants expect further travel in India on a personal basis following the GS placement. This is reflected further in the recommendations section.*

Food, Accommodation, phone access, etc were excellent and appreciated by all.

India:

- One centre which was a 'convent' provided some challenge to the team. They were unsure about the level of 'involvement' in daily life – participants felt they were treated as 'honored guests' but still unsure of expectations of joining in with the daily religious routines. Prior knowledge would have helped.
- All agreed that a more 'local' guide to each centre would have helped. This was addressed during the day and each centre prepared detailed notes for their centre. This covered issues not covered in the general training and preparation. These are attached and include the contact details for a participant who is willing to brief next year's participants.  
*This information flow from former participants has been made available but may not be accessed during training.*

Ireland:

- Some issues of concern during the Irish training phase were expressed. Participants would like more time to get to know team members early in the training process.  
Facilitation of car-pooling and travel for those living distant from the training centre.  
Alternate centres should reflect the group home locations so that travel distances can be suited – participants may be able to offer alternative training or accommodation centres.  
The constant movement of people during vaccination day meant that participants missed essential training elements over the course of the day.  
*This has not been an issue previously and mainly due to re-scheduling by the TMB staff and outside the control of GS.*

### *b. Safety & Resources*

There was unanimous praise for the GS programme and staff in this context. This included travel, accommodation, local integration, 'down-time', respect among all participants from Ireland and India.

More information on the 'local context was suggested – local travel, towns, recreational activities, local guide with good level of English language, name of safe drivers, distance to schools, etc. These are mainly addressed by the group action on the day, producing centre specific 'micro-information' based on experience. This might include a typical 'day-in-the-life' timetable for each centre.

*Much of this information is available through former participants and should be emphasized as a part of the personal preparation by each individual. GS provides*

*unmediated access to former participants which is an excellent practice and possibly under-utilised by participants.*

The Training Manual.

The course manual has undergone a significant review process including:

- Experienced tutors had revised the manual/workbook after its use in 2 previous cycles. The aim was to make the manual more user friendly.
- An experienced Indian tutor, Archana Rana, had expressed her confidence in the manual following the adoption of her recommendations for revisions.
- Roland Tormey, an experienced and highly qualified Educational lecturer and researcher had input into the revised manual.

Despite this comprehensive process there were concerns expressed about the manual and course delivery. There is an issue within the training process that reflects either a lack of clarity and emphasis in the delivery to participants or a lack of focus and personal research and preparation among participants. This is clearly seen in the participant comments and the GS information (*italics*).

Some individual issues are listed here:

- The course is too theoretical for year one of the diploma. More focus on classroom methodology and resource use would help.
- *The main thrust of Year 1 is practical and tutors are encouraged to deliver as practical a training as possible.*
- Training sessions in Ireland should use the manual from an early stage and be a constant during the training.
- *Tutors receive a hard copy of the manual on day 1 of training*
- Some lack of consistency in language eg Diary and Journal. A plain English review would help.
- *The Indian reviewer found no issue with this terminology.*
- Perhaps consider a student manual and a tutor manual eg Workbook and Text Book.
- *The manual is expected to be delivered by the tutors based on their accumulated teaching experience. GS consider the teacher participants to have the freedom to adapt their approach rather than follow a strict programme.*
- Some repetition in assignments.
- *Repetition develops student skills*
- More focus on 'questioning' included.
- *This is addressed in depth in year 2.*
- Manual should include 'extension' work for students.
- *GS consider this to be within the realm of the experienced tutors and offered by them on an individual student needs basis.*
- It would help to have access to all 3 years training information to help 'building blocks' approach to learning.
- *GS make this available to all tutors.*

- Need to make the delivery more linked to the local classroom environment, resources, student numbers, physical environment and student ability level (both academic and English language).
- *This can be provided by accessing former tutors experiences, which GS provide and was an innovation of a previous review.*
- Manual could include 20 lesson plans.
- *A previous tutor review considered this number excessive but lesson plans are included across the 3 years training.*
- Need to link the course to the local curriculum and in particular local text books (could these be accessed during training sessions in Ireland?)
- *Copies of various syllabi were made available during training as well as access to the Meghalaya Board of School Education website.*
- 4 psychologists section – questioning the relevance of this in year 1.
- *GS consider this essential as the focus in year 1 is ‘how children learn’*
- Include more ‘subject specific’ training for secondary teachers.
- *The focus of the course is on teaching methodology rather than subject content. The multiple subject teachers cross all centres makes this impractical and possibly suggests participants suggesting changes to local curriculum content.*

#### Human resources.

- Team building early in the training cycle.
- *This issue has been raised previously and can be improved.*
- Clear information and guidance on the local Indian colleague’s role.
- *Irish and Indian tutors share equal roles and this is an essential pillar of GS.*
- Clarify and discuss the role of the Irish tutor – mentor or inspector?
- *Again the essence of GS is that tutors are guides/mentors and colleagues who share the educational experience of the course*
- Need to discuss the ‘Grading system’. Is it consistent? Is it relevant or needed?
- *The grading system is internationally recognized and is essential to the course.*
- Be realistic about student numbers and the need to have at least 2 observations of each student during the programme.
- *GS consider this possible with 15 students over a 2 week period.*

Unanimous praise for the quality of the local teaching, given the class sizes, lack of resources, low level of training received and physical environment.

There was a request and reminder for the need for Certificates to be given to the participant students.

#### c. Belonging.

The group expressed a real sense of respect and belonging to GS and also to the local people with whom they worked and shared life during their stay. As stated above, only one centre had an ‘uneasy’, though friendly experience in a convent setting.

The main topic of conversation in this context was the need to establish teams early in the training cycle and to provide each team time to work together during the training cycle. This would both deepen the personal bonds within the team and also allow for better preparation for the course delivery.

Participants expressed respect for the learning opportunity eg between Primary and Secondary teachers, but needed more team time to capitalize on the expertise of each team member.

All participants experienced great support for their fund-raising activities and the work they were going to carry out as part of GS.

There was unanimous support within each team and between the teams and their Indian counterparts – students and local team member. Some clarification on the role and expectations of the local Indian colleague would be appreciated. Prior knowledge of room-sharing with the local colleague would be appreciated.

Again unanimous praise for the priests as ‘hosts’ was expressed.

#### d. Esteem/Achievement.

The GS experience is a wonderful and valued personal development opportunity. Participants speak of it as:

- *Was like a retreat and mindfulness filled!*
- *Very ‘satisfying’ experience.*
- *Brilliant cultural experience.*
- *Personal Growth.*
- *Life altering.*
- *Friendship building.*

The programme has succeeded in creating a personal and professional atmosphere with a high level of mutual support and respect from all involved. Participants value this and it is a cornerstone of the success and reward that is felt by the participants.

Where there may be gaps in this, participants see them and wish to be as inclusive and supportive as possible, expressing support to GS to improve on an excellent experience.

This is evident in the wonderful ‘cultural’ experience expressed by the group and a sense of having experienced the ‘real India’.

#### e. Self Actualization.

There are a few relevant issues worthy of comment here.

As stated above the personal fulfillment experienced is extremely high among the participants. This is both personal and also present in a high level of respect and admiration for colleagues in India who achieve a very high level of classroom education in difficult circumstances.

The level of mutual respect between the team members is excellent and although participants see areas for improvement, it is a testament to GS, that such a high level of satisfaction on this level is expressed by all. This is not just professional satisfaction but a sense that this 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience has created new depths of personal development and 'global citizenship'. Very little will be taken for granted in the future lives of the participants.

Despite the above, I was surprised when I explored the idea that this experience might be a valuable 'development education' opportunity in the participant schools. Most teachers felt that they would not feel comfortable using the experience beyond their own classrooms. One expressed the 'uneasy feeling that she would be preaching'.

Most participants did not make a clear connection with their own subject area or curriculum.

If this continues I feel a valuable resource has been 'misaid' through the GS experience.

#### 5. Individual ranking exercise.

Participants were asked to rank 17 statements that reflected the placement experience and the impact on them as individuals.

High ranking scores were reflected in the following areas:

1. The programme was equally a 2 way process between Indian and Irish participants.
2. The experience enlightened me.
3. Links between Irish and Indian participants were respectful.
4. The experience widened my cultural experience.
5. Enriched my educational experience as a teacher.
6. The programme is not sustainable without GS.
7. The links were mutually beneficial.

This exercise reflects the personal and professional value of the GS programme.

#### 6. Group diamond-ranking exercise.

Participants formed 5 groups based on placement centres/teams and were asked to 'diamond rank' a series of 10 statements about the programme. The ranking reflected the value/meaning of the programme to the participants.

Among the top ranking statements :

- An opportunity to share my teaching skills (2)
- A way to promote education for all in the world (3)
- Helping to combat poverty and injustice (3)

Among the lowest ranking choices :

- An opportunity to see the real India.
- An opportunity to expand my cultural horizons.
- A way to experience a different educational system.

These responses show a very high level of respect and value for the global aims of the GS programme. Despite the relative value of the lower ranking choices above, it is clear that the participants are focused on the higher level expectations of the programme and the value to the Indian teachers and their wider community needs.

## Recommendations:

1. The training process should address the need for participants to be agents of their own learning and preparation. Attending all training sessions, accessing all course material, contacting former tutors (especially from their allocated centres) and building a good work and personal relationship with team members. GS should make it clear that training is a combination of training delivered by GS and individual preparation and information gathering by tutors. If not already provided a list of preparation and learning resources should be provided to each person at the first training session.

2. The process of review and development of the course manual/workbook that has been completed in 2014 should be made clear. The importance of reading all 3 years material should be emphasized so that participants get a clear view of the full course content. This is particularly important as many teachers will only participate once and deliver only one year of a 3-year course/training. If not already included as part of the training, adapting the course workbook to less able or weaker language level students should be included in the training programme.

3. The professional teaching experience of each individual should be acknowledged by GS and by each participant themselves. Confidence in adapting and supplementing the course material is an essential element of a good participant in the GS placement. This may be an early indication of (un)suitability for the programme.

3. A decision needs to be made regarding travel accommodation on flights. GS needs to balance the needs of the majority to have early flight details, less disruptive flight schedules, economic costs and yet offer some accommodation to those who wish to add personal travel time in India after the GS placement. Will GS continue to facilitate those who do not travel as part of the group and how this can be balanced with early flight information for the majority?  
My recommendation is that all participants are booked on outgoing and return flights together.

4. The training cycle should be reviewed to establish centre teams early in the training process and these 'teams' to be used as a key element of all training days with time allotted to team building.

*(Clarification that GS training or work is not accepted for Primary EPV days – relevant to Primary teachers only)*

5. The 2014 participants input to local information to be considered to produce centre-specific guides. *(Please refer to separate centre-specific notes attached)*  
These should include guidelines on suitable 'cultural' or practical gifts for hosts.

6. The valued elements of the preparation and support identified and retained – these to include the valued support of the past participants as visiting monitors and support during the stay; the personal growth and cultural experience; the GS

preparation and 'safe, secure and belonging' focus and the high level of mutual respect that GS promotes.

7. GS to consider the possibility that some participants may not be considered suitable for inclusion in the programme. Failure to attend the minimum number of required training sessions, indications of unsuitable 'team' suitability or other issues, which may arise during the preparation sessions, may indicate a lack of readiness or suitability to participate.

7. GS to consider introducing an element of the Development Education environment in Ireland to the training programme and explore the potential of using this experience as part of a wider educational opportunity in their own and other Irish schools.