

Response to www.goodcharity.ie by Global Schoolroom

The following are responses to questions raised by www.goodcharity.ie and additions by Global Schoolroom

Q: What problem is the charity trying to solve?

A: Global Schoolroom addresses the knowledge and skills deficits in teacher training to ensure the optimum provision of quality education in schools.

Global Schoolroom places education at the heart of the global development agenda and recognises that even when children manage to go to school, poor quality education is holding them back, with one third of primary school children worldwide not learning basic literacy and numeracy. We also recognise that an education system is only as good as its' teachers and point out that education quality improves only when teachers are supported.

In India, the quality of teaching in government schools is, with few exceptions, very low. Government teachers are well paid but regularly do not show up for work – rather employing local boys and girls to keep control of the class. As a result, only very poor parents send their children to government schools if they are to go to school at all. Private missionary schools are the schools of choice for many families (including families of government officials). Poorer families will save to send their children to these schools and sometimes these schools have scholarships for poorer children. In the main, these schools are well run but often, particularly in rural areas, employ unqualified teachers – very often these were promising high school students who were immediately offered a job. The problem then is that while discipline is reasonably ok, the quality of the education is low as the teachers have never received any formal training.

Addressing these knowledge and skills deficits is therefore a very important way to ensure the optimum provision of quality education in areas where the government do not appear to have the capacity to do so. Working with civil partners on the ground (Missionary Schools, Teacher Unions) is a very successful way of providing training to those most in need.

In order to gather robust evidence on the impact of Global Schoolroom's teacher training work in India, a multi-year quantitative research initiative has been established. In particular, the research seeks to gather verifiable metrics on participating schools in the areas of teacher performance, pupil performance and parental support. The focus on quantitative research is to minimise the risk of bias (versus open form qualitative questions) and to allow direct comparison between participating schools. The quantitative questions themselves were devised in a workshop with participating school principals – with a particular focus on relevance and practical availability of verifiable data.

To date, Global Schoolroom has gathered written responses from 27 schools – both primary and secondary - covering 12,744 pupils and 478 teachers. These responses form an initial performance 'baseline' with respect to Global Schoolroom's 2014-2017 programme.

Additional rounds of information gathering will take place in 2016 and 2017 to assess the progressive impact the programme is having on participating schools' performances.

In addition, several of the questions give information that allows comparison to Indian school performance at the state/national levels and also internationally – e.g. Pass rates on the Indian equivalent to Ireland's junior/leaving certificate examinations and teacher absenteeism levels.

For reference, some sample baseline measurements include:

- *99% of pupils passed the Indian version of the junior and leaving certificates – with a pass equating to a 35%+ marking grade. The percentage of pupils obtaining marking grades of 60%+ is much lower in most of the surveyed schools*
- *Average teacher punctuality for the start of the school day is 92% - with several schools falling below 90%. Average teacher absenteeism rates are 7% - with several schools having rates above 10%. For reference, Indian school principals consider absenteeism and punctuality to be strong indicators for teachers' levels of professionalism, enthusiasm and diligence*

Applications for enrolment to these schools are running at a rate of approx. 4,000 children a year – about 3 times the sustainable level of enrolment. The schools are in practice seeking to accommodate this demand and many are, as a direct result, rapidly growing their pupil numbers. This puts more onus on the teachers to be professionally trained to better cope and perform in such an increasingly pressurised teaching environment.

Q. Does the charity's approach to solving that problem make sense?

A. If teachers are trained and supported, and work within a well-resourced and managed education system, quality education will follow.

Failure to address education quality and provision has led to a "learning crisis" which requires urgent attention. All children need teachers who are properly trained, are motivated and enjoy what they do. If trained teachers are supported and work within a well-resourced and managed education system then the current learning crisis can end.

Research from UNESCO and the OECD shows that adequately funded national education plans that aim explicitly to meet the needs of the disadvantaged and ensure equitable access to well-trained teachers results in high quality education. Attracting and retaining the best teachers, as a means to end the learning crisis requires a delicate juggling act on the part of policy-makers. To ensure that all children are learning, teachers also need the support of an appropriate curriculum and assessment system that pays particular attention to the needs of children in early grades, when the most vulnerable are in danger of dropping out. Beyond teaching the basics, teachers must help children gain important transferable skills to help them become responsible global citizens. Global Schoolroom's programme does just that, by adequately equipping teachers the necessary skills to put the child central to their educational experience.

The founders of Global Schoolroom, Gwen Brennan and Garret Campbell were invited by the Salesians of Don Bosco and Holy Cross Order of the Northeast of India to train a number of their teachers in 2006 and 2007. They discovered a knowledge and skills deficit in teacher education and a lack of confidence in the teachers' own professionalism and skills. The teachers themselves acknowledged that they and their pupils were at a major disadvantage when compared to the rest of India as they had not had the same teacher training opportunities as teachers in other parts of the country would take for granted. This they attributed to their "Schedule Tribe" status and was supported by research carried out by the North Eastern Hills University of Shillong (NEHU) in 2004 and later by the Khasi Jaintia Deficit Schools Teachers' Association.

Garret and Gwen also saw a desire among Global Schoolroom Irish teachers to share their experience and expertise and so help build the necessary capacity among Global Schoolroom their Indian counterparts if such a project could be established. Towards the end of 2007 they agreed a longer-term more focused response to teacher education needs with their Indian partners, and with the support of University College Dublin (UCD), they made a three year

commitment from 2008 to 2011 to five locations in the Northeast where they established their first five teacher training hubs. The three-year teacher education programme targeted the knowledge and skills deficit as voiced by Indian teachers and identified by Global Schoolroom. The first 99 graduates received their parchments from Professor Bairbre Redmond, Deputy Registrar UCD, who travelled to India in July 2011. Global Schoolroom went on to establish an additional 9 hubs with a small number of Indian Global Schoolroom graduates volunteering as tutors along Global Schoolroom Irish counterparts, thus contributing to the sustainability of the programme. The next graduation of close to 250 teachers will take place early next year and an additional 10 hubs were established in 2014 to train a further 450 teachers. The overarching rationale for these interventions is the strong body of evidence which indicates that better education leads to less inequality, better health, greater democracy and more equitable wealth distribution.

Currently, quality education is not universally available to every child in this part of India and our model of teacher education addresses this deficit. The work of Global Schoolroom came into sharp focus in the Northeast of India in the last 18-24 months as the Right to Education Act (RTE) 2009 was slowly being ratified by each state. While the act in itself is to be applauded, many unqualified teachers, of which there are many, will lose their jobs by 2018 if they do not up skill. These are largely women and often the only breadwinner in a family. This will have a detrimental effect on the livelihoods of thousands of families who are already living a precarious existence in a remote corner of India. While up skilling courses are available in private institutions, many teachers on salaries as low as €30 a month cannot afford to take these courses and government run programmes very often only take place in the bigger towns – again not possible for many people. Global Schoolroom's programme, as well as improving the quality of education in a neglected part of India, is therefore the only way many of these teachers can up skill locally and remain working and supporting their families

Global Schoolroom's specialist focus is teacher education. Since 2006, Global Schoolroom has harnessed the social conscience, critical mind-set, professional expertise and skills of Irish teachers. From its inception, the Global Schoolroom programmes have created a different paradigm in teacher education through its teacher-to-teacher sharing of educational experience, expertise and good practice, backed by a robust academic structure. This real and meaningful sharing is key to any true engagement amongst colleagues and has been repeatedly shown in international research to be a successful model for best practice teacher education and CPD (e.g. Levine, 2006). Its facilitation is non-threatening, collegial and respectful, leading to a new way of thinking about teacher education, and education and development more generally. The professional recognition and academic rigor associated with the involvement of UCD and ADBU, along with the appointment of the Advisory Panel in 2011, adds value and credibility to the programmes. Its methodologies are readily scalable, allowing them to be replicated amongst educational communities worldwide.

We believe that Global Schoolroom programmes add significant value to teacher education in Northeast India because it is a focused response to voiced needs, which harnesses the professionalism and goodwill of teachers from Ireland. These needs are being addressed, not from outside the profession but from within, in a spirit of peer sharing and equality. The focus applied, driven by the demands of academic and professional best practice ensures that energy is not dissipated or wasted on peripheral issues. The programme actively and consciously avoids a patronising, service-delivery approach as it creates and fosters a real and equal partnership between educators worldwide.

Q: What has the charity achieved to date?

A: Global Schoolroom has been working in India since 2006 and has 331 of its graduates working within the education system there.

The first 3-year diploma programme began in 2008 (2008-2011) and the second in 2011 (2011-2014). Over this period more than 300 Indian teachers have qualified and as the evidence below suggests, have turned their practice around, improved their teaching skills and have contributed to an overall improvement in the quality of the education being provided to children in their schools. We have recently launched a third three-year cycle (2014-2017) and have 450 teachers registered on this programme.

What Indian teachers say....

"I have attended some seminars in the past, but these days have been the best ever"

Stephen, Mizoram

"I got many ideas about teaching and learned different teaching methods. I also got tips about how to motivate students. This course has given me great confidence."

Bijou John, Mizoram

"It gave me a chance to think about my school and my role there as a teacher"

Jinsu Abraham, Mizoram

"During these days we have also learned not only about the importance of the teacher – student relationship but also about the relationships with parents and colleagues"

Victorius Lyngkhoi, Shillong

"After this course I feel more confident in tackling problems with children who find learning difficult"

Prettyman Marboh, Shillong

"Co-operation and understanding will be my first priority to help progress in my school"

Nilia Marboh, Shillong

"Before coming to this seminar I thought that all students learnt in the same way but I have now come to realise that all students are individual and learn in their own way"

Khamla Thapa, Shillong

A Perspective from Local School Managers:

In 2010 Fr. Francis Sebastian reported at a meeting facilitated by Global Schoolroom and attended by local School Principals involved in Global Schoolroom programmes. He made a presentation in which he described the steps he had taken to address the many difficulties he faced in the area of staff, student and parental motivation when he first took up his post as Principal of Holy Cross School, Umkiang. In 2002, Umkiang had 162 pupils and 10 teachers in its school. All nine class 10 students failed their State exams. The next year one passed out of seven. In 2007, the first year of a Global Schoolroom programme, 35% passed. This he attributed to the growing professionalism of his teachers brought about by the training given by Global Schoolroom.

In subsequent years 100% of the students passed. In 2009, 91% of the twenty-two students sitting the class 10 exams passed with three students getting a first division score. In 2010 two students got a distinction. Parents tended to send their children to school very late (e.g. At age

8). This contributed to a high dropout rate on entry to high school. In 2005 it was about 50%, by 2010 it had fallen to 30%, i.e. 70% went through to high school. Global Schoolroom had, over this period, developed strategies with the teachers to encourage parental involvement and support. Fr. Francis believed that the involvement of Irish teachers through the Global Schoolroom programme and the dedication shown by them has impacted on the way in which the Indian teachers now take their profession seriously. This is over and above the new skills the local teachers have acquired through their training.

The results speak for themselves:

- A dramatic improvement in the success rate in State exams.
- A huge fall off in the student dropout rate.
- Significant improvements in punctuality and reduction in absenteeism.
- 100% co-operation from a now fully professional teaching staff including major reduction in teacher absenteeism and improvements in teacher punctuality.
- The teachers' English language skills have improved significantly helped in part by the presence of the Global Schoolroom team each year. The social interaction between students and teachers from Ireland has also helped improve the students English as it is a matter of prestige for the students in the village to be seen to speak English with teachers from Ireland.
- The school will now offer class 11 and 12 tuition.
- The teaching staff has grown from 10 to 26.
- The student population has grown from 162 to 1080 – an increase of almost 700% in only 8 years.

Now in 2014, the school has more than 2000 pupils with the majority progressing to class 12, giving them career opportunities they never had before. This story is replicated in many other Global Schoolroom hubs where a whole school improvement policy is engaged in with all stakeholders.

A summary of progress in another one of the Indian schools involved (Namdong) is as follows:

In this school, the Principal, Sr. Jessy, did the training herself and was fully involved in the teachers' professional growth throughout their 3-years of training with Global Schoolroom. With Global Schoolroom she developed strategies to encourage parental involvement, such as encouraging parents to come to the school for a cup of tea or a concert. Slowly, over the three years, Global Schoolroom facilitated parent teacher meetings, which were used to outline to parents the value of sending their children to school. Over time pupil attendance improved and lead to a greater success rate in exams and scholarships to college. It should be noted that this

school is in a very challenging area, geographically and socially, with a very high crime level. Children typically do not go to school and often fall into crime and prostitution. Parents tend to feel helpless and cannot see their way around these problems. The success of this school is so important in contributing to the sustainability of these communities and clearly illustrates Global Schoolroom's linkage between education, poverty reduction and sustainable communities.

Formal linkages with government:

An MOU with ADBU ensures formal linkage with the Indian education authorities. In addition, Global Schoolroom maintains a good working relationship and regularly briefs both the Indian Ambassador to Ireland and the Irish Ambassador to India. Efforts are currently underway to engage with the state and national education ministries to begin a conversation on the current state of teacher education.

Linkage with development plans:

A former Indian Minister for Education has gone on record to say that the problem with the Indian education system is the lack of qualified teachers. Some states have responded to this by putting in place teacher training programmes but a lot is still to be done. The work of Global Schoolroom complements the national/sub national development plan and in association with our civil society partners go further to implement the plan than many state governments are currently doing.

Lesson learning and policy influencing:

The national plan for Indian teacher qualification under the RTE Act (2009) is that all teachers must be qualified appropriately by 2018. Through its recognition via its partnership with ADBU, Global Schoolroom fully supports and compliments these national plans. The CEO of Global Schoolroom has spoken at a number of education conferences in India and is currently on the organising committee of a national education conference to be held in Delhi next year. He is also on the Advisory Board of ADBU. Through these roles he seeks to influence teacher-training policy on state and national level in India.

Q: Is the charity signed up to any professional standards?

A: Comhlámh Code of Practice for Sending Organisations; Dóchas Code of Conduct on Images and Messages; Member of ICTR/Signatory to the Statement of Guiding Principles for Fundraising; On adoption journey of the Governance Code for the Community, Voluntary and Charitable Sector in Ireland

Q: Does the charity make information on its finances publicly available?

A: Audited accounts are put up on the Global Schoolroom website annually.