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Case Study: Giving a voice and a sense of agency to students at Mahatma Gandhi International School through meaningful pedagogy

MAHATMA GANDHI INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL

Introduction

Mahatma Gandhi International School (www.MGIS.in) was founded in 1999 with the vision to create an international school accessible to all sections of society and create a landmark in schooling experience for the city of Ahmedabad and the state of Gujarat. Coming together with the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporations, the founders offered to share their expertise in education through a public-private partnership. It was a precursor to the Right to Education Act and since its inception in 1998, has been providing equal opportunities and inclusive education by reaching out to the elite, the middle class and the economically disadvantaged by providing partial and full scholarships all through their academic years.

Affiliated to the International Baccalaureate, Cambridge International, Edexcel and the French board Mission Laïque Française, students can opt for a program tailored to their requirements. The school has been recognised among the top ranking schools of the country and the best in the state. Although the school is housed in a simple municipal state building, it has an in-house centre for research and teacher training to invest in the quality of its faculty, keep them updated about the latest research in education and create a cohort of teachers driven to excellence.

Pedagogy, the USP of the school

Through a project-based approach, learning at MGIS is guided by spiral, experiential learning. Subject knowledge is delivered through a concept based curriculum and is integrated in a multi-disciplinary way through class projects that are meaningful, relevant, engaging and embedded in a real life context. Through the learning process, students create outcomes such as films, calendars, food, products, booklets, presentations etc which become a resource for further learning by the same group or another. The MGIS pedagogy utilizes the body, all five senses, space, movement, easily available material, pedagogical tools, the self, the group and abstract thinking as learning resources. Students are active agents in the construction of their knowledge and self govern themselves through the class and school council. The pedagogy of MGIS is the USP of the school, it is what sets it apart from other schools.

About the in-house teacher training center

ADEPT stands for Applied Development in Education Programmes and Trainings, it is the teacher training centre housed in Mahatma Gandhi International School, Ahmedabad. The trainings are delivered by the core team of Mahatma Gandhi International School in a visionary effort to share the successful teaching methodology of the school to interested teachers across the world. Mahatma Gandhi International School (MGIS) is the school of application, the space where teachers trained in the Teacher Training Center (ADEPT) implement the pedagogical tools and teaching strategies developed in the in-house action research centre.

In addition to providing induction teacher trainings and continual professional development to MGIS teachers, it also provides training modules which are open to the interested teachers from across the world. Pedagogy being the backbone of any educational institution, ADEPT is the hub of disseminating innovative teaching techniques that have been successfully implemented, perfected and developed at MGIS.



About the Founders

Dr. Pascal Chazot is a published author, a respected statesman and a teacher with over 30 years of experience in education and international cooperation. He is a French Civil Servant, Category A officer with the French Ministry of National Education. An engineer with six post-graduation degrees and a PhD in Education, Pascal received the Medal for Best Doctoral Research by the North Paris Universities and the Republic of France for research in education conducted at MGIS. He was awarded the President's Medal of Honour of Foreign Affairs (*Médaille d'Honneur des Affaires Étrangères*) for 'acts of courage' during the 26/11 attacks.

Anju Musafir is a doctoral candidate at King's College, doing research in education. She has over 25 years of experience in innovative teaching and learning, conducting parenting workshops and training teachers and consulting with policy makers. She is a published author and has scripted and presented nearly 20 films on education, including one for UNICEF.

About the Trustees

The following are trustees of the school along with the founders: **the ex-officio Hon'ble Mayorshri, the ex-officio Municipal Commissioner, the ex-officio Chairman of Municipal School Board, Retd. Chief Justice T.U. Mehta, Anju Musafir-Chazot and Dr. Pascal Chazot.**

Case-Study details

Class work done by students as they cover the mandated curriculum through hands on projects, has won national and international awards in recognition of the remarkable quality of work produced by the bright young minds of our students using technological tools. This case-study will chronicle a few class projects and share the community involvement of students as ambassadors of the potential of using MGIS pedagogy which promotes a project based, experiential pedagogical approach with a real life purpose in a real life context. Student outcomes that have been used and distributed

by government agencies such as the Election Commission, the city Municipal authorities etc.

This case study will focus on the visionary decisions the school took in pedagogical choices to herald in a new benchmark in the quality of student work created in the classroom with the reach and appeal of an engaging learning process touches students of all ages. Our third graders author their own ebooks and professional looking newsletter, our middle school students edit films and multimedia content for class assignments, and our high school students create an app over the weekend after studying about a topic that piqued their interest in class... This is the power of using good pedagogical tools in the classroom. Traditionally achieving these kind of outcomes would require the input of an expert and professional equipment. With immersive teacher trainings, teachers have been able to mentor students to achieve such outputs using the MGIS pedagogy. In other schools, such projects would count as extra activities but in our school every learning opportunity is integrated with the curriculum requirements and made a part of the on-going class project or module.

STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT THROUGH ENGAGING CLASS PROJECTS

GRADE 8 STUDENTS CREATE ECOLOGICAL FRIDGES FOR RURAL AHMEDABAD MUNICIPAL SCHOOL PARENTS, THEIR FILM GETS PRESENTED TO HON. PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Filmmaking was not accessible to school going children until recently, but in 2003 the perseverance and ingenuity of our eight grade students (age 14) using iMovie were able to edit a documentary filmed with a hand held camera. They did a service project that became a unique example of the use of Development Communication for Sustainable Development to bring about social change.

The project involved creating Matka Fridges, distributing them in rural Ahmedabad in households that do not own a fridge, and making a video programme on the *Matka Fridge Project* (*Matka Fridge* is an Earthen refrigeration device). The Director of Mahatma Gandhi International School (MGIS) visited **Bopal Primary School (BPS)**, a rural, government-run school. MGIS and BPS collaborated to create twenty-



five matka fridges at a highly subsidized rate for the villagers of Bopal. They created eco-friendly bags, lanterns, cards, face-packs etc. to sell them to MGIS parents and raise funds for the Matka Fridges for the rural parents, during the exhibition held in school. Through the money generated, students were able to significantly reduce the selling price of the matka fridge and could reach out to more households. Through this interdisciplinary project, they learnt human values and brought about a concrete and constructive change in the lives of the students and the families in Bopal. The video made by students has been screened at several national and international conferences and has had an impact on the minds of those who have seen it. It was also screened to the then President of India, Dr. Abdul Kalam and he greatly appreciated the work of the students and the spirit of the school.

GRADE 10-11 STUDENTS CREATE ENGAGING MULTIMEDIA CONTENT FOR ELECTION COMMISSION

Grade 10-11 students participated in the Systematic Voter Education and Electoral Participation Campaign for the Election Commission, Gujarat. They worked on strategies and several outcomes to communicate the importance of voting to different target

audiences: women, urban youth etc. Their work edited using professional editing software, Final Cut Pro app, was screened on the television channel Doordarshan as well as local cable television. Some of them were very popular. In fact, that year there was maximum electoral participation during the elections. The Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat sent a letter felicitating the students and the faculty, she also mentioned the school's contribution in the official publication of the Election Office. **This project won the school the Best Public-Private Partnership Award in Vocational Education.**



GRADE 8 STUDENTS AUTHOR A DOCUMENT FOR THE ELECTION COMMISSION THAT REACHES 7.5 MILLION PEOPLE IN GUJARAT

Grade 8 students were given the task of designing the Sankalp Patra to encourage electoral participation by the Election Commission of Gujarat as part of SVEEP. The process included slogan writing, authoring text in Gujarati, creating logos and design options for the *Sankalp Patra* in its second edition to promote voting and encourage a sense of civic responsibility. In other words, the curriculum in English, Gujarati, Humanities, Art and Technology was covered through this project in addition to life skills and study skills. Creating the *Sankalp Patras* on iPads and the simple word processing software Pages, two designs were finally approved by the authorities.



The *Sankalp Patra* created by Grade 8 was distributed to over 75 lakh voters across Gujarat by the Office of Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat and was incorporated by Radio Mirchi to create voter awareness among traffic offenders. The work done for the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat won the national CSO award by the Election Commission of India.

GRADE 9 STUDENT WINS AN INTERNATIONAL FILM AWARD

Makalp Patel, a grade 9 student, won the International Solid Waste Video Award 2013 for a social awareness video commissioned by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation. Grade 9 and 10 students participated in this project. After understanding the issue of waste segregation through authentic literature provided by the Deputy Commissioner Waste Management, Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC), on field work, primary and secondary research as well as discussions about the civic responsibilities of the AMC and of our responsibilities as citizens of the city, they created videos to create awareness about the importance of cleanliness and waste segregation.



They used iPads to work in different parts of the school simultaneously and do in depth research relevant for their presentation on the move, they documented the process, made annotations, story boarding etc.

GRADE 3 STUDENTS CREATE A RADIO SHOW ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT

Grade 3 students came together to make an audio podcast on GarageBand thereby learning language, diction and subject content from the curriculum in a fun way. They collaborated with one another and worked on this project under the guidance of three teachers who offered three different perspectives from three different subjects thereby covering the curriculum effortlessly.



GRADE 7 CREATE AUDIO PODCASTS FOR THE NATIONAL BLIND AUDIO-MAGAZINE

Grade 7 students collaborated with the Blind People's Association (BPA) to record stories for their audio book library that is distributed across India and shared as an e-magazine. The visually impaired head of the library of BPA came to MGIS to interact with the students and explain the need for audio books for the blind and the guidelines to

keep in mind while doing so. Tina Parekh, a volunteer coordinated between BPA and MGIS. The students received positive feedback from listeners across India!

“Hi Lissa, Hope you are doing good...I got many calls regarding the story recorded by the students, everyone loved it...I am forwarding one email which I recd today... you can forward it to the students. Tina”

“Dear editor Madam,

I am a regular listener of the magazine “Listeners' Club”. I am a teacher of English at the Botad Government High School, Botad in Bhavnagar district. In the latest issue of the magazine, you have given us a very pleasant surprise. My joy knew no bounds when I listened to the podcast prepared by the class VII students of the MGIS School. It was a well- prepared podcast which needed a lot of hard work. Judging by the quality of the item, I can safely assume that not only the students but also the teachers of the school sweated buckets. It was a gesture of goodwill of the entire institute to us--the blind listener community. Please convey my deep gratitude to all of them. I also thank you for inspiring them to contribute to the magazine.

Hoping for more pleasant surprises in future.

Yours sincerely, Ashikali Hirani”

GRADE 11 & 12 STUDENTS TEACH ENGLISH TO TRIBAL SCHOOL STUDENTS IN DAHOD, RURAL GUJARAT

in 2015, Grade 10 and 11 students used interactive games and activities to teach English to over 1000 students studying in government schools for in Tribal children in Dahod. They stayed in Dahod and worked in several schools in Dahod district.



STUDENTS MAKE FILMS FOR THE ELECTION COMMISSION, SCREENED ON NATIONAL TELEVISION

Grade 10 and 11 students created 30-60 seconds advertisements for the Government and the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat which was preparing for the Legislative Assembly Elections for the State of Gujarat in 2012. It was their mandate to take up voter's education through various means in the State under the aegis

of SVEEP or Systematic Voters Education for Electoral Participation. The films were screened on local cable television and reshot for national television, Doordarshan. It was a meaningful vocational project which won many awards.

FULL SCHOLARSHIP STUDENTS TEACH ENGLISH IN A MUNICIPAL SCHOOL IN AHMEDABAD

MGIS has offered full scholarships for students from under-privileged backgrounds through their academic years, before the Right to Education Act was introduced in India. Many of them have given back to society by teaching English, martial arts, computers etc.



GRADE 10 STUDENTS MAKE ADS ABOUT SOCIAL ISSUES WHICH ARE PURCHASED BY GOVT OF GUJARAT

Advertisements by Grade 10 students about social issues such as water preservation, hygiene, sanitation, health, animal rights etc were purchased by the Government of Gujarat as part of the Nirmal Gujarat Campaign.



GRADE 8 STUDENTS PUBLISH THEIR CLASS WORK THROUGH THEIR OWN YOUTUBE CHANNEL

Grade 8 students launched their online newscast channel for the school community which they called MGIS TV Newscast and created content using appropriate authoring tools. They went through a rigorous learning cycle where they learnt important concepts in language, sciences, mathematics, technology and arts. Their work was put together with the editing software Final Cut Pro and iMovie on the iPad and Apple computers. After creating an identity for MGIS TV Newscast through a visual syntax of editing choices, posters, logos, font, colours and slogans, writing style, diction and shooting style, students were able to fructify their efforts by releasing three episodes of

MGIStv Newscasts. All three episodes were viewed and critiqued by MGIS management, media professionals and senior journalists from CNN IBN and was published by Pearson India on their official youtube channel (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7yqqatihxnU>). Their episode on Human Rights which chronicled what they learnt in class was viewed by the full school community and by people across the country. For the grade 8 first time filmmakers it was a litmus test from the real world. It put their class work on a platform where it continues to exist long after the culmination of the class, in a day and age when students work is relegated to cupboards and never looked at again.



MGIS STUDENTS RELEASE BOOK WITH A TEAM OF LAWYERS

Grade 8 students worked with lawyers trained at Harvard Law School to create a comic book about rights and duties, and related laws. They touched more than 3000 people through this initiative.

GRADE 11 MAKE FILMS TO CREATE SOCIAL AWARENESS FOR MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES

During the 2014 monsoon, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation commissioned students to create one film about water borne diseases and one film about vector borne diseases in Gujarati. Grade 11 students interacted with officials from the Health Department of the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation who gave them authentic data about the city. The two vernacular films were created as



part of the vocational film making program affiliated to BTEC, offered at MGIS. These films were screened in cinema halls during intervals across the city of Ahmedabad.

GRADE 10 STUDENT ORGANISES A TEDX EVENT

Grade 10 student, Manav Shah hosted a TEDx youth event at MGIS as part of his Personal Project in grade 10, under the guidance of Ravinder Kaur. This event held on 31

March 2017 consisted of thought-provoking opinions and enthralling talks from renowned experts in their respective fields as well as students of MGIS. It aspired to equip the listeners with essential notions that the society requires to evolve as a whole.

GRADE 10 & 11 STUDENTS CREATE STUDENT COUNCIL AND APP TO HELP STUDENTS SELF GOVERN THEMSELVES, ARE FINALISTS IN NATIONAL EDTECH COMPETITION

Students from Mahatma Gandhi International School collaborated with the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer, Gujarat, to design, develop and launch a student constitution aimed at bringing experiential democratic processes in school by empowering young students with their own governing system and enabling them to experience democracy in their school environment.



MGIS students presented this case study at the National EdTech Summit 2015 in New Delhi, organised by one of the country's leading publishing houses, India Today. MGIS students were finalists.

GRADE 12 STUDENTS INITIATE EXCHANGE WITH REMOTE SCHOOL, MAHABODHI RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL IN LADAKH, LEH

Student Leader, Raivat Shah as well as Environmental Studies student, Sahil Singh Sen were the pioneering batch of students who spearheaded this student exchange with Mahabodhi Residential School in Leh, Ladakh. Aspiring to create a partnership between the two schools using new technology to bolster their common interest in environmental studies and technology, they raised funds through crowdfunding to go there. The project culminated



in an online platform to record and compare scientific data to enable students to conduct scientific investigations and share their findings. They presented their findings in the Regional Learn Today Education Summit and later at the National EdTech Summit.

GRADE 11 STUDENTS EDIT A BOOK RELEASED BY HON. PRESIDENT OF INDIA

Grade 11 students collaborated with the Office of the Chief Electoral Officer of Gujarat and edited the book 'Belief in the Ballot' chronicling stories about democracy and election from across India, this was published by the Election Commission of India. They also authored one story. This book was released by the President of India in a grand ceremony attended by the Chief Election Officers from all states of India in 2016.



GRADE 10 & 11 STUDENTS REPRESENT GUJARAT IN INTERNATIONAL VOTER FESTIVAL 2016

Grade 10 and 11 students worked on role play and a Garba performance to showcase Gujarat in the Matdata Mahotsav, the International Voter Festival held in New Delhi in January 2016.



GRADE 10 STUDENT RELEASES A SONG FOR NATIONAL ORGANISATION

Rukmini Chariar from Grade 10, curated a song on women empowerment as part of her Personal Project on 19 February 2017. Parwaz, which means a flight, is a feminist rendition. This song is for a Delhi based non-profit organisation, 'People for Parity' who work on gender equality. It promotes gender equality, freedom and a need for a better future. Rukmini Chariar's Personal Project was featured in the DNA Newspaper on Woman's Day, 8 March 2017.

GRADE 10 STUDENT INITIATES EXCHANGE WITH KOREA

Yehee Lee from Grade 10, organised a cultural exhibition titled 'Meeting Korea in India' on 31 January 2017 as part of her Personal Project to create awareness about Korea and experience the connection between both countries. The Embassy of Korea supported Yehee with resources such as books, magazines, DVDs, brochures, music etc.

COMMUNITY SERVICE INITIATIVES

OVERCOMING SOCIAL APARTHEID

Rakshabandhan is a traditional Indian festival where sisters tie bracelets to their brothers to demonstrate fraternity and love. This festival holds a lot of value among the young and the old even today.

On Rakshabandhan, the girls of Mahatma Gandhi International School went out on the streets and tied *rakhis* (bracelets) to rag pickers. The emotion was so strong that many had tears in their eyes and even bowed down to touch the feet of the students. By reaching out to them, class and caste barriers were transcended and for many it was an experience that taught them to rise above social apartheid.

BREAKING TABOOS

AIDS patients are ostracized in India and often the poor are vulnerable to the disease as well as the social attacks. With the number of AIDS patients increasing by the hour, it became essential to discuss this taboo subject and reach out to those who need help. Students of grade 6 studied about this subject, collected money through their Banking project and used it to help an AIDS afflicted family with medicines and other material needs of the patients.

REACHING OUT TO THE ELDERLY

In India, children take care of their parents in their old age. In recent times, more and more old parents are having to live on their own. Since this is a new trend, the parents feel all the more isolated as it is a new social phenomenon. Mahatma Gandhi International School students went to Old Age Homes and tried to bring smiles on their faces by putting up a show for them, dancing, singing etc.

REVIVING GANDHIJI'S CHARKHA

Students of standard 8 studied about peacemakers throughout the world and also learnt important virtues such as patience, perseverance and team work through the *Charkha* Project. *Charkha* is the Indian word for the spinning wheel, it was popularized by Mahatma Gandhi during the struggle for freedom in a bid to help Indians be self reliant. *Khadi* which is the cloth created out of the threads woven out of the *charkha* is fast fading

into oblivion. Students of MGIS taught visitors how to spin the *Charkha* and when the students and teachers of Mercedes College, Australia came to MGIS as part of the exchange program, charkha weaving was made an integral part of the exchange, to strengthen inter-cultural awareness, social responsibility and integration.

CELEBRATING RESPONSIBLY

Holi is a traditional Indian festival in which friends put a paste of colour on each other to celebrate. Over the years, there was rampant use of chemical colours harmful for the environment as well as the person on whom it has been applied. Students created awareness about the importance of going back to our traditions and using organic colours to celebrate this festival in school. By creating awareness through festivals and events that touch the student's daily lives, social awareness and change have more impact.

UTTARAYAN AWARENESS RALLY

Students of the Middle Years Program in Mahatma Gandhi International School often go out on a rally to spread awareness about *Uttarayan*, a traditional kite flying festival celebrated on 14 January every year. This festival celebrates the change of weather. The sky becomes colourful with a plethora of kites and each one tries to cut the kite of the other. Over the years, kite makers began putting glass in the thread which in turn proves to be lethal for birds and people on two-wheelers. The rally was done in two languages: Gujarati (local language) and English to reach out to maximum number of people. After the rally, students become activists on their own and go around their locality to create awareness about this issue and convince people to use thread without glass during *Uttarayan*. The onus is to celebrate the festival in a traditional manner.

ART WORKSHOP WITH CHILDREN FROM CHHARANAGAR, MGIS AND MERCEDES COLLEGE, AUSTRALIA

Shri. Toofan Rafai, a noted painter, conducted an art workshop with children hailing from the socially ostracised and socio-economically underprivileged community of Chharanagar. This community was stigmatised as criminals and forced to do labour due to The Criminal Tribes Act of 1911. After this act was repealed in 1952, they relocated to the outskirts of Ahmedabad but continue to face social discrimination.

The best art work created collaboratively in September, were displayed in an arts gallery, Kanoria Centre for Arts on 14, 15 and 16 October 2011. This art work was part of the Ahmedabad International Arts Festival (www.aiaf.in) and was viewed by many locals of the city. It served the purpose of creating awareness about the Chharas, providing them with art skills, giving them exposure to a public space to express themselves, and fingers crossed, maybe pave the way for future collaborations with local artists.

TEACHING ENGLISH ON THE STREETS

MGIS and exchange students from the French school, Lycée St. Germain-en-Laye teach street children of Ambavadi, English every year. They go there in the evening to reach out to the under-privileged children who come to study and do their home-work under the street lights in the benches created by a metal welder.

MICROCREDIT PROJECT WITH MARGINALISED COMMUNITY IN THE CITY

In February 2010, 17 French students of Lycee St. Germain-en-Laye and three teachers came for two weeks to MGIS and collaborated on a series of community service projects and micro-credit programme. They learnt traditional Indian Art techniques, shared French cuisine, art and culture to Indian students and worked on a Microcredit project in Johapura, Ahmedabad – one of the biggest slums of the city. They also initiated many community service projects including teaching English to the slum dwelling children, conducting self-confidence enhancing workshops and fun activities such as football for them.

Recognition

Ranked as the top school in the state and among the top 20 schools in India, MGIS celebrates 15 years since its inception with a series of national awards. MGIS stands as a testament to its remarkable contribution to the field of education at the local and the national level. It was ranked the Number One School in Gujarat by Digital Learning Magazine, Education World and has been awarded for its international standard in different fields of teaching and learning by British Council International School Award, World Education Summit, ASSOCHAM Excellence Awards, Knowledge and Resource Development Welfare Group etc. MGIS teachers have been recognized and/or awarded

by American Psychological Association, Pearson Teacher's Award, Apple Distinguished Educator, Digital Learning Magazine, KRDWG, British Council Core Skills etc. and have presented at UNESCO, UNDP, World Education Summit, TEDx, EdTech Review Summit etc.

MGIS has also been awarded the UK India Education and Research Initiative (UKIERI) in the field of Vocational Training. Through this venture, MGIS with its UK partner Dudley College, provides modules for skill-based teacher training to hundreds of teachers across Gujarat. MGIS also houses a Research and Teacher Training center. Research done by MGIS teachers includes over 500 articles on education and parenting in French and English in publications across Europe and Asia, authoring text-books for the Gujarat Government (Gujarat State Textbook Board) for Standard 1, 2, 3 English and Environment textbook, conducting MGIS Pedagogy trainings across India, conducting Train-the-Trainer Workshops for GCERT (Gujarat Centre for Education Research and Training) to Master Trainers in Gujarat, conducting education technology workshops for teachers across India etc.

Conclusion

The alchemy of the learning process touches all in the MGIS community – children, initiators, parents and leads to a metamorphosis that transforms us from within, gives us courage and conviction, questions our assumptions, equips us with skills, provides us with tools to face our future, to shape it, to change it. With a visionary effort to bring the best resources to our students and equip them for the future, as a school we feel as ambassadors of change at the local and national level.
