



GLOBAL
SCHOOLS
FORUM

INDIA STUDY TOUR • 19-23 NOVEMBER 2018

“We are very happy to be part of the ecosystem you are creating. Collaborations are critical for system reform and each of us contributing in our own small way will add up to large whole.” – Indian GSF Member



GSF delegates with paintings created by LEAD School students from their Mangaon campus

Summary

Last month, Global Schools Forum (GSF) hosted its inaugural Study Tour in India. Eleven delegates from eight African school network organisations attended the trip, for many it was their first time in India. The delegates had a rich experience, gaining the most from their conversations with each other and Indian school operators. They loved the unstructured question and answer time with the senior leadership team of each school, which was a great opportunity for them to ask their detailed school operator questions and resulted in meaningful conversation and learning. Delegates found several new ideas they could take back to their own school networks, ranging from Edtech learning platforms to social emotional curriculum resources. Many of the delegates noted the number of young entrepreneurs in India establishing their own education organisations – which was perceived as different from what they see in their own countries, and reflected on how to create this pipeline in their communities.

The purpose of the trip was for these delegates to visit schools in a new country and context, hear from social entrepreneurs and innovators, network and collaborate with other school operators and take

back lessons and observations to strengthen their organisations. Over five days, two in Mumbai and three in New Delhi, we visited seven schools of which six were GSF members. We held two roundtable discussions on working with government through public-private partnerships and on strengthening school leadership with a group of practitioners. We also hosted panel discussions on social entrepreneurship in Mumbai and on private sector engagement in education in New Delhi, where we had also invited key stakeholders in Indian education.

This report shares some of what we learned during the trip.

5 Big Ideas

India is full of passionate local education entrepreneurs

Our delegates were inspired by the number of homegrown, talented education entrepreneurs in India, many of whom gave up lucrative careers to start their organisations. Several of these young entrepreneurs are Teach for India (TFI) alumni. It was apparent that there is a clear need for countries to build a pipeline of education entrepreneurs, harnessing their innovation and connecting them to each other. Teach for India places a great emphasis on supporting their alumni to create system change and it is clearly effective. We were humbled by the passion and drive of these leaders to improve the quality of education for all children in India.

School networks are using non-school scaling as a platform for system wide impact

Almost all of the school networks we visited in India have a dual strategy: establish a limited number of excellent schools to prove their model and then have a separate strategy for impact beyond their schools. Their various scaling plans include teacher training for government teachers, establishing a technology learning platform to sell to other schools or codifying and sharing best practices. All of these networks want to have a wider system impact and create change for a large number of children, but not through running more schools. This is also a more cost-effective path for them. This resonated deeply with some of our delegates who have their own plans to impact and serve more low-income families without increasing their number of schools.

“Half-cooked meal” lesson plans are a recipe for success

LEAD School use their internally developed app and tablets to provide lesson plans to their teachers that they describe as a “half-cooked meal”. These lessons have the minimum foundational ingredients needed for a successful learning experience, yet provide flexibility for teachers to innovate on top of that. The result is high quality scripted lesson plans for low-skill teachers in low-resource classrooms. We saw this in action during our visit to the rural LEAD School Mangaon campus and noted the enthusiasm from, and adoption by, teachers. This concept was also very appealing to our delegates and has already led to further conversations about implementing something similar in their contexts.



GSF Delegates with Akanksha school parents



and with Pratham school children and teachers

Strong community engagement delivers clear results

The vital importance of investing time and resources into community and parent engagement became apparent during our visit to The Akanksha Foundation schools. Delegates saw firsthand the clear link between strong wraparound services and student achievement. Akanksha has a 97% secondary student retention rate and 100% of their graduates go on to higher education. Community visits and detailed conversations with social workers highlighted the need to develop vested and deep relationships with families and community members. This engagement is critical and delegates reflected on what pieces they could take back to their own model.

Low-cost and replicable, Teaching at the Right Level programme effectively teaches foundational skills

At Pratham, we saw their Teaching at the Right Level (TaRL) programme in their urban community centres. TaRL is a pedagogical approach that moves away from age-based grade-level curriculum and instead groups students by learning level. This innovative and replicable intervention is a brilliant illustration of a low-cost way to teach foundational skills at scale. Our delegates gained insight from deep diving into an organisation with massive scale and proven results. Evaluations of the TaRL programme consistently show substantial impacts on student learning outcomes across varied contexts and through multiple implementation models. Some of our delegates had already piloted TaRL in their own organisations and benefitted significantly from seeing the original India programme.



GSF delegates and GSF India member and partners at the Delhi evening reception

*“We often talk about scale as us increasing the impact of our own organisation. After this trip, I have realised a big part of scaling is how we use the power of the collective to make a real difference. I think **a forum like this is a brilliant way to pool all of our best practices and think about how to scale them** within our systems and convince others to adopt them without compromising on quality. That is what we struggle with as individual providers.” – GSF India Study Tour Delegate*

4 Dynamic Conversations

Evening Conversation:
Social
Entrepreneurship

In Mumbai, we heard from three education entrepreneurs on aligning incentives and outcomes and remaining true to your vision while being nimble with your operating model. The panelists included **Safeena Husain** from [Educate Girls](#), **Priya Agarwal** from [Antarang](#) and one of our delegates **Catherine Stevens** from [Schole](#). It was an insightful, fascinating and candid conversation moderated by **Namita Dalmia** of [Omidyar Network](#). Delegates discussed the importance of having a clear vision of success, leveraging technology to solve a specific challenge, and allowing for decentralised decision-making.

Roundtable Discussion:
Public-Private
Partnerships

In a stimulating conversation moderated by **Amitav Virmani** from [The Education Alliance](#), we heard from four practitioners who are working on facilitating government partnerships. The speakers included **Chetan Kapoor** from [Tech Mahindra Foundation](#), **Kruti Bharucha** from [Peepul](#), **Mainak Roy** from [Simple Education Foundation](#) and **Sujatha Mathayya** from [Bridge International Academies](#). The diverse experience in the room added to a dynamic conversation about the importance of the 'Public' part of PPPs, including how to effectively engage governments as true partners; the optics of PPPs and on how to build sustainable PPPs.



Public-Private Partnerships Roundtable



School Leadership Roundtable

Roundtable Discussion:
School Leadership

The second roundtable conversation focused on strengthening school leadership with school leaders from both non-profit and budget private schools. The speakers included **Anita Paul** from [Indus World School](#), **Chandrakant Singh** from [National Independent Schools Alliance](#), **Jayasree D** from [Simple Education Foundation](#), **Urmila Chowdhury** from [Peepul](#) and was moderated by **Gayatri Nair Lobo** from [India School Leadership Institute](#). These school leaders spoke very candidly on tackling challenges such as lack of parent participation through active parent engagement programmes and lack of teacher accountability through purposeful teacher observation.

**Evening Conversation:
Private Sector
Engagement in
Education Reform**

In Delhi, we ended our study tour with a riveting conversation about private sector engagement and partnership in education reform. The lively conversation touched on multiple topics including how to maintain deep impact at scale by having one measured, clear and undiluted metric and shared goal, making real-time and process-driven decisions using data, and using technology effectively to scaffold teaching. The speakers included **Seema Bansal** from [Boston Consulting Group](#), **Prachi Windlass** from [Michael & Susan Dell Foundation](#) and **Bikkrama Daulet Singh** from [Central Square Foundation](#), facilitated by **Pranav Kothari** from [Educational Initiatives](#).



Mumbai evening conversation panel #womanel



Delhi evening reception panel

2 Thoughtful Takeaways

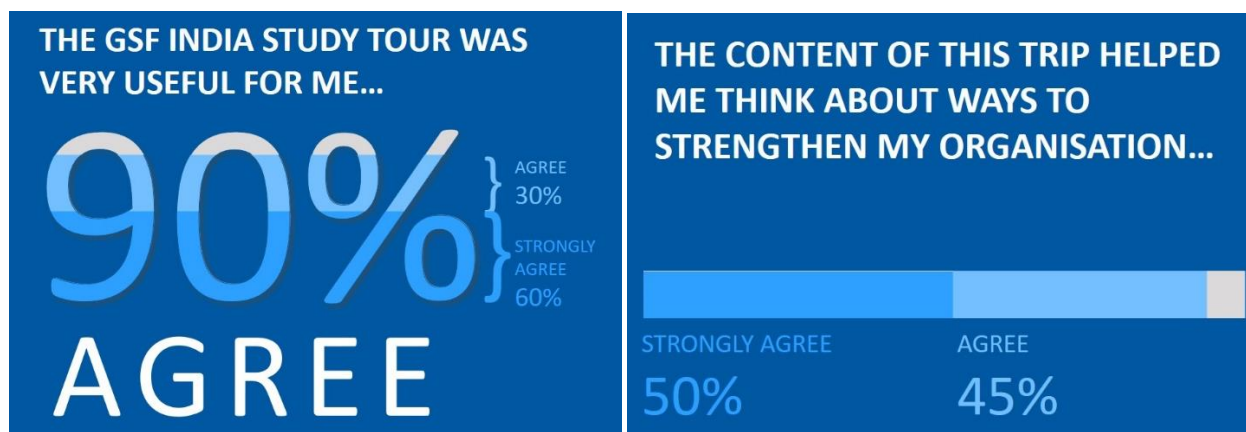
Two way learning among the delegates themselves and Indian operators was a very valuable part of the trip

“It was amazing to spend the week with a group of like-minded individuals in terms of the vision we’re all working towards, but at the same time who brought such diverse perspectives and experiences. There was rigorous dialogue and debate around what we all are doing in our organisations and how to get the best from what we are doing. I am going back to my country invigorated by new ideas from my fellow delegates.”

A combination of micro school level “deep dives” and macro evening conversations gave delegates a good understanding of the Indian education landscape

“One of the most valuable parts of the trip for me was the bus ride debriefs with other delegates. These bus rides were often the site of heated and interesting discussions. It was powerful to have time as a group to discuss and digest what we all had just seen in the schools and we generated rich conversation and ideas.”

“GSF gave us an agenda with such great exposure to some incredible school providers who are doing the work at the ground level and achieving amazing results for their kids. Then in the evenings, we attended panels that jumped up to a high level and we met some inspiring people who are having impact at system level at amazing scale. It was an extremely helpful mix of visits to grassroots operators and thought-provoking evening discussions with stakeholders working at scale. It made me think about how my organisation, who is working at a grassroots level now, can eventually reach scale.”



"I can't wait to start collaborating with people I met on this trip and sharing brilliant ideas. GSF did a fantastic job curating a great set of people and visits " – GSF India Study Tour Delegate

See the conversation here:
#GSFIndia2018



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Annexes

1. [Agenda](#)
2. [List of Delegates](#)