KER Learning Loop Report

2018- 19

KID EDUCATION REVOLUTION

IDENTIFICATION

Received 240+ nominations, and took 70+ Phone interviews to identify 14 students from 5 cities across India

DOCUMENTATION

- Traveled across India to capture videos of the 14 students
- Students documented their own journeys through a student portfolio

Across India, students are engaging in their own learning and the learning of others. They aren't just the recipients of education - they are the drivers of it. The KER Learning Loop was founded with the deep curiosity to understand this better. How were kids setting up exchange programs between private and government schools to spread learning? What was enabling the peer education models we were seeing? How were they raising their voice to reimagine education? With countless such questions in mind, the KER Learning Loop was officially launched in August 2018 as a journey to learn from students whose leadership was enabling other students to learn in reimagined ways.

In our first ever attempt at creating a student learning loop, we faltered and made several mistakes, but learnt so much at every juncture along the way. To have had the chance to learn from these students has been nothing short of extraordinary, and we're so excited to share our learnings and experiences.

NOTES AND REFLECTIONS FROM THE DISCUSSION COMPILED INTO A REPORT

LEARNING

- Student videos and portfolios sent to participants as prework
- 18 adult and 9 student participants came together for a 2 day discussion at the National Summit to learn more from the 14 profiles

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Education should be experiential, and a way to change things.

- Afsaar Maniyar, Grade 10

Meet our 14 Learning Loop students:

Afsaar Maniyar
Grade 10, iTeach, Pune

To spread the idea of student voice far and wide, Afsaar, along with 3 friends, started Project IQ or Inner Quest, which took place once a week at their school. The scale of this project spanned across 9 extracurricular clubs, 20 mentors, 9 observers, 4 executive board members and 120 participants! After a successful first year, the team of 4 is now planning to spread Project IQ to different schools in Pune and slowly convert it into a business plan.

▶ Click here to watch Afsaar's Interview

Aman Vernekar
Grade 11, Reap Benefit, Bengaluru

Deeply passionate about experiential studies and science, Aman set up a makerspace in his school to encourage the 'maker spirit' amongst other students. Aman has also created his own app called 'Relief Reunite' which aims to expedite the process of reuniting lost people with their families through facial recognition software.

▶ Click here to watch Aman's Interview

Anjali
Grade 9, Teach for India, Delhi

To demonstrate the fruitlessness of stereotyping, Anjali, and a few of her classmates, started a community learning center where they teach non-Teach For India students who are generally seen as "disruptive". Apart from creating lesson plans for reading, math, and leadership, they have organised a successful reading mela too!

▶ Click here to watch Anjali's Interview

Isha Thakur
Grade 10, Teach for India, Delhi

Isha has uncovered a unique way to spread happiness in the world! Along with a few of her friends, she's planning to organise 'Jalebi', a camp to get students, educators and parents under one roof, where they will work on solving the problems faced in the community.

▶ Click here to watch Isha's Interview

Meet our 14 Learning Loop students:

Jyoti Chauhan
Grade 10, Teach for India and Slam Out Loud, Delhi

Jaded by the one dimensional education system, Jyoti started 'Gurukul' to impress the importance of arts and artists in society. She invited skilled students to conduct workshops for other students in the community, thus creating an environment conducive to creativity!

▶ Click here to watch Jyoti's Interview

Khushi Chauhan
Grade 9, Teach for India and Lexicon International School, Pune

Alarmed at the rapidly increasing indifference for all things 'desi'(Indian), Khushi started 'Deewana' to restore respect for the country in her schoolmates' hearts. The activities and workshops also aim at inculcating values like love and empathy in all her peers - something she believes each child should experience and have.

▶ Click here to watch Kushi's Interview

Mahesh Jalnila
Grade 11, Teach for India and iTeach, Pune

A highly articulate and expressive student, Mahesh performs street plays all around Pune city along with his group 'Umang'. Mahesh hopes to raise social awareness on issues close to his heart, while giving other students the opportunity to explore their interests in the arts. The group's goal is to one day perform at the world's biggest auditorium in London.

▶ Click here to watch Mahesh's Interview

Pooja Venkataramani
Grade 10, HLC International School, Chennai

What started as a part of her school's outreach program has now turned into an active project for Pooja! She, along with 5 students, creates lesson plans and a language development program for teachers at a low income school in Chennai. Deeply inspired by Pooja and her project, several of her schoolmates found the courage to start their own initiatives!

▶ Click here to watch Pooja's Interview

Meet our 14 Learning Loop students:

Sanmyukta Shinde
Grade 10, Udayachal High School, Mumbai

Being a champion for mental health, Sanmyukta has founded various safe spaces and support groups for adults and kids alike! Through 'Open Book', she celebrates the individuality of every student participant at her school. She has also constituted 'Sanvad Katta', a place where adults and kids join hands to solve problems in their society!

▶ Click here to watch Sanmyukta's Interview

Shagun Kumari
Grade 8, Teach for India, Delhi

Recognising the importance of safe spaces for self-expression, Shagun, and her friends Radha and Sana, conduct learning circles in their school and community. They practice collective reflection to come up with solutions for the challenges faced by kids!

▶ Click here to watch Shagun's Interview

Shiksha
Grade 9, Teach for India and Simple Education Foundation, Delhi

Guriya, fondly known as 'Shiksha', has conducted a project to uncover the loopholes in the education system. She started focus group discussions consisting of teachers, parents and students to try and find solutions for these problems. To ensure long-term implementation of her solutions, she plans to be a teacher when she grows up!

▶ Click here to watch Shiksha's Interview

Taarini Weling
Grade 10, DSB International School, Mumbai

When she realised that understanding people leads to acceptance, Taarini sent out anonymous surveys to better understand her fellow students and their perceptions of different identity groups. Based on the responses, she compiled a report along with her teachers, to understand the students, and is planning to organize events and projects to encourage belief in true equality for all!

▶ Click here to watch Taarini's Interview

Meet our 14 Learning Loop students:

Vibha Nadig

1st Year Law, Reap Benefit, Bengaluru

Vibha has been working for 'equity in education' since the 9th grade, when she created a holistic curriculum with the NGO Pratham, for kids who couldn't go to school. Vibha has also successfully organized various exchange programs between government and private schools to encourage mutual sharing of resources and breaking of stereotypes!

Click here to watch Vibha's Interview

Vibish Kashyap

1st Year BTech, Reap Benefit, Hosur & Chennai

Deeply passionate about sustainable development and the environment, Vibish started 'Project Hosur Sanitation', which aimed at improving the sanitation facilities in the schools in his hometown. He generated eco-friendly solutions only after in-depth interactions with the school students and has since handed over the project reigns to his juniors!

Click here to watch Vibish's Interview

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5 CITIES

The diversity in where these students come from geographically, also resulted in diversity amongst their projects.

GRADE 8 TO 1ST YEAR COLLEGE

The age difference amongst the 14 students showed the various journeys these students had been on. While some of our older students had finished their projects and were working on newer initiatives, our younger students were just starting out and figuring their way forward.

FAMILY BACKGROUND

6 of our students came from high income families and studied in private schools, while 8 of our students came from low-income families and had studied in government schools with Teach for India or iTeach interventions.

10/14 GIRLS

Out of the 14 students, 10 were girls whose projects focused on empathy and developing the skills of others.

Learnings from the students

During the National Summit, we held a separate invite-only track of students and educators for the Learning Loop Discussion where we looked at all of these student profiles and tried to find trends in their stories. We have tried to compile our biggest learnings from the two days into this report and hope it helps all of you reading.

Please note that this report contains **observations** of the stories of these 14 students and should not be understood as applicable to all children.

Here are some of the **characteristics** that we observed common to all 14 students:

Purpose and belief in the work

Consistency and Commitment

Clear approach

Compassion

Vision of excellence

Humility

Reflection

Sense of Possibility

Critical Thinking

Emotional Awareness

Enablers and Tools

Our discussions aimed to unpack the factors that enabled these students to exhibit leadership the way that they have. Here are some of the insights that emerged:

★ Guided Mentorship

To provide perspective, guidance, critique, and overall support, we noticed that all our 14 students had at least one person they could turn to at any time. This mentor figure could have been anyone close to the student such as an educator, parent, or even a school senior. What we observed though, was that these mentors were able to provide very structured support that allowed the students to figure things out by themselves, but they were always around to provide support. They made sure to keep themselves approachable and provide a safe space, while at the same time, they never shied away from giving constructive criticism and ensured that the student never lost sight of the purpose and vision behind their work.

Take a look at the responses filled by Aman's mentor, Kuldeep, to see how he was able to help Aman execute Relief Reunite!

★ Vision-Action Alignment

What does it really take to convert an obscure idea into reality? Having had a glimpse into the lives of these 14 students, we observed how each of them had a very clear vision right from the start and had created plans and a team to help them reach there. They were able to adapt and change their plans along the way when faced with challenges, but always made sure to keep their vision sacred.

The students are also living examples of the values they preach and through their ambition and hard work, many of them have now also started planning and working towards scaling up their projects.

Take a look at Afsaar's presentation for converting Project IQ into a business plan where he does a SWOT analysis for his work.

★ Self Awareness

Being truly aware of oneself and reflecting on a constant basis can seem daunting to many people, but we saw these students reflect and introspect with a lot of ease. All of them were highly aware of their backgrounds and how their history has shaped them to be the people they are today. When asked about their strengths, areas of development and the values they consider important, all of them were able to answer immediately. This deep sense of self-awareness meant that these students were able to identify what they wanted to do, and leveraged their strengths to reach their goal.

Read Isha's personal journey and her reflections on how it's led to where she is today.

Enablers and Tools

Another observation that came up at multiple times, was how these students had reached 'ikigai' due to their work and constant reflection. 'Ikigai' refers to the Japanese word for 'reason for being.'

⭐ **Understanding the problem**

How does one decide what problem they want to take up? These 14 kids made sure that they chose problems that they had either personally experienced or had taken the time out to conduct research and talk to people who experienced it. Rather than immediately jumping in to solve a problem they saw, all of them tried their best to really understand what was happening at the ground level. This attempt at an in-depth understanding meant that the students' projects seem to be on the road to being sustainable in the future as well.

Listen to Vibish talk about his project on sanitation and why he chose this issue to tackle.

⭐ **Leveraging Stakeholders**

The last factor that really stood out amongst these projects, was how all the students had made an attempt to leverage different stakeholders within the system. From other children, to parents, teachers, and others in the communities, the students worked towards making sure that they were involving everyone in the process and not trying to do everything themselves. They recognised the strengths of different people, and then started working closely with them. Listen to Shiksha and Jyoti talk about their projects in which they brought different groups of stakeholders together.

Conclusion

We'd like to end the report with a bit of dissonance, and a question that one of our student participants, Dhanashree, asked during the discussion - "Do you expect our friends to demonstrate all of this? We really need to think of ways in which we can celebrate them and not make them feel the pressure of becoming like this!"

Over the course of the year, we faced dissonance with our own work at several places, and had to pause, reflect, and remember why we started this: to learn from students. How each of us take these learnings back into our work may be very different from each other, but our main hope is that people see the need to learn from their own students. We encourage others to create their own mini Learning Loops in their classrooms, schools, or organizations, because while the process is extremely disorienting, it is full of learning!

As a team, we hope to continue leading our own learning loops so that we can keep evolving our understanding of student leadership.

Lastly, we'd like to give a HUGE shout out to Afsaar, Aman, Anjali, Isha, Jyoti, Khushi, Mahesh, Pooja, Sanmyukta, Shagun, Shiksha, Taarini, Vibha, and Vibish! None of this would have been possible without the fourteen of you, and we're forever grateful that you allowed us into your lives. Thank you, thank you, thank you!

★ **Access to Resources:**

  - Link to ALL student profiles.
  - Keep an eye out for webinars and courses on student leadership on Firki!