

Project IDentity

Group 7-23

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Project Type: Multi-Year

Section I: Overview

1. Area of Concern

We are looking at the low acceptance levels of the intellectually disabled, and the public's lack of understanding of Intellectual Disability (ID). According to Ms Ng Rei Na, senior manager for MINDS social enterprises, less than 5 percent of their adult population are able to secure employment. Most adults were unable to find jobs to integrate into the workforce.

Based on a survey conducted in April 2016 by the Lien Foundation on 1,000 respondents, there was a general lack of inclusiveness for those with intellectual disability. Moreover, although two-thirds of respondents are willing to share public spaces with special needs children, they are not willing to interact with them. Only a third of respondents felt that Singapore was an inclusive society, and a mere 8% of respondents believed that Singaporeans were ready to go the extra mile to make intellectually disabled children feel welcome.

2. Challenges Identified

Some of the challenges we have identified are:

1. The students that have graduated from MINDS schools and their workforce training programme face difficulty in securing jobs and fundamentally, integrating into the rest of society
2. Employers tend to show discrimination towards the intellectually disabled when hiring; they are less likely to hire them
3. The students lack the social skills set, having little interaction with people outside their family and school
4. The general public has a social stigma towards this group

3. Underlying Problem

Given that the lack of understanding and low acceptance levels in Singapore have led to the neglect and stigma of the intellectually disabled, how can we help to increase public outreach to raise awareness for this group of people and provide them with the adequate social skills to be self-sustaining and integrate well into society?

4. Identify Strategies/ Propose Solutions

We have identified several strategies to tackle the problem:

1. Educate the general public about the Intellectually Disabled in Singapore, raising awareness towards the problems they face and also clearing misconceptions, hence removing stigma towards the intellectually disabled, easing their integration into society and the workforce.
2. Conduct social skills lessons for the Intellectually Disabled children at LGS (Lee Kong Chian Gardens School, a special school under MINDS), improving their communication and mannerism and hence better enabling them to integrate into society and find sustainable jobs in the future
3. Creation of resources and tools to better impart the technical and social skills to the students.

5. Plan of Action

Our plan of action is detailed in the table below.

Date	Action	Objectives
Jan-April	1. Communication with LGS teachers, principal and MINDS 2. Planning of lessons 3. Acquiring of Funding from NYC	
April-July	<u>Social Skills Lessons</u> Lesson 1: Manners and Greetings Lesson 2: Dining Etiquette Lesson 3: Money Interaction Lesson 4: Cafe Practical	Teach students social skills
22 April	Service Learning Summit	
25 April	Eco Buddy Day	Teach students recycling

5 May	Parents Appreciation Day	Allow students to express themselves
May-August	HCI School Sales	Raise funds
26 July	HCI Interaction Day	Raise awareness among school population Create interaction between students an HCI population Allow students from LGS to apply skills learnt
6 August	Roadshow	Raise awareness
	Documentary	Raise awareness

Section II: Implement Solutions

1. **Social Skills Lessons:** From 22nd March to 24th May, we conducted Bimonthly Lessons (Enrichment sessions) at LGS which aimed to inculcate values in students and equip them with social skills that would better prepare them for communication with others outside their comfort zone, easing their integration into the workforce. We used real-life scenarios for students to get as much real experience as possible.
2. **Service Learning Summit:** On the 22nd of April, we took part in the Service Learning Summit (SLS), where we shared about our project with the students of various schools and raised awareness about ID
3. **Eco Buddy Day:** On 25 April, in collaboration with NEA, we educated the students in LGS on upcycling by creating sub-irrigated planters using empty plastic bottles. Through these hands-on activities, we aimed to inculcate in students a habit of recycling.

4. **Parents Appreciation Day:** On the 5th of May, our project also collaborated with LGS to organise a Parents' Appreciation Day Celebration, which comprised team-bonding games, followed by a short combined performance by the intellectually disabled students and us. This celebration and performance served as a platform for the students at LGS to show appreciation towards their parents. We also made a short montage that was screened as part of the celebrations.
5. **HCI School Sales:** From May to August, we sold ice cream, drinks and snacks in HCI to raise funds for MINDS to develop better resources for students in LGS.
6. **HCI Interaction Day:** On 26th July, we brought these students for a tour around HCI, creating a platform for them to have exposure to an external environment. The students interacted with both students and teachers, who may appear to them as strangers. The students also tried out selling snacks to the school population, which served as a practical for them to apply the skills learnt through the social skills lessons we held in LGS, while also helping to build their confidence when interacting with others. Through such a tour, we hope to not only benefit the students from LGS, but also to raise awareness among the high school population about challenges faced by them.
7. **Roadshow:** In August 2018, we held a roadshow at Keat Hong Community Centre. We gave passersby a brief sharing about our project, as well as facts about ID, followed by a game to test their knowledge. Many also pledged to support the intellectually disabled. This was to correct any misconceptions that they may have, and also increase awareness of the intellectually disabled in our society. We also handed out brochures that taught members of the public on what to look out for when interacting with people with ID.
8. **Social Media:** Throughout the whole year, we had monthly posts on our Instagram account. We have updates on upcoming events, as well as facts of the intellectually-disabled, in order to clear any misconceptions from the public. This serves as a good platform for us to have a large public outreach and spread awareness.
9. **Documentary:** It will feature the students of the MINDS schools, showcasing their ambitions and dreams while also uncovering the issues they face. This would clear misconceptions about the intellectually disabled, raise awareness and also act as a call for greater acceptance towards people with Intellectual Disability.

Section III: Project Outcomes

1. Accomplishments

Social Skills Lessons for intellectually disabled students at MINDS: We received positive reviews on the lessons we conducted from the teachers and the principal at LGS; they even requested for us to share with them the resources we created for their use in future lessons. The students we taught managed to absorb the social skills we imparted to them, as they showed greater confidence in interacting and communicating with others. The students applied their knowledge and skills learnt to communicate with students from HCI during the interaction day, where they helped to sell bubble tea and snacks to the school population.

Awareness campaign: Through our successful programmes, namely, our social media campaign, our roadshow, our school awareness campaign and the HCI Interaction Day, we raised awareness of Intellectual Disability and the intellectually disabled among the school population and general public. On an overall, we spread awareness to approximately 2176 or more people. We currently have 679 followers on our Instagram.

Fundraising: We managed to raise \$3962.65 for MINDS through our fundraising activities for them to develop better learning resources for the students.

Others: We helped to organise Eco Buddy Day and Parents' Appreciation Day in LGS, which complemented our social skills lessons, serving as platforms for students to put their skills learnt to use and express themselves.

2. Reflections

This project has been an enriching journey which has opened our eyes to see the world in a slightly different light. It helped to remove our prejudices of the Intellectually Disabled. We truly understood the everyday difficulties faced by the intellectually disabled, and uncovered the present social stigma between them and the rest of society.

In hindsight we could have an awareness campaign of a wider scale and create more opportunities for closer interaction between the intellectually disabled and members of the general public. Furthermore, the issues of overprotective parenting and employers unwilling to hire people with intellectual disability remain beyond our ability to solve.

Nevertheless, on an overall, we are satisfied with the work our project has done. We hope that our efforts would go a long way in helping to remove the social barrier between the intellectually disabled and the rest of society, and enable the intellectually disabled to be able to integrate well into society and live self-sustainable lives in the future.