



Published on: August 5, 2010

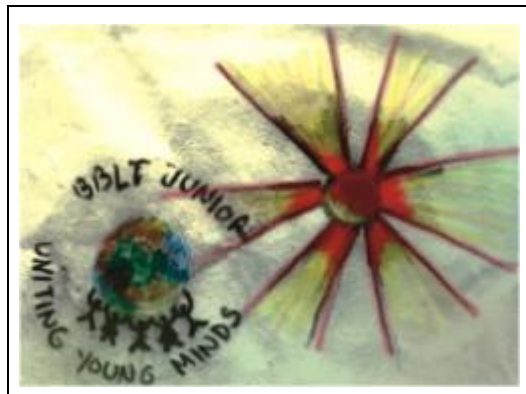
Building Bridges

Monoshita Ayruali

"PERMIT yourself to fail" said Md. Ejaj Ahmad, Founder and President of Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC), to the BBLT Junior students on their first class with him. He explained to the students that because people fear failure, they do not want to take risks. But to bring change, one has to step out of one's comfort zone and take risks, for which, one has to permit oneself to fail, and learn from it.

Most of the large class sessions throughout the BBLT program were intense. Several times, an instructor came into the class and wrote 'let's start the work' on the board, and stood aside without providing any further instructions.

The confused students shifted in their seats, avoided eye contact with the instructors, doodled, wondered, and looked around for seemingly constructive things that they could pretend to do. At some point someone would try to raise a discussion over some topic, which led to arguments over the subject. This was how the classes started. The instructors played the role of silent authority and all these were done to demonstrate that people should not always depend on authority, and leadership requires the courage to make impactful interventions.



BBLT Junior is a condensed form of the BBLT program, which is available for students who have already finished class 10 school leaving exams. From over a hundred applicants, the best ten were selected for the first BBLT Junior program. Both programs have the same main three components: Building Bridges, Leadership Training and Community Service.

Building Bridges is a component unique to BBLT and not practiced in any other club in Bangladesh. Only in BBLT do the three different educational mediums in Bangladesh: English Medium, Bangla Medium and Madrassa come together to work in the same team.

Leadership training is the second component of the program. The fact that practising leadership has nothing to do with having authority was a point repeated so frequently throughout the course that it is arguably the most important takeaway of the program. The large classes equipped the students with important tools to practise leadership. They were taught how one should observe a situation and try to diagnose the real issue instead of jumping to conclusions and administering quick fixes, which exacerbate the situation in the long run.

As part of the training, the program also had a session to remind us of our roots. Colonel Q. Sajjad A. Zahir (Bir Protik), a renowned freedom fighter and a Professor of Dhaka University, visited the Juniors and delivered an excellent interactive lecture session about the liberation war. Besides this review of our history, the leadership training component had several workshops on the art of leadership, public speaking and community service.

Bangladesh Youth Leadership Center (BYLC)

11F Jahanara Apartments, 42-43 Siddeshwari Circular Road, Dhaka 1217, Bangladesh
Phone: +880-2-8333853, Fax: +880-2-8333854, www.bylc.org

On the third and final part of the program, the community service campaign was launched. The students observed and surveyed the school of underprivileged kids they were going to work with, isolated some issues and split into two groups. Each group was allowed 20 minutes for presentation. The students collected data and resources from the Internet and other sources and worked out a plan. The presentations were interactive, with dramas, stories, posters and placards carrying colourful pictures, slogans, quotes etc. The children responded enthusiastically, and thus the community service campaigns ended.

After the community service component, the participants had to make posters that covered their projects, and write reports. The posters were presented during the graduation ceremony, in front of Chief Guest Shireen Manzoor, Brother James S. Sarker, Vice Principal of Saint Joseph Higher Secondary School, and Md. Ejaj Ahmad, Founder and President of BYLC. The Graduation Ceremony was held in Saint Joseph, on the 22nd of July, 2010. The participants received certificates, and exchanged heavyhearted goodbyes after three incredible and wonderful weeks.

URL: <http://www.thedailystar.net/rising/2010/08/01/special.htm>