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Supporting the Asian community to get online

Insights from Anulekha Roy

Introduction

Dr Anulekha Roy is an Anthropologist and a Digital learning consultant. Born in India, she has lived and worked in USA, Hong Kong and France. She has worked in higher education, corporations, government, startups and non-profits. She came to Cambridge in the summer of 2014 and the same year started her business, *Banyan Consultants*.

Anulekha is a volunteer Digital Champion at Cambridge Online, Advisor to the Cambridge Online Trustees and attends the Executive Committee meetings. She set up and ran the weekly digital skills club for the Asian Community in partnership with Cambridge City Council. The club activities were paused when the lockdown started in March 2020.

Anulekha is currently working as a Digital learning designer and trainer with the National Health Service, UK

Setting-up and Running the Club for Asian Community

The club was set up to teach digital skills to Ethnic Minority Community

Launched in early 2016, it was open every Thursday morning for two hours. It started in Akeman street, moved to Cambridge online site and back to Akeman street. The lockdown forced it to pause in early 2020

Women from ethnic minority communities (mainly Bangladesh), came to the club regularly

Only one man (from Bangladesh) and a woman (from Pakistan) attended the club for few months

Ups and downs of recruiting learners

The club was made popular through word of mouth, bilingual flyers & its positive outcomes

Ups of recruiting learners

- Learners felt comfortable in the multi-lingual environment - Bengali, Urdu, Hindi and English
- Mothers came with small children and brought older kids during school breaks
- Women expressed their hopes freely and felt the club could help them achieve their goals

Downs of recruiting learners

- Biggest barrier was lack of confidence because of inability to read, write and speak English
- Family commitments, transportation challenges were persistent & discouraging
- Lack of local job opportunities took a toll on the perseverance of the learners

Ups and Downs of Supporting learners

Ups of supporting learners
- Flexible facilitation style motivated the learners to push themselves & achieve their goals
- Encouragement and positive feedback kept the learners on the learning path
- Social media apps (Whats-App) was used to communicate outside the club hours

Downs of supporting learners
- The notion that finding a job is hard regularly created strong doubts
- Some learners could not overcome their home, community and cultural barriers
- Limitations caused by lack of literacy discouraged some learners

Achievements and Lesson Learned

Awareness of the value of internet and digital devices
- The limitations of cheap smart phones and tablets were quickly felt
- New WIFI connections were installed at home and regularly used

Growth in use of online services for everyday activities
- Popularity of Mobile services, Credit cards, Online shopping, Online banking
- Use of google maps, google translate, Instagram, whats app, Email
- Applying for jobs online, preparing for interviews - Youtube videos
- Volunteering in shops - to practice English, reading children's books – borrowed from libraries
- Passing driving theory test, ESOL, B1, Life in the UK
- Finding jobs as care givers, in corporate kitchens, as escort in school

Lesson learned

Success was created from support and freedom to learn & nurturing the *will* to keep trying

Thank you

Your Questions