

Brief in progress:

Informing curricula through arts-based pedagogies



SUMMARY

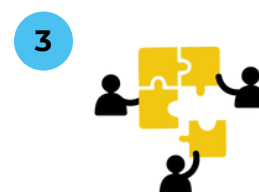
This brief (in progress) presents an exemplar lesson plan as a model of how:



Art-based pedagogies, especially those implemented by the Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) program, can support the National Curriculum Framework to make learning holistic, child-centered and practice oriented.



Community voices - children and young people - can be given primacy in the curriculum development process while adult specialists and allies "translate" their needs and actions into the formal language of the sector.



Arts-based approaches reposition knowledge production to encompass marginalized communities and different ways of knowing.

INTRODUCTION

The intent of Nepal's national education policy and thus its curriculum developers is tending towards holistic, inclusive and multi-modal pedagogies. The National Curricular Framework (NCF) (2076 BS), for example, envisaged the following fundamental principles for curriculum development:

- a) holistic development of children through child-centered learning;
- b) promoting soft skills and life skills;
- c) acknowledging social, cultural, and linguistic diversity of Nepal,
- d) addressing the local needs;
- e) promoting local values and exploring western wisdom traditions.

These guiding principles are intended to foster the development of children through a focus on "learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together."

Artful pedagogies (teaching and learning practice) facilitate alternative imaginaries, acknowledging challenges, as well as feeling joy and pride. This aspect of art-based pedagogy makes it a particularly useful tool for engaging youth. Importantly, art-based pedagogies can use artistic expression from the popular culture that youth identify with now, while also drawing on Nepal's rich and diverse cultural heritage. These pedagogies can transmit long-standing values whilst fostering skills and capacities for respecting diversity.

An emerging body of work suggests that art-based approaches have restorative, empowering, and therapeutic qualities (Leavy, 2017) and can address children's emotional well-being (Moore, 2004). They can also result in increased empowerment, social inclusion, mental health, and social resilience (Hacking et al., 2008).

METHODOLOGY

The research project that informs this brief was a collaboration between youth, local academics, local expert practitioners, and the global Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) community including partnering organizations Karkhana Samuha, Kathmandu University, and Mid-West University. The MAP Manual - a flexible set of educational and wellbeing games, exercises, and techniques - previously created by Prof. Dr. Ananda Breed from University of Lincoln (UK) was used as the study's core toolkit for art-based pedagogies. In addition, the *Basic Education Curriculum, 2077 (Grade 6-8) Compulsory Subjects - Social Science* guided the researchers in understanding national curricular goals. Thirdly another methodological influence over the process was Karkhana Samuha's Think Make Play Improve (TMPI); an inclusive and participatory design thinking methodology. The study team worked with Karkhana Samuha's Youth Advisory Advocacy Research (YAAR) Forum, a group of roughly 30 young women between the ages of 16 and 24.

KEY FINDINGS



Young people have a deep interest in understanding and contributing to curricula and other mechanisms that govern education systems.



Adult allies and sectoral experts serve as essential interlocutors between young people and decision-makers to ensure policy engagement with community curricula.

EXAMPLE LESSON PLAN

Overview of Activities: This lesson can be used to explore untouchability, a critical issue identified by the Nepali national social science curriculum as a topic of study in grade 6.

Curricular Link:

Basic Education Curriculum, 2077 (Grade 6-8) Compulsory Subjects - Social Science.¹ Specifically this lesson links to Activity 4.1.i enumerated on page 301 of the curriculum.

Lesson Objectives:



- To stimulate thinking about social issues
- To encourage group discussion and communication
- To facilitate intergenerational dialogue with seniors and authority figures

Video Explanation:

bit.ly/ExampleLessonPlan

¹ <https://moecdc.gov.np/en/curriculum>

Brief Description: Learners explore social problems or challenges they have witnessed in their communities alongside proposing possible solutions using the image theatre technique.

ACTIVITY 1: SCULPTOR CLAY	
<p>This activity helps participants understand how images can be created and how they can ‘sculpt’ themselves into a picture representation of a given theme. For instance, if the prompt given is war, how would the participants form an image to depict the given theme. Sculptor Clay gives all the participants a chance to design and direct an image and simultaneously allows them to act as an object/character for the image, warming them up for the main activity.</p>	
	<p>Number of Participants: Four or more</p>
	<p>Estimated time: 20 minutes</p>
Approach:	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Divide participants into pairs and ask them to determine who will be the “sculptor” and who will be the “clay.” • Demonstrate this activity with another facilitator or a volunteer. The “sculptor” can sculpt the “clay” partner’s body into an intended image. If body contact is not preferred, the sculptor can use his/her/their own body to illustrate how the clay should hold his/her/their body and what kind of expression the clay should have. The exercise should be conducted in silence. • Call out a word prompt and direct the sculptors to sculpt the clay into that image (ex: athlete, farm animal, etc.). • After a few minutes, tell the sculptors to finish their sculptures and the clay to stay frozen in the form they have been shaped into. • Allow the sculptors to “tour the gallery” and walk around the room briefly to observe the ways other sculptors have interpreted the prompt. Permit each sculptor to tell the story behind their work of art. • Ask the partners to switch roles. 	
<p>Video explanation: bit.ly/SculptorClay</p>	

ACTIVITY 2: STILL IMAGES – REAL VERSUS IDEAL

This activity enables uses still images to further dialogue and discussion amongst participants based on differing perspectives and viewpoints.

**Number of Participants:**

Six or more

**Estimated time:**

60 minutes

Approach:

- Ask participants to divide in smaller discussion groups to share observations and experiences related to how untouchability might play out in their neighborhood and communities. Retrieve the scenarios.
- Divide the group into different groups of 4 (depending on the number) and randomly assign the different scenarios. Let them know they will have to create two images based on the chosen topic.
- For the first image, using the methods presented in Sculptor/Clay, instruct all the participants to come up with a combined still image that depicts the topic as clearly as possible, asking them to create an image that shows the real picture of the scenario at hand. Encourage them to use different levels, keep in mind which side the audience will be seated and create the image accordingly to be as creative as they can with their bodies. This image is the 'real' image that represents the topic's truth.
- For the second image, ask the group to create a second image which is a transformed scenario of the first image depicting what the 'ideal' image surrounding the topic should be.
- All the groups should be working simultaneously. Observe the groups and make sure that everyone is participating, give any feedback/clarify questions. When all groups are ready with a sculpted image, instruct them to remember their positions in both the images.
- Invite each team to show their two images in front of the whole group in turns. Once the first image is shown, the facilitator prompts students to respond to the image while all the participants are frozen in their image. After responses are given, the same group shows the second image in the similar format and audience response and comments follow. This format allows for direct feedback and discussion.

Note: The first round of showcasing the final images can be done with the participants themselves. A second round of this performance can be through an intergenerational dialogue described in detail below.

Video explanation:

bit.ly/RealVersusIdeal

ACTIVITY 3: INTERGENERATIONAL DIALOGUE

This activity aims to facilitate discussion between young people and elders, seniors, elected representatives on social problems using still images.

**Participants:**

Students and invited guests

**Estimated time:**

60 minutes or more

Approach:

To enhance the value of this lesson, students and staff can invite community leaders, school principal, members from the school management committee, alumni of the school, local elected officials, and government officials (or whichever stakeholders might be able to actions solutions to the staged problems). The youth asks the audience the following questions:

- What did you just see in the first image? What are the 'real' issues that relate to untouchability in society?
- What did you see in the second image? What might be solutions to create the 'ideal' situation?

The audience members share their ideas that might relate to further reflection questions noted below. At the end, the student facilitator thanks the guests for their participation and the adult ally and participating organizations could follow up with any relevant actions to continue informing local policy and or curriculum through designated channels (if this lesson plan was to extend beyond the classroom environment).

Possible Reflection Questions:

- What happened? (What did you see, feel, or hear during the exercise?)
- What may be some of the factors in the society, culture, history that may have contributed to allow the conflict shown in the image to persist?
- Who are some of the characters? How do they relate to one another?
- What action do you think happened prior to this image? What would happen following this image?
- How could you change one of the figures in the image to illustrate going from the 'real' image of conflict to the 'ideal' image of peace?
- What was the suggested intervention? What would really need to happen on a familial, community, or government level for the intervention to succeed?
- How did you feel about the exercise and linking it to untouchability?

Contributors: The following individuals are acknowledged, in alphabetical order, for the significant contribution made to the development of this Brief and the research study: Juhi Adhikari (Co-Lead, YAAR), Gunjan Dixit (Theater Artist), Binod Prasad Pant (Assistant Professor, Kathmandu University School of Education), Sakar Pudasaini (Founder, The Karkhana Network), Asmita Sah (Co-Lead, YAAR), Lalit Jung Shahi, Ramila Tamang (Co-Lead, YAAR), Rajib Timalsina (Co-I, MAP).