

Building Community Curriculums

A Field Guide

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Introduction

Aims

This guide is designed to assist educators and non-profit organisations aiming to positively influence the learning experience of young people by integrating artsbased, participatory approaches into formal, informal, and non-formal curricula. It draws on three key approaches towards that goal.

First, it outlines how children and young people can contribute towards curriculum development. Next, it explores how arts-based methods and pedagogies, specifically those adopted in the Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) program, facilitate inclusive approaches to make learning holistic, child-centered, and practice-oriented. Finally, it reflects on the role of adult expert allies - researchers, education advocates, and duty bearers - in "translating" community voices back into the formal language of policy advocacy.

This guide draws on learnings from co-creation and advocacy workshops carried out with 390 youths and students in four districts of Nepal between January and November of 2023. However, we believe that many of the contexts and conditions are shared across many other countries and cultures making these approaches and practices useful in varied other contexts as well.

This project was made possible through the <u>Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP</u>) program, a practice-as-research project supported by the <u>Global Challenges Research Fund</u> (<u>GCRF</u>) through the <u>Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC</u>). The MAP program was founded by <u>Professor Ananda Breed</u> and is hosted at the <u>University of Lincoln</u>.

The Nepali Context

The modern era of Nepali education began in 1951 with the end of the insular and inward-looking hereditary Prime Ministership of the Rana Regime, which ruled for over a century. In 1951, only 321 formal primary schools were recorded in Nepal, with



less than 1% of the eligible population enrolled (O'Sellar et al., 1981).¹ According to UNESCO statistics, by 1983, net primary enrolment stood at 59%, and by 2011, it reached 99%.²

The rapid rise in enrolment, while a cause for celebration, also had consequences. The greater uptake of education created significant pressures to rapidly recruit and deploy teachers. This led to gaps in pre-service teacher training, monitoring, and continued education. The consequences of these gaps have only recently become apparent, with an increased focus on learning outcomes rather than education inputs. The Government of Nepal's own National Assessment of Student Achievement confirms the findings of other studies that years in schools do not result in most students performing at grade level (Education Review Office, 2018)³.

Another significant consequence of the rapid growth of enrolment has been the loss of teacher autonomy. Traditional pedagogies in the Nepali context often emphasise that a highly skilled teacher (*guru*) is empowered to follow their own course of instruction. However, the post-1951 system, characterized by an imposed curriculum, an overemphasis on textbooks, and standardized high stakes testing (Au, 2017), effectively curtailed the abilities of teachers to adjust to their immediate realities.

Even in the best of circumstances, the job of a Nepali teacher, who faces a bewildering diversity, is complex. Children from varied caste/ethnic groups - the 2021 census recognizes 142 - often with their own home languages, share classrooms (National Statistics Office, 2022). Cultural differences regarding the appropriate age to send children to school mean that a primary classroom might have children six years apart in age (ASER Nepal, 2019)⁴. Furthermore, students come from a variety of households, ranging from first-generation learners with parents having minimal formal education to those from households where both parents are literate. Thus, children arrive at school with vastly different levels of readiness for learning.

⁴ ASER (2019). Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) Nepal 2019. Accessed October 10 from: <u>https://galligalli.org.np/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/4.-ASER-Report-2019-Province_Two_.pdf</u>



¹ O'Seller, P. et al. (1981). US AID to Education in Nepal: a 20 Year Beginning. Project Impact Evaluation No. 19. Accessed October 10 2024 from: <u>https://pdf.usaid.gov/pdf_docs/xnaaj168a.pdf</u> ²_UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2020). School enrollment, primary (% net) – Nepal. Data as of February 2020. Accessed October 10 2024 from: <u>https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SE.PRM.NENR?locations=NP</u>

³ Education Review Office/ Kafle et al., (2019). National Assessment of Student Achievement 2018. Government of Nepal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Accessed October 10 from: <u>file://network.uni/staff/S3/shuxley/Downloads/1623747102_275787545_NASA%202018%20Report%20E</u> <u>nglish.pdf</u>

These complexities demand pedagogies that are flexible, inclusive, and accommodating to a variety of backgrounds.

Youth, Community Curricula, and Arts-based Methods

National education policies and curricula wield significant influence over young people and the communities they inhabit. With the expansion of education programs, an increasing number of young people spend larger portions of their formative years within the influence of formal education systems bound by these policies.

To enhance the relevance of its education system in addressing modern challenges and opportunities, Nepal's national education policy and curriculum developers have recently leaned towards holistic, inclusive, and multi-modal pedagogies. For instance, the National Curricular Framework (NCF) (2076 BS)⁵ envisaged the following fundamental principles for curriculum development:

- A. Holistic development of children through child-centred learning.
- B. Promoting soft skills and life skills.
- C. Acknowledging the social, cultural, and linguistic diversity of Nepal.
- D. Addressing the local needs.
- E. Promoting local values and exploring Western wisdom traditions.

These principles serve as the pillars of a transformative vision, aiming to nurture the development of children with a focus on "learning to know, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together." This vision recognizes education as a vehicle for empowerment, encompassing not only knowledge acquisition but also the cultivation of skills, identity, and collective harmony. In contrast, the post-1951 "modern" educational models, with their emphasis on replicability and standardization, prioritized a "power over" dynamic characterized by top-down approaches and an emphasis on rote learning. While these methods have been dominant recently, they increasingly diverge from the evolving understanding of

⁵ Curriculum Development Centre (2076 BS) National Curricular framework. Government of Nepal Ministry of Education, Science and Technology. Accessed October 10 from: <u>https://moecdc.gov.np/storage/gallery/1679810764.pdf</u>. Principles A to E are direct quotes from the National Curricular Framework.



human potential. The national curricular framework and its principles can be seen as an attempt to respond to this discrepancy.

However, the journey towards this ideal encounters formidable challenges at the intersection of theory and practice. Despite widespread acknowledgement of its importance, the actual engagement of young people in education processes such as policy-making, citizenship, and co-learning in classrooms often falls short of aspirations. These processes, though theoretically open to youth participation, frequently fail to accommodate the communication styles of young people. This creates a pattern where policy and curriculum development are "done to" young people, rather than "done with" them, rendering them passive recipients of decisions made on their behalf, instead of being co-creators.

This field guide explores arts-based and iterative co-creation methods as a means to break old patterns. Art, in this context, goes beyond aesthetics alone. Rather it grapples with processes of imagination that objectivist and reductionist pedagogies are limited in. Artful pedagogy enables the use of symbols, metaphors and even bodily expression. It legitimizes music and culture, both popular and traditional, as a legitimate vehicle to discuss matters of social importance, and facilitates imagining alternatives, acknowledging challenges, experiencing joy, and feeling pride. This particular aspect of art-based pedagogy makes it a powerful tool for empowering young people and creating the conditions for them to voice their issues, needs, solutions, and ambitions.

In recent years, increasing evidence suggests positive outcomes associated with artsbased methods, including: (1) enabling diverse forms of participant expression, with restorative, empowering, and therapeutic qualities (Leavy, 2017); (2) addressing children's emotional well-being (Hamilton & Moore, 2004); (3) enhancing empowerment, social inclusion, mental health, and social resilience (Hacking et al., 2008); and (4) promoting social cohesion, empathy, and learning to live together (Catterall et al. 2012).

Thus, art and arts-based methods can encourage a shift towards a pedagogy of care. The rest of this guide outlines practical and applied approaches to realizing such a pedagogy "in real life" contexts.



Mapping the process

This guide outlines a series of activities and practices that were undertaken and proved useful in involving young people in the policy development process. They are outlined below under four broad headings - **Conceive, Recruit & Activate, Co-Create, Translate and Disseminate**. In practice, these categories are not discreet, and they are not necessarily implemented in the order presented here. Co-creation activities, for example, can have a significant impact on dissemination.

For example, in one co-creation workshop, teachers were invited to brainstorm critical topics to be discussed alongside students. The activity design had only planned for peer-to-peer student-led workshops. The student-to-teacher dissemination had only been planned for the end of the project. However, the teachers asked if they could attend the student-led workshops as participants the very next day. This led to an organic opportunity for the students to disseminate their ideas to the teachers outside of the project design.

Similarly, translation activities, where young people learn to understand and manipulate the symbols and language of formal education policy-making processes, catalyse new ideas and opportunities for co-creation. For example, after they learnt to write policy briefs for the federal government, the young people decided that these documents were not suitable for advocacy at the local government levels. Thus, they initiated a new round of co-creation, inviting the researchers to rethink policy advocacy at the local level.

Therefore, instead of thinking of these as separate steps carried out in a linear fashion, we suggest thinking of each category as a dial that can be adjusted based on the intended goal of the activity and the opportunities presented by the environment.

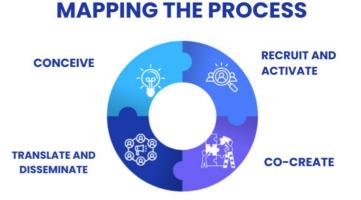


Conceive

Key Questions: What is the

initiative supposed to achieve? How does it plan to achieve it? What are the ideas, policies and approaches on which it stands?

To begin with, outline the key outcomes the program is seeking to achieve. This guides the resources and bodies of work that form the pillars of the study. In this case, the



research team sought to achieve the following outcomes:

- 1. To explore if arts-based methods facilitate intergenerational dialogue.
- 2. To utilize co-creation to allow community-based knowledge to enter into a conversation with the formal national curriculum.
- 3. To maximize opportunities for young people to exercise their agency and voice.

To fulfil this intent, we drew on three broad resources: the MAP Manual, the Nepali National Curriculum, and the Think Make Play Improve (TMPI), an iterative cocreation protocol developed by Karkhana Samuha.

MAP Manual: The <u>MAP Manual</u>, created by Prof. Dr Ananda Breed from the University of Lincoln (UK), was used as the study's core toolkit as a flexible framework of games, exercises, and techniques for art-based methods and pedagogies.

National Curriculum: A broad review of the national curriculum was carried out, examining guiding documents such as the national curricular framework, subject guides, and the emerging integrated curriculum. From this vast review, the grade 6-8 social science curriculum was chosen as the point of intervention.

TMPI: Karkhana Samuaha's Think Make Play Improve (TMPI); an inclusive and participatory design thinking methodology was leveraged as the appropriate approach for iterative co-creation.



To achieve the ends outlined above, the study team aimed to design a program that facilitated dialogue between these approaches: the grades 6-8 social science curriculum, the MAP Manua, I and TMPI.

Recruit & Activate

Key Questions: Who needs to be in the room? Who already has relationships of trust with the individuals we want in the room? How do we ensure inclusivity? What compromises do logistical, budgetary, and social constraints impose?

A youth-led approach necessitated forming a community of young people to take charge of the project. Thus, a Youth Advisory Advocacy Research (YAAR) group was operationalized. The acronym YAAR, slang for 'friend' in Nepali, communicated the informal and youth-focused ethos of the program.

The establishment of YAAR was based on extensive consultations within our study team and a broader network of partners. Together, we identified four pivotal criteria to ensure that YAAR was diverse and inclusive:

- 1. Regional Diversity Reflecting the vast tapestry of our Nepal's geography to ensures that no region was left unheard.
- 2. Ethnolinguistic Diversity Embracing the rich multitude of languages and cultures within Nepal's boundaries to bolster collective wisdom.
- 3. Urban and Rural Lived Experiences Balancing urban and rural perspectives to ensure a holistic view of our societal landscape.
- 4. Gender Considerations Addressing the pivotal role of gender in shaping experiences and opportunities to ensure equitable development.

The latter two points led to particularly rich debates. Balancing the desire to include participants from rural and remote areas to represent rural lived experiences against the significant increase in logistical complexities and costs required to support such efforts was a dilemma. This debate was resolved by a creative solution: the program would seek out and partner with existing scholarship programs that enabled rural youth to study in Kathmandu. This approach would ensure a significant rural voice



and experiences in the program while reducing the logistical complexities to a manageable level.

The question of accounting for gender led to another engaged debate. The conversation oscillated between the importance of integrating boys to foster shared leadership versus the potentially inhibiting impact of mixed-gender programs on the participation of young girls, especially considering societal norms and familial comfort levels. This particular debate was resolved with an understanding that while the initial program would be for girls only, the agreement was to integrate boys into future iterations.

Aligning with these principles, we selected three co-leads for YAAR, embodying the diversity envisioned: hail from distinct regions, represent varied ethnolinguistic backgrounds, and include perspectives from rural landscapes. These co-leads, proposed by partners, ensured leadership that was not only diverse but also represented young people with the ability to inspire and execute.

Ultimately a group of 30 young women between the ages of 16 and 24 were selected to be part of the program. The specifics of this selection process are outlined in the recruitment and activation process plan below.

Co-create

Key Questions: What process allows for the transfer of knowledge and skill without putting young people in passive roles? How can the experiences and extant knowledge of young people be valued and integrated?

Co-creating with young people necessitated careful choreography that incrementally shifted authority and leadership from the study team to the young people. A balance was necessary as premature transfer before the emergence of sufficient capacity was setting young people up for failure. Whereas any delay past the point of minimum sufficient capacity was a detriment to youth agency.

The study team designed an iterative process - outlined in the 'co-create process map' section of this field guide - aimed at making young people aware, involved, and co-creators in the project's overall systems. The four-step process began with an



emphasis on understanding the context. It shifted to young people facilitating their peers' acquisition of the same context and practices. It guided young people in learning to observe their peers through analytical lenses. And it finally aided young people in consolidating the insights gained into policy briefs.

Translate

Key Questions: What are communication preferences for young people? How do policy and curriculum experts like to "hear" findings? What are ways to bridge these preferences?

Activation and co-creation draw the considerable resources of young people and generate a plethora of interesting insights, approaches, and reflections. These insights and solutions need to be consolidated in ways that make them available for dissemination. We conceptualized the activities carried out in this stage as a "translation" function.

We suggest that expert adult allies are indispensable in this process for three reasons:

- To support young people in translating the ideas generated by their engagement back into the "respectable" formal language for curriculum experts and policymakers.
- 2. To enable policymakers and curriculum experts to adjust their communication preferences and engage with young people on the latter's terms.
- 3. To produce reflections, insights, and guides that other adult allies can utilize.

In the Lesson Plan section in Appendix A, we outline one exemplary activity that illustrates each of the three functions.

Disseminate

Key Questions: Who needs to know what we learned? How do we make it as easy as possible for our target audience to learn what we now know?

The participatory action research framework emphasizes the importance of involving those most affected by research outcomes in every stage of the study, including dissemination (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2000). Engaging young individuals in the



dissemination process empowers them as ambassadors of knowledge, increases their status in their communities, and establishes them as advocates for change.

The inclusion of youth in dissemination also leverages their intrinsic adeptness with digital tools and the cultural zeitgeist. This not only broadens the reach of research findings but also generates public discourse in unexpected places. In fact, we might go so far as to say that many elected officials at all levels of government were more responsive to youth-crafted messaging than ideas crafted by the study team.

As discussed in the dissemination section of the Lesson Plan and Process Map section, young people can engage in a multitude of settings and methods during this phase. There is great value in drawing young people into formal seminars and round tables to share their views. In such venues, it is useful for adult allies to provide coaching and mentorship and enable them to support their advocacy with tools such as policy briefs.

It is also valuable to invite policymakers and community leaders to step into environments where the youth set the tone. We found that inviting policymakers as audiences of the art forms enacted by young people and discerning the intent and motive of such acts resulted in transformative and open intergenerational dialogue. Asking adults to step out of the space they feel they should control such as seminars, policy briefings, etc. and into art-ful and play-ful spaces, is an effective way to sidestep social norms that form barriers to intergenerational communication.



Lesson Plans and Process Maps

In this section, we outline step by step the processes that can be undertaken to implement activities at each of the stages outlined above.

Recruiting

1. STEP 1: Identify potential recruiting partners

Recruiting partners are wonderful resources that should be leveraged both to reach young people and to advise on engaging young people. We recommend reaching out to three kinds of recruiting partners.

 a. Youth-based organisations -Youth-based organisations offer a range of resources. They have networks of young people who



are already motivated by social issues. They also have access to proven youth leaders with a demonstrated ability to motivate and mobilize their peers.

- b. Formal state-sanctioned youth structures Engaging with the state and state- institutions prioritizes mobilizing pre-existing and preapproved structures. Therefore, we reached out to the National Youth Council as well as local-level youth councils in the areas we worked in. Child clubs at schools and the designated focal teachers responsible for them were valuable assets in navigating the engagement with local governments, school managers, and community leaders.
- Non-profits that work with youth Some of our most promising and successful recruits were found through non-profits, including those (1) that run youth leadership programs for 16-18 year old girls; and (2) that mobilize youth as volunteers to engage in learning activities through



games with primary school children. Such organisations have vetted candidates and expansive networks to reach out through.

2. STEP 2: Keep inclusion in mind

As noted in the Recruitment section above, after much debate, we chose to work with only girls and set a selection criterion that included optimizing for four kinds of diversities. Against this backdrop, we selected a mix of partners who would bring geographical, ethnolinguistic, and socioeconomic diversity into the recruiting process.

Two key constituencies supported our diversity effort.

- a. One group was made up of non-profits that provided scholarship programs for rural and disadvantaged youth to study in the capital.
 Partnering with three such organisations focusing on different regions of Nepal gave us a pool of geographically and ethno-linguistically diverse young people.
- b. A second constituency that supported these efforts were university professors, particularly in public universities that are lower cost and draw a wider pool of students from around the country. Professors understood student histories and the program objectives and provided referrals that resulted in good fits.

3. STEP 3: Youth Led Selection Process

Engaging youth in leadership roles is about practice and perception. Starting the recruitment process as a youth-led initiative communicated the project values and allowed the co-leads of YAAR to build a working leadership team.

The three YAAR co-leads developed a series of presentations and pitches about the project by working with the study team and reviewing project documents. After some coaching sessions, they conducted online orientations for other interested young people. In addition to this, they also visited colleges, schools, and recruitment partner sites to raise awareness.

After a sufficient number of candidates showed interest, the YAAR coleads and study team collaborated to develop interview questions. These questions focused on the lived experience of the candidates, their motivation to join a



program like MAP, and what their contribution would be. The YAAR co-leads conducted the interviews without any adult supervision, and made recommendations on which candidates should be selected for the program.

4. STEP 4: Formalize the commitment

Given the cultural context of Nepal, it was important to formalize the commitment - for example, by signing MoUs with NGOs or local governments or by conducting program launch ceremonies with partners. Selection decisions were communicated in writing to all candidates, and their acceptance to join the program was also formally recorded. These formal communications provided an opportunity to gather additional demographic information that was not acquired in the selection process and also to confirm

candidates' compliance with the organisational and national safeguarding policies.

The entire formalisation process was youth-led, with a compliance officer supporting the YAAR co-leads.

5. STEP 5: Shift power to the group With YAAR fully formed, the group



was given its first opportunity to make a collective decision regarding the timing and location of activation activities. This was important to increase participation but also to set the right tone for project engagement.

Activation

The activation process had multiple interrelated goals:

- 1. To build a sense of community and team spirit;
- 2. To develop knowledge about education systems and research methods;
- 3. To build the ability to run peer-led arts-based processes.

To achieve these goals, the program designed a series of four workshops exclusively for the YAAR.



Workshop 1: Get to know each other

The first workshop, a fully youth-led activity with no researchers present, focused on building community and understanding each person's resources. The YAAR members chose to play games from the MAP manual as a warm-up.

YAAR members then shared their talents, with an emphasis on music, poetry and artistic forms. Both popular art forms, as well as songs/art forms from the villages and local areas of each individual, were encouraged.

Finally, the YAAR co-leads led a discussion on the topics and issues of interest to them. This process validated the earlier findings of MAP that youth were interested in and aware of social issues such as child marriage, domestic violence and untouchability. However, in this session, issues pertaining to their digital lives, such as cyberbullying, online romances and equitable access to digital tools, were also prominent.

Workshop 2: Arts-based Lessons

The study team, which included educators and theatre artists, had designed two artbased workshops aligning directly with the national curricular framework and the grade 6-8 social science curriculum. Members of the YAAR participated in these lessons, considering that they were expected to run similar workshops with their peers later.

Each of these lessons included ample opportunities for feedback and suggestions regarding desired modifications. However, the research team was also observing the activities and had its own set of ideas on how to modify them for improved outcomes. An example lesson is included in Appendix A.

Workshop 3: Exploring the curriculum

Young people have experienced the education system from the inside but are not always clear on what sorts of policies, forces, and interests shape their experience. In the "Exploring the Curriculum" workshop, an expert from the Curriculum Development Committee was invited to work with young people to understand the intent behind the curriculum. There was also extensive discussion on how a curriculum is made, including who is consulted, and what choices need to be made regarding inclusion and exclusion in the curriculum.



This session allowed young people to zoom out beyond the textbook and classroom experience and recognize the metastructure that underlies their entire formal education system. Furthermore, it empowered them by providing tools on how they could engage with and influence this metastructure.

This workshop also generated valuable insights for the research team on engaging adult allies beyond the team. Although the team initially intended to avoid lectures throughout the program, the government officials resorted, out of habit, to lecturing. Consequently, the workshop was confusing and overwhelming for many young participants. Therefore, the study team designed follow-up integration activities that allowed for more discussion and social knowledge creation about curriculums and education policy. The lecture also became a reference point for discussions about institutional cultures, and the need to adopt varied approaches to engage different kinds of institutions.

Let us consider three examples highlighting how three different kinds of institutions, each critical in shaping education policy, can be invited to engage with youth in artful and play-ful ways.

- Institutions that operate in formal and hierarchical patterns, such as the Ministry of Education and its agencies, are likely to first engage young people in didactic lecture-style interactions regardless of how the invitation was extended. Thus, planning for such an engagement and preparing the young people for it is of value. However, this first engagement could also include artful methods that draw adults into alternate ways of engaging young people in the future.
- For youth-led organisations, which often have funding tied to advocacy, it is useful to begin engagement by stressing awareness-building and advocacy. Subsequently, demonstrating how art-ful methods can achieve advocacy goals is useful to continue alliance building.
- 3. Finally, schools and school leaders are often primarily concerned with the curriculum. Presenting engagements with schools as opportunities to realize the curriculum in new ways may yield the best results.



Workshop 4: Research and Advocacy

Research, especially the way it is taught in school, can feel impersonal and disconnected from the "real world". Thus, the emphasis of this workshop was on how social research could be used to inform change-making and advocacy. The workshop was part of a series designed by Dr. Neeti Aryal Khanal at the Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University, which went through two phases.

The objectives of Phase I were:

- Understanding Research and Social Science Research;
- Understanding knowledge and ways of knowing;
- Linking social science research with informed advocacy and change-making.

The objectives of Phase II were:

- Identifying research agendas for informed advocacy and change-making;
- Developing a mini research project.

The full workshop, including slides are included in Appendix A: Example Lesson.

Co-creation

The notion of co-creation, drawn from design thinking and human-centred design, suggests that including the ultimate beneficiary population in the design of products and services increases opportunities to discover new solutions. It also reduces the chances that there will not be uptake by these populations. In the co-creation process, the ultimately intended beneficiary population are not treated as subjects of a study but as equal co-creators. The co-creation process was guided by four major principles:

- 1. Interdisciplinary collaborations yield more creative outcomes.
- 2. Collaboration should involve partnership between generations.
- 3. Iterative design and development of the project is a responsible approach to shift meaningful authority to young people.
- 4. Young people should have leadership roles in implementing and designing the project to the maximum possible degree.



Principle 1: Interdisciplinary collaborations for more creative outcomes. From the outset, the design team prioritized interdisciplinary collaborations. Therefore, the team included an education practitioner with both field implementation and policy experience and a theatre artist who was also a classroom teacher bringing real-world artistic experience as well as pedagogical input into the team. The team also consisted of three academic researchers with different disciplinary focuses, namely STEAM education, peace studies, and developmental studies.

During the brainstorming phase, the research team focused on ways to maximize the flow of ideas from diverse disciplines outside of our own. We adopted a posture of curiosity to explore beyond our existing knowledge.

Principle 2: Collaboration should involve partnership between generations. Intergenerational collaborations were important, leading to the recruitment of three young people as the co-leads of the YAAR. These co-leads were recruited in the early phase based on partner recommendations and were included in research team discussions. The YAAR co-leads were young people who had worked with the project team before and had demonstrated leadership skills along with some familiarity with education-focused social interventions. One co-lead also served as a member of the MAP Global Youth Advisory Board to bridge international and national efforts. As noted in the recruitment section above, the YAAR co-leads led the recruitment and selection process, which was important in communicating the youth-led nature of the project to their peers. They also co-facilitated workshops for their peers and participated fully in post-event surveys and reflections, resulting in modifications to the program design by the research team.

Principle 3: The iterative design and development of the project is a responsible approach to shift meaningful authority to young people.

While YAAR co-leads were critical in establishing intergenerational collaborations, the project aimed to increasingly transfer responsibility to the YAAR members. This was achieved through an iterative series of activities.

During the first field test, selected YAAR members facilitated workshops they had been trained in during the activation stage for their peers in grades 9 and 10. At this stage they fully took on the role of a facilitator formerly shared with research team members. The research team switched into the role of observers in the five field test workshops in this phase.

In the second field test, a larger group of YAAR members facilitated workshops in schools in Central Nepal. The selected YAAR members, especially those involved as facilitators in the first field test, took on the role of co-researchers and joined the research team in conducting observations, taking field notes, and conducting post event interviews.

The youth-researchers then conducted web-based focus groups with their youthfacilitator peers. Their findings were used as input to finalize the design of the community curriculum.

In this way, iterative development was critical in empowering young people and enhancing their agency. At each stage of iteration, their knowledge and abilities had grown and thus they were more effective co-creators by the new stage of the process. While there was no clear linear phasing of activities, the iterative development had a chain effect. Because different groups of young people were introduced to the project at different iterative cycles, there was a great deal of peerto-peer knowledge transmission.

For example, the theatre practices that an artist shared with the initial group of young people changed and morphed in the transmission chain to other groups of young people. And it further changed form by the time it was transmitted to students in schools. This process of morphing made the uptake easier and faster along the chain of transmission, suggesting that young people were making valuable adaptations suited to improving pedagogy.

Principle 4: Young people should have leadership roles in implementing and designing the project to the maximum possible degree.

With the community curriculum finalized, young people assumed responsibility for implementing the art-based lesson plans in schools. For six months, they conducted monthly workshops in schools, working with peers slightly younger than themselves. Throughout the co-creation process there were deliberate and steady transfers of key



skills needed to support the shift in implementation responsibility from the project team to the young people.

The most obvious skill that needed to be transferred was the pedagogical abilities necessary to conduct workshops. As documented above, this was achieved in both the activation phases. At these times, multiple groups of young people - starting with a core group of co-leads and growing to the entire body of YAARs - were presented opportunities to be participants, observers, and co-leads of art-based workshops. Furthermore, the activation workshops and discussions through the co-creation phase grounded their learning of the practice of art-based workshops in the national curriculum and the national curricular framework.

The less apparent skills that were transferred were equally critical to the activation phase. Young people who participated in the YAAR attended meetings the project team had with school leaders and local governments to get the approvals necessary to conduct activities. They observed both successful and unsuccessful attempts to collaborate with schools. And they sat through the project team's analysis of the interactions. The project team and partner NGOs had prepared each local government unit for the young people to approach them. But, ultimately, the young people themselves were responsible for ensuring the signing of the final agreements. This learning was critical in building young people's ability to operationalize the peerled sessions.

No amount of initial training or formal documentation was, or could be, sufficient for the young people to take on the task of operationalising the peer-led sessions. Thus, the research team held monthly gatherings for youth facilitators and youth researchers to ask questions. Usually, one group of young people were invited to serve as observers in the classroom, where another group of their peers facilitated. This provided opportunities for young people to observe in others what they may not have seen as they were facilitating themselves.

These sessions led to reflections on their learning. And some groups requested specific skill-building sessions in areas they felt they were lacking. Common areas of self-identified gaps were classroom management and time management. They asked many questions about dividing learners into groups, utilizing classrooms designed for rote learning - i.e. with fixed benches pointing forward towards the teacher - for interactive and art-ful activities, keeping noise levels manageable as



students got excited, and ensuring that activities were completed within the assigned class period. Common advice offered by observers included urging peer teachers to refrain from excessive intervention and to include all learners in the process. With regards to the former, observers noted that all their peers had enjoyed the time and space given to them to try, modify, and try again. However, during the project team-led workshops, peer teachers were quick to intervene and "fix" the situation at the first sign of a struggle. With regards to the latter, observers noted that while a substantive portion of the students were engaged and participating, a minority seemed disconnected from the activity, and required additional skills and tools to engage them.

Translate & Disseminate

Young people can play an important role as translators and disseminators of research findings. While some see these functions as part of a single activity, we suggest it's useful to conceptualize them as two closely interrelated but distinct functions.

The translation phase is more inwardly focused, with the key participants being the youth and the research team. In this phase, the major effort is to digest the findings of the study, identify key audiences, and determine the best messaging and channels to reach them. This stage is a useful time to build a shared understanding of what was observed and what should be done in response.

In the dissemination phase, the emphasis is on stakeholders beyond the project team. Here, the emphasis is on communicating the findings and recommendations to various stakeholders. We suggest that while utilizing youth to communicate with their peers is a natural and productive activity, truly empowering young people should aim to go beyond that. It is of great value to equip young people to present their ideas to other stakeholders, including and especially, policymakers.

In this stage we undertook the following activities:

 Creating videos and presentations: Young people, in our case the YAARs, worked independently to create short videos and build narratives they could use to present to their peers.



2. <u>Creating youth-led policy briefs</u>: Select YAARs that expressed interest in research methods were engaged to produce youth policy briefs. The process began with the team sharing examples of policy briefs produced by youth and disciplinary experts. From these examples, the young people were prompted to choose styles and elements they wanted to include in their format.

Next the youth-researchers created a list of their findings, insights, and recommendations from the project. This was developed both through their own engagement with the project and by interviewing their peers who facilitated workshops alongside them.

They then organized their insights and recommendations into like categories, and determined which of those categories were most valuable to communicate to policymakers.

At this stage, they produced a working draft that was reviewed and critiqued by members of the research team. Using that input, the youth researchers produced another draft. This process was repeated until all parties were satisfied with the final output.

Disseminate

Dissemination activities were targeted at two major stakeholders: peers and policymakers. To disseminate to the latter group, the project organized a National Round Table and an invite-only seminar.

1. National Round Table

The findings of the youth-led research were shared through the policy briefs at the event co-organized by MAP and UNESCO on the 21st of September. The YAAR members also demonstrated various scenarios using Art-based Image Theatre to communicate with a diverse audience consisting of educators, civil society actors, policymakers and government officials. The objective was to lay out social scenarios that are seen in the community and to facilitate discussions where unique perspectives were drawn along with possible solutions.



The event also engaged co-investigators Gunjan Dixit, Binod Pant, and three members from YAAR in the panel discussion on "Intergenerational Dialogue on Arts-Based Creative Learning Pedagogies; Application and Practices."

2. Seminar

An invite-only seminar consisting of education officers from local governments, the Ministry of Education, civil society organisations, and academics was organized by the research team in the lead-up to the national round table. This seminar served to understand the reaction of key policymakers to our recommendations and, thus, a moment to recalibrate the message for greater efficacy.

Two youth researchers presented at the event to deliver messages and gain practice and confidence speaking to decision-makers. Additionally, the project team worked closely with other civil society organisations and forums to ensure youth-researchers would be invited to participate and present at other forums.

In selecting the partners and stakeholders that the project sought to influence, we took a systems approach and thus engaged four types of stakeholders: government bodies, donor agencies, youth organisations, and CSOs/NGO. For example, YAAR co-leads, through partnerships established by the project team, were invited to present at a National Education Day event organized by the Government of Nepal, a seminar hosted by Kathmandu University, as a panellist at an event co-hosted with UNESCO, and at numerous youth forums. This is just one example of consistent efforts to bring the different stakeholders into conversation with each other and young people.

Art-based Dissemination

Art-based dissemination techniques were particularly successful at the community level for young people to engage both their peers and community leaders. The most successful approach for engagement involved young people preparing an artful engagement with social issues - in our case, usually a theatrical performance - in the first half of the day. Community and school leaders were invited to attend the performance in the latter half of the day.



The best engagement was achieved when the community leaders were not told what the issue under scrutiny was. Instead, they watched the performance and were later asked by a moderator, also a young person, about what they observed and felt during the performance. Other young people in the audience were then invited to share their reactions both to the performance itself and also to what their community leaders were saying.

This approach generated significant discussion about both the underlying social issues but also the power of art-based approaches to leverage the imagination and bring potent issues into conversation. Creating an environment where the community leaders were invited to a "performance" without a lot of contexts, allowed them to listen and observe in a way they may not be socially permitted to do in a policy discussion or advocacy session. The need to assert expertise and authority was deflated by the art-based setting, thus allowing for stronger intergenerational dialogue.



Appendix A: Example Lessons

Art Based Lessons

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.⁶ Specifically, this lesson links to Activity 4.1.i enumerated on page 301 of the curriculum.

Lesson Objectives:

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

Video Explanation:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/lv-Wq83-IJ697fQ2KfkG3tz8pw6Mbzw4_/view?usp=drive_link

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

⁶ <u>https://moecdc.gov.np/en/curriculum</u>



Activity 1: Sculptor Clay

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.

Number of Participants: Four or more

Estimated time: 20 minutes

Approach:

- 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.

Video explanation:

https://www.canva.com/design/DAFq3EuOjEc/llwceQ2UVIEtL0OOXh-8Bg/view?utm_content=DAFq3EuOjEc&utm_campaign=designshare&utm_medium= link&utm_source=publishsharelink



Activity 2: Still Images – Real versus Ideal

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

Number of Participants: 6 or more

Estimated time: 60 minutes

Approach:

- Ask participants to divide into smaller discussion groups to share observations and experiences related to how untouchability might play out in their neighbourhoods 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:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1HGmK0fORIajX4AAPB9g2EH7gfYeHc2Ji/view?usp=drive_li nk



Activity 3: Intergenerational Dialogue

Purpose:

To facilitate discussion between young people and elders, seniors, and elected representatives on social problems using still images.

Participants: Students and invited guests

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 action 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 organisations 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?



Social Research for Informed Advocacy and Change-making Overview of Lesson Plan

The following two activities were prepared by Dr. Neeti Aryal Khanal, Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Tribhuvan University.

Lesson Objectives:

- 1. Gain clarity about social science research
- 2. Understanding knowledge and evidence
- 3. Identify research agenda for informed advocacy and change-making
- 4. Design mini-research project

Brief Description:

Number of Participants: 10 - 40 Estimated time: 90 mins Session Plan:

First half (45 mins)

- Understanding Research and Social Science Research
- Understanding knowledge and ways of knowledge
- Linking social science research with informed advocacy and change-making

Second half (45 mins)

- Identify research agenda for informed advocacy and change-making
- Develop mini research project

Methodology: Experiential Learning

- a) Active listening
- b) Participating
- c) Reflecting
- d) Interactive



Activity 4: Research in everyday life

- Research is important in everyday life because it allows us to make informed decisions about the things that matter most to us.
- How do you choose which jacket to wear?

What is research?

 Research is defined as creating new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, and understandings to solve problems to make the world a better place for everyone.

What makes a good life

Video explanation: <<Robert Waldinger: What makes a good life? Lessons from the longest study on happiness - YouTube (13 mins)

• Listen to this carefully and make notes

Q) What are the main findings of the research?

Q) How can parents, educators and policymakers use the knowledge from this finding to change the way they do things?

Activity: Group work

Points for discussion:

- What are the main findings of the research?
- How can these groups use the knowledge from this finding to change the way they do things?
 - Group 1: Parents
 - Group 2: Educators
 - Group 3: Policymakers

Group discussion time: 10 mins

Group presentation: 2 mins

Group discussion Protocols:

- Listen with respect
- Synthesise everyone's perspective

How do we know, what we know

What is health?

Looking from eyes of Social Scientists



Social Science Research

- Social Science refers collectively to academic disciplines that study society and the relationships among individuals within a society.
 - Sociology
 - Anthropology
 - Gender studies
 - Economics
 - Psychology
 - Political Sciences
- For Social scientists, society is the lab
- Our research tools involve people including us
- They use Theory as a lens to understand the society and its dynamics
- Social Scientists also generate theories based on the in-depth study of society.
- Social scientists use a range of research methods.

Activity 5: Understanding Advocacy and Changemaking

Social Research and informed advocacy and change-making

- Social research is closely tied to advocacy and change
- Three domains of practice, activism and research are interconnected

My Research Experience

Research agenda:

To explore various intersections of gender, social justice and marginalization (SDG Goals 3,5,10)

Beyond Research Topic: Developing Research Agenda

- Crucial question to think about when you are pursuing your research for any academic or non-academic purposes
- Research agenda is not just a particular research topic but broader area of research that you want to explore in different phase of being a scholar

Process of Identifying research agenda

- 1) Think, Brainstorm, Reflect with self and peers
- 2) Read, Listen, Observe
- 3) Write regularly



Sometimes you research an existing topic, sometimes social issues drive you to identify the topic.

Activity: What is your Research Agenda and Research Topic: Think/ Pair/ Share

Think (4 mins)

- I. What is the key social problem that you want to investigate?
- II. Who are the people most affected by this problem?
- III. How can eliminating this problem help bring social change?

Pair (3 mins)

I. Share with a person next to you about each other's perspective

Share (5 mins)

- I. Volunteers come forward to share.
- II. Share what you learnt from each other's experience.

Activity: Design your mini research project

i) Research title:

ii) Study of ______(insert the social problem) of ______

(insert the group of people who are most affected by problem)_____ in (insert the geographical location

Write: 5 mins

• Gallery walk in the end

Write your research objective

- Sentence combinations:
 - To investigate
 - To examine
 - To evaluate
 - To assess
 - To determine

- Sentence combinations:
 - Interrelationship
 - Causes
 - Effect
 - Impact
 - Role

- To develop
- To measure
- To explore

Research Methods (Choose any three)

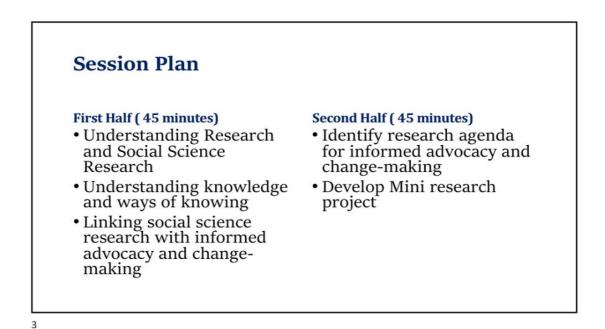
- Online survey/ field survey (whom and where)
- Structured/Unstructured Interview (whom, and where)
- Participant Observation (whom, where and how)
- Content Analysis (media stories, literature review, films, text books; what and how)
- Ethnography (where and which community)
- Case study (of whom, what)

#Make sure your methods match with your objective.

Gallery Walk

- Post your Mini Research Project in the wall
- Walk through your friend's project and gain insights
- Use Sticky notes to provide appreciative comments or constructive feedback









<text><list-item><list-item><list-item><list-item>







- <u>Robert Waldinger: What makes a</u> <u>good life? Lessons from the</u> <u>longest study on happiness | TED</u> <u>– YouTube</u> (13 min)
- •ध्यान दिएर सुन्नुहोस् र नोट गर्नुहोस
- अनुसन्धानको मुख्य नतिजा के थियो। यस नतिजालाइ अभिभावक, शिक्षक र नीति निर्माण गर्ने व्यक्तिहरुले कसरि प्रयोग गर्न सक्छन होला

lessons from longest running study on happiness at Harvard University

- -Make notes as you listen
- What is the main findings of the research?
- How can parents, educators and policy makers use the knowledge from this finding to change the way they do things?

Group Work

Points for discussion:

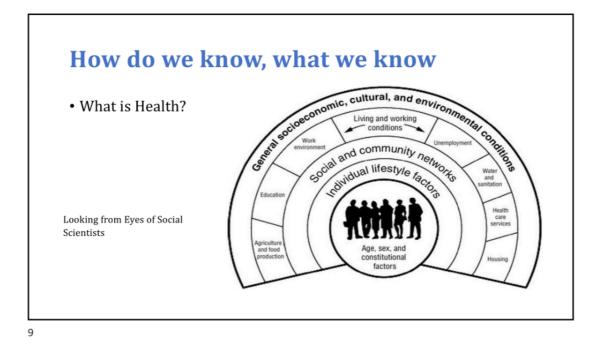
- What is the main findings of the research?
- How can these groups use the knowledge from this finding to change the way they do things?
- Group 1: Parents
- Group 2: Educators
- Group 3: Policy makers



- Group discussion time: 10 mins
- Group presentation: 2 mins each
- Group Discussion Protocols:
 Listen with respect
 - Synthesize everyone's perspective

8



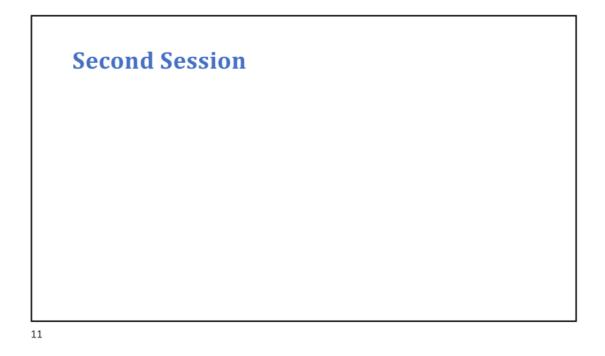


Social Science Research

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 - Sociology
 - Anthropology
 - Gender studies
 - Economics
 - Psychology
 - Political sciences

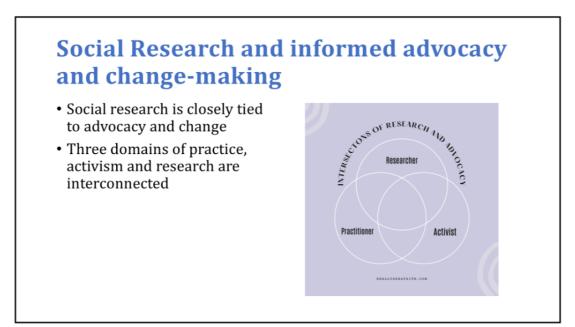
- For social scientists, society is the lab
- Our research tools involve people, including us.
- They use Theory as a lens/चस्मा to understand the society and it's dynamics
- Social Scientists also generate theories based on the in-depth study of society.
- Social scientists use range of research methods.













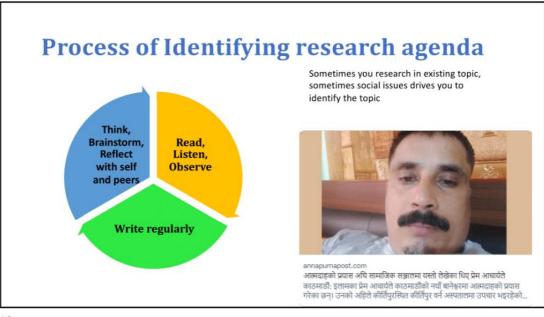


Beyond Research Topic: Developing Research Agenda

- Crucial question to think about when you are pursuing your research for any academic or non-academic purposes
- Research agenda is not just a particular research topic but broader area of research that you want to explore in different phase of being a scholar



15





What is your Research Agenda and Research Topic: Think/Pair/Share

Think (4 minute)

- What is the key social problem that you want to investigate?
- Who are the people most effected by this problem?
- How can eliminating this problem help bring social change.

Pair (3 minutes)

• Share a person next to you about each other's perspective

Share (5 minutes)

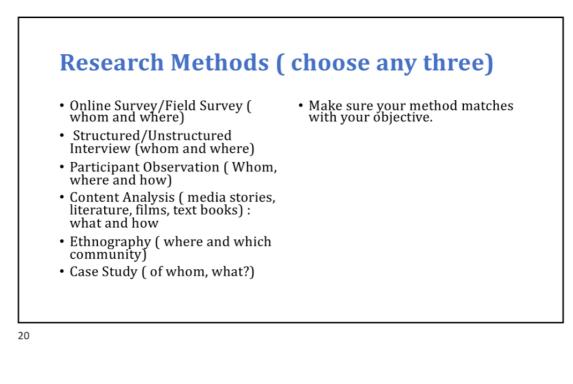
- Volunteers come forward to share.
- Share what you learnt from each other's experience













SOCIAL RESEARCH FOR INFORMED ADVOCACY AND CHANGE-MAKING

Dr. Neeti Aryal Khanal Assistant Professor Department of Sociology Tribhuvan University



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SOCIAL RESEARCH FOR INFORMED ADVOCACY AND CHANGE-MAKING

Dr. Neeti Aryal Khanal Assistant Professor Department of Sociology Tribhuvan University



Learning Goals

2



Gain clarity about social science research

- Understanding knowledge and evidence.Identify research agenda for informed advocacy and change-making
- Design mini-research project

1

Session Plan

Second Half (45 minutes) • Identify research agenda for informed advocacy and change-making • Develop Mini research project

- First Half (45 minutes) Understanding Research and Social Science and Social Sciènce
 Research
 Understanding knowledge
 and ways of knowing
 Linking social science
 research with informed
 advocacy and changemaking







Research in every day life

- Research is important in everyday life because it allows us to make informed decisions about the things that matter most to us.
- How do you choose which jacket you wear?



5

What is Research ?

curiosity It is poking a with a pu

Research is defined as creating new knowledge and/or the use of existing knowledge in a new and creative way to generate new concepts, methodologies, and understandings to solve problems to make world a better place for everyone

6

What makes a good life

गर्नुहोस

7

- गनुहास अनुसन्धानको सुख्य नतिजा के यियो। यस नतिजालाइ अभिमावक, शिक्षक र नीति निर्माण गर्ने व्यक्तिहरुले कसरि प्रयोग गर्न सक्छन होला
- • Robert Waldinger: What makes a good life? Lessons from the foncest study on happiness at Harvard University on happiness at Harvard University YouTube (13 min)
 essons from longest running study on happiness at Harvard University Make notes as you listen

 • YouTube (13 min)
 • What is the main findings of the research?
 - How can parents, educators and policy makers use the knowledge from this finding to change the way they do things?

Group Work

- Points for discussion: What is the main findings of the research?
- How can these groups use the knowledge from this finding to change the way they do things?
- Group 1: Parents
- Group 2: Educators Group 3: Policy makers



- Group Discussion Protocols: Listen with respect
 Synthesize everyone's perspective





What is your Research Agenda and Research Topic: Think/Pair/Share

Think (4 minute)

17

- What is the key social problem that you want to investigate?
- Who are the people most effected by this problem?
- How can eliminating this problem help bring social change.
- Share (5 minutes) • Volunteers come forward to share.

Share a person next to you about each other's perspective

Pair (3 minutes)

Share what you learnt from each other's experience

Design your mini research project

• Write: 5 mins

Gallery Walk in the end

• Research Title:

• Study of......(insert the social problem) of......(insert the group of people who are most effected by problem).....in (insert the geographical location)

18

Write your Research Objective

Sentence combinations:	 Sentence combinations
to investigate	 Interrelationship
to examine to evaluate	Causes
to assess	 Effect
 to determine 	Impact
 ◆to develop ◆to measure ◆to explore 	• Role

Research Methods (choose any three)

- Online Survey/Field Survey (whom and where)
- Structured/Unstructured Interview (whom and where)
- Interview (whom and where) Participant Observation (Whom, where and how) Content Analysis (media stories, literature, films, text books) : what and how Ethnography (where and which community)

- Case Study (of whom, what?)

.

Make sure your method matches with your objective.













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