

Samuhik सामूहिक पहल Pahal

A journal of our collective action

July 2024 | Volume 4 Issue 7



Learning spaces outside the school

CONTENTS

Editorial

- 03** Exploring learning spaces outside the school for effective learning

Reflections & Opinions

- 05** **Embodying traditional knowledge through the process of learning crafts**
Poornima Arun
- 09** **Extending the classroom: real-world learning through internships**
Nikhil Bangera
- 13** **The transformative power of guided nature walks**
A journey into the world of fungi
Shrey Gupta
- 16** **‘कथावना’ नामक रेसिपी के लिए सामग्रियाँ**
एक बाल साहित्य महोत्सव का आयोजन
सोनिका पराशर और उमाशंकर पेरियोडी
- 20** **Nurturing ecological literacy beyond classrooms**
Arathi Hanumanthappa
- 25** **Craft spaces as a medium of learning for children**
Rushikesh Kirtikar
- 28** **Learning spaces for active citizenship**
Vinita Gursahani Singh and Neha Yadav

Resources and Reviews

- 31** **Facilitating learning spaces outside of school**
Aastha Maggu

Exploring learning spaces outside the school for effective learning



Wipro Foundation

Schools have an undeniable role in democratising access to education. They help in ensuring that all children, including those from traditionally marginalized social groups, are able to learn the skills, mental attitudes and knowledge necessary to function as full members of democratic societies.

Ensuring effective learning in the school is a necessity. However, it is increasingly evident to those of us who work with the school system, that it is not sufficient for facilitating a complete education, which meets the demands of the present context and answers to the needs of all children.

Therefore, we need to look at, and intervene in, spaces outside the school system to cater to these needs. The natural world itself provides an important set of such spaces. Being in nature, and becoming a part of structured activities such as tree walks, bird watching, and mushroom walks, help children

develop an intimate connect with nature. These also help them in honing skills related to observation and analysis.

Students' immediate social contexts, in the communities they inhabit, are also an important source of learning. In rural communities, agriculture and the crafts are often an important part of life's rhythm. Therefore, production processes related to crafts and farming can be vital sites for learning. Similarly, in urban areas, structured apprenticeships and internships in workspaces can provide openings for children's education.

Such learning, developed through an intimate interaction with the community context, can be about the interconnections between the various academic subjects, and specific content knowledge. It can also be about important aspects of social life that makes such economic production possible.

Actual production skills are, of course, an added bonus. In all of this, though, care

must be taken that their interface with the production process happens with the primary objective of education.

Structured participation in non-economic community processes is also an important space for learning. Civic engagement is one such avenue that CSOs may explore. This has the twin results of enhancing children's learning about social life and governance, and of deepening democratic processes. Participation in other community spaces, such as volunteer groups and theatre groups, etc., can also aid learning.

Engagements with, and participation in, public spaces - whether parks or museums, etc. - can offer critical learning aids for children. These can also help them understand the value of such spaces for citizens to come together and interact, and therefore as important enablers of civic action and engaged citizenship.

CSOs may also take the initiative, and craft events and processes that both deepen academic knowledge and open avenues for new learning. These include creating and supporting theatre clubs and drama festivals, organizing children's literature festivals, and events around crafts.

If organized in a democratic and open fashion, all of these can become spaces where an active interface can be built between school students and wider social processes. These can be also used to create larger learning communities that can support students' learning.

In preparing our children for life, the school and academic knowledge have a critical place. However, a richer engagement with real life, in all its myriad diversity, through structured and unstructured processes, can add additional aspects to it. This can also deepen the process of acquisition of academic knowledge itself.



Wipro Foundation

Embodying traditional knowledge through the process of learning crafts

Poornima Arun

Craft week at Marudam: where everyone is a learner

For 14 years now, Marudam has been host to an annual craft week, a celebration of diversity and of endangered skills. The craft week has been conceived as a space to celebrate the knowledge and expertise of working with hands, and to showcase the talents of artisans. We live in the times of machine-made-products. Traditional craftspeople, and along with them their skills, are fast disappearing.

The ability to make what we need with our own hands is a very special skill. It is sustainable, creative, and frees us from dependencies. To keep as many of these skills alive as possible, by imparting it to children, is the core idea of the craft week. We have around 15 different schools from various parts of Tamil Nadu and Karnataka participating in the event. It is also a space for both children and adults to learn together.

Celebrating the crafts by crafting diversity

For the craft week, we invite traditional crafts people with skills in forging, basket making, kalamkari, natural dyeing, weaving, stone carving, wood carving, bamboo work, clay work, etc., to teach both children and adults. In 2023, over 30 artisan groups had joined us. Besides facilitating the joy of learning new skills during this week, it is also our endeavor to support the artisans financially.

The event is a not-for-profit one. It is supported by the contributions made by all the participants. This includes those from privileged as well as from less privileged

backgrounds. The contributions are made in the spirit of the ethos of the craft week. Everyone contributes to the best of their capacities.

In keeping with the spirit of diversity, adults and children coming from various social and economic backgrounds share resources equally. The collective students group from these schools is a confluence of urban, rural and tribal children. The urban students come from many cities, including, Bengaluru, Chennai, Coimbatore and Belagavi, etc. The rural children join the craft week primarily from the neighboring villages. The tribal children are from communities such as the Irulas, Lambardi, and Boom Boom Mattukaran. The children also come from all across the various economic strata.

Some of the participating schools have students mostly from an upper class, urban background. Others cater to students from relatively lower economic classes. The participating schools vary in their pedagogical approaches too. Both regular matriculation schools and alternative schools participate. Among the latter, some try to function as centers of self-knowing through dialogue and observation inspired by the teachings of J. Krishnamurthi, and some focus on integral education as defined by Sri Aurobindo and the Mother. Some others are Montessori schools. There are also schools which provide education to children from tribal communities suited to the local needs.

Additionally, in the last few years, we were also joined by organizations such as a residential center for neurodivergent adults, and a special school which is a neurodiverse



Marudam Farm School

community of children and adults. Everyone learnt together in a natural setting. We also have had homeschoolers join us.

Some children come from rural communities. Here many of the artisans, albeit decreasingly, continue to be a part of their communities and of their lives. For example, rope making is a life skill. However, many who see their families and community members do it, often echo the attitude of our machine-made society. They often do not value it as a skill, either monetarily or otherwise.

Since they are used to it, they miss acknowledging the craft's specialness. They see it as a mundane activity, taking it for granted. For such children, craft week is a space where the skill is acknowledged by people from all backgrounds. This plays a role in bringing back the lost dignity to a craft. These rural children then start giving the crafts, something their own parents, uncles, grandparents are skilled in, more importance.

The children who come from urban, upper-middle class backgrounds are used to having

people from less privileged backgrounds work for them, as domestic helps and drivers, etc. The space of the craft week challenges this paradigm and reverses it. The children who have never worked with their hands before or aren't used to it, are taught patiently by the skilled craftspeople. The latter often come from underprivileged communities. As the rural artisans take the role of educators, and the children learn from them, old conditionings are challenged.

Rural artisans as educators

The craft week is also an education of being with a process, from the start to the end, shifting the focus away from the end-product. For example, an artisan would teach the children to make fiber from banana stems, and another would teach them to make a bag from this fiber. The children would learn to make paper and take this paper to then learn how to bind it to make it into a book. This translates to a collaboration across crafts. As the children embark on a new kind of learning, it also offers a change of

views for the facilitators who are handholding the process.

For the artisans teaching a new set of people, who are not their sons and daughters, for them too it is a journey in education. A few years ago, we had a banana fiber artisan join us. Her family had been practicing the craft for generations. While teaching a group of children, she saw potential in a child. In her excitement, she set her expectations very high. She made the child do the braiding thrice and more. The child, initially enthusiastic, broke down.

When this happened, the woman too broke down. She wasn't aware that she had hurt the child. Her expectations and pushing had only come from her seeing a potential in the child. However, the child found it harsh. Eventually, they settled on making a simpler bag.

The artisan shared that for her it was a lesson. Teaching children who are not her own, she would need to teach differently. The same methods could not be employed. She reflected that her traditional methods of teaching could be seen as harsh and impatient.

Sometimes, the craft week has also become a space for innovation, of coming together of crafts and the arts. From the very start, traditional Kalamkari artisans have joined us. They have a particular way of hosting it, where they draw many traditional shapes.

Once, a few years back, we had an artist come in who hosted it differently. The technical process of Kalamkari was faithfully followed. However, what was drawn was not controlled. The children could draw anything, animals, scenery, flowers.

This led to a mini revolution. Many more students got interested. We had about 150 pieces a day of Kalamkari being made. For the traditional artisan too, it was a new experience. It was an exposure for them to see the infusion of the arts into craft.

Creating a community by weaving relationships

Beyond this, the craft week has also become an avenue for the artisans to come together to weave a strong web of relationships. They often look forward to this time of the year, to be with each other. Many artisans also have wanted to learn from each other. Already being skilled in handicrafts, they do learn quickly and get a chance to enhance their skills.

Increasingly the artisans have demanded to create a dialogue space during the week, where they meet every alternate day. They use this space to share their personal journeys. They also share their difficulties, which are often understood better by people sharing similar journeys.

Over the last few years, they have also been talking about how to make their practices more sustainable. During one such dialogue, the palm leaf craftspeople, who have traditionally used tender leaves, after discussion, decided to use mature leaves instead. They went ahead with it, and even adapted their products accordingly.

The 9-10 days craft week culminates in a Crafts Mela. Here, the artisans showcase their crafts for sale, which is not open for bargains. With time, people have understood the process and respect it. The audience have come to cherish the crafts and the ones making them. This too is a dignifying experience for the artisans.

The mela is open to all townsfolk. Various community members and parents join in too. Some help in setting up the stalls. Others provide support by holding food stalls. It is also a time of sharing joy through songs and dance. The participants, both students and teachers, perform the Kaliyiyal and Kummi dances they learn during the craft week.

Prior to the mela day, the participating schools exhibit all the crafts they have made

for everyone to see. Through this, the children look at each other's crafts and get new ideas.

The mela is not limited to crafts. We also provide organic food. After intensely engaging for over a week, it becomes a joyful space. Here the participants make new relationships that have sustained over time.

The crafts as a space for continuous learning

I specifically remember one incident. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, a dalit school from Coimbatore, who have been regularly participating, could not come to attend the craft week for five years. I happened to visit them.

A 15-years old child, who would have been 10 years old when he last attended the craft week, ran inside. He brought out an unfinished palm basket to show me. He shared how he has been waiting all these years to make the final rounds.

We contacted the palm weaver. The school invited him to do a workshop, where the child finally finished his basket. The child had waited for so long. In a world of consumerism, how do we look at this? For me, this shows how we have a lot to learn from children. They take their learning very seriously. Taking short cuts and being impatient is indeed a result of social conditioning.

Over the last 14 years, many schools and teachers have become co-holders and co-facilitators of this space. The crafts mela, as an idea, has also been taken up by the participants. Around 10 participating schools now do it in their own spaces too. The same artisans go there. This has become another support for their livelihoods.

Traditionally, women have used crafts and life skills to come together. They do things together. And in doing so, they celebrate female camaraderie. For instance, the village women gather to make brooms. This act of coming together offers them a chance to build relationships. These sustain them and

help in sharing and resolving conflicts. They acknowledge the enabling properties of this camaraderie. Craft week is an attempt to make this spirit come alive. I hope many more such craft weeks flourish.

Poornima Arun is a Founder-member and Head Teacher of Marudam Farm School. She is involved in all aspects of running the school – from curriculum development to teacher training and administration. Over the last 20 years, she has also been involved in creating innovative approaches to learning the sciences in her classrooms. Poornima has been organizing an annual craft week at Marudam for the last 14 years now, to showcase traditional arts and crafts from all over the country. She is an active member of the Alternative Education Network and was instrumental in starting its Tamil Nadu chapter.

Website: marudamfarmschool.org

Email: poornima.arun12@gmail.com

Connect on:  



Marudam Farm School

Extending the classroom: real-world learning through internships

Nikhil Bangera

Why stop at the classroom?

As I enter the room, Ira immediately surrounds me. She starts to share how her employer isn't able to keep their baking business together. She rattles off ideas on how things could be done better. Heeya overhears this. She then starts sharing how her [media startup](#) can help the business and shares three concrete things. These sound like the start of a social media calendar.

As usual, Shaurya interrupts this rather interesting exchange of ideas to brag about how he has designed a workflow to help doctors diagnose diseases from symptoms. The pediatrician he works with has now switched to his workflow every time a patient complains of fever. That's the first question that begins his algorithm.

Jash has one look at the sheet of paper. He then starts designing a prototype for it in Figma. Before the day ends, he shows us the first draft of his prototype and a pitch deck. He later shares with his employer on how to crack the medical market.

Big picture learning

You might be surprised to learn that I am not describing seasoned professionals or adult entrepreneurs. Rather, these vibrant, real-world problem solvers are learners from my grade 8 class in Next School.

As their advisor (homeroom teacher), I get to support learners on their journeys. In these, they explore real world professions through internships.

Next School is part of the international Big Picture Learning Network. It is an educational

About Next School

Set in Mulund, a suburb of Mumbai, Next School is known for its entrepreneurial spirit. The school's learners are enrolled in the International Baccalaureate program for academics.

Next School's founder, Parmeet Shah, spent years visiting schools and exploring learning frameworks that could truly engage students and prepare them for the future. The philosophy of Big Picture Learning resonated with his own beliefs about education.

For Parmeet, the traditional education system, with its emphasis on rote learning and standardized testing, seemed inadequate to address young learners' diverse needs and potentials. He tried to create a model in Next School, which prioritizes student agency, real-world experiences, and holistic development.

movement with over 200 schools across the world. It is backed by rigorous academic research. Having built on learnings over a 25-year period, these schools run on the principle of 'one student at a time'.

One day in the week is compulsorily spent away from school. On this day, students explore internships that align with their interests and backgrounds.

Implementation

The process of discovering interests and passions starts early. Right from Nursery, 1-2 hours is dedicated in the school schedule for exploring interests. In the early years, this

takes the form of various workstations. These are set up across learning spaces, akin to the Montessori method.

The workstations range from photography to programming and the arts to stock markets. These try to foster independent learning. At these, learners in their primary classes engage in areas that genuinely interest them. The stations allow learners to explore at a pace that suits them.



Next School

This model depends heavily on the role of the advisor and the advisory. The advisory is a group of 15 students and one adult advisor. They stay together for four years. This allows for the creation of strong bonds.

We have one-on-one discussions scheduled weekly with each learner. This continuous, long-term relationship is at the model's heart. It helps build deep connections with the students.

In the eight years I have worked here, I have seen through two batches. I can claim to know my learners inside out—their strengths, limitations, aspirations, what pulls them down, and what makes them fly!

Our students were asked, “What did high school teach you best?” The following rank as their top two responses. These are, first, “Understanding my own strengths and weaknesses.” And, second, “Identifying my own interests and passions.”

Knowing them is just the first step. We also conduct workshops on writing resumes, identifying internship opportunities, writing compelling cover notes or messages, presenting their authentic selves in interviews, and more. By the middle/secondary years, learners have built an extensive profile. They also have a portfolio of tangible work to showcase at their internship sites.

For internship opportunities, we rely heavily on the rich network of our learner's parents and their friends and families. Initially advisors may be involved in evaluating how well the internship site aligns with the learner's interests, and in discussing work and workplace expectations. However, in a few weeks to a few months, the learners start managing this independently.

I have had a grade 7 learner, who accompanied her mom to a nail spa. She spoke to them about interning. She impressed them enough to get started the next day. It was only after she started interning that she informed me about it.

Benefits

A young learner at a work site always catches everyone's attention. This builds interest in our school's model. It also leads to parents walking in for admissions. Often, they have had interactions with one of our learners at an internship site.

I have seen this model transforming not just individuals, but the entire school's learning environment. Learners bring back real-world knowledge and skills. This sparks richer classroom discussions. It also influences and expands their peers' ideas of new areas to explore.

For example, one learner interned at an automobile workshop. He returned with stories of all the tinkering he was able to do and the exciting cars he worked on. Suddenly, many more learners developed an interest in joining him.

Additionally, our learners develop crucial professional skills at these sites. Communication, teamwork, problem solving, and time management are just some of the skills they must pick up to succeed. Every school has its share of easy-going learners, whom teachers struggle with. The professional environment at internship sites demands excellence. With our support, learners are able to navigate these expectations. The internship experience completely turns them around.

Most of all, the tangible outcomes of these experiences—resumes, portfolios, testimonials, professional networks—are invaluable. The college applications of our learners are impressive. They are able to showcase real-world work experience and letters of recommendation from employers.

This makes them stand out among applications who only have volunteering experience or letters from their teachers and principal. Shrey is one such graduate from our school. He has an average academic record. But thanks to his internship experience and portfolio, he has secured admission to most universities he applied to.

Challenges

The benefits of this model are clear. However, we have had to address several logistical and safety challenges. The most common issue involves communication lapses. Learners need explicit training on how to proactively communicate with employers before things get out of hand. Unlike teachers, employers may not be as forgiving. Extensions into the real-world come with real consequences.

Like in any other work environment, at times, our learners are also asked to stay late or

take on more work than they can handle. Here, advisors might have to intervene to ensure that learners can manage internship expectations alongside their academics.

We advisors are the interface between the school and the internship sites. As a result, we tend to know when things are not going smoothly. A quiet nudge or frank conversation helps learners reflect on what is not working out. We assist them in navigating the many expectations they have to handle.

“Learners from NEXT worked on creating visual and written content for our range of products, including bicycles and bicycle accessories. We found them to be sharp and responsive to tasks. They are consistent and diligent, showing great maturity for their age. Their creativity is impressive, and they reliably deliver tasks within timelines. We had a great time having them with us.”

– Deb, SCOTT Sports India

However, not all learners recognize this opportunity for what it truly is. Sometimes, they treat it as just another checkbox in their school requirements. This remains one of our biggest challenges. Weekly check-ins with advisors help address this issue to some extent. We remind learners how this experience will ultimately benefit their college admissions and career goals.

We also showcase success stories from others. By doing this, we hope to shift their perspective and enhance their engagement with the program. A recent example is Zainav,

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



This book is the journey of a young lad who got into cooking and bakery out of sheer curiosity and soon got passionate about it!

One can convert a passion into a profession, especially when you enjoy doing what you love to do, excel in it and in the process feel rewarded and compensated in more ways than one.

At 12, Tuvyah showed immense dedication, commitment and responsibility in whatever he undertook...a potential entrepreneur at heart! He opened his first baking studio 'Tuvyah's Temptations' and he created it's Brand name and Logo.

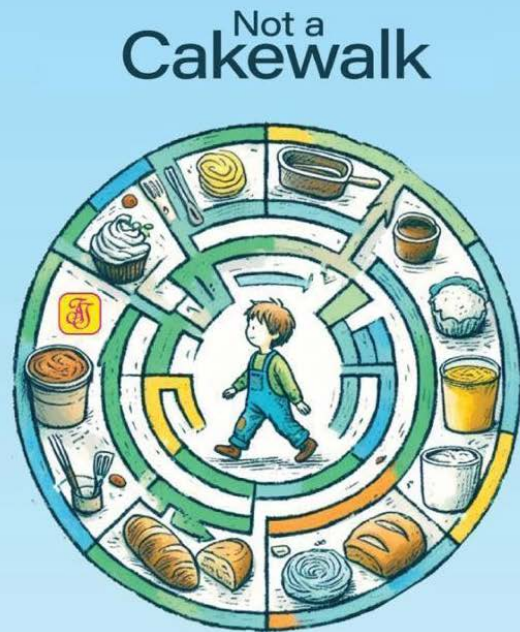
This book can be a source of inspiration to young children who want to pursue their passion and make their dreams come true.

ADHYAN BOOKS
www.adhyanbooks.com



Not a
Cakewalk

Tuvyah
Koyande



Tuvyah Koyande

A 8

Next School

A book about a student's passion project

who interns at a clothing reseller. A common feedback from advisors was that he is 'bored and sleepy' in the classroom.

This is in stark contrast to his internship site. He has passion for the fast-paced retail reselling industry. This has transformed him into being an integral part of the store over the 1.5 years he has spent there.

He can now manage the store independently. He handles stocktaking and monthly audits on his own. He has also set his sights on running his own store/business.

Advisors, now say that he has shown consistent improvement in his academic performance. He also actively contributes to classroom discussions. His improved grades attest to these changes.

When asked, Zainav says that doing better academically will get him the grades he needs to pursue further studies and become a successful businessman. His internship

environment, and his mentors there, helped him realize this.

Conclusion


In the words of John Dewey, "Education is not preparation for life, education is life itself." Should we stop thinking of classrooms as a safe black box, where we test and prototype our ideas in education? Should we instead let learners learn from real life as well?

Note: Learners and their passion projects can be seen [here](#).

Nikhil Bangera is an Advisor with Next School, Mumbai. He prefers traveling on two wheels. He is often spotted near a hill or the sea.

Website: nextschool.org

Email: nikhil.bangera@apu.edu.in

Connect on:  

The transformative power of guided nature walks

A journey into the world of fungi

Shrey Gupta

When I first started working on demystifying fungi, I had no idea how it would change my life and the lives of many young students. Fungi, essential for life on Earth, are often overlooked and misunderstood.

Over the past four years, my journey has been one of discovery, education and transformation. It has culminated in a project. Working on this has brought me closer to students and teachers across various parts of India. These include educators and learners in places such as Shimla, Solan, Dehradun, Bengaluru, and beyond.

The beginning: a vision takes root

This journey began in earnest when Ashish joined me to support our organization, Eco Vigyan Foundation. Together, we envisioned making fungi as familiar to everyone as flora and fauna.

To achieve this, we created an easy method for documenting mushrooms that both experts and beginners could use. However, the challenge has been to bring this vision to life in a way that would engage and educate young minds.

The opportunity came through the Wipro earthian program, when we decided to collaborate with schools across different regions. Beyond tangible outcomes, our goal is to change student's attitudes and understanding of mushrooms using a holistic 3H approach: head, heart and hands.

Head: the seed of knowledge

We chose to conduct guided fungi walks as an important part of this process. We have conducted these walks over the years across India. These have been met with a mix of excitement and apprehension.

As we ventured into forests, parks, and various natural habitats, I began to share stories about the fascinating world of fungi. The students, initially cautious, soon found themselves absorbed in identifying different types of mushrooms. Their eyes lit up with curiosity as they learned to distinguish between parasitic and decomposing fungi.

One memorable moment was during a walk where a seventh-grader excitedly called out, "I found a parasitic mushroom!" His peers gathered around. Together, they examined its features. These hands-on discoveries have been turning points.

Through these experiences, students' cognitive proficiency has blossomed, like spores finding fertile ground. Over the course of these walks, 187 out of 245 students could accurately identify parasitic fungi. And 162 could identify decomposing fungi!

Heart: cultivating emotional connections

As the walks continued, a noticeable shift occurred. The initial wariness was replaced by wonder. Students began to see mushrooms not as strange, possibly dangerous organisms, but as vital parts of the ecosystem. This emotional connection was perhaps the most rewarding aspect of the journey.



One day, during a walk at Nalagarh Biodiverse Forest, a small girl stood out. Most of the kids were excitedly observing turkey tail mushrooms. These are a multi-colored mushroom variety. They come in various shades of brown, yellow, gray and blue. This girl was looking for something specific. When I asked what she was searching for, she innocently replied, “I’m looking for a turkey tail mushroom that has the colors of a rainbow.”

This moment transported me back to my childhood in Shimla. Then, I would dream of foraging rainbow-colored berries. It was a surreal connection. I realized that something I had seen only in dreams was now being sought after by this young explorer in reality.

Post-walk surveys revealed a profound change. 104 students expressed curiosity toward encountering wild mushrooms in the future. Ninety students felt a sense of awe!

I have watched these young minds transition from caution to curiosity, and then to genuine fascination. This process has been like witnessing the unfolding of a beautiful, complex organism. These children are no longer just students. They are explorers, eager to understand nature’s marvels.

Hands: mastering practical skills

Practical skills have been another crucial part of the journey. We wanted students to feel confident and competent in interacting with

nature. The transformation has been evident in their growing abilities to locate, identify and discuss mushrooms independently.

During one particularly successful walk, a group of eighth graders, equipped with their newfound knowledge, ventured ahead. They returned with mushrooms’ photographs. They also confidently explained their ecological roles.

Over time, 173 students have felt confident in locating mushrooms independently. 156 students could articulate their ecological roles. 150 students felt equipped to ensure safety during mushroom walks!

The hands-on mastery they have developed is not just about fungi. It is about fostering a sense of responsibility and stewardship for the environment. These practical experiences have empowered them, turning theoretical knowledge into tangible skills.

Overcoming challenges: navigating the unknown

Of course, the journey has not been without its challenges. Initially, there was a significant knowledge gap among both students and teachers. Overcoming this required patience, creativity, and many preliminary workshops.

Safety was another concern. However, we have been able to follow clear guidelines and protocols. Through this process, we have built a framework that ensures a safe learning environment.

The biggest challenge, however, has involved changing deep-seated perceptions. Many students have grown up with the notion that mushrooms are either useless or dangerous. It has taken time to change these perceptions. However, with each walk, each discovery, and each story shared, we have chipped away at these misconceptions.

Conclusion: a journey continued

Reflecting on this journey, I see it as a testament to experiential learning’s power.

Guided nature walks, with their focus on fungi, offer a transformative educational experience. These engage students' heads, hearts and hands. These can also help foster cognitive proficiency, emotional connections, and hands-on mastery.

Through this project, we have worked across different regions of India. Our vision is not yet fully realized. We are still on the journey. I envision a future where fungi are as familiar and appreciated as plants and animals. Through continued efforts in education and community engagement on fungi, we can cultivate a deeper understanding and respect for the natural world.

As I look back on the faces of those young explorers, filled with curiosity and wonder, I am reminded that the journey of learning is

never-ending. Together, we can only plant the seeds of knowledge in each other. I am excited to see how these will grow in the years to come.

Shrey Gupta is an environmental microbiologist by training, with more than ten years of self-taught and academic experience. He has been demystifying the world of fungi for communities across age groups and educational statuses. He is a co-founder of Eco Vigyan Foundation. The CSO envisions a culture of sustainability and learning through nature education in schools.

Website: www.ecovigyan.org

Email: ecovigyan@gmail.com

Connect on:  



Eco Vigyan Foundation

‘कथावना’ नामक रेसिपी के लिए सामग्रियाँ

एक बाल साहित्य महोत्सव का आयोजन

सोनिका पराशर और उमाशंकर पेरियोडी

जब भी हम स्कूलों में मौजूद स्थानों के बारे में सोचते हैं, तो आमतौर पर हम भौतिक स्थानों के बारे में सोचते हैं। सीखने के उद्देश्य से, ज्ञान के आदान-प्रदान के लिए किए जानेवाले विशिष्ट आयोजन भी विद्यार्थियों, शिक्षकों और स्कूल के अन्य कर्मचारियों के लिए सीखने और सिखाने का जश्न मनाने की महत्वपूर्ण जगह बन सकते हैं। बाल साहित्य महोत्सव ऐसे ही स्थानों में से एक है, जिन्हें हम स्कूल के अपने वार्षिक कैलेंडर में शामिल कर सकते हैं। ये महोत्सव हमारे शिक्षार्थी को किताबों व अन्य पाठ्य-सामग्रियों से गहरा रिश्ता स्थापित करने में और साहित्य से जोड़नेवाले एक साधन के विकास में हमारी सहायता कर सकते हैं।

‘कथावना - बाल साहित्य महोत्सव’ के माध्यम से यह आर्टिकल हमारा ध्यान दो महत्वपूर्ण मुद्दों की ओर खींचता है - 1) हम शाला/कक्ष के बाहर कैसे सीखने सिखाने के मौके बना सकते हैं, 2) इस प्रकार के आयोजन की प्रक्रिया और हर एक निर्णय / गतिविधि के पीछे की सोच कैसे इन अवसरों/अनुभवों को सभी सहभागियों के लिए अर्थपूर्ण और समाधानकारक बना सकती है।

यह लेख पहली बार सामूहिक पहल के अप्रैल 2023 अंक में अंग्रेजी में प्रकाशित हुआ था। - सम्पादकीय टिप्पणी

हाल ही में हमने अपने सालाना द्विभाषी बाल साहित्य महोत्सव कथावना के ग्यारहवें संस्करण 2022-23 का समापन किया। अगर कोई हमसे यह पूछे कि यह कैसा रहा, तो हमारी तत्काल प्रक्रिया एक बड़ी सी मुस्कान और ये शब्द होंगे, “यह एक बहुत बड़ी सफलता थी!” यह लेख उस यात्रा पर केन्द्रित होगा, जिसने हमें यहाँ तक पहुँचाया। इस पूरी प्रक्रिया पर सोचने-विचारने के दौरान, हम उन सामग्रियों पर प्रकाश डालने का प्रयास करेंगे, जिनके बारे में हमें यह लगता है कि उन्होंने बाल साहित्य महोत्सव की हमारी रेसिपी को ‘सम्पूर्ण’ बनाने में योगदान दिया।

सामग्रियाँ

उत्तरदायित्व: किसी भी पहल की सफलता के लिए, ऐसे हितधारकों की ज़रूरत होती है जो उसमें दिलचस्पी रखते हों और उसे लेकर प्रतिबद्ध हों। प्रति वर्ष, अजीम प्रेमजी फाउंडेशन के फील्ड संस्थानों में और विश्वविद्यालय में नए सदस्य हमारे साथ जुड़ते हैं। कथावना की एक मुख्य टीम है, जो इस काम में विश्वास रखती है और लम्बे समय से इसमें शामिल रही है। फिर भी, हर साल हम सक्रियता से ऐसे लोगों की पहचान करते हैं, जो शिक्षा, भाषा और साहित्य के मुद्दों में रुचि रखते हों और इस पहल से जुड़ने के लिए उन्हें प्रोत्साहित करते हैं। चूँकि सदस्य अपनी इच्छा से समूह का हिस्सा बनते हैं, इसलिए चुनौतियाँ आने पर उनकी आन्तरिक प्रेरणा और



Azim Premji Foundation

प्रतिबद्धता प्रयास को आगे बढ़ाने में एक अहम भूमिका निभाती है। बातचीत और चर्चाओं के माध्यम से, समूह के सभी सदस्य, चाहे वे किसी भी भूमिका में हों, इस पहल की जिम्मेदारी लेते हैं, जो इसकी सफलता के लिए महत्वपूर्ण है।

सिद्धान्त (थीअरी) और व्यवहार (प्रेक्टिस) के बीच का सम्बन्ध: बाल साहित्य महोत्सव आयोजित करने के पीछे ठोस सैद्धान्तिक विचार हैं (Lynch- Brown, et al., 2014; Matulka, 2008; Putnam, 1964; व अन्य)। ये सैद्धान्तिक विचार हमें दर्शाते हैं कि बाल साहित्य कल्पना, रचनात्मकता और भाषा के विकास में सहायता प्रदान करता है। यह विभिन्न संस्कृतियों और दुनियाओं से परिचित कराने के साथ-साथ खुद की समझ और दूसरों की जिन्दगियों के प्रति समानुभूति निर्मित करता है।

भारत में शिक्षा की ज़मीनी वास्तविकताएँ हमें दिखाती हैं कि विशेषकर सरकारी स्कूलों के सन्दर्भ में बच्चों और शिक्षकों की बाल साहित्य तक पहुँच ना के बराबर है। सीखने-सिखाने की सामग्री के तौर पर उनके पास केवल पाठ्यपुस्तकें हैं, जो कि बुनियादी साक्षरता के विकास और साहित्य के साथ गहराई से जुड़ाव स्थापित करने के लिए पर्याप्त नहीं है। बच्चों के लिए किताबें और समृद्ध साहित्यिक परम्पराएँ उपलब्ध होने पर भी ऐसी सम्भावना होती है कि शिक्षकों को यह न पता हो कि उन्हें अपनी कक्षाओं में इस्तेमाल कैसे करें।

ऐसे सिद्धान्त जिन्हें ज़मीनी वास्तविकताओं पर लागू न किया जा सके वे, ठोस शोध और व्यवस्थित प्रक्रिया के बिना किए गए अभ्यासों पर आधारित सिद्धान्त के जितने ही अनुपयोगी होती हैं।

इस प्रकार, कथावना जैसी किसी पहल के लिए यह महत्वपूर्ण हो जाता है कि जिस सन्दर्भ में पहल का संचालन किया जा रहा है यह उस सन्दर्भ को समझते हुए और फील्ड की ज़रूरतों की पहचान करते हुए सिद्धान्त को व्यवहार से जोड़े व फील्ड की उन ज़रूरतों को सम्बोधित करने के लिए ऐसे अभ्यासों का इस्तेमाल करे, जो सैद्धान्तिक रूप से मज़बूत हों और मौजूदा शोध द्वारा समर्थित हों।

कथावना क्या है?

कथावना का विचार डॉक्टर शैलजा मेनन ने दिया, जो 2011 से लेकर 2022 तक अजीम प्रेमजी विश्वविद्यालय की फैकल्टी थीं। इसे 2012 में शुरू किया गया। इसे कई वर्षों तक अजीम प्रेमजी फाउंडेशन कर्नाटक के क्षेत्रीय संस्थानों द्वारा समर्थन प्रदान किया गया। छोटे बच्चों की जिन्दगियों में मौखिक, लिखित और प्रदर्शनात्मक बाल साहित्य कितना महत्वपूर्ण होता है, इसे स्वीकार करना और समझना ही कथावना के केन्द्र में है। इस पहल के माध्यम से, विशेष रूप से सरकारी स्कूलों में, छोटे बच्चों और शिक्षकों को बाल साहित्य की ताकत से परिचित कराने का और स्कूलों में साहित्य के इस्तेमाल में शिक्षकों की मदद के लिए उपयोगी सामग्रियाँ, जैसे कि - बच्चों की किताबें और शिक्षकों के लिए संसाधनों - को तैयार करने का प्रयास किया जाता है।

पिछले ग्यारह वर्षों से, पाठकों से जुड़ने के मामले में और अलग-अलग तरह की साहित्यिक गतिविधियों की योजना बनाने और उनके क्रियान्वयन के मामले में कथावना ने धीरे-धीरे और लगातार प्रगति की है। फिर भी, ध्यान हमेशा बाल साहित्य को छोटे बच्चों और शिक्षकों के लिए सहजता से प्राप्त करने योग्य बनाने पर रखने के उद्देश्य से अलग-अलग सालों में कथावना विविध विषयों को शामिल किया गया है, जैसे कि - 'नीम-गुड़: COVID-19 के दौर की कहानियाँ' (2021), 'कन्नड भाषा के बाल साहित्य का कार्याकल्प करना' (2019), 'बच्चों के लिए लिखे गए साहित्य को समझना' (2017), 'पाठकों के रूप में शिक्षक' (2015), 'साहित्य में बच्चों की आवाज़ें' (2014), वगैरह।

कथावना 2022-23 की झलकियाँ?

कथावना 2022-23 के लिए लिया गया विषय 'बच्चों को किताबों के बारे में बात करने के लिए प्रोत्साहित करना' था। इस पहल के ग्यारहवें संस्करण के लिए जिन चार कार्यक्रमों की योजना बनाई गई, उनके माध्यम से यह लगभग 3000 बच्चों और 260 शिक्षकों तक पहुँच सकी। पहला कार्यक्रम, जिसे बाल दिवस के दिन शुरू किया गया, एक ऑनलाइन बाल साहित्य महोत्सव था, जो सप्ताह भर चला। इसे 14 से 18 नवम्बर, 2022 के बीच यूट्यूब लाइव पर आयोजित किया गया। दूसरा कार्यक्रम एक आवासीय दो-दिवसीय शिक्षक कार्यशाला थी, जो 12 और 13 दिसम्बर, 2022 को हुई। तीसरा, अजीम प्रेमजी विश्वविद्यालय बंगलुरु में 14 दिसम्बर, 2022 को पहली बार व्यक्तिगत रूप से आयोजित किया गया बहुत बड़ा बाल साहित्य महोत्सव था और चौथा कार्यक्रम 3 फरवरी, 2023 को आयोजित की गई एक पैनल चर्चा थी। इन कार्यक्रमों के बारे में और अधिक जानकारी <https://azimpremjuniiversity.edu.in/kathavana-2022> पर पाई जा सकती है।

कल्पना करना और योजना बनाना: किसी भी संगठन या पहल के लिए उसके सामने उपस्थित सम्भावनाओं और बाधाओं पर विचार करते हुए कार्य-योजना की कल्पना करना ज़रूरी होता है। अच्छा होगा कि पहल का नेतृत्व कोई ऐसा व्यक्ति करे, जो योजना बनाने और उसकी देखरेख व निगरानी का काम, दोनों ही प्रभावी तरीके से कर सके। इसके साथ ही यह भी ज़रूरी होता है कि कार्य के विभिन्न स्तरों पर जिम्मेदारियों और नियोजन का विकेन्द्रीकरण किया जाए। इसमें विभिन्न हितधारकों की अन्य अतिरिक्त जिम्मेदारियाँ हो सकती हैं, जिसके लिए उन्हें एक साथ कई कार्यों को पूरा करने के लिए अपना समय और ऊर्जा लगाने की ज़रूरत होगी।

ऐसा भी हो सकता है कि कार्य के स्थानों और शिक्षकों की अपनी खुद की शैक्षणिक पाठ्यचर्या, व्यस्तताएँ और कार्यों को पूरा करने की समय-सीमाएँ हों, जिनकी वजह से उनकी भागीदारी पर असर पड़ सकता है।

बजट से जुड़ी हुई बाधाएँ भी हो सकती हैं, या फिर उपलब्ध संसाधन व्यक्ति (resource person) कम हो सकते हैं।

बहुत से कार्यों की जिम्मेदारियाँ लेकर और बहुत कम कार्यों को पूरा करने की जिम्मेदारी लेकर किसी पहल के साथ न्याय नहीं किया जा सकता इसलिए एक विस्तृत वास्तविक योजना बनाए जाने की

ज़रूरत होती है। इसके साथ ही, एक विषय होने से एक रूपरेखा मिल सकती है, जिसके आधार पर कोई व्यक्ति कार्य-योजना बना सकता है। महोत्सवों के लिए संसाधन व्यक्तियों की पहचान के लिए कथावना 2022-23 से एक उदाहरण यहाँ साझा किया जा सकता है। इसके लिए संसाधन व्यक्तियों की एक लम्बी सूची बनाई गई, जिसमें से 23 को चुना गया। चयन के कुछ कारकों में i) विषय के बारे में संसाधन व्यक्ति की विशेषज्ञता, ii) फील्ड, फील्ड के सदस्यों और इन स्थानों पर मौजूद बच्चों के बारे में उनके ज्ञान के आधार पर उच्च गुणवत्ता वाली साहित्यिक गतिविधियों के माध्यम से साहित्य के साथ आलोचनात्मक जुड़ाव बनाने में पाठकों की सहायता करने की उनकी क्षमता और iii) टीएलसी समन्वयकों और शिक्षकों के नेतृत्व में संचालित किए जा रहे 72 शिक्षण-अधिगम केन्द्रों की आवश्यकताओं के अनुरूप इन गतिविधियों के अनुकूलन शामिल थे।

सहायता (फसिलिटेट) करना और क्रियान्वयन: न केवल संसाधनों, सामग्रियों और गतिविधियों को व्यवस्थित और प्रबन्धित करने की ज़रूरत होती है, बल्कि भूमिकाओं और जिम्मेदारियों को निर्धारित करना भी महत्वपूर्ण होता है। कौन नेतृत्व वाली विशिष्ट भूमिकाएँ निभा सकता है और कौन योजना को क्रियान्वित कर सकता है, इसकी पहचान करने से हितधारकों के लिए अपनी क्षमताओं का इस्तेमाल करते हुए काम कर पाना सम्भव हो पाता है। यहाँ हम जिस नेतृत्व की

बात कर रहे हैं वह किसी शिक्षक द्वारा कक्षा में सीखने में सहायता प्रदान करने के लिए निभाई जानेवाली भूमिका के समान है।

प्रभावी शिक्षक यह जानते हैं कि प्रत्यक्ष शिक्षण और विद्यार्थियों द्वारा अपने सीखने की जिम्मेदारी का प्रभार स्वयं पर लेने के बीच सन्तुलन कैसे बनाया जाए। वे अर्थ को समझने में कदम-कदम पर विद्यार्थियों की मदद करते हैं। इसी तरह, एक अच्छे नेतृत्वकर्ता जिम्मेदारियों का बँटवारा मात्र नहीं करते, बल्कि लोगों को जो जिम्मेदारियाँ दी गई होती हैं, उन्हें सफलतापूर्वक पूरा करने में उनकी मदद भी करते हैं। उन्हें हरेक छोटे-छोटे काम की कड़ी निगरानी करने की कोशिश नहीं करनी चाहिए और अलग-अलग स्तरों पर लोगों को खुद पहल करने देनी चाहिए। इसके साथ-साथ उन्हें इसकी भी पूरी जानकारी होनी चाहिए कि अलग-अलग स्तरों पर क्या हो रहा है, ताकि ज़रूरत पड़ने पर वे तुरन्त सहायता प्रदान कर सकें। कथावना में अलग-अलग लोगों ने विभिन्न तरीकों से नेतृत्व की भूमिकाएँ निभाई, जैसे कि- राज्य शिक्षा विभाग, फ़ील्ड पर कार्य करनेवाले सदस्यों, स्कूलों, शिक्षकों और बच्चों के साथ समन्वय करना, वॉलन्टियर के तौर पर कार्य कर रहे विद्यार्थियों के साथ कार्य करना, संसाधन व्यक्तियों के साथ समन्वय स्थापित करना वगैरह।

एक ऐसी टीम जिसमें विविध पृष्ठभूमियों, परिवेशों, कौशलों वाले लोग होते हैं, उसके सफल होने की सम्भावना ज़्यादा होती है, क्योंकि प्रत्येक व्यक्ति विविध क्षमताओं के साथ-साथ एक अलग नज़रिया भी लेकर आता है, जो किसी बड़ी पहल के लिए ज़रूरी होते हैं। उदाहरण के लिए, कथावना की टीम विश्वविद्यालय के फैकल्टी सदस्यों, फ़ील्ड लीडर्स, जिला संस्थान और टीएलसी के समन्वयकों, ब्लॉक समन्वयकों, सामुदायिक सहभागिता विभाग, अनुवाद समूह, आधारीक संरचना सम्बन्धी और प्रबन्धकीय कार्यों के समूह, मीडिया और संचार टीम व स्वेच्छा से जुड़े हुए विद्यार्थियों से मिलकर बनी है। समूह के अलग-अलग सदस्य इसकी गतिविधियों में सहायता प्रदान करने और इसके क्रियान्वयन से जुड़ी अलग-अलग भूमिकाएँ निभाते हैं। वे कार्यक्रम की आवश्यकतानुसार अलग-अलग समय पर एक साथ कई भूमिकाएँ भी निभाते हैं।

सहयोग एवं समन्वय: कथावना जैसी कोई पहल तभी सफल हो सकती है, जब इसके विभिन्न हितधारकों के बीच आपसी सहयोग एवं समन्वय हो। इसके प्रत्येक चरण पर सभी में इसकी एक साझी समझ होने और सभी के द्वारा जिम्मेदारियों को मिल-जुलकर निभाने की ज़रूरत होती है। हमारा अनुभव कहता है कि एक दूसरे के साथ लगातार ईमानदारी, अनुशासन, खुलेपन और लचीलेपन के साथ काम करके हम इसे सफलता के मकाम तक पहुँचा सकते हैं।

जिस तरह डोमिनोज़ प्रभाव में एक घटना एक के बाद एक सम्बन्धित घटनाओं का कारण बनती है, लगभग उसी तरह प्रत्येक व्यक्ति के कार्य दूसरों के कार्यों से जुड़े होते हैं, जिससे यह ज़रूरी हो जाता है कि समय-सीमाओं का सावधानी और लगन के साथ पालन किया जाए, अनुवर्ती कार्रवाई समय पर की जाए, कार्य-योजना में मौजूद खामियों को तुरन्त दूर किया जाए और सबसे

महत्वपूर्ण बात टीम के सभी सदस्यों में कार्यक्रम की एक जैसी समझ निर्मित करने के लिए संवाद और चर्चाओं को कार्यक्रम का महत्वपूर्ण हिस्सा बनाया जाए। इस तरह का अनुशासन, सहयोग और समन्वय स्थापित होने में समय लगता है। जब लोग एक दूसरे की सराहना करने की तत्परता के साथ नज़दीकी से एक साथ मिलकर काम करते हैं, एक दूसरे से सीखने के लिए तैयार होते हैं, तो काम के दौरान आनेवाली आनेवाली कई बाधाएँ दूर हो जाती हैं और कई काम आसान हो जाते हैं।

संचार-व्यवस्था: प्रभावी सहयोग और प्रभावी समन्वय तभी सम्भव होता है जब संचार-व्यवस्था प्रभावी हो। नियमित बैठकों के माध्यम से संवाद और चर्चा सामान्य अभ्यास बन जाना चाहिए।

किसी विषय पर सोचने से लेकर, 'क्या' कार्य किए जाएँगे, 'क्यों' और 'कैसे' किए जाएँगे से लेकर बड़ी और छोटी सफलताएँ साझा करने तक, विभिन्न हितधारकों के बीच स्पष्ट संचार से उनमें एक साझी समझ विकसित होती है और वे मिल-जुलकर जिम्मेदारियाँ साझा कर पाते हैं। जब हर किसी को यह पता होता है कि वे जो कुछ कर रहे हैं उसे वे क्यों कर रहे हैं, और निर्णय लेने में भी उनकी एक महत्वपूर्ण भूमिका होती है, तो उनके द्वारा कार्यों की जिम्मेदारी लेने और सभी ज़रूरी निर्णय हितधारकों से प्रभावी ढंग से साझा करने की सम्भावना अधिक होती है।

अच्छा संचार तभी हो सकता है जब केवल 'क्या बातचीत की जाएगी' पर ही नहीं, बल्कि इस पर भी विचार-विमर्श किया जाए कि 'बातचीत कैसे की जाएगी।' इसके लिए विभिन्न हितधारकों में लोगों से मेल-जोल बनाने, सभी को महत्वपूर्ण बातों की जानकारी देते हुए सभी को शामिल करने की क्षमता, सभी की राय और अनुभवों को सक्रियता से सुनने और निर्देश देने के बजाय सहयोग करने की क्षमता होनी ज़रूरी होती है।

उदाहरण के लिए नवम्बर 2022 से फरवरी 2023 के बीच होने वाले कार्यक्रमों की योजना बनाने के लिए सितम्बर 2022 की शुरुआत से ही कथावना की टीम ने बड़े समूहों में बैठक करनी शुरू कर दी थी। पहली बैठक के तुरन्त बाद, विचार-विमर्श करने, योजना बनाने, जिम्मेदारियों का आवंटन करने, समस्या-समाधान करने, साधियों के साथ अपडेट्स, जानकारी और प्रगति साझा करने, समीक्षा करने जैसे अलग-अलग उद्देश्यों से नियमित अन्तराल पर कई बड़ी और छोटी सामूहिक बैठकें हुईं। इन बैठकों की बदौलत ही इन कार्यक्रमों के औचित्य, योजनाओं, संसाधनों, सामग्रियों और गतिविधियों को व्यवस्थित और प्रबन्धित करने, चुनौतियों, संकल्पों और अनुभवों से प्राप्त अन्तर्दृष्टियों के बारे में समूह के दूसरे साधियों को बताना और इन पर बातचीत करना सम्भव हो पाया।

चिन्तन और समीक्षा: किसी भी कार्यक्रम के प्रत्येक चरण पर, थोड़ी देर रुककर अब तक किए गए कार्यों का जायजा लेना ज़रूरी होता है। नियमित चिन्तन और समीक्षा ने कथावना के लिए अतीत से सीखना, हर साल प्रगति करना, उन व्यवस्थित तरीकों से काम करना सम्भव बनाया, जो सीधे फ़ील्ड की ज़रूरतों को पूरा करते

हों। कार्यक्रम में क्या ठीक हुआ और क्या बेहतर किया जा सकता था, इस बारे में फीडबैक न केवल समूह के सदस्यों से, बल्कि प्रतिभागियों जैसे कि, बच्चों और शिक्षकों से भी एकत्र किया जाता है। जितना सम्भव हो पाता है, इस फीडबैक को अगली बार के कार्यक्रम में शामिल किया जाता है। इस तरीके को अपनाने से ही यह पहल कई गुना आगे बढ़ सकी है और इस पहल के विशिष्ट पहलुओं के लिए संरचित प्रक्रियाएँ स्थापित करना सम्भव हो सका है।

विधि

बच्चों के साहित्य, बच्चों, शिक्षकों और शिक्षा के प्रति खूब सारे प्यार और जुनून के साथ ऊपर बताई गई सभी सामग्रियों को धीरे-धीरे और लगातार मिलाएँ। हालाँकि हम इनकी प्रचुरता में यकीन रखते हैं, फिर भी जिस सन्दर्भ में आप रेसिपी तैयार कर रहे हैं उसे ध्यान में रखते हुए इन सामग्रियों की मात्रा में फर्क हो सकता है।

रेसिपी की समीक्षा

हालाँकि इस लेख की शुरुआत में हमने एक 'सम्पूर्ण' रेसिपी के तौर पर इसका उल्लेख किया था, लेकिन हम यह स्वीकार करते हैं कि आज हम जिस नतीजे के बारे में बात कर रहे हैं, वहाँ तक पहुँचने के लिए हमें कई पुनरावृत्तियाँ और विचार-विमर्श करने पड़े। साथ ही, हमारा यह मानना है कि और अधिक प्रगति करने व और बेहतर करने की हमारी निरन्तर इच्छा के साथ हमें एक लम्बा रास्ता तय करना है। हमने जिन सवालों के बारे में सोचना शुरू किया है, वे कुछ इस प्रकार हैं:

- क्या हम इस महोत्सव को न सिर्फ़ कन्नड़ और अँग्रेज़ी में, बल्कि ज़्यादा से ज़्यादा भारतीय भाषाओं में आयोजित कर सकते हैं? शुरुआत के तौर पर हम इसे राजस्थान, छत्तीसगढ़ और उत्तराखण्ड के अज़ीम प्रेमजी स्कूलों में हिन्दी में आयोजित कर सकते हैं?
- हम कक्षाओं में साहित्य और भाषा के समावेश पर बाल साहित्य महोत्सवों और शिक्षकों की कार्यशालाओं के प्रभाव की नज़दीकी से निगरानी कैसे कर सकते हैं?
- क्या कम से कम 36000 बच्चों तक पहुँचने के लिए हम व्यक्तिगत मेले को विकेन्द्रीकृत कर सकते हैं और इसे कर्नाटक के कम से कम ऐसे 72 स्थानों पर आयोजित कर सकते हैं, जहाँ हमारी मौजूदगी है?
- क्या हम अन्य संस्थानों के साथ मिलकर बाल साहित्य महोत्सव को विभिन्न स्थानों पर आयोजित कर सकते हैं?

हमारे अनुभव के आधार पर, हम इस बारे में आश्वस्त हैं कि कथावना जैसे कार्यक्रमों में संख्या और विस्तार दोनों के लिहाज़ से बढ़ोतरी होनी चाहिए, क्योंकि ऐसा देखा गया है कि इनका दोहरा प्रभाव पड़ता है। इसका सीधा-सीधा असर उन बच्चों और शिक्षकों पर पड़ता है, जो साहित्य और भाषा से जुड़ने के सार्थक तरीके खोज पाते हैं।



Azim Premji Foundation

दूसरा फ़ायदा उन आयोजकों को होता है, जो विभिन्न अकादमिक, प्रबन्धकीय और सामाजिक क्षेत्रों में अपने कौशलों और क्षमताओं का विकास कर पाते हैं। इससे इसमें शामिल हरेक व्यक्ति को बाल साहित्य के साथ निरन्तर जुड़ाव कायम रखते हुए एक दूसरे से सीखने की सीख मिलती है।

सन्दर्भ

Lynch-Brown, C. G., Tomlinson, C. M. & Short, K. G. 2014. *Essentials of children's literature*. Pearson Education Limited.

Matulka, D. I. 2008. *A picture book primer: Understanding and using picture books*. Libraries Unlimited.

Putnam, J. F. 1964. 'Folklore: A key to cultural understanding.' *Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development*, 364-368.

सोनिका पाराशर अज़ीम प्रेमजी विश्वविद्यालय, बेंगलुरु में शिक्षक-अध्यापक हैं, जहाँ वे भाषा-शिक्षा, और पाठ्यचर्या व शिक्षाशास्त्र के कोर्स पढ़ाती हैं। उन्हें सेवा-पूर्व शिक्षक-शिक्षा, पाठ्यचर्या विकास, शिक्षा में भाषा, विभिन्न पाठ्यचर्यात्मक क्षेत्रों के शिक्षाशास्त्र और उनके एकीकरण, शिक्षा में कला, विशिष्ट शैक्षिक आवश्यकताओं वाले बच्चों को पढ़ाने और मार्गदर्शन व परामर्श में अनुभव व रुचि है।

उमाशंकर पेरियोडी 1980 से डेवलपमेंट सेक्टर में हैं। उन्होंने विभिन्न गैर-सरकारी संगठनों में दलितों, आदिवासियों और गरीबों को संगठित करने का काम किया है। उन्हें बादल सरकार द्वारा थर्ड थियेटर में प्रशिक्षित किया गया था। वे 2003 से अज़ीम प्रेमजी फाउंडेशन के साथ विभिन्न भूमिकाओं में काम कर रहे हैं।

Website: <https://azimpremjifoundation.org>

Email: sonika.parashar@apu.edu.in

Connect on:     

Nurturing ecological literacy beyond classrooms

Arathi Hanumanthappa



Wipro earthian

How do we address the nature-deficit disorder?

When we think about what the term ‘ecological literacy’ represents, we immediately envision outdoor spaces, the natural world and children exploring these spaces. We probably do not associate this with images of children exploring the natural world sitting inside a classroom. However, that is exactly what nature/ecological literacy has been reduced to.

We teach lessons on the natural environment and the various species that exist in it, through books and digital media, including photos and videos. Often all this is done without having to step outside of the classrooms.

Such practices have left children disconnected from the natural world. It has led to something called the “Nature Deficit Disorder” (NDD). NDD was coined by author Richard Louv in his 2005 book, ‘Last child in the woods: saving our children from nature-deficit disorder’. NDD, says Louv, has led to negative physical effects on children. This has also affected their long-term mental well-being.

How do we sow curiosity in children’s minds on nature and natural spaces, to help them realize their place in the natural world? That we share this planet with thousands of other species of flora and fauna, and these resources are not for us to singularly consume and exhaust, to the point of extinction.

Movies like “WALL-E”, although made for entertainment, have an undeniable message. Such films do not seem that dystopian anymore. Some version of it seems highly likely in the not-too-distant future.

Children are glued more and more to their devices. They are, more often than not, confined to the indoors. Outdoor spaces are considered unsafe. And ‘nature’ exists somewhere far away in a forest.

In this context, urban biodiversity is also not a familiar concept. Cities are built by destroying natural spaces, without much thought given to cohabitation. This is the setting in which students in urban spaces generally grow up.

Is experiential nature education the solution?

Most people can recall their childhood, and experiences of outdoor play and exploration. These were an integral part of growing up. The benefits of growing up with these experiences are immeasurable and incomparable. As the cliché goes, the greatest teacher is, indeed, the natural world itself.

There are clear benefits to outdoor learning experiences for children, both cognitive and physical. Some alternative schools have successfully adopted these outdoor learning practices. However, the mainstream education system is largely behind on this.

A beautiful, and perhaps the best, example of utilization of outdoor spaces for learning involves the ‘[Forest schools](#)’. Established in the 1950s in Denmark, and popularized across other countries, Forest Schools are for children of all ages. Their pedagogy is based on exploring natural spaces, where children form a deep bond with nature and grow up empathizing with it.

Forest schools has spread to many geographies. This includes India, where a few have been established. These have demonstrated that mainstream education can coexist with alternate education systems,

where outdoor learning experiences are an integral part.

The challenges of activity-based nature education in the outdoors

There are fundamental challenges to incorporating outdoor education activities in the curriculum. These relate to how education is perceived and how it has evolved. Traditionally, formal education policies and curricula have provided very limited or no opportunities for outdoor learning.

Beyond this, schools are burdened with existing courses to be completed by the year-end. Most do not have the bandwidth to deviate from the existing curriculum and pedagogies to incorporate outdoor learning practices. To add to this, teachers do not often have the time, the capacities or the knowledge to include outdoor learning activities in the subjects they teach.

This leaves us with ‘extracurricular’ activities and programs in schools, such as *The Environment Education Programme (EEP)*, which was launched by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, in India. [EEP](#) “aims to supplement the knowledge that the children and young generation gain from classrooms with experience from nature and hands-on activities”.

NEP, nature education and outdoor learning

National Education Policy (NEP) 2020, which is now being implemented across the country,



Wipro earthian

emphasizes the importance of experiential learning for students. This includes outdoor learning experiences. The policy encourages a shift from rote learning to a more hands-on, experiential approach.

NEP 2020 notes that outdoor learning isn't just an extracurricular activity. It envisages this to be integrated into the formal curriculum. This is hoped to allow for interdisciplinary learning, including the sciences, social sciences, the arts, crafts, and vocational skills. Schools are encouraged to have the flexibility to include local knowledge and traditional skills, which can be taught through outdoor activities.

Nature education, the Wipro earthian way

The hope is that NEP 2020 will create opportunities for programs like Wipro earthian to be actively included in schools. Wipro earthian is an initiative in the nature and sustainability education space by Wipro. It relies on outdoor experiences for learning on sustainability related issues. Designed for both school and college students, it was launched in 2011. It is implemented through a network of partner organizations across the country.

The school program enables students to explore their surroundings, and research on issues related waste, water and biodiversity. The program's primary point of contact involves teachers, both in government and private schools. It has three [activity-based booklets](#). Most of the activities are designed to take children outside of their school campuses, explore their surroundings, interview various stakeholders, and write reports based on their findings and reflections. These reports enter a nationwide competition. The national and regional level winning teams are recognized for their exceptional work.

In the program's early days, the competition was primarily an essay writing exercise. It needed little to no exploration outside of classrooms. In 2015, the program team

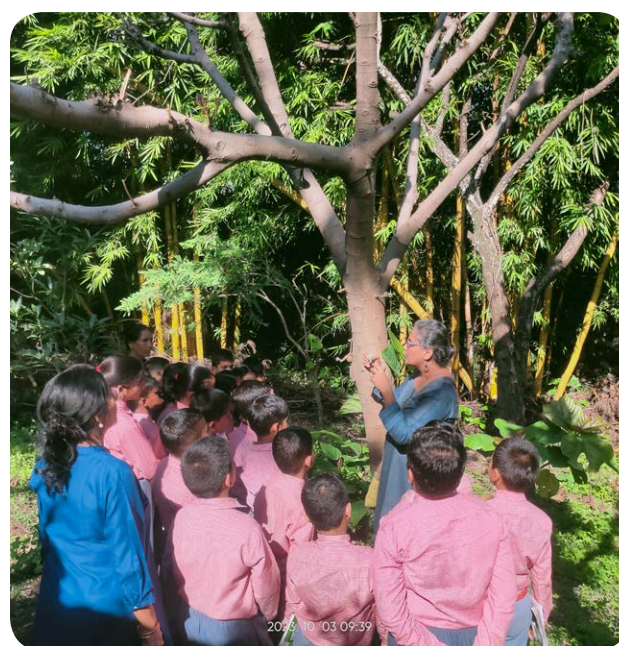
realized that there was a potential to create a unique experience for school students through hands-on activities and outdoor learning opportunities.

Now, participating students need to do activities that enable exploration and observations. These create opportunities to deep dive into sustainability related issues in their immediate surroundings. This process encourages students to relate their findings with larger planetary conditions. It also has the potential to unlock other skills such as report writing, teamwork and documentation.

Creating an ecosystem of learners through the Sustainability Educators Network

In 2018, we launched the Wipro Sustainability Educator Network (SEN). The SEN is a collective of grassroots sustainability educators. They evangelize the main Wipro earthian competition to schools in their locations. These trained individuals are housed in organizations working in fields such as conservation and education.

The educators in our partner organizations, take the program to different clusters in districts across the country. They also conduct teacher training. In the process, the teachers are introduced to the concepts and processes of outdoor learning.



Wipro earthian

Nature education in practice: voices from the field

Nobina Gupta is the founder of Disappearing Dialogues (DD), a CSO in Kolkata. DD works on preserving the cultural and natural heritage of marginalized regions and communities. It is also one of the partners for the Wipro earthian program. Nobina has been a sustainability educator for the program since 2022.

Nobina shares, “True learning occurs when the body, mind and soul connect with the subjects. Outdoor learning broadens students’ holistic understanding and emotional connections, and fosters creativity. By immersing themselves in nature, students explore the deep interconnections between ecological resources and human existence. These experiences instil a sense of urgency for behavioural change to care for and conserve nature.”

Through her experience of working on the Wipro earthian program, Nobina reflects that its activity-based, experiential learning approach cultivates sensitivity to the lived environment. It has been empowering students to recognize and implement actions driving positive change. To amplify this, DD facilitates Wetland Discovery Educational Trails, Nature Explorer Labs, and Creative Ecology Engagements, etc., in the wetlands of East Kolkata. These initiatives give the youth opportunities to research, analyze and respond to their own assets and challenges. The process deepens their commitment to ecological leadership.

From another distant corner of the country, Chanchal Singha Roy, the guide teacher from Government Senior Secondary School, Kadamtala, shares that the program has had similar impact on his students in the Middle Andamans. According to him, the activities in the Wipro earthian booklets have created a continuous learning environment. His students have been exploring the local areas. This has enabled them to develop their observational skills. He further states that the program has connected the students, the teachers, and the communities of parents.

From the north of the country, Shivakankshi Ahuja, a Wipro earthian student from St. Lukes Senior Secondary School in Solan, in the state of Himachal Pradesh, shared that a simple exercise such as stepping out and identifying the plants in her surroundings was the best way of learning. She hopes that the rest of the curriculum would include an outdoor component and be exploratory in nature.

Over the years, the teachers have come to appreciate the program’s benefits. These are in terms of both building their own capacities in sustainability education, and in what it offers their students, which they otherwise do not get from their existing school curricula.

The educators are given support in designing contextual, place-based community engagement programs for students and teachers. In some cases, parents and communities in their network are made a

part of their efforts. These engagements are hands-on and exploratory in nature.

A few examples of community engagement activities include the following. Citizen science workshops on mushroom identification, and demystifying the ecological role of mushrooms, have been conducted by our educators in Eco Vigyan Foundation in Himachal Pradesh. A Bird Atlas has been developed by our educators in Goa working in Arannya Environment Research Organisation (AERO). Here they involved the

student community in documenting Goa's diverse bird species. Kids Climate Connect is a program launched by our SEN partner Hume Centre for Ecology and Wildlife Biology in Wayanad, Kerala. They have encouraged their network of students to measure and document Wayanad's weather and climatic conditions. Our educators in Disappearing Dialogues (DD), based in Kolkata, have been working with student communities as well. DD has been conducting regular visits and workshops for them on the vital importance of East Kolkata's wetlands.

These are just a few examples of educators from SEN developing contextual and place-based activities to create awareness on pressing environmental issues. These have also helped students connect better with their natural environment.

In conclusion

Our experience at Wipro earthian shows that it is possible to create curiosity in

young minds. By better connecting to nature, empathy for other species and the environment can be fostered.

However, programs such as Wipro earthian are standalone and are considered extracurricular. It is of critical importance to integrate these activities into curricula and across disciplines.

Furthermore, deploying a whole school approach for such programs has the potential to create a generation of individuals who are aware and sensitized to environmental issues around them. This will also equip students with skills to deliver solutions for a sustainable world.

The success of creating and implementing such learning spaces outside of classrooms needs the commitment of various stakeholders. These include school management, teachers, students, governments and CSOs.



Wipro earthian

Craft spaces as a medium of learning for children

Rushikesh Kirtikar

When we talk about ‘learning,’ many tend to assume that it takes place mostly in educational institutions, such as schools and colleges. It is thought to comprise things taught specially in schools, such as reading and writing, arithmetic, the sciences, history, geography, etc.

However, learning in its broadest sense can be anything from learning to walk and talk, brushing your teeth, cycling, climbing the trees, and cooking. We also tend to believe that learning in schools is independent of students’ lives and experiences outside the school.

This article is based on the experience of Khamir, an NGO working in Gujarat’s Kachchh district. The organization experiments on how the school curriculum can be more contextualized to where children live, what they observe, and the experiences they have.

Kachchh, crafts and children

Kachchh is well-known for its diverse handicrafts, practised for hundreds of years collectively by craft communities. These include textile and non-textile crafts, such as weaving, spinning, embroidery, felting, block printing, pottery, lacquer work, copper bell, leather work and many others.

For children coming from villages where crafts are practised, it is an everyday experience to see these crafts around them. The question is then how they can be connected to what they already learn in schools. This must involve an acknowledgement that the crafts themselves are a learning experience on their own.

The knowledge of the crafts, the materials used, and the craft processes followed, are passed on from one generation to another. Children belonging to craft families see craft practices since their childhood. They play with craft materials, tools and equipment, and hear stories and songs related to their work.

A child from a potter’s family, for instance, will play with soil and clay and try to make various things on his own. Whereas a weaver’s child plays with fibres, yarn, the loom, and other things found in the craft workspace.

While sharing about his childhood memories with weaving, Khimji bhai, a local weaver says, “After I was born and opened my eyes, the first thing I saw was the handloom.” He explains that when his father went to sleep in the afternoon, he and his brothers used to sit on the loom and tried working on it. They did so, even though it was difficult for them to reach the loom’s pedals. This reveals the close connection a child from an artisan family develops with the craft.

The learning crafts offer

Crafts spaces offer a wide scope for education. Understanding craft materials and equipment, and playing with them, are certainly a primary form of learning. These involve a child’s psychomotor and cognitive capabilities. Through this, children develop a sensorial understanding of the properties of different materials, and how these respond to varied processes. They get an opportunity to see the transformation of materials sourced from nature into different products and how these are used by people in their daily lives.

Production is one of the fundamental activities of humans. Observing it closely is a unique learning experience. This cannot be simulated in any educational setting at such an intricate level. The learning is of course about materials and craft processes. However, this also involves developing an understanding of the local ecological processes these are connected to, and the socio-economic and cultural aspects of crafts.

The child sees how different people in the family are involved in the craft. They also experience it as a shared, collective activity. Men and women traditionally played different roles dependent on each other. In pottery, for instance, the women were involved in preparation of clay and painting on clay articles. These were made by the men, who work on the pottery wheels. Similarly, the women in weaving worked on pre-processes such as sizing and setting warps. The men worked on the looms.

Thus, family members performed different roles and responsibilities to collectively produce something. The rituals in craft communities, such as those related to birth, death or marriage often depend on each other. A spinner and a weaver not only exchanged their products, but took collective part in different ceremonies as well.

These cultural ties existing since centuries convey the values of unity and cooperative living among communities. The child experiences this by being a part of it. Traditional songs, poems and music sung by craft community members, and the stories shared by the elders, convey the philosophy of life. These predominantly use simple examples from crafts. Saint Kabir, one of India's popular poets, was a weaver. His songs are part of craft communities' daily lives.

Finally, the market and the sale of craft products is an integral part of any craft, especially in the modern times. This is



Khamir

another experience that a child observes, where elders are involved in taking orders, transportation, managing finances, dealing with customers and guiding laborers, if any. The crafts, thus, touch upon diverse aspects of human life and nature, all of which are closely accessible for the child living in such a community.

Crafts and learning in the school

A close look at the crafts reveal that the experiences provided by them are not independent of the learning we expect from schools and the curricula these follow. These experiences touch every subject of the school curriculum, whether science, mathematics, history, geography or the languages.

The craft of pottery, for instance, deals with various types of soils used to make different products. A child's experiences with these provide opportunities to connect with the properties of soil, their formation, and geological landscapes.

Experiences in the crafts of spinning and weaving, in using fibres like wool or cotton, give an opportunity to talk about the sources of fibres. These can also be used to discuss their properties. The way these have changed historically due to climatic, socio-economic and political factors also provide rich strands of resources for learning.

The staple length of cotton is a good example of this. It was one of the important considerations for the spinning mills

emerging during the industrial revolution. This changed the history of cotton production. It also impacted livelihoods. This process shaped the political history of our nation as well. A social science curriculum deals with all these aspects.

The processes undertaken with materials in each craft has a scientific basis. These provide the knowledge of science. They also give opportunities for developing a scientific temperament of looking at things. This is something which the formal curriculum in the schools is expected to address and which every craft artisan possesses.

Khamir's work in education

Khamir is originally a craft organization, working since 2005 with the craft artisans of Kachchh. Looking at the educational potential of craft, it has begun the process of integrating crafts as a medium of education in the formal schools of Kachchh through its 'Sugri Shala' program.

It's a process of understanding crafts from an educational lens and designing a curriculum for the same. Craft artisans are an integral part of the program. They help in taking crafts to the school. Students get an opportunity to engage with different crafts. They understand these through their diverse aspects and explore the ways in which these relate with their academic subjects in the school.

For example, while preparing clay during pottery, grade 7 students learnt about the different components of soil. This is also a part of their science textbook. Making such integrations needs an active participation of the teachers as well.

They need to identify the overlaps between the craft and the curriculum. They also must use the students' craft experiences to enhance their regular teaching practices. All of these require the teachers to understand the crafts to be able to integrate these with the curriculum.

Khamir facilitates this collaboration of teachers and artisans to implement the program with children. This is a new and challenging experience for everyone. This is because schools follow a fixed structure. And Khamir's program demands teachers to make a fundamental shift in the approach toward teaching and learning. The program closely resembles Gandhi's education philosophy of Nai Talim. It also aligns with many provisions in National Education Policy (NEP), 2020.

Through its work, Khamir has been able to recognize crafts' educational potential. The organization has also been able to build a network of craft artisans. It has been taking steps to involve them in education. All this prior work, the resources that Khamir has been able to build on crafts, along with the support of local schools and the enabling provisions of NEP 2020, have allowed for the development of a platform that is ripe for experimenting with an organic integration of crafts and school education.

Conclusion

Within every craft, one finds innumerable examples that become a potential starting point for connecting to diverse subject matters that are part of the school curriculum. All the crafts together, therefore, have the potential to become a dynamic learning resource.

These are available right in our schools' backyards. How can we, as educators, utilize it for this purpose, remains a challenge. It calls for changing our perspective toward looking at local resources and wisdom within communities. We must acknowledge their value for children's education.

Rushikesh Kirtikar works in the 'Sugri Shala' program of Khamir.

Website: www.khamir.org

Email: rushikesh.kirtikar@khamir.org

Connect on:   

Learning spaces for active citizenship

Vinita Gursahani Singh and Neha Yadav

Active citizenship

Active citizenship is usually seen in reference to democracy or democratic systems. Political science scholars like Putnam, Tocqueville, among others, largely agree that laws and institutions alone are not sufficient for a democracy to flourish. The quality of a democracy depends on the “civic virtues and engagement of citizens” (Putnam et. al. 1994; Hoskins 2014).

This means that democracies need citizens willing and able to act toward bettering their lives and communities. In other words, democracies need active citizens or active citizenship. This is an important direction to India, as the world’s largest democracy, and to us as well, as guides and educators to the children of the world’s largest democracy.

Bryony Hoskins, who has worked extensively on active citizenship indicators with the European Commission’s Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning, broadly defines active citizens as those citizens who engage in a “broad range of activities that promote and sustain democracy” (Hoskins 2014).

Unpacking this definition points toward two aspects. First, that active citizens undertake activities. Depending on the context, there could be a range of these – from voting, volunteering, petitioning, campaigning for elections, protesting, and holding public hearings, etc.

The second aspect is that activities on their own are not sufficient. Active citizens must base these activities on certain values and principles that are essential for a democracy. These could include respect for others, freedom of choice, equal voice and participation, respect for the law, among others. The important thing then is that

activities per se without values and principles can become unguided. These may lead to non-democratic activities that can harm other individuals and social groups.

This brings us to the question: what does it take to develop active citizenship? Insights from early Roman and Greek conceptions of democracy, outlined a need for citizens to learn the techniques and competencies of acting in pursuit of solidarity and the common good.

This points toward two things. That active citizenship is essentially a learned process. And that developing an active citizenry needs deliberate and effective capacity building efforts. These involve building attitudes, knowledge and skills. This is needed for developing the ability to act, and to be able to understand the values that form the basis of a better society. This is of huge significance to us, as guides and educators of children. They are the future citizens, who will take India’s democracy forward.

Citizenship education: our experience

The foundation for active citizenship is to be built in schools. Schools’ curricula provide for conceptual learning. However, active citizenship is essentially honed through practice. Children must be able to apply concepts to spaces in and outside of school. These include community spaces such as neighbourhood markets and grounds, local institutions such as panchayats and municipalities, and family spaces as well. Children can relate pedagogic knowledge to daily living in these spaces.

With a view to build practical, active citizenship skills, We, The People Abhiyan has been engaged with a number of private

and government schools. The interventions are focused on 'citizenship in action'. This is done through practical problem solving for students of grades 10th, 11th and 12th. Teachers or champion students are oriented on facilitating project-based learning. This takes place through Civic Action Projects (CAPs), which students take up.

The CAPs' focus is on identifying a pressing development issue that students face within their communities. Then, they link the issue with the constitutional framework and try and become familiar with the relevant laws and government services. They also attempt to understand the role of other stakeholders. Finally, they undertake civic action to address the issue.

Usually, these CAPs are related to local issues. These concern local governance bodies like the Municipal Corporations. The practical application of concepts learnt in the classrooms helps in knowledge retention and skill building.

For example, Jnana Prabodhini and City Prides School chose to work on the issue of Solid Waste Management. They underwent a systematic process of doing field research and desk research. They then met with the officials of the Pimpri Chinchwad Municipal Corporation. The detailed field research done by City Pride, on how 300 families manage their solid waste, was appreciated by corporation officials.

Students then made individual plans of how they would like to work upon the issue. They engaged in diverse activities to combat the challenges related to solid waste management. They wrote letters to vegetable vendors asking not to use plastic bags.

They were extremely glad to see that one snacks centre listened to the request and started using paper bags, instead of plastic ones. Students from younger grades made around 400 paper bags on their own and distributed these to nearby shop owners.



We The People Abhiyan

This is just one among hundreds of projects taken up by young people. They have engaged with state authorities, gram panchayats, housing societies, and their community in general, to resolve various civic issues. These include those related to streetlights, zebra crossings, potholes, stray animals, uncovered drainage, community libraries, among others. The CAPs have created spaces for learning and practical experience for young people to engage with their communities and relate pedagogical knowledge to daily life.

Learning spaces for citizenship education

The extraordinary opportunity in citizenship education is that citizenship is a continuous experience. There is no point in the day that one stops being a citizen. Where and how one sleeps, to what one eats, and how one interacts with others, everything relates to our citizenship. Our fundamental rights and responsibilities are at play at each moment. This gives educators scope for helping children learn from everyday actions outside the boundaries of schools.

These actions could be in the realm of the self. The guide to reflection could be, for example, asking oneself, "How did I treat someone today? How did I react to someone's views on my caste or religion or gender today? How can I stand up for my rights?" By taking examples from everyday actions, educators can help children practice active citizenship in the 'here and now'.

The other realm of actions is the immediate community where children live and relate. Here, children could identify the civic issues and social problems they face. These could range from, “There is not enough water in our locality,” to “The streets don’t have lights,” to “Garbage is strewn everywhere.” It can be anything that is of concern to the students, and they want to do something about.

Educators can make any of these inquiries a project for learning and reflection. If there is a possibility, the inquiry could be extended to identifying and working with stakeholders who can do something about the problem. This gives students the opportunity of ‘learning by doing’.

What is needed from us

In India, despite directions from NEP, active citizenship has not been cultivated in the school system in an adequate manner. Thus, students come out of schools uninspired and ill-equipped with the values, knowledge and practical skills needed to participate in democracy and development. At the same time, communities face governance and development issues that could be addressed through citizen engagement.

Additionally, essential skills of active citizenship like critical thinking, questioning, dialoguing, and problem solving are not seen as ‘desirable’ by governments’ education departments. In the words of a senior official of Education Department, “You would teach the children how to question! Then they would question even their teachers!”

The answer for us is clear. If such spaces are not available within schools, we must create these outside. CSOs working in education, who are working to build active citizenship, must bring in this focus in learning spaces beyond schools.

Another clear aspect is that there is an intense need for advocacy with governments. When governments view active citizenship as

a threat rather than as a necessary feature of democratic education, then it serves no one – least of all the young children who hold Indian democracy’s future in their hands. The way forward for us then is to continually and consistently engage with governments to help them centre and front the tremendous opportunities of citizenship education in everyday learning spaces.

BR Ambedkar pointed toward the importance and enormity of this task when he wrote, “Constitutional morality is not a natural sentiment. It has to be cultivated.”

References

Robert D. Putnam, Robert Leonardi, and Raffaella Y. Nanetti. 1994. *Making democracy work*. Princeton University Press.

Alexis De Tocqueville. 2016. *Democracy in America*. Columbia University Press.

Bryony Hoskins. 2014. “Active citizenship,” in *Encyclopedia of quality of life and well-being research*, ed. Alex C. Michalos (Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands; pp 14–16.

Vinita Singh is the managing trustee at We, The People Abhiyan. She has worked in the social development sector for the last 28 years, mainly in the areas of livelihoods, human rights, and active citizenship. Vinita focuses on building people’s capacities by empowering them with skills, knowledge and attitudes to find solutions to the issues they face.

Neha Yadav has worked in the area of active citizenship and constitutional awareness for a decade. She leads partnerships, focusing on enabling people to uphold their rights through partner-centric programs.

Website: www.wethepeopleabhiyan.org

Email: vinita.gursahani.singh@wethepeopleabhiyan.org

Connect on:     

Facilitating learning spaces outside of school

Aastha Maggu



Wipro Foundation

Learning spaces to be found outside the schools are important for children. Interactions in these spaces help them understand their environment and society, and to gain broader exposure. The resources provided here will help educators in facilitating activities that encourage students to explore the world beyond the boundaries of their schools and enhance their learning.

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage

Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH) is dedicated to conserving India's heritage. One of its primary missions is to raise public awareness about the country's

pluralistic cultural legacy. Various divisions within INTACH have produced and published books, brochures, and other materials.

These illuminate our tangible and intangible heritage. INTACH'S books can be purchased from their offices. Relevant details may be found [here](#).

Adopt a heritage series | Aao virasat apnaein

This series includes three books—'Adopt a Monument,' 'Adopt a Tree,' and 'Adopt a Craft'. These are intended for teachers, students and enthusiasts interested in learning about India's built, natural and material heritage.

Language(s): English and Hindi

Tree of life: an activity book on nature education

This is a comprehensive, informative and colorful handbook. It is designed for teacher educators, middle school students, and natural heritage enthusiasts. It includes engaging warm-up exercises, lesser-known facts, informative sections, exercises, and interesting details about trees.

Language(s): English

SeasonWatch

SeasonWatch invites volunteers, including children and adults, to collect information on changes in the flowering, fruiting and leafing patterns of select tree species. Children in participating schools act as ‘citizen scientists’. They collect data on trees with the help of their teacher coordinators. Through SeasonWatch, children can record changing plant life patterns and understand how climate affects their lifecycles. They also gain perspectives about nature conservation.

SeasonWatch has created resources for educators and citizen scientists. These include materials for identifying plants and participating as citizen scientists. In the process, one can learn about trees through games and activities. Their resources can be viewed [here](#).

Language(s): English, Hindi, Malayalam, Marathi and Tamil

Nature Classrooms

Nature Classrooms at Nature Conservation Foundation (NCF), Bengaluru, has been developing learning resources on nature education. These are aligned with existing primary school Environmental Studies (EVS) curricula. The CSO also conducts capacity-building workshops for schoolteachers. For more information, please visit [Nature Classrooms](#) and [NCF India](#).

Nature learning framework and nature learning pedagogy

The framework and guide serve as a guide for designing age-appropriate nature learning experiences. It begins with experiential activities that make nature immediately accessible to young students and progresses to more abstract, conceptual understanding of ecology, and nature’s interconnectedness.

The dynamic and collaborative pedagogy fosters wonder, love, curiosity, and a connection to nature. It is based on classroom observations, and conversations with ecologists, in-service teachers, and experienced educators. A discussion of this framework and pedagogy can be found [here](#).

Language(s): English





Wipro Foundation is a public charitable trust set up for corporate citizenship and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives of Wipro.

To read previous issues of Samuhik Pahal please visit: <https://issuu.com/wiprofoundation>



For more information, visit:
<http://wiprofoundation.org/>

Cover Photo Credit:
Marudam Farm School

Designed by:
Bindu Creative

Disclaimer: The information in the document is made available based on internal data and other sources believed to be true and are for general guidance only but which may have not been verified independently. While every effort is made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of information contained, Wipro Foundation takes no responsibility and assumes no liability for any error/ omission or accuracy of the information or claims for damages, including exemplary damages, arising out of use, inability to use, or with regard to the accuracy or sufficiency of the information contained. Views expressed by authors are their own and do not represent Wipro Foundation's views. Recipients of this material should rely on their own judgments and conclusions from relevant sources before making any decisions.