

Avehi-Abacus Project

Activities conducted during In-Service teachers' workshops

Drawing on a newspaper

No of Participants/volunteers: All participants/trainees

Preparation: Cut each page of the newspaper into 4, ensuring that there is one piece for each participant.

Objective of the activity: To highlight the fact that children come to school with their own experiences and views. It is therefore a mistake to treat them as blank papers or balls of clay.

The Activity (process):

Distribute a piece of newspaper to each of the participants. When all the participants have one, circulate crayons amongst the group and ask them to pick up a colour of their choice. Now ask them to draw a picture on the paper and give them 5 minutes to complete this activity.

After they have finished, ask a few of them to display their pictures and explain what they are trying to communicate. Observe and make mental notes of how different participants have made use of the newspaper available to them. (E.g. some may use the entire paper, some may use both sides, some use only the blank areas, while others may improvise on an existing photograph or illustration in the newspaper given to them).

Now ask them the following questions:

1. What did you think the pieces of newspapers were meant for?

Expected answer: Craft work, reading the newspaper, serve food on the paper, etc

2. What was your reaction when you were asked to draw a picture on the newspaper?

Expected answer: Surprise, expected to be given a blank piece of newspaper to draw a picture.

3. What do you think is the purpose of conducting this activity?

Expected answer: Encourage children to show their creativity, express their feelings through drawing, etc

4. How is this activity relevant to the work in our field (education)?

Expected answer: It demonstrates how students could be encouraged to use their creativity and provide opportunities for self expression. The pictures drawn can be used to interpret student's emotions and feelings.

Sum Up:

Everyone expected blank pieces of paper for drawing. Similarly we think that children in our class are like blank pieces of paper (or clean slates / balls of clay) and that teachers can imprint what they desire on them. Even if all the pieces were made from newspaper, they were unique in terms of matter and illustrations. Similarly children too come with their own baggage of experiences, views and feelings.

Further, some participants used blank spaces to draw; others used dark coloured crayons to make their pictures more visible against the printed matter. Some used the existing pictures / matter to create new pictures. Similarly teachers are of different kinds - some teachers complement / contribute to the knowledge / experiences the students already have, while others try to impart as much knowledge and skills as possible, sometimes ignoring what the children bring with them.

The essence of this activity is to understand that all of us, children as well as adults are unique. We all come with some experience / knowledge, values imprinted on us. The interaction between teachers and children becomes more fruitful if we use these previous inputs in a creative manner for mutual growth.

Assembling the newspaper

No of Participants/volunteers- 6 volunteers

Objective of the activity: Today completing the syllabus merely involves covering the textbooks from front page to last page, with the actual contents being sidelined in the bargain.

Preparation: Choose 6 copies of the same newspaper of the same date. Jumble up all the pages of the newspapers so that the page numbers are mixed up and some of the pages are upside down. Ensure that all the copies are arranged in a similar manner.

The Activity (process):

Invite the 6 volunteers to stand in two rows of 3 each, facing each other. Ask your team members to ensure that the volunteers do not get space to move around. Give each of the participants a newspaper and ask them to imagine that they are traveling in a crowded train compartment. They have to arrange the pages of their newspaper in a serial order in one minute's time.

Now ask them the following questions:

- How many volunteers managed to finish the given task (putting the pages in a serial order)
- How did you manage to complete the task?
- What are the reasons for non-completion of the activity?

Expected answer: Lack of space, lack of time, too many pages etc

- Did any one of the volunteers read the news?

Expected answer: No, just the headlines, saw the pictures etc.

- How will you relate this activity to your work?

Expected answer: Limited time to complete the syllabus, crowded compartment can be compared to the classroom with many children, too many subjects and education related projects to be completed in the stipulated time.

Sum Up:

The two major constraints that one comes across in completing this activity are time and space. Similarly in schools there is constraint of time in completing the entire syllabus. In this activity the volunteers were too busy putting the pages in order and hence they did not have the time and opportunity to read the newspaper. The same is true of classroom teaching and learning - completing the syllabus involves covering the textbooks from cover to cover in a specified time. The contents are thus not given due importance. The students too memorise the content without understanding it and are unable to recollect it later.

Reading a passage

No of Participants/volunteers: All participants/trainees

Objective of the activity: each one of us had a different style of studying/learning and retaining as well as 'expressing' what we learn.

Preparation: Select a Marathi or Hindi passage depending on the group. Distribute a copy of the passage each to all participants.

The Activity (process):

Read the passage loudly. Then tell the participants to study the passage carefully to enable them answer questions later. Give them 5 minutes to study the passage. Observe all the participants as they study the passage. (You may find some participants reading the passage loudly, underlining important words, making notes, discussing the passage with their colleagues, etc).

Now ask them the following questions:

- How did you study the passage?
- How can you relate this activity to school education?

Sum Up: Seek feedback from a few participants and add your observations. The point we are trying to make is that students have different ways of comprehending, memorising and expressing information. The commonly used teaching method is the 'lecture' method. The common ways in which students comprehend are by listening and making notes, reading and making notes while others may just comprehend merely by listening.

Though it may not be possible to cater to all students who learn differently, being conscious of this and trying to use a combination of teaching-learning methods to cater to varieties of 'learning-styles' would be beneficial. It would also thus be possible to involve different senses in the teaching -learning process.

Ask all the participants to recite the 4th line of the National anthem (immediately without thinking). Most of them will have to recollect the entire anthem and then count the 4th line. While analysing the reason, mention that information is stored in the brain in a particular manner as a whole, not as parts. Hence it becomes difficult to retrieve specific information in isolation as was observed in recollecting the 4th line of the National anthem. The same is true for students who on most occasions find it difficult to recollect specific information from what they have learnt and reproduce it as a correct answer in limited time during exams.

Completing jigsaw puzzles

No of participants/volunteers- All participants

Objective of the activity- To highlight the limitations of the current school syllabus which lacks linkages amongst various subjects. Individual topics are dealt with in parts in successive classes, and teachers too are unaware of the entire content and the objective of introducing it.

Preparation: Take 3 or 4 complete puzzles (depending on number of groups you want to make). Mix the pieces of all these puzzles. Remove a piece each from all of them. (This is to ensure that no group can complete the puzzle)

The Activity (process): Divide the participants into 3 or 4 groups (depending on the number of participants). Give them a (mixed-up) puzzle each. The participants have to complete the puzzle in 3 minutes. After 3 minutes ask the groups if they have completed the puzzles. They will obviously need more time. If they have not approached/observed other groups ask them to do so as it could give them clues to solve their own puzzles. Give them an extended time limit of 3minutes for completing the puzzle.

Now ask them the following questions:

- Did all the groups manage to complete the puzzle?
- If not why?
Expected answer: limited time, puzzle pieces were mixed, entire picture of the puzzle was not provided, etc
- How will you link this activity with your work?

Sum up: Like the puzzle, the curriculum too is divided into various subjects. A single topic is dealt with in parts in successive classes. The lack of chronology or order in providing information makes it difficult for students to understand the subject. One of the major constraints in completing this puzzle is the non availability of the whole picture. Teachers too are often unaware of the entire curriculum or the purpose/objective with which it has been introduced. This creates barriers in drawing linkages between different subjects and the teaching-learning becomes directionless.

Slot game

No of Participants/volunteers- As many as the pieces of chart papers

Objective of the activity- To show how a single type of examination system does not respect/take into account the diversity amongst students with regards to their capacities, interests, skills and experiences

Preparation: Take a sheet of chart paper and make 6-7 slits of about 3 inches each on the lower half. Then stick some chart paper behind the slits to make a kind of pocket. Also cut about 6-8 shapes of 3 inches out of coloured paper and about 10-15 pieces in a size and shape larger than the slits.

The Activity (process): Ask the participants to choose a piece of chart paper (in different sizes and shapes). Tell the participants that they have to put their pieces through the slots without forcing the piece through the slot or folding it.

Now ask them the following questions:

- How many of you managed to put the pieces through the slots?
- How can this activity be linked with the functioning of the education system?

Sum up: Only 6-8 participants will have managed to put their pieces through the slots. Tell the participants that only those 6-8 have passed while the rest have failed. Find out their reaction to your statement. It is most likely that the participants will raise objections for various reasons e.g. the size and shapes of the pieces they had chosen were different and hence could not fit into the slot, etc. Linking this activity with the functioning of the educational system explain that the slots represent the evaluation process or exams. Students may have different learning abilities and multiple intelligences (like the pieces of chart paper in different shapes and sizes). However the method of evaluation for all these students is the same. Thus all students find it difficult to cope with the system. This process instead of being inclusive ends up alienating more than 50% of the students from the main stream.

3 Girls poster

No of Participants/Volunteers- All participants

Objective of the activity: To stress the fact that education is not merely sought through schools or books but also from our daily life experiences.

Preparation: Draw 3 girls representing 3 completely different types of backgrounds on a large sheet to make a poster. The first girl is a tribal girl, the second is a typical middle class girl, dressed neatly in a school uniform, while the last girl is obviously well to do and westernized. While conducting this activity fold the poster in a manner which ensures that participants can see the picture of only one girl at a time.

The Activity (process): Show the participants the poster of 3 girls successively one after the other. Get their responses for the questions mentioned below and note them on the blackboard.

Now ask them the following questions: (ask all these questions after showing each poster)

- Describe the appearance of this girl
- What do you think is her family/cultural background?
- What is her educational status?
- What is her economic background?
- What kind of future does she have?

After seeking responses for all the three girls, show them the entire poster with all the three girls. Next tell the participants:

'Close your eyes and imagine that you are out on a long walk in a forest. You can feel the soft grass beneath your feet, there is a slight drizzle. You become engrossed in your surroundings and loose track of time. It is late evening. You suddenly realize that you are lost in a forest. Far away you hear a tiger roar!

Now tell the participants to open their eyes and ask them which girl they would approach in such a situation. Seek responses from the participants and reasons behind those responses. They will most likely say that they will approach the first girl for help because she is familiar with the surroundings and hence will be able to help.

Sum up: As was seen in this activity, everyone unanimously said they would approach the first girl for assistance. Earlier the same girl was considered to be from a poor, tribal, illiterate family who may/may not be educated. However her knowledge and familiarity with the forest was a major asset when one wanted assistance to get out of the situation mentioned above. In conclusion, mere formal education sought through schools and textbooks is insufficient in providing with skills and knowledge to deal with life.

Animal Drawing

No of Participants/Volunteers-3

Objective of the activity-To stress the fact that chronology is important in teaching and learning History.

Preparation- Divide the black board into three equal horizontal parts and cover it with a newspaper.

The Activity (process)-Invite three volunteers and allot numbers one to three respectively to each of the volunteers. Now ask them to leave the room for some time.

In the mean time tell the rest of the participants in the room that the volunteers would be asked to draw the 'Head', 'Body' and 'Torso' of any 'living being' respectively. The participants in the room are expected to observe these proceedings silently without providing any clues to the volunteers.

Now call the first volunteer in the room and ask her/him to draw the 'Head' of any 'living being' in the first part of the black board. Ask the volunteer to extend some part of the drawing to the second part as a clue to the second volunteer. Now cover the first half of the black board but ensure that the clue is visible to the second volunteer.

Next, call the second volunteer and ask her/him to draw the 'Body' of any 'living being' in the second part of the black board. Draw her/his attention to the clue left by the first volunteer. Ask this volunteer too to extend some part of the drawing to the second part as a clue for the third volunteer. After the second volunteer finishes drawing cover the drawing in such a manner that some part is visible to the third volunteer. Next call the third volunteer and draw the 'torso' of any 'living being'. Draw her/his attention to the clue left by the second volunteer.

After the third volunteer completes the drawing remove the newspaper and display the entire drawing. The possibility is that the drawing does not make any sense.

Now ask the following questions:

- Which living being have the volunteers drawn?
- Why does the drawing not make any sense?
- How is this activity linked with teaching History?

Sum up:

The volunteers faced a problem as each of the volunteer was not aware of what the earlier volunteer had drawn. Hence no connections are visible in the final drawing. Similarly there is lack of chronology or an understanding of cause and effect in the History syllabus.

Therefore it becomes difficult for both the teachers to teach and students to understand the events without chronology.

Recounting my past**No of volunteers- 1**

Objective of the activity-To understand that events are relevant than mere dates while learning History.

The Activity-

Invite one volunteer for the activity. Now ask the following questions in a serial order.

1. Recall any incident from your childhood.

Let the volunteer narrate the incident. Then ask the second question

2. Recall any incident that occurred two days before.

Let the volunteer narrate the incident. Then ask the third question.

3. Recall any incident that occurred on 23rd April 2004.

Wait for the volunteer to respond. The possibility is that the volunteer may not be able to recall any specific incident of 23rd April 2004 (provided that it was not relevant to him/her.)

Now ask the following question:

- Why could the volunteer recall incidents from his/her childhood or 2 days ago but not recall what had happened on 23rd April 2004?

Sum up:

The volunteer could recollect incidents from his/her childhood or 2 days ago because they had some relevance in his/her life or had happened recently. However he/she could not probably recollect what happened on 23rd April 2004 because nothing relevant had happened on that day. Moreover quite some time has passed to recollect anything of the mentioned date. Thus in History too importance needs to be given to events rather than merely memorizing the dates of important events.

Map Quiz

No of volunteers: All the participants (in 8 groups)

Objective of the Activity- To familiarize the participants with the use of maps for the purpose of reading and understanding the maps.

Preparation- Provide one map each to all the 8 groups along with a packet of Bindi. The facilitator should keep the quiz ready along with one map that should be displayed in the front of the room. Divide the blackboard into 8 vertical columns with the group number marked on each column. Enter the marks in the respective column during the quiz.

The Activity-

Inform all the participants that this is a group activity. Each group should nominate a volunteer who will raise her/his hand in case the group is aware of the answer and keep the packet of bindi to mark the specific country/area. The facilitator will read out one clue at a time. The volunteer of the group who raises his/her hand first will be invited to give the answer. The volunteer is expected to read out the answer. If the answer is correct he/she will come to the front of the room and mark the specific country/area with a bindi on the map displayed in front. The group that identifies the country/area correctly and is able to mark the same on the map will get 5 points. In case they fail to do so the next group will be given an opportunity to give the answer. The group getting maximum points will be declared the winner.

Bindi Game

No of Participants/volunteers: All participants

Objective of the activity: To emphasise the fact that as humans we essentially are social beings and prefer to live with others. Human society has different sub-groups some in 'majority', some in 'minority'. Often the bigger groups act in position of domination and thus the smaller groups feel a sense of insecurity. It is necessary that we empathise with those who feel vulnerable. It is essential to understand that belonging to 'majority' or 'minority' is susceptible to change and empathy and respect for others is a pre-requisite for living together.

Preparation: Keep 3 to 4 packets each of different coloured bindis ready for the game.

Activity: Ask all the participants to stand in a circle with their eyes closed. Choose 2 different colours of bindis and put one bindi each on every participant's forehead. The bindis should be put in a manner where two groups are formed one large and second slightly smaller. Ensure that

all the participants with the exception of 3 have the bindi on their forehead. Now put 3 different coloured bindis on the foreheads of these 3 participants.

Ask them to open their eyes and tell them that each participant has a bindi on their forehead. All the participants having similar colour bindis have to form one group. This has to be done without any verbal exchange between the participants. Give them 5 minutes time to complete the activity and observe the process.

Now ask them the following questions:

- How did they manage to 'find their own groups'?
- How did each participant feel when they found their groups?
- How does the biggest group feel?
- How does the smaller group feel?
- What were the feeling of the 3 participants who did not belong to any group?

Sum up:

Those managing to find their respective groups will feel happy and secure while those who could not be in a group will feel sad, lonely and insecure. The biggest feels powerful. These feelings can be attributed to the fact that we are essentially social beings and prefer to live with others. Human society has different sub-groups some in 'majority', some in 'minority'. Often the bigger groups act in position of domination and thus the smaller groups feel a sense of insecurity. It is necessary that we empathise with those who feel vulnerable. It is essential to understand that belonging to 'majority' or 'minority' is susceptible to change and empathy and respect for others is a pre-requisite for living together.

'Perspectives'

No of Participants/volunteers: 6 volunteers

Objective of the activity: Looking at something from many different angles/points of view gives us a better understanding of what that thing is really like.

Activity: Call for six volunteers to play the game. Ask each volunteer to go to a different part of the room and lie down in a different position; for example, one volunteer could lie on her back and look at the ceiling, another could lie down sideways at the opposite end of the room, a third could lie on his stomach in a corner.

Now ask each volunteer to describe what he or she can see from his or her position. Tell the participants to listen carefully to these descriptions. After all the 'views' have described, the volunteers can go back to their seats.

Discuss the game with the participants with the help of the following questions.

- What did each volunteer describe?
- Were their descriptions similar? Why?
- Did the description of any single individual provide a complete description of the room? Why?
- Can we say that the different descriptions put together give us a more complete description of the room?

Sum up

Since each volunteer was in a different part of the room and lying in a different position, each person's view of the room was different. We cannot say that anyone was wrong; at the same time, no one gave us a full and correct description of what the classroom really looks like. Even if we put all the descriptions together, we don't get a full picture; but we do get a better idea of the classroom. In other words, **looking at something from many different angles gives us a better idea of what something is really like.**

Balloon game

No of Participants/volunteers: All participants

Objective of the activity: To stress the importance of team work in achieving desired results especially in face of challenges and difficulties.

Preparation: Keep one or two big packets of balloon ready for the game. Every participant should get one balloon

Activity: Ask the participants to stand in a circle. Distribute balloons among all the participants. Ask them to blow air in the balloons and tie them up. They have to strictly follow the instructions while keeping the balloons afloat. The aim of this game is to keep all the balloons belonging to every member afloat. All the participants have to float their balloons in the air as soon as the game starts.

At the beginning the participants can use both their hands to keep the balloons afloat. Change the instructions after short intervals to make them more complex (use of only right hand, only left palm, later only right foot, later only left foot and lastly; only head). Continue the game even if some balloons fall to the floor). After the game is over invite responses from participants.

Sum up: It will be evident that the participants could easily follow instructions initially. As the instructions became complex it was difficult for them to keep the balloons afloat. Hence they had to put in more efforts and help each other to ensure that all balloons stayed afloat. In conclusion team work is crucial in achieving any results. There are bound to be challenges in completing our tasks. Team work makes it easier to overcome these challenges and all are winners no one is a loser.