



Civil Society Organisations Reflections on Arts Based Methodologies in Schools

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CSO participant observing the research process. Photo credit: Nub Raj Bhandari

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Co-I, Examining the Interpretations of Civic National Values Made by Young People in Kenya and Nepal

Project Summary

Two decades of internal conflict and instability in Nepal has brought a drastic reformation in the state structure from central government to federal state including the education system. The school education is divided into two levels: basic (up to 8th grade) and secondary education (9th – 12th grade). Moral education is included in the curriculum of basic education aiming to inform young children about civic national values such as citizenship, social and moral behavior, tolerance and mutual respect. The local government units (LGUs) are responsible for the formation as well as implementation of regulations related to education. Besides the efforts of the central government to reform learning, LGUs, educational institutions and civil society organizations (CSOs) were also seeking

opportunities to engage young children in the learning process in post conflict communities. To inform and advance policy making at local (LGUs) and national level on the interpretations of civic national values made by young people, we devised [Schemes of Work](#) consisting of reflections-actions-performances-recording and tested them in two schools. The schools and participants were selected randomly from distinct setting: rural/urban, public/private and English medium/Nepali medium. Six young students each from grades six, seven and eight grades, two teachers and two CSOs were selected randomly from each school.

Engagement of CSOs

The selection of CSOs was purposeful. In each school (rural and urban), two CSOs were invited to observe the research process. They overtly observed the engagement of young children and teachers in the arts based methodologies (reflections, actions, performances and recording). Based on a set of open-ended questions, the CSOs provided a reflective overview on the arts based methodologies, overall research process and content.

Reflections of CSOs over the research process

At the planning phase, there were two questions concerning the engagement of CSOs in the research process. The first was 'whether the CSOs accept arts based engagement of young children as a process of teaching and learning?' Similarly, the second question was, 'how could the engagement of CSOs in the research process add value to the project?' The reflections from the CSOs showed that their engagement was an essential part of the project. 'I am wondering, how can I apply these steps in my work?' was the concern of one CSO participant. While young children were drawing to illustrate their vision of a model community, CSO participants expressed their interest to integrate the activity into their own work at schools. The drawing, according to a CSO, 'is the best way of engaging students and teachers in the learning and teaching process'. They expressed their interest to learn more about the SOW; 'I should learn more about the arts based methodologies', said one urban CSO. Similarly, 'can we work together on similar project in future', was the interest of rural CSOs.

According to CSOs, lessons on reflection and performance help young children to learn fast. 'Everyone is actively participating, so these forms of creative engagement are a better way of engaging young people in the learning processes' was the common response of CSOs. Though they were watching the actions and performances of young people, they spoke much about engaging adolescents and adults in their community based civic education projects. However, CSO participants know that it is not easy for Nepali CSOs to follow these lessons in their development projects. It could be a challenge to organize multiple opinions of different groups because research is not the common working arena for CSOs in Nepal. Therefore, when they return to their actual work, it could be a challenge for them to integrate the theory of the research they have experienced. However, every opinion made by CSOs in this research project is praiseworthy and it is also a positive indication for the follow up activities based on arts based methodology.

Concluding remarks and way forwards

The observations of CSOs throughout the research process from lesson one to four of the SOW's (reflections, actions, performances and recording), endorse the arts based methodology as a successful research tool to engage people for constructive learning in the post conflict context. CSOs' keen interest for including the arts based methodologies and SOW in their work could be considered a further step towards sustainability of the process.

With the above reflections, the way forward for future similar projects would be to provide a space for CSOs in the research process to improve their understanding of arts based methodology at a deeper level. This could be done through engaging them in pre-planning meetings, orienting them about the research process well before the fieldwork and engaging them as facilitators as well. CSOs engagement in the pre-planning meeting and orientation will enhance their understanding of the differences between their CSO project and a research project. The facilitation will strengthen their interest in integrating arts based methodologies in their regular project, which will further support the sustainability of arts based approaches in the post conflict countries.

TAGS: [ARTS BASED METHODOLOGIES](#) [CSO](#) [KENYA](#) [NEPAL](#)



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