



‘Articulating Futures can be defined as a process of expressing one’s vision or idea of what lies ahead.’

ARTICULATING FUTURES

Process, activity and outcomes

A collaboration between Proboscis, Niharika Hariharan and Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya (New Delhi, India)

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Articulating Futures team

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Background



Articulating Futures was a 4 day workshop held at Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya in New Delhi between the 17th - 20th November, 2009.

As a collaboration between narrative designer Niharika Hariharan and Proboscis, the workshop investigated how through innovative thinking young students could be mobilized to voice issues that are important to them.

Niharika Hariharan is a narrative designer whose work is rooted in the realm of social and community design. She works on a variety of trans-disciplinary projects that explore the relationship between design, creative thinking, sciences, traditional knowledge systems and sociology. Collaboration and creating spaces of discourse is essential to her practice as it is to Articulating Futures.

Proboscis is an art organization based out of London since 1994. It is a creative studio which researches, develops and facilitates innovation. It creates artworks and acts as a production company, commissioning agency, design studio, think tank and consultancy. Proboscis' work embraces cultures of listening through new processes, tools and partnership that cross linguistic, cultural and social divides; in particular work in creating cross cultural tools that by their nature encourage the skills of negotiation, listening, articulation, sharing and decision making. This in turn inspires students to understand that their voice matters and that they have agency to influence change in their classroom, school, community and environment.

Articulating Futures started with an orientation presentation inviting up to 16 students to participate in the workshop. Designed and developed through a think tank group consisting of Giles Lane (Proboscis), Janani Iyer- an award winning tutor and progressive thinker and Laxmi Venkatesh class teacher at Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya, the workshop was an open creative space where students worked collaboratively, fearlessly and creatively to investigate, question, reason and articulate intelligently issues and ideas that were important to them.

Intentionally situated within a classroom scenario, the three primary goals of the workshop were:

- **To get students to think, assimilate and express their ideas within a limiting existing academic structure in a creative and meaningful manner.**
- **To create methods and processes in which they could find ways of connecting their learning in school with matters that are relevant and important to them, beyond the institution,**
- **To allow for educational institutions to involve alternative and creative methods of learning within their academic set-up, so as to not educate students out of their creativity. And to achieve this goal by involving and collaborating with creative thinkers and practitioners.**

What followed over the course of the workshop was a feverish participation of young minds, fearlessly thinking and learning to break new grounds in creative learning and critical thinking.

Supported by Proboscis (London) and using creative tools designed by Proboscis such as StoryCubes and Diffusion eBooks, students collaboratively worked to create scenarios of what their vision of the future would be in 2050.

Chinamaya Mission Vidyalaya school was specifically cited to launch Articulating Futures because of the environment and the context the school was situated in. The school is located in New Delhi, the capital city of India. It is based on the teachings of saint and philosopher, Swami Chinmaya and has branches in India and abroad. The school focusses specifically on the overall development of a child's identity based on cultural and social context. Aiming to instill Indian value systems and cultural knowledge in the young students, Chinmaya Vidyalaya incorporates activities like Geeta chanting and teaching in vernacular language. The school constantly battled the incoming of western influences evident in student behavior, language and thinking, it became an ideal place to kick start a radical workshop like Articulating Futures, which enabled students to voice this change in their identity and their social context and project it in their vision of the future.

Collaboration

In order to develop a stimulating and productive workshop, a team of professionals were invited to brainstorm and contribute to Articulating Futures. **Giles Lane** from Proboscis worked closely in developing the core idea and creating the eBooks and StoryCubes for the workshop. He also helped define the desired outcomes and the potential future growth of Articulating Futures after the life of the project. **Janani Iyer** an award winning tutor and a facilitator of progressive teaching in India was also a close collaborator through the development of this workshop. Since she had been working with students from varied backgrounds and personalities, she plugged into the facilitation and the structure of the workshop. Her input was of real value in making activities engaging and easy for students to plug. She also helped making stronger and valuable connections between Articulating Futures and the school's academic curriculum. Collaborating closely with **Laxmi Venkatesh** was also a real investment for the project. She is a 11th grade teacher of history and is closely connected with the students. Having been at Chinamaya Vidyalaya school for over 4 years she is aware of the requirements of the students and the school. She saw Articulating Futures as a project that would be extremely useful for students who are unable to exploit their maximum learning potential in a structured class room environment. She was also a real asset in evaluating the potential strengths and change in the learning curve of each of the 16 students before and after the workshop.

Janani Iyer says, *'When you collaborate, you give and provide a subject with a wider and more holistic view and that is what the future is about. Not mine but OURS. By doing this we are forming an OUR world.'*

'Designers working with educational institutes is a renaissance which is happening. This is what education needs. We need people who can see the structure from the outside to attach themselves to education.'
(Janani Iyer)

'Collaboration is essential for us teachers. Singularly you can't achieve holistic learning. We are going to be with students after the workshop, so we can see the changes in the children. Only if our inputs today are better, can we see and understand its achievements over time. And this is something I have noticed after the workshop- these changes in the students.' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Emergence of Articulating Futures

Articulating Futures grew out of the current social scenario existing in India. It is for this reason why it is a relevant and important workshop for students to immerse in. The three key aspects that Articulating Futures is rooted in, are:

- 1) The term 'Future'
- 2) The current Indian context
- 3) The change in social identities

Today it has become imperative for us to think about the term 'Future'. Our civilization and our planet is at a point where we need to understand the impact of our actions, inventions, developments on what lies ahead. Educational institutes are geared to equip young people for this future and it is for this reason, important for us to provide a platform for young students to understand and articulate what their needs and desires might be in the coming years.

Closer home, India is at a turning point as well. It is the world's largest democracy and now a growing economic super power. In the future it will also be the world's youngest nation with more than 60% of the population under the age of 25. As Nandan Nilekani states rightly in his talk on 'Ideas for India's Future' at the TED conference in 2009:

'Indians are far more comfortable with globalization. Being the youngest country in the world, globalization is very attractive. For some reason, lack of money, priorities, religion based on oral tradition, primary education never got the focused it required. But I believe now that is changing because more than 50% of children in Urban India are going to private schools.'

India's future is surely to have a dramatic impact on the world's future. It is exciting to not only be a part of this change but, also delve into the minds of the youth that will be pioneering this change in the years to come.

However, while understanding and acknowledging these changes, it is also important to identify the potential chaos or confusion this change might bring along. Through the country's timeline, from colonization right

from the Persians, Mughal's up until the British, the country's identity, culture and tradition has become more diverse and dynamic. While for many decades this has been a part of our unique identity, over time due to the rapid globalization and strong western influences, there seems to be a fast growing homogenous culture in India. This is evident foremost in our languages. English seems to be growing to almost a national language status and is considered a second language to Hindi (the national language). Many traditions, festivals and cultural identities have also very strong western influences. Most importantly traditional knowledge systems seem to be discarded over 'modern' ideas and notions- as is most evident in our educational set-up and sciences. Apart from discarding our language, another common example is Yoga and Ayurveda, which was adopted and understood for its value by many western nations, they are now being brought back into our country by them.

What is interesting to note is that this kind of effect of globalization and identity is very specific to India. Many leading nations like Germany and Japan have retained their social and cultural tradition only to adopt English and western influences to communicate and do business with other countries.

It was these insights and concepts that guided and shaped the structure of the workshop. Students were asked to reflect over the following questions in their eBooks and through debate and discussions.

1. How would young Indian students define themselves as unique in the future, in a growing homogenous culture in India?
2. Which elements of your culture and tradition, do you think are integral to your identity as a young Indian?
3. Which cultural and social elements would you discard as irrelevant as a young Indian?
4. Which such cultural and social elements would your grandparents and parents discard and retain?
5. How do you think the written script of Hindi would change in the future?
6. Do you think our traditional knowledge like our 'Vedas' or our 'Mythology' is going to become irrelevant? Is that going to make a difference to us at all in the future?
7. Do we think traditional sciences are not as advanced as modern sciences?
8. Does technology help us think more creatively?
9. What is the impact of western influences on our vision of the future?
10. What would make you different from a 16 year old in America or England? In a western influenced homogenous culture emerging in India, is it important to be different at all?

Structure of the workshop

The workshop was designed as an open space for students to adopt and make their own through creative inputs, needs and desires. Although the workshop was designed in advance, the content and the language of the workshop was shaped by the students over the 4 days. It was specifically structured keeping in mind the following criteria

- 1) To allow students to raise issues that are important to them and create opportunities where they can debate, discuss and critically argue the same.
- 2) To develop a structure that enables students to think of their future in terms of these issues that they have identified as important. Also to make them realize that their voice is important and should be heard.
- 3) To create collaborative and team work activities where inputs can be drawn from students from varied classes and backgrounds.
- 4) To use creative tools so that students can think out of their linear teaching system. Also using these aids to help them express difficult and complex topics and themes such as identity and future.
- 5) To showcase the benefit of collaboration between educational institutions and creative thinkers to cultivate a more receptive learning environment. Also to enable schools to explore more effective and holistic methods of teaching-learning processes.
- 6) Most importantly, to unlearn them out of the notion of right and wrong that is so strongly instilled into us through out our school years. Hence allow them to think more freely and fearlessly.

Based on the above ideas a 4 day workshop plan was developed. Each days activities were woven into the next and a variety of mediums like music, films, performances and debates were used to engage students over the course of the workshop.

Students were encouraged to reflect upon their daily activities by writing in their eBooks of ideas and research. They were also asked to write down a 'thought of the day' based on what they liked or disliked during the daily course of the workshop. Each days activities were explained to the students so that they could understand and comprehend why they were participating in it. Through discussions they were also linked to the proceedings of the following days as well to their academic curriculum. This enabled them to make sense of the workshop, meaningfully participate in it as well as make it relevant to their context.

'Today was total fun. It was imaginative and I learned to listen to others and respect their decisions. Groups work makes you see other perspectives too!' (student feedback- 20th November, 2009)

'It was an interactive workshop, but at the end of it I have learned to plan a future for the whole world, instead of planning it for my ownself' (Karandeep, student feedback)

'Inf act the workshop touched literally all aspect- current issues, now and in the future and how they see themselves in a few years from now. I think it was good because it made them realize that they need to know and think about the future. They don't lend their attention and ears to the current scenarios or seeing the extended present. It was hence necessary to make them think like that. I was amazed and their ideas-such

as unified government- which means that they are hoping and thinking about world peace.' (Lata Ventaktesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

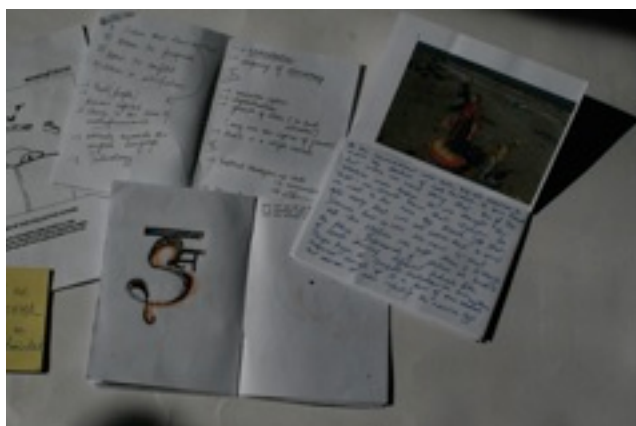
The workshop took place over four days. The students worked in groups and participated in discussions, debates and performances. Students were also involved in a creative learning process using tools such as eBooks, StoryCubes, films and music compositions. Through playful and innovative teaching and learning methods, they were made to unlearn their notions of right and wrong. Since the subject was future, which is an abstract concept, students were able to shed their preconditioned ideas of a classroom

The workshop had 4 essential umbrella themes it covered:

- Identity- change and evolution
- Traditional knowledge systems through the lens of our current social-cultural scenario
- Language and its evolution in the growing homogenous culture
- Current economic scenario and its relevance to our identity, culture, social- cultural fabric and language

'The structure of this workshop was novel. Workshops that we have in school usually go on as a one sided monologue. 'Articulating Futures' was very well sequenced. It captured the child's attention! The amount of distraction students are exposed to these days. You managed to hold their attention and interest for 5 days!' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Workshop packs



Based on the theme and the core concept, workshop packs were carefully and thoughtfully designed to weave into the natural flow of activities during the course of the workshop. Acting as creative tools for students to use for expressing and documenting their responses and reactions, these packs helped them compile their thoughts, ideas and map their progress through the days.

The pack contained the following

1. An introduction booklet
2. An eBook of Ideas- to note one's personal thoughts and moments of inspiration
3. An eBook of search and research- to write down responses to specific questions discussed through the day
4. An eBook of storytelling- to help students think more creatively using methods and techniques of narrative and story telling
5. An eBook of Future- to use as a personal log to create the final future scenarios
6. Two StoryCubes
7. A craft bag
8. A case study booklet containing articles in both hindi and english for inspiration and ideas
9. A blue 'Thought of the day' leaflet for feedback and to map the daily takeaway of each student

The workshop packs were aimed to inculcate the practice of jotting down ideas. They enabled students to creatively and collaboratively think as individuals as well as in groups.

Things that inspire



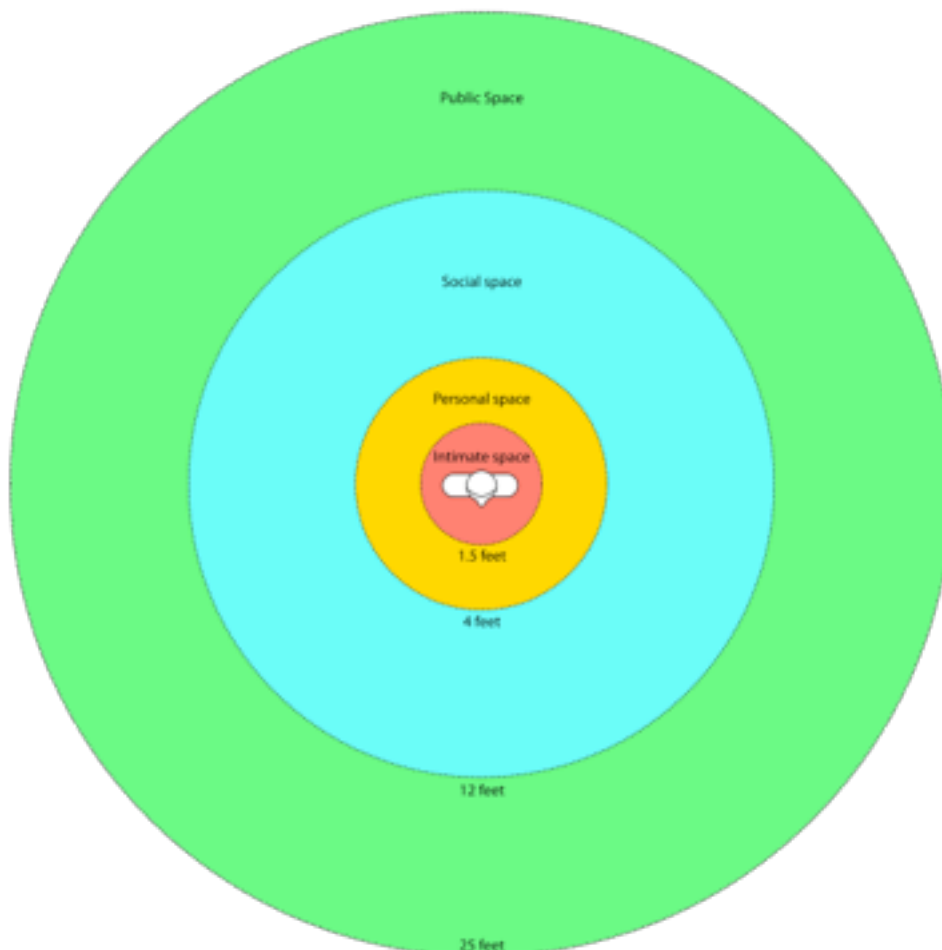
The workshop structure and the packs were designed keeping in mind 'things' that would inspire the students. These were in the form of films, talks, music, articles, newspaper clippings and personal experiences of people. These elements were woven in through out the workshop activities and a booklet was designed as part of the workshop pack that consisted of interesting case studies. Students were greatly motivated by talks of Ken Robinson and Nandan Nilekani as well reading articles on 'Navadarshanam' (the eco-friendly village). The 'things that inspire' section of the workshop also directly fed into developing future scenarios and acted as triggers for the discussions and debates held over the four days. The case study booklet was an essential take away for student participating in Articulating Futures, as they found its content useful, important and interesting to hold onto to.

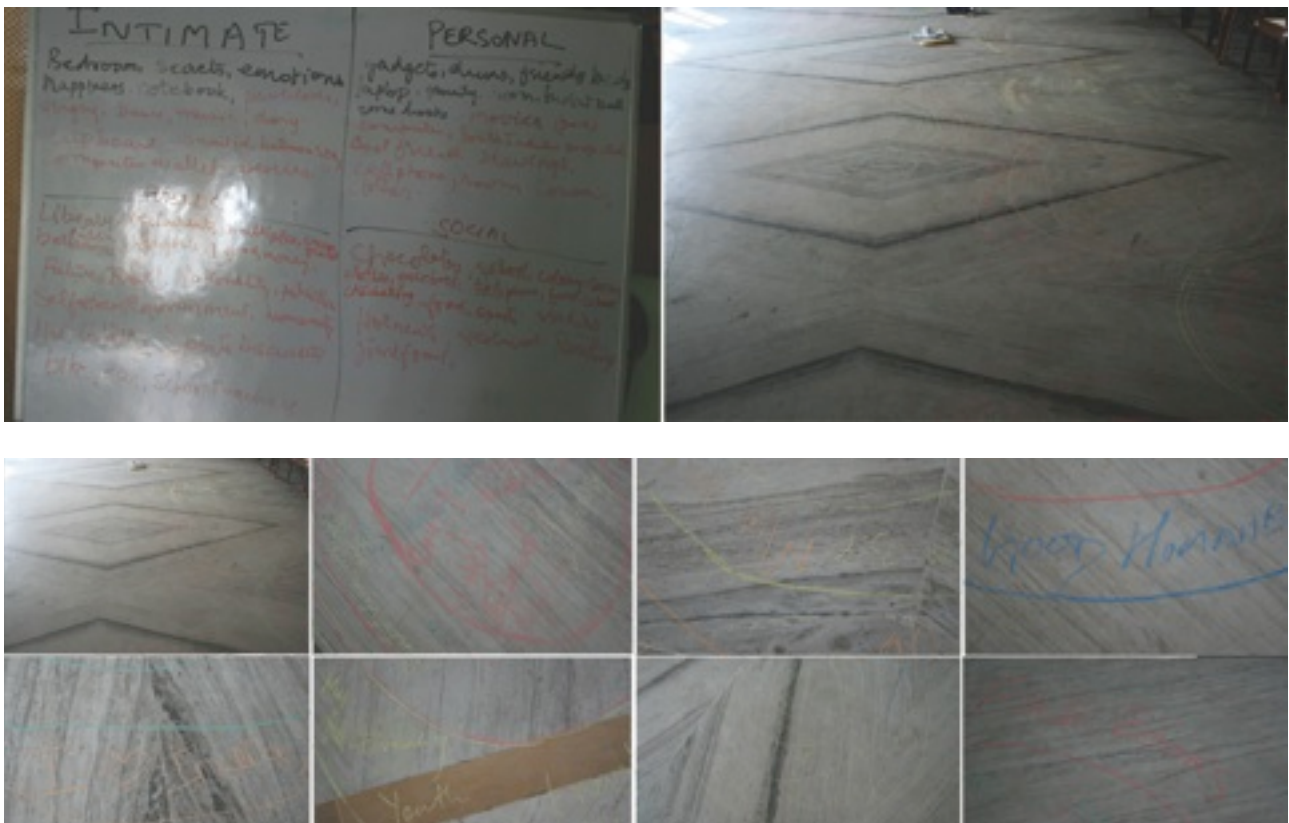
Day to Day workshop proceedings

Day 01: IDENTITY

Objectives

- 1) Establishing a rapport
 - 2) Setting a mood/context in terms of identity at a micro and macro level
 - 3) Creating opportunities for interaction and collaboration
 - 4) Unlearning and recreating notions of self with relation to our culture and society, past, present and future.
- The students worked individually and in groups defining elements of their identity that they thought important. They worked around an identity diagram defined by Edward T Hall, which is given below. Students then exchanged their identities with each and tried to define themselves through elements of their classmates identity. This kind of activity helped them get to know each other better as well as develop a comfort level with the entire group.





Some of the questions asked:

- What is your notion of identity?
- Have you ever been confused about who you are and who you should be?
- At which age did you become aware of your individual identity and that of other people?
- How would your identity be different from someone your age in America?
- How would your identity change in the future?
- What have been your physical and emotional awareness with regard to your identity?
- Who are you in relation to your peer?

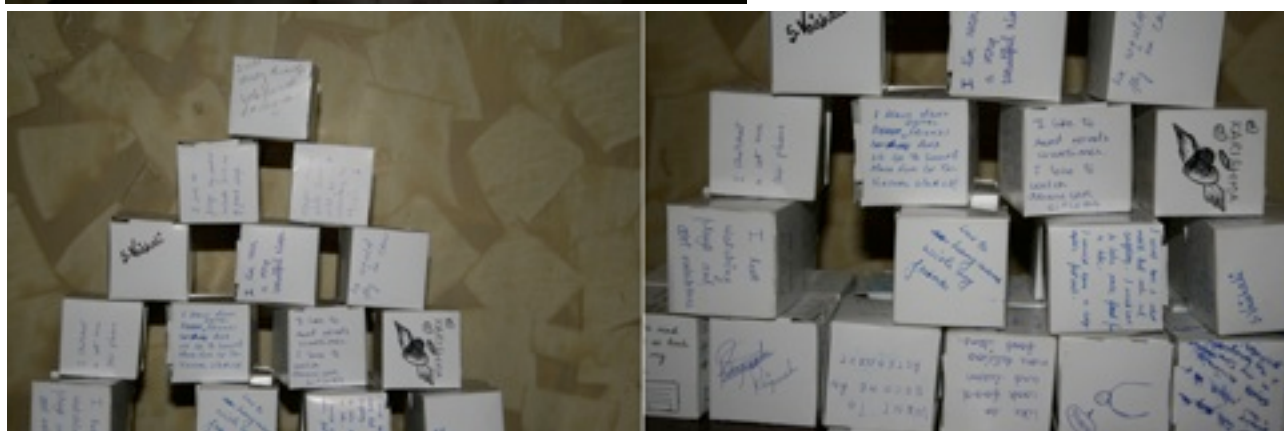
"I found a new perception in me regarding my identity as an Indian first and foremost. I should respect Hindi. (student feedback)

'Today I learnt a lot about many topics and I think all of us exchanged ideas and views. It was fun to learn in such an enjoyable manner.' (Arati, student)

'Enjoyed discussing about future and about our identity. Lucky to have such people who will encourage us to make a future by ourselves rather than depend on any other.' (student feedback)

'Because the present generation of children are actually in search of an identity in the future which they are unable to articulate right now. They are in a state of confusion in their mind about what they are, how that was and what they will be in the future.' (Janani Iyer)

Day 02: Culture and traditional knowledge systems now and in the future



Objectives

- 1) Developing the Indian identity and identifying the change that has come about over the last decade
- 2) How does this relate to the future?
- 3) Narrative and scenario building- as tools for learning and comprehending information
- 4) Talking about issues that are of concern to them in the real world.
- 5) Relating and applying school learning to issues encountered outside the institution

Through the second day students were asked to reflect upon the changes that they felt around them and the issues they defined as relevant in their current social and cultural scenario. Using case studies based on yoga and Eames report NID and Slumdog Millionaire, students were asked to create a map of India's identity by highlighting elements that they considered important. They were also divided into groups the latter half of the day to recreate their mythology using characters. This activity was important as students reflected about oral tradition and knowledge that is very specific to them as Indians. They had the opportunity to critically analyze the importance of such a tradition and its relevance in their life at present and in the future. Through the days activities and discussions, students worked collaboratively to clusters of ideas and thoughts that would eventually feed into their future scenarios.

Some questions asked

- What is your notion of identity?
- Have you ever been confused about who you are and who you should be?
- At which age did you become aware of your individual identity and that of other people?
- How would your identity be different from someone your age in America?
- How would your identity change in the future?
- What have been your physical and emotional awareness with regard to your identity?
- Who are you in relation to your peer?

'Many things from our culture have been copied by western people and they have presented these things to us with changed names.' (student, feedback)

'I thought we had become western by our own choice and peer pressure. Being Indian is not a sad thing.' (student feedback)

'I liked the debate because I am not used to it much. The 2009 version of our mythological characters was a very good topic to think about and I realized that our culture and tradition is very important to us and we should work to enrich it in the future.' (student, feedback)

'Enhancing your debating skills and creativeness is very important. It may be useful in the future. Enjoyed today's day with group discussion and creativity.' (student, feedback)

'It is a very interesting phase in education in our country. There is a lot of talk about child centric teaching but, how much each school is committed and convinced about is a class room reality that we will find out about in due time. This workshop is providing a forum where you are forcing kids to come face to face with very uncomfortable questions, forcing them to think and formulate their identity. It's almost like a need created in them.' (Janani Iyer)

Day 03: Language and its relevance in the current social and cultural scenario



Objectives

- 1) Developing ones personal perspective on the topics and ideas that we have covered
- 2) Using creative and narrative construction elements in classroom teaching
- 3) Developing skill and thinking to connect and related different issues together

The medium of communication through this day was Hinglish [a blend of hindi and english]. Discussion was initiated by showing videos and talks by Jay Walker on English Mania, Bollywood films that addressed the issue of identity and language. Students went onto debating feverishly on the relevance of our Indian tradition and culture in the future.

Some questions posed were:

1. Will Hindi become the future language of opportunity
2. What will happen to hindi if our mythology would be translated into hinglish or english (refer to previous days discussion)
3. If India would become the next super power what will happen to our language?

'Ideas should be inculcated. A lot of ideas go through our minds. We should put up the ideas to our work. Enjoyed the day's work. Had fun.' (student feedback)

'Hindi hain hum. The most oldest manager and the best. Becoming more social is better than being more intimate. Youth + Experiences, breath taking combination to make a colorful world. (Kartik, student)

'Believe in yourself and believe in your religion. Spread Hindi as a global language. Be patriotic and love your nation. (Shikha, student)

'Re-defining Mythology was fun oriented. Normally the character are associated with mythology. It was out of the box thinking and ignited the imagination of the students. They grow up with these things and it must have really hardened certain facts. The next time they would like to know more in detail about characters and that is relevant learning.' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Day 04: In a fast growing homogenous culture in India, what would make a young Indian unique?



Based on the emergence of key concepts over the course of the workshop, students would be divided into groups of 4-5 and asked to depict and create a future scenario based on the following

A day in the life of a 14 year old Indian in 2050.

Keeping in mind what would make him different from another 14 year old in the world.

Students were asked to consider the following elements.

1. Language
2. Culture
3. Society
4. Religion
5. Food

They used 'eBook of the Future' from their workshop packs to compile and develop ideas together

Working on future scenarios in selected groups, students were encouraged to refer to material and resources available in the library, talking to tutors, fellow classmates and family members.

They were also given the freedom to depict their scenarios through story telling, performances and visual mediums.

'I loved the freedom I got in school. It was interesting to think about our future freely without any boundaries.' (student feedback)

'The future is gonna be very different. It is only we who will shape it up.' (student feedback)

'i was taken aback! I couldn't believe that they could think so deeply about the future! This was something even I couldn't visualize at my age and experience!' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinamya Mission Vidyalaya)

' While the workshop lent itself to an open ended discussion, it had a very clear set out objectives, logical flow and boundaries. The structure somewhere by itself was inviting a lot of talk. It was leaving a road open in the child's mind to think not just over the 5 days but after that as well.' (Janani Iyer)

Diffusion eBooks



Diffusion eBooks are used to create custom engagement and note taking books for specific projects as well as for publishing essays and project documentation. They can be used as a way to gather, collect and share knowledge and can be a personal means of ongoing reflection. The eBook format allows us to design and distribute a notebook that participants in a project or workshop can fill in by hand (writing, drawing or adding stickers as they wish) which can then be scanned and turned back into a PDF file for sharing – either within the group or more widely. This 'virtuous circle' moving from digital to material to digital is at the core of the 'Shareables' concept. The eBooks are free to download, cost almost nothing to make and can be shared (or re-distributed) as both physical objects and PDF files. <http://diffusion.org.uk>

Now one can directly create eBooks online by registering on Bookleteer. Personal eBooks can be created and shared through the public directory. <http://bookleteer.com/>

Uses within the workshop

The eBooks were specifically designed to take the students through the different workshop activities. While they acted as their personal journals (eBook of Ideas), they were also tools for them to compile their ideas together. Students were asked to use eBooks as platform to reflect over the proceedings of each day. Although a fun and interactive way of learning, they were made to realize that the activities through the day were serious and integral for them to critical analyze and document.

The eBooks were a far more exciting and interesting medium for students to use as a way to map and record their learnings and ideas. The students and the tutors both found eBooks useful to incorporate in regular classroom teachings. Janani Iyer felt that these tools would be a great way to initiate group work through various academic subjects like history.

'I think StoryCubes can become important teaching aids, with any subjects! they are very essential classroom teaching aids. eBooks were like your own booklet of thoughts, free of teacher correction and set stencils.' (Janani Iyer)

StoryCubes



StoryCubes are a tactile thinking and storytelling tool for exploring relationships and narratives. Each face of the cube can illustrate or describe an idea, a thing or an action, placed together it is possible to build up multiple narratives or explore the relationships between them in a novel three-dimensional way. StoryCubes can be folded in two different ways, giving each cube twelve possible faces – and thus two different ways of telling a story, two musings around an idea. Like books turned inside out and upside down they are read by turning and twisting in your hand and combining in vertical and horizontal constructions. We have begun to use these in projects with communities and schools to help reveal different sides to the stories people tell, enabling them to see from others perspectives and viewpoints, promoting a higher level of thinking, negotiating and decision making process.

<http://proboscis.org.uk/storycubes>

'The StoryCubes were something different. The children were enthusiastic. Even after the workshop ended, I still had children making their own cubes and stories as part of their school assignments. I want to use these StoryCubes because I think they are an excellent teaching aid!' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Uses in the workshop

StoryCubes were a really effective way of creating a rapport amongst the students. They were used on the first day for students to write down elements of their identity. They were an interesting way for students to warm up to a workshop that was both fun and hands on. It also ignited their imagination in terms of alternate ways of expressing themselves in a classroom scenario.

It was essential to tie together the four days of the workshop using StoryCubes. Students created their cubes of identity on the very first day and another cube of their future identity on their last day. Creating a mountain of their collective identity on both these days gave them a sense of being part of them group. Also being able

to view all their cubes together encouraged students to make immediate visual connections between their ideas and ideas of their classmates.

'Storycubes is something which is almost a building block that the child is building. what is beautiful that even if he/she breaks the cube and rearranges it that would make the story more personal and flexible for the child.'(Janani Iyer)

Final outcome



The outcome of this workshop were four future scenarios developed by the sixteen students of Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya. They worked together in groups of four, researching, brainstorming and creating artworks and performances that showcased their visions the future might be like in 2050.

Based on the discussions during the course of the workshop, they created four main categories within which they put down ideas that they wished to work upon and take forward to develop these scenarios. These categories were social, economical, cultural and tradition and political. The students were divided into groups of four and each focussed on a particular category to develop their scenario.

Students had naturally began to identify creative and innovative ways of creating these scenarios. Using music and live streaming videos coupled with performances, they presented their scenarios with fresh energy and enthusiasm. During the course of the workshop, the students had also identified best ways of working together in a group. Although each group followed their process of creating these scenarios, they acted upon each members interest and strengths to allocate tasks and roles.

What was interesting to observe was that each group developed their own way of working and researching. While one group used performance as a way of showcasing their scenario, another used music live streamed from youtube to enhance their verbal presentation.

All groups adopted a unique way of researching and arriving upon their respective scenarios. They used their personal experiences and opinions, online research as well as spoke to their peers to develop their narratives. Working as a team was a new and interesting experience for them which they had approached collectively or by dividing specific tasks between each other depending on their strengths and weaknesses.

The final scenarios were brilliant visual interpretations of their future as young Indians in 2050. The most interesting part of this activity was to work with a variety of mediums and materials as well the freedom to do what they desired. They drew inspiration from their classroom curriculum as well as information that they had imbibed outside the institution to develop these scenarios. Working on a specific category had been a challenge for them but, it also helped them create four varied kinds of scenarios. Although a fun activity, through feedback students stated that they had begun to think about themselves in connection with the larger environment in a very different manner than before

'Today was the total creative part and I loved creating the future scenario.' (Karishma Karin, student)

'Today was the best day. I enjoyed every bit of it. My perception of the future changed.' (Riddhi, student)

The final scenarios though fictional and imaginative are extremely insightful. They are clearly indicative of the young Indian mindset nurtured by the immediate social and cultural environment as well by external 'global' influences

'My future is made by me. I am the big stone that raises the ocean high.' (Kartik, student)

'My thought for the day is that we are now more serious about our future. Earlier I never used to think about my future. I got to know many things that would help me in the future.' (student, feedback)

'Our identity is much more important for our country than myself. The workshop was so fun, it made my imagination more strong.' (Devashish, student)

'The most important insight and outcome for me was that there were some children who began to think very positively. They could understand their friends, and where they were coming from. They were getting into a positive mode. It helped them re-discover themselves, which is so vital. Earlier some students did not realize that they had certain strengths- career wise, future wise. I can see the impact of Articulating Futures was of generating confidence and enthusiasm.' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Insights



Articulating Futures was created and designed as an open space which the students could give shape to depending on their desires and needs. Although there was a outlines structure, it was the participants that gave it voice and identity. The workshop led to some key revelations.

1. The students enjoyed the experience of being part of the free space of Articulating Futures. They slowly warmed up to the notion of 'there is no right or wrong' and began to think without fear.

"Growing children are still forming their perspectives. By judging their perspectives even before they are formed, you have blocked the river of flowing. When something is free of right and wrong, the child feels more uninhibited and relaxed to express himself. and most importantly feels valued. That might lead to a very important thought for the future because they will dare to think like no one else has before." (Janani Iyer)

2. The creative inputs within a classroom environment allowed a group of students with different learning abilities to work together and utilize different methods of expressing their ideas. As Ken Robinson says in his TED talk held in California in 2006

'Our education system is predicated on the idea of academic ability. The whole system was invented around the world when there was no public system of education before the 19th century. They all came into being to meet the needs of the industrial revolution. Number one: The most useful subject for work are at the top. So you were probably benignly steered away from subjects you liked as a kid on the ground that you would never get a job doing that.'

3. The students enjoyed the opportunity to guide the curriculum. They had the freedom to choose how they wanted to showcase their scenarios and activities. They naturally began to take ownership over the workshop. They even began to decide how they would like to sit each day and took responsibility to ensure that all resources and material were in place at the beginning of each session.
4. The learning process was made transparent to the students. They were explained before and after each discussion and activity, why they were doing it and how it would benefit them. This introduced them to the idea of critically analyzing and expressing what their perspective on each day's proceeding were and if they found it useful or otherwise.

5. The feedback sessions were also democratic. All students, shy or not were asked for their opinion- good or bad. They could choose to write it down and be anonymous if they felt more comfortable. Each day's feedback was incorporated in the next day or workshop to create a better and a more holistic learning experience for the students as well as the facilitators.
6. What really influenced and made the environment more student friendly was the team of Articulating Futures. Since the team was young and projected a very different persona from their teachers in school, the students felt comfortable thinking and expressing more freely.

'If this type of positive impact can be introduced into our system, the school will benefit in terms of rendering very good creative individuals in the long run. Students who would be able to think freely and out of the box!' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor, Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)



From the content of Articulating Futures, there were some exciting discoveries made

1. Although Hindi and English both were used as a medium of expression and communication, students felt more comfortable using English or Hinglish to write and to talk.
2. The students and like them many others seem more comfortable with the idea of a global identity versus a purely local one. This was clearly indicative through the future scenarios and the re-inventing mythology exercises they did. Due to the Indian history and even the current political and social scenario, they found it difficult to identify themselves in a strictly Indian scenario.
3. The subject of this workshop, seemed to be relevant to students of all ages. Through their personal experiences as well as the feedback from the tutors, Articulating Futures would be a useful module to integrate in regular academic curriculum.
4. The students clearly understood the shortcomings of their current educational structure. They realized that they all have inherently different processes of learning and assimilating information, which the school did not cater to. However using creative and innovative tools of teaching in a classroom as it was done in Articulating Futures, was incredibly refreshing and helpful for them.

The most valuable outcome of this workshop was to realize the importance and the need to work collaboratively with artists and designers to enhance learning. Young Indian students essentially have books and their tutors as the two primary knowledge sources. However, as students pointed out, there is no connection between what they learn in schools and the knowledge they need to function in the world. By talking about ideas and issues that are relevant to them within the school environment and developing future scenarios, helped them make create that bridge.

The final scenarios developed by the sixteen students of Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya were extremely informative and valuable. They gave an insight into how young Indian students see themselves and the world around them grow over the coming decades. It showcased the kind of value system a country and a society like India would learn and strive from. These scenarios were also an indication of how the educational system in India needs to evolve and change and what steps can be taken to guide the thinking of young and fertile minds in the country.

'I really like the speech by Nandan Niliketan. My whole perception of the future changed from a western one to a totally different one. (student, feedback)

'I discovered the importance of recording history in books. So that it can be reused for reference tomorrow to shape up a better future.' (Ridhi, student)

Successes and learnings



1. The carefully thinking and planning, Articulating Futures was designed in a manner to initiate all students to actively and equally participate in the workshop activities. This was done keeping in mind the different kinds of personalities that would be working together through the four days. The freedom to choose and add their own voice to presentations, debates and discussions allowed all the students to equally participate and gain confidence through the workshop.

2. Using a variety of techniques and tools to initiate discussions and group activities also allowed the students to plug into areas that interested them. Some enjoyed working and thinking through films, while others were more excited by creating visual material. As a result throughout the workshop, students felt that they were constantly engaged and excited by the content that was being shared with them.
3. Although the workshop was held within the school campus, it was made clear to the students from the very first day that this was their space and they were free to think, share and argue their thoughts and ideas. Over the course of the workshop, students gained confidence, began to critically think and fearlessly articulate and give voice to issues that were of concern to them.
4. What was perhaps the most important aspect of this workshop was the feedback. Students documented their thoughts for the day in their eBooks and on feedback slips specially designed for this purpose. Also their responses were recorded through video and audio recorders. It was made transparent that it is their constant feedback that would make this workshop more successful. It was due to this the students took greater interest in thinking through the day's activities and participating in it with vigor, interest and enthusiasm.
5. Involving a multi-disciplinary team of artists, designers and educationalists to brainstorm over the structure of the workshop was a real investment. It was this collaboration that created a workshop structure that was very dynamic, creative and enriching for both students and facilitators.

'The role of the teacher changes. She does a lot more for the child than just subject based knowledge. She tends to become a mentor. She gives the child the confidence to look at the future. for children this is crucial because any school, especially ones looking at holistic learning. You can not avoid something like this and integrate in your everyday teaching no matter what the subject.' (Janani Iyer)

'I learnt that I should change my mode of teaching. It becomes boring but you can hold onto their interest and attention by using tools like StoryCubes, showing movies and let them out in the open to learn and explore!' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

'How are things in the past going to be relevant to us in the future. creating a sense of balance between the past, present and future.' (Janani Iyer)

'The concept of boredom is key to address- students don't want to study. And we don't allow them to think. the education board wants them to write a particular kind of answer. We don't entertain or teach them to write beyond the book. This workshop made students realize their inner strength curbed by our current way of teaching.' (Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Learnings



1. Articulating Futures is a workshop that is appropriate for young students in various countries and cities. It addresses issues that are very relevant and part of our daily experiences
2. There is a need to re- contextualize educational structure and teaching methodologies in the majority of schools in India. However, coupled with the lack of initiative there is also a lack of foresight in educational institutions to collaborate with creative practitioners and thinkers to develop a more dynamic and holistic curriculum.
3. It is integral to involve the school administration and tutors and create a workshop module that would foster and closer collaboration between the students and the tutors. This would lead to a more integrated learning classroom environment.
4. The idea of un-learning is as important as that of learning. Students were very encouraged and stimulated by the idea of 'there is no right answer'. Since mistakes are so heavily penalized in classrooms, students become afraid and think in a linear fashion. The freedom to express themselves without the fear of being wrong helped them gain confidence and kick start their inherent and natural way of learning and assimilating information.

' I liked the debate because I am not used to it much. The 2009 version of our mythology characters was a good topic to think about. And I realized, our tradition and culture is very important to us and we should work to enrich it in the future.' (student feedback, 18th November 2009)

'My thought for today is that today I learnt many new things about India, like tradition, culture and food etc. It will help me a lot in growing up my knowledge.' (student feedback, 18th November, 2009)

Conclusions



Articulating Future was an extremely successful workshop. More so it was inspiring for both the participants as well as its facilitators. The workshop was highly energetic, refreshingly creative and incredibly valuable in terms of the content it generated. It gave voice and brought to light issues that were of relevance to young Indians. Most importantly it allowed students to critically think and articulate what they desire out of their education and in turn their future.

'Follow up is important. make a commitment to take it through. document it in a certain way for every person to use it comprehensive and accessible. to suit to different ages.' (Janani Iyer)

'Current educational process is in a phase of change. If the change is well defined and if the future is well understood. It would be a smooth meaningful transition.' (Janani Iyer)

'All schools need this specially government schools.' (Janani Iyer)

'We would certainly love to have more of these workshops- students and teachers! we are not creative people or we are unable to creative in our approach to teaching and education. So we need more workshops such as these!' ((Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Evolution of Articulating Futures



Articulating Futures was an immensely interesting and engaging workshop. It was the first of its kind to be held in a school in India, inviting young students to create future scenarios.

Since it addresses issues that are relevant not only to students but to institutions that shape their thinking, it is integral to weave this workshop as a series through an academic year. It also outlines a clear need for educational institutions to collaborate with creative thinkers and practitioner. The changes in a society's language and its social-cultural fabric that the workshop is addressing is relevant to many developing cities across the world. In the future, Articulating Futures could be a informative and interesting map of the collective future as visualized by young minds world over.

Future uses and approaches

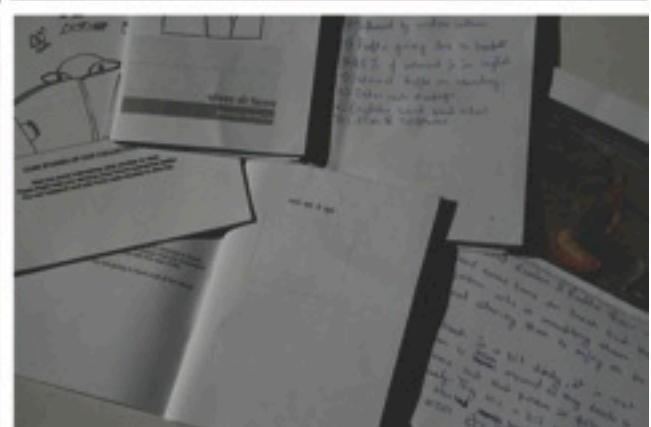
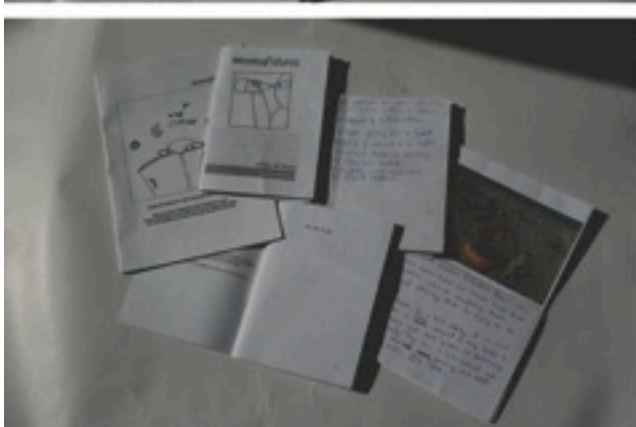
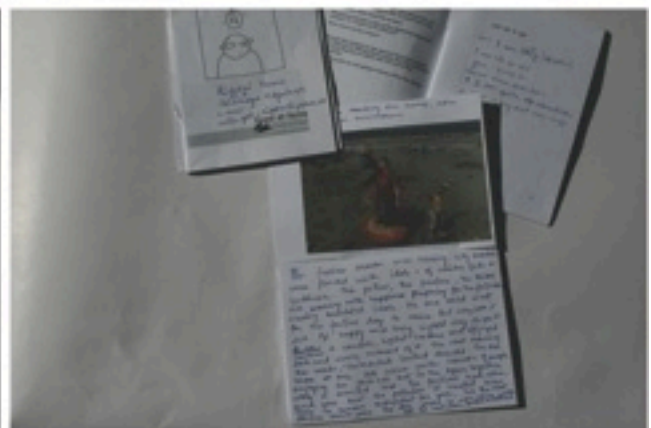
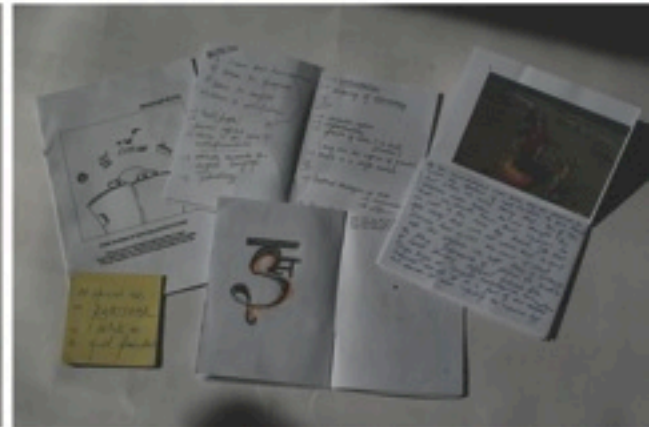
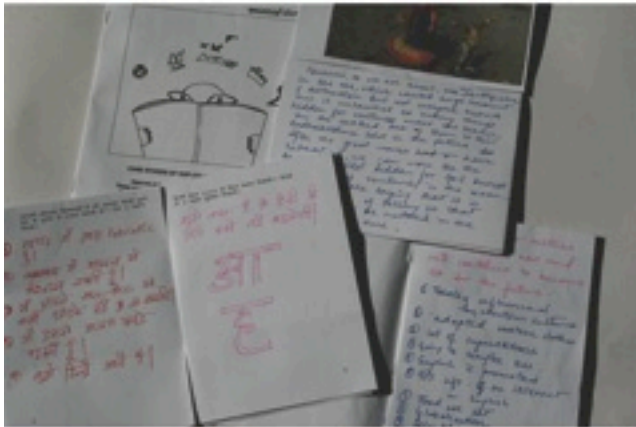
1. Making it a ready to use module, where facilitators could download the workshop structure and content to hold such series of workshops in educational institutions.
2. Creating a detailed document that would act as guidelines for designing school curriculums that are more creative and innovative.
3. Articulating Futures is a module that would fit into schools with students from different social, cultural and economical backgrounds. It would be important as well as integral to try and trace how young Indians perceive their future to be based on the issues that are relevant to them. This would prove essential for designers, artists, creative practitioners, counsellors as well as educationalists, while working with students across the country.
4. Another future approach to Articulating Futures would be to create a truly democratic structure where each student can feed into the content depending on their abilities and inherent learning processes.

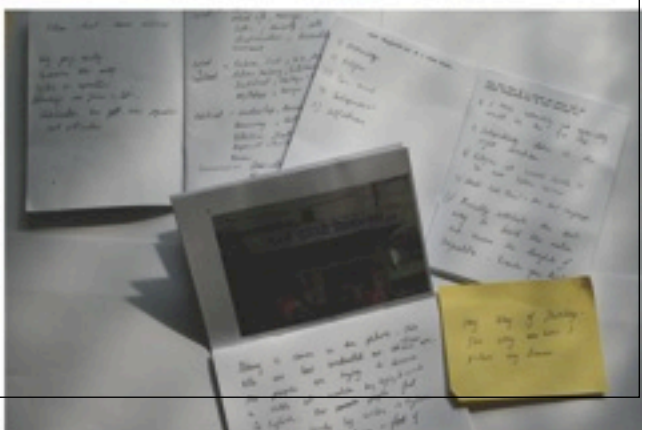
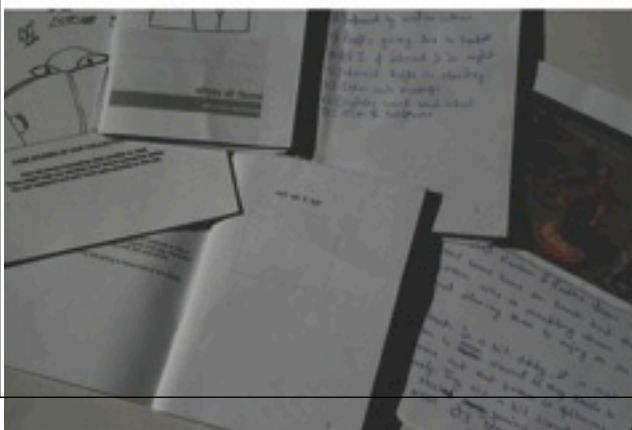
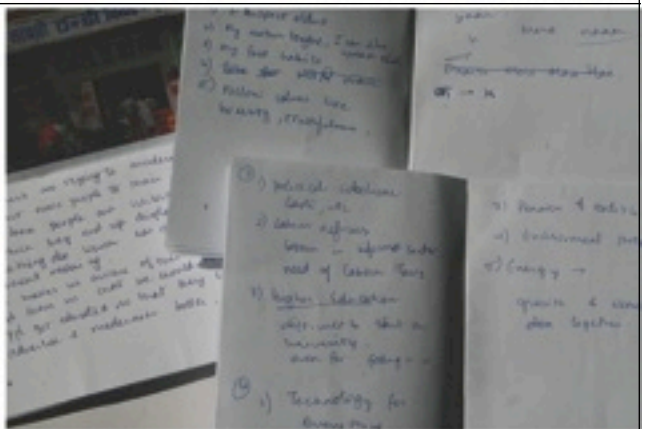
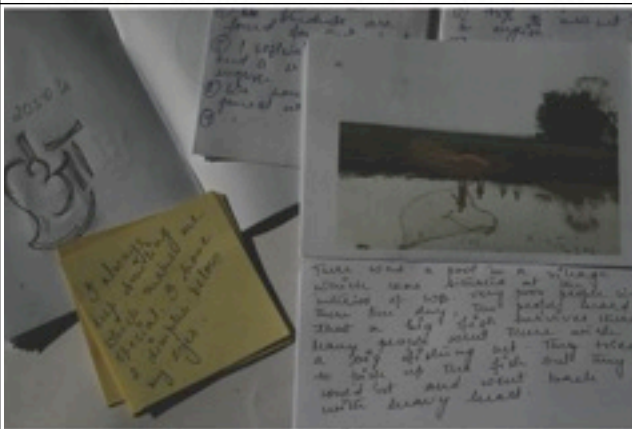
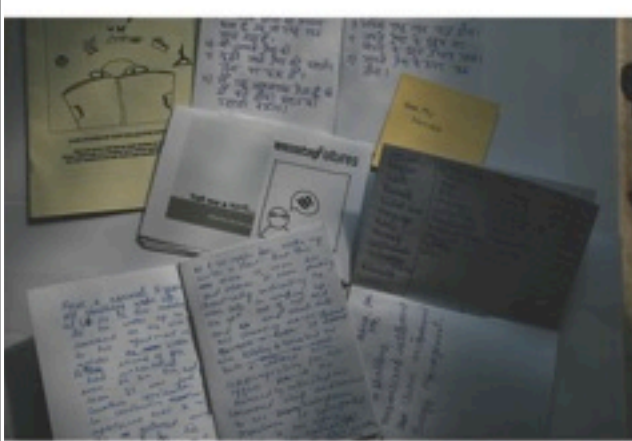
5. Finally to make an open ended and relevant workshop like Articulating Futures, as part of a schools academic curriculum in order to not educate students out of their natural inborn creativity.

'Students are very well aware of the fact that what they learn in school has no relevance to what they experience outside. Articulating Futures is a workshop that helps them bridge this gap. It helps them make sense of their knowledge and learnings. This is very motivating and inspiring for young students stepping out of schools into the real world.' (Janani Iyer)

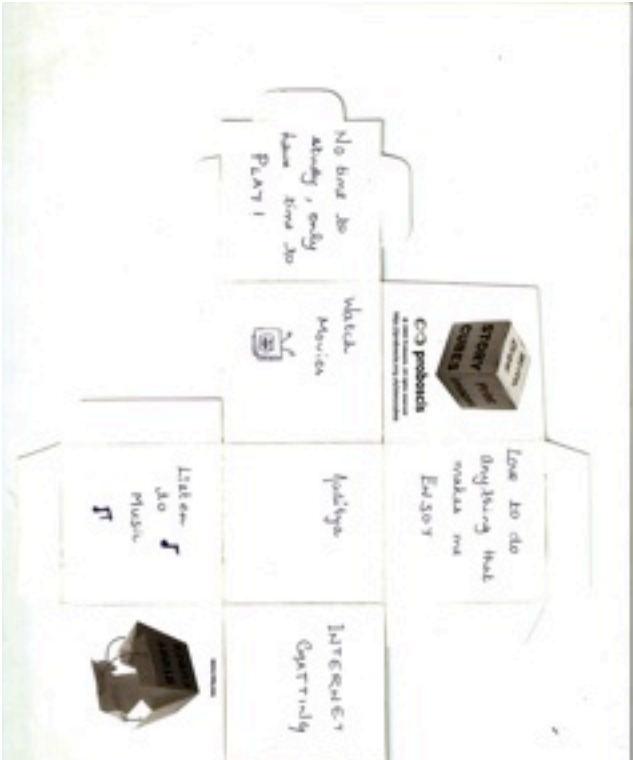
'Articulating Futures' fits in very well in school curriculum. It can be a part of the extra learning that children need to do. The structure and the content of the workshop can be associated it with subjects like social studies, political sciences. We would certainly have children thinking about humanities stream. They all have a mad rush for sciences- there is no need for everyone to become a doctor or engineer. This is a closed mind-set and as a result students fail to identify where their real strengths lie.' ((Laxmi Venkatesh, tutor Chinmaya Mission Vidyalaya)

Completed workshop packs





Identity StoryCubes



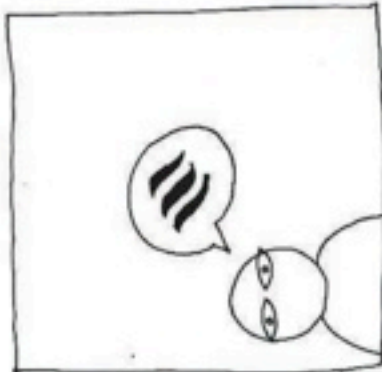


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This Ebook belongs to...

Articulating Futures



Tell me a कहानी...

Niharika Hariharan



मुझे एक कहानी सुनाओ...
अगले पन्नों पर तस्वीरों के आधार पर हों एक कहानी सुनाओ।

You can draw, write or visualize the story in whatever form or medium you want.

Keeping the below questions in mind, tell us a dramatic story based on the images that follow:

- 1) What led to this event?
- 2) What are the characters thinking and feeling?
- 3) What is happening at the moment?
- 4) How does this story end?

2009-11-17

Images-4,6,12 by Abhinandan Sekhri
Images- 8,10,14 Google images

'आर्टिकुलेशन फ्यूचर्स'

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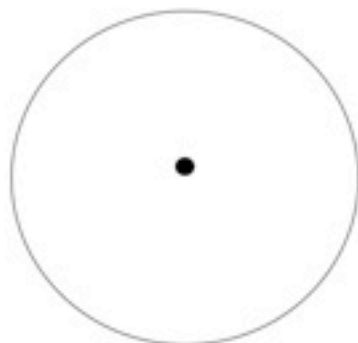


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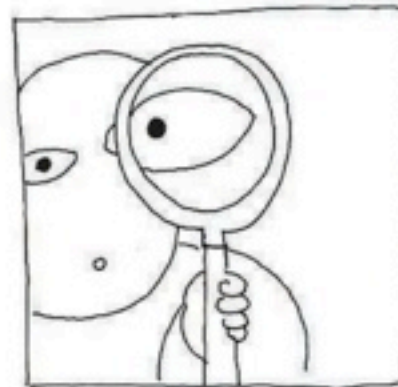


अपने माता-पिता से भी यही क्रिया दोहराये।
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This project is about the future. It is about how we
 imagine what we would be like 10 years from now.
 As Indians, what would we be like?
 Would we become a part of the global homogenous
 culture? Or would we be different?
 How would we be unique?
 Through this project we are going to forecast a future
 for ourselves by talking about issues that are important
 to us and sharing our ideas with the rest of the
 community.
 And of course we are going to have a bit of fun along
 the way!

Articulating Futures



खोज और **research**

Niharika Hariharan

2009-11-17

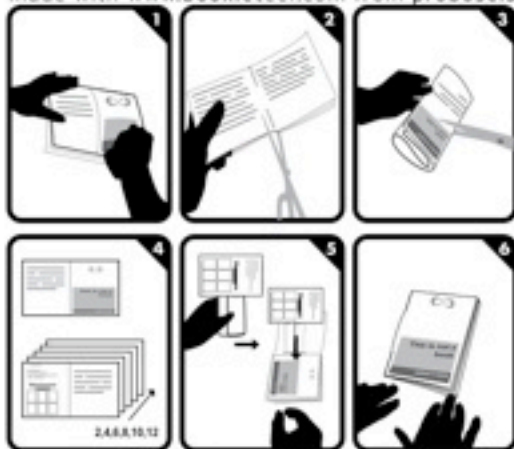
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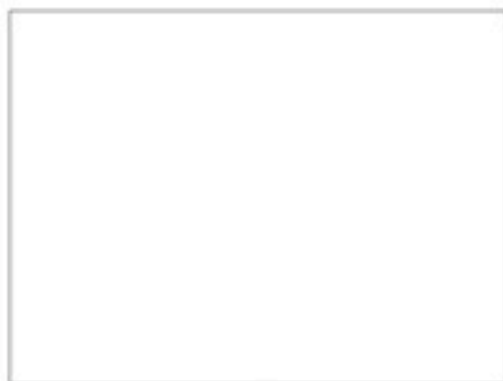
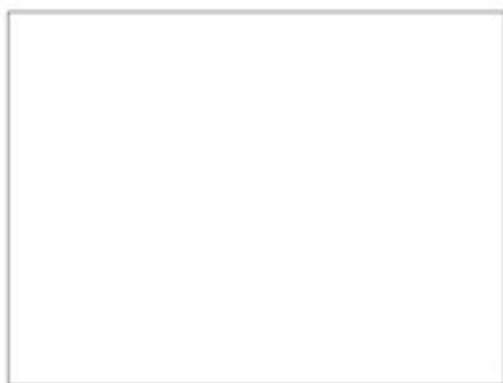
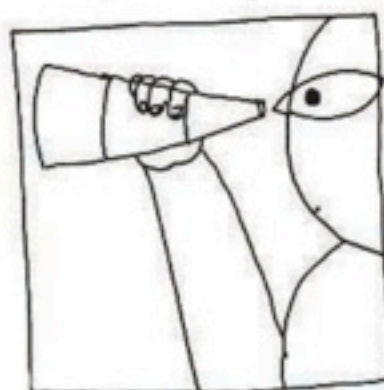
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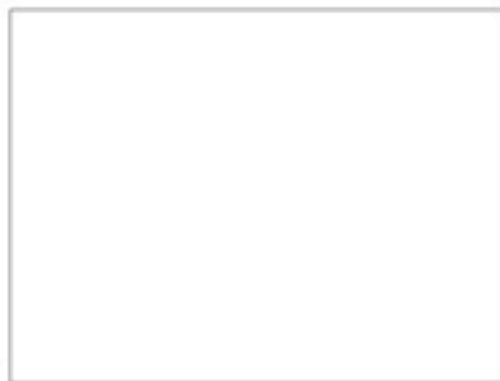
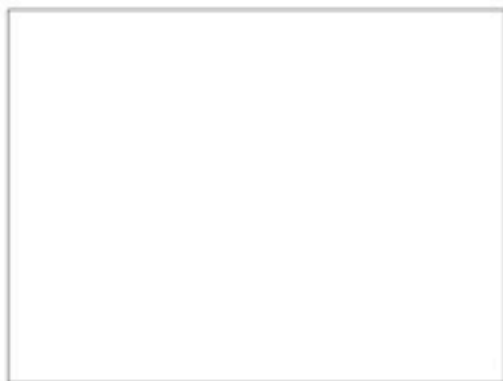
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Niharika Hariharan



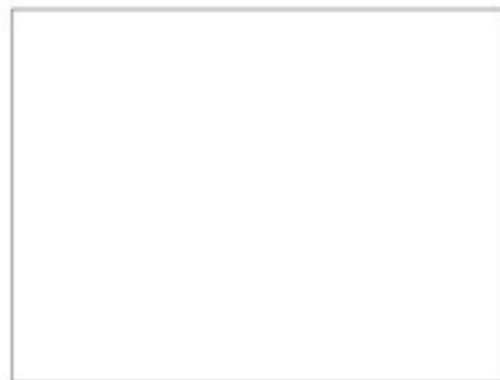
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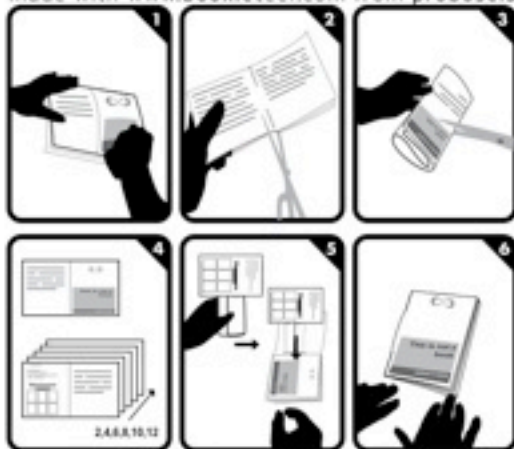
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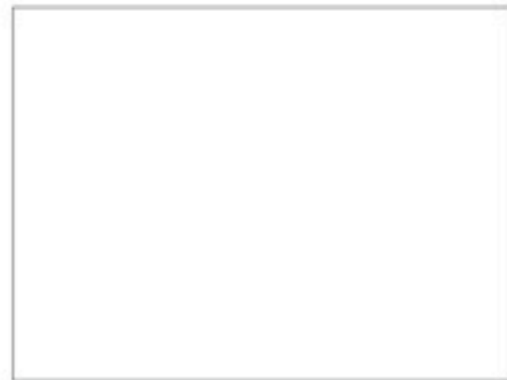
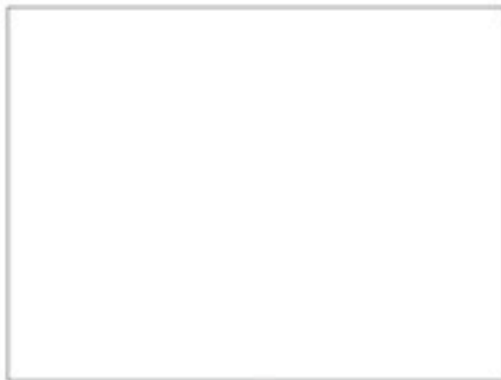
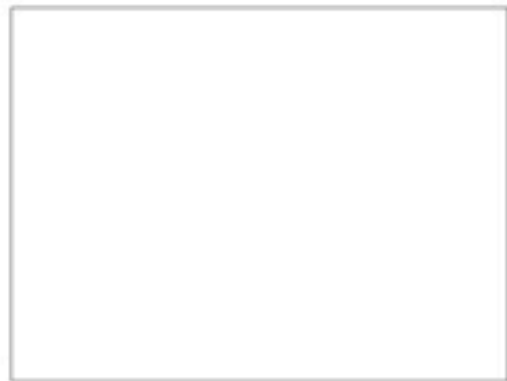
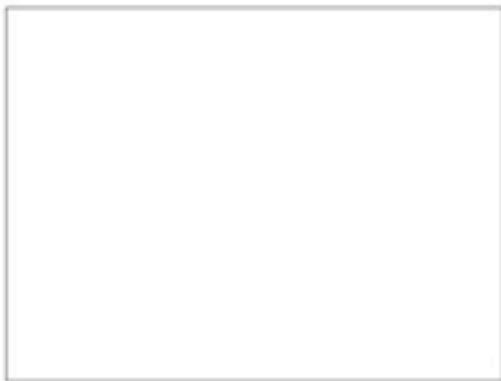
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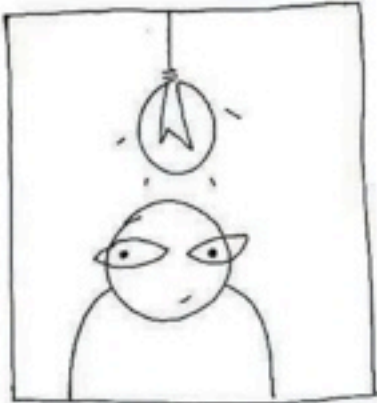
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Niharika Hariharan

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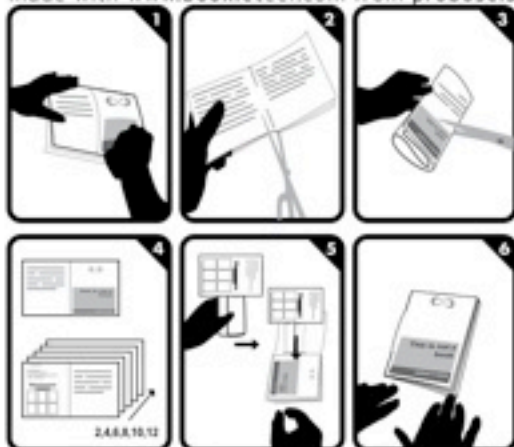
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Teacher's notes and reflections

Educational workshop in the parlance of education obviously stands for innovations, and improvised ideas, methodologies and processes made aware to the learner so as to be successfully implemented to meet the needs of the learner. Its significance increases manifold especially when we are encountering an explosion of knowledge and information. At this juncture it would only be correct if we point out that the educational processes has been reduced to shaping or training the individual mind to be a mere assimilation centre. The obvious pertinent question that should hound the system is –Are we training and grooming the young impressionable mind to Think? Articulating Futures –the workshop conducted by Niharika in our school premises from 17th to 21st of Nov 09 exactly came as the preliminary step to think and envision a change that is ardently required into our gaping school level instruction transaction.

Articulating Futures was without doubt an exercise with a difference. I choose to say this because the concept unlike other workshops was novel the methodology and approach different, and the end objective simple –making the young mind think out of the box.

The initial hesitance and discomfort on the part of students to be associated with a 5 day workshop underwent a complete turnaround from day one , somersaulting into a child like enthusiasm and verve. Perhaps the wide range of activities right from screening of movies, debates and group discussions and , picturing their thoughts in an informal and democratic set up captivated their interest . This triggered in them the urge to think differently, seriously ,positively and above all creatively.

What personally gratified me was that the batch of 15 students who were a conglomerate of good, restless, mischievous and docile now seemed transformed and on the path way to making their incumbent potential from better to the best. Unquestionable is the effort of Niharika and her team in conducting the workshop. She taught me as a teacher that there are many ways to hold the attention of a child and make them a productive member of the class.

The above pointers have not been voiced as routine protocol but are a confirmed fact. This can be vouched from the difference in cognitive, behavioral and affective domain of the participants .

The noticeable difference is as mentioned below

Pranil: A very versatile, intelligent performing well academically besides being a keen sportsperson. But thoroughly unsure of his future and was gradually becoming lackadaisical in his attitude. He now feels more charged, enthused and clear about what he needs to undertake to be successful in future.

Himanshi:A simple and hardworking child now seems more relaxed ,confident and sure about her future prospects

Karthik:An intelligent boy but terrible academically. He realized his strengths and to a great extent realizes what he should pursue and this workshop also made him realize and aware of the wide arena of avenues open to him.

Aparajit :Talented and academic excellence are his forte .After the workshop he has been able to associate himself more with his class fellows and feels that it was the first time he had a chance to discuss issues openly and get to know his friends more closely.

Vaishali :Simplicity, modesty and honesty are her traits .she feels more dearly for her country and its future.

Sreedeepta:A docile and practical child is again like vaishali feels for her country and its rich heritage .

Riddhi: certainly wants more workshops like this which shall give them a platform to voice their opinion and interact fearlessly.

Arti: Musically talented and performing well academically definitely feels the need for more such workshops as she feels she actually helped her in realizing her dormant potential.

Ananya: Has turned into amore effective active and responsible student with underlined difference in his confidence levels.

Karan: honestly confessed that his initial world was restricted to I, me, myself but now he feels he certainly is apart of a larger universe.

Devleen: feels that she visualizes a future that shall be a blend of the traditional and modern thoughts.

Shikha: feels she gained a lot in terms of understanding our culture and using it to her benefit.

Piyush: Everything interests him except studies. He definitely wants to be apart of workshops especially if conducted by Niharika so that he can have loads of fun.

To sum up I definitely feel that Articulating Futures was indeed a workshop with lot of utility in bringing out the transformation in today's child. We as teachers are restricted due to time and demands of mark centered education to merely encapsulate the young child into information charged capsule. Perhaps we are not able to sensitize and make our children think beyond the rigmarole of routine issues. This workshop aptly fills the gap. We would appreciate more such workshops. Complete credit to handling this workshop so effectively and fruitfully to Niharika and her team .We are exceedingly grateful to her for this.

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