



TEACHFORINDIA

Progress Report

My Body My Rights



Day-wise Summary

01

Day 1 focused on the idea of growing up where we discussed the body, consent, boundaries, puberty, sense of self and safe and unsafe touches. A common theme which emerged early on in the discussion was a shared traumatic experience of growing up; often due to a lack of complete and reliable information. In the context of educating children about gender and sexuality, the notion of age appropriateness was challenged. "Age-appropriateness" is often used as an excuse to keep children ignorant, and is driven by cultural norms. When introducing these topics to children, it was crucial to include parents in the discussion- establishing healthy boundaries, developing trust, taking baby steps and negotiating the boundaries of the community intelligently. Public and private parts, which constitute a conventionally important topic while learning about the body are culturally constructed. The important variable mediating these spheres is consent, which allows a person to maintain healthy boundaries. Instead of good and bad touches, safe and unsafe touches should be emphasized while teaching children.

02

Day 2 revolved around conversations around relationships, emotions, peer pressure, bullying, anxiety and depression. It drew upon concepts of consent and boundaries discussed on the previous day. Fellows discussed whether they themselves had set certain non negotiable in their relationships with family, friends, partners or colleagues. Following this, an ESCA facilitation test was taken by each fellow to better understand their own facilitation style which will be helpful in interactions with students. Self awareness is an important part of healthy relationships, so we discussed the categories of self-concept, self esteem and self image so that fellows could use these notions in their own classrooms. This was followed by an insightful discussion about bullying and peer pressure in their own lives, and ways in which they can manage such a situation in their capacity as a TFI fellow. The importance of having a support system and the provision of a safe space in schools was highlighted. This makes it important to discuss mental health, normalize conversations around mental health and encourage mental well being.

03

Day 3 included discussion on the concepts of gender, identity, sexuality, power dynamics and gender based violence. The first step was to distinguish between sex and gender and understand that even sex, which is considered biological, is not as permanent and unchanging as it is claimed to be. Awareness of one's gender and experiences of being a certain gender in the society were also discussed. The fellows were introduced to the stages of the development of gender identity in children. The nuances of gender expression and how it is different from gender identity were highlighted in addition to gender norms and roles.

04

The first part of Day 4 focused on matters of sex, sexual orientation and sexuality, especially the concept of sexual health rights. The stigmatization of sex work was discussed and extending from that, ideas of social morality and the shame surrounding sexual pleasure itself was deconstructed. The second part of the day was designed to help fellows identify a problem they see in their own communities and schools. Defining the problem would help develop an intervention plan which would be implemented over 6 months.

05

After a module on contraception, pregnancy and abortion, Day 5 was dedicated to refining the problems statements which were created on the previous day and lay out a clear plan of action for the next six months. Fellows were trained in the nuances of designing a survey, which is often the first step to developing an intervention in classrooms. Drawing on conversations from the last 3 days, fellows brainstormed problem statements in detail and discussed the probable causes behind these problems. They also identified indicators which would help them ascertain if their interventions were working – these include change in knowledge, change in habits change in mindsets. All these would be included in the surveys they design for the monitoring and evaluation of their individual projects. Major themes which emerged were gender, consent, relationships, social emotional learning and violence. Specific problem statements are outlined in the next section.

Some Reflections

“One of the fellows brought up interesting points about public parts and their non-public nature. The element of consent is important to make this point. The mere distinction of good and bad touch is not enough to educate young people. Perceptions of public and private activities/parts also differs with the context and community culture. For some communities, urinating is a public activity and dancing private! Negotiating the boundaries of acceptance and punishment in a community while acting as an educator is essential.

“A fellow remarked that when he was growing up, gay was an abusive word in school. There was either male, female or gay. He has come a long way today. Learning that it is insensitive to use the term Sex reassignment surgery instead of gender affirmation and that no two people have the same gender identity.

“It is important to look at children as sexual beings. Instead of making a distinction between good and bad touch, a distinction needs to be made between safe and unsafe touches. An unsafe touch is possible even in a “public part” and this possibility needs to be made clear to children. Just because a touch feels good, it should not be assumed to be consensual.

Feedback

Here's what the fellows had to say!

Which topics or aspects of the workshop did you find most interesting or useful?

- The safe space, videos and discussions. It became a small circle of friends from different cities and felt wholesome. Got information and the differences between gender, sexuality.
- changing bodies, emotions, gender identity and expression, pleasure and sexuality
- Definitely learnt a lot about general growing up and bodies as well as the aspect of sexual health and reproductive health. Also got some clarity in terms of the content and module. The space itself was beautifully facilitated and felt so accepting and engaging and most importantly safe. That made the sharing so much more organic and lovely.

Do you think you will be able to apply your learnings over the next six months and beyond? If yes, how will you do so?

- Yes, the curriculum as well as the experience of self exploration in the online sessions had led to me to believe that using hybrid methods, I can work on holding safe space for the students in my classroom over the next year to explore topics that are otherwise taboo or there is general lack of scientific awareness with an outcome of shifts in adolescent behaviour inside and outside the class.
- Absolutely, the entire process was a learning and unlearning journey for me. I plan to identify my problem statement and then work in conjunction with the module and classroom context.

Did the workshop meet your expectations? Would you recommend it to other people working in a similar space?

- The curriculum is very well designed and the sessions helped in breaking down self barriers I have in opening up to communication. I would recommend it to all learning facilitators.
- Absolutely yes!
- Yes, it almost met my expectations in terms of content delivery. And I would definitely recommend it to other people in a similar space.
- Thank you so so so much Rangeen Khidki for this amazing opportunity. Thank you Sanjina for your patience and enthusiasm to facilitate this space and thank you Anandita on your valuable input regarding the ways to go about bringing this into our realistic classroom contexts.

Problems identified

Projects in the Pipeline!

01

After my 1 year in the community I have observed that there are great gender biases in the community and stereotyped gender roles which permeates to the children and into the classrooms. There are preconceptions about what work only men can do and what are the work only women can do.

In the next 1 year I would like to **create a sports club in school for mixed sports events to break down these stereotypes.** By the end of the year they should understand the concept of mixed sports, its related gender neutral vocabularies and the stereotypes on women in sports and would begin spreading awareness within their families and the community regarding the same.

02

Gender roles and identity: My kids tease each other and try to demean also using gender and boys especially look down upon girls

Consent: I have seen them touching my personal belongings or others', also I want them to respect each other's space

04

Students in my community rarely collaborate or communicate especially with other genders in their studies or endeavors. I believe collaborating with each other is a very important part of humanizing one another. This enables us to build a more inclusive and equal society. **Therefore, I want to help my students interact with each other in a respectful way for their growth and development.** A second area I want to work on is the self-esteem of my students, who often feel unprepared to attend class. Thirdly, a few of the girls in my community are in relationships with older partners. The students are at an age where they are bound to explore their **sexuality, and hence they need to understand consent to keep themselves safe.**

03

I want to work on **collaborative problem solving between boys and girls.** I want them to see each other as equals, interact with each other constructively and by the end of the year, start planning and moderating spaces together.