

## Making the 'impossible' possible: using a Living Theory methodology to improve my practice

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### Abstract

This paper explores how I had a change of understanding concerning my relationship with the children of my country, and how I entered an 'I-You' relationship (Buber, 1970) of genuine love and care. The change encouraged me to negate the contradictions I experienced in my practice and take concrete steps towards the betterment of their learning. The gifts and talents of the marginalized children have persistently been dismissed and it has been alleged that they are 'impossible' to teach. As I try to make the 'impossible' possible, I draw attention to the education of the rural children in India who have unequal opportunities and education; with proper motivation they can achieve beyond what some consider to be possible.

Through a multi-media representation of my classroom, I discuss the unexplored domain of pre-vocational education in the primary school. I believe it to be a field for consideration, scrutiny and research if we hope to augment the educational competencies of our children to enable their seamless entry into the world of work.

I share my students' and my own experiences in learning as I seek to communicate an innovative paradigm of vocational education, while using a living educational theory approach to answer the question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?'

**Keywords: Pre-vocational education, Living Educational Theory, Film-making workshop**

## Preamble

Let's begin with a few questions that I posed to myself:

- How can I produce an effective curriculum to enable skill-building as pre-vocational education (see Glossary<sup>1</sup> in Appendix 5) at the primary-school level?
- How can I use learner-centred education to teach film-making and thus motivate children to learn competences integral to the specific skills of making moving images?
- How can I teach my students – who have no exposure to the art of film-making – to use that particular visual medium?
- How can I demonstrate a nexus between art and learning?

This paper is about why I asked these questions and how I tried to answer them. It is the explanation and description of an educational enquiry as I asked:

- How do I improve what I am doing?
- How do I improve my practice?
- How do I improve the process of education here?
- How do I live my values more fully in my practice?

### My living-educational-theory

I take a living-educational-theory to be an individual's explanation of their educational influence in their own learning, in the learning of others and in the learning of the social formations in which we live, work, and research. These explanations are the value-laden practical principles that I use to give meaning and purpose to my life. (Whitehead, 2013, p. 33)

A living-educational-theory is created from, 'the methodological inventiveness of individuals' (Dadd and Hart, 2001) in the process of generating and offering their explanations of their best practices as these synchronise with their values. For me, the living-educational-theory is a methodology that goes beyond best practices, through which I can ask, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' I would like to stress that I am not rejecting the significance of asking, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' I uphold the merits of the question and am continuously applying it to improve my practice; but to me the 'living' element of a living-educational-theory is matchless because it is evolving and dynamic, it enables me to see my present, evaluate my past and create new...anew (Whitehead, 1998, p. 1).

My practice was initiated by my values. By this I mean that, when I saw what I valued being alienated by the way education was imparted in my country, I created my own practice. I embarked on my journey as a teacher because of 'the indignation I experienced as I observed the struggle faced by school-going children in my country' (Rawal 2006, p. 2). I valued, and continue to value, democracy, equality, equity, love and dialogue. I observed

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<sup>1</sup> The Glossary constitutes a long list, so it has been moved to the Appendices (Appendix 5).

that the educational practice in India was not value-based. I saw the children traumatised by what is termed as education in modern India and decided to do something about it. The question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?', and the statement, 'I experience a problem when some of my educational values are negated in my practice' (Whitehead, 2013) were not applicable to me at first, as I was not yet an educator; I had no practice. However, my values of social justice and holistic educational practice positioned me in Boal's (2000) terms as a 'spect-actor'. My values compelled me to 'invade ... the stage ... to occupy [my] own Space and offer a solution ... [by] consciously performing a responsible act' (p.xxi). It corroborated my belief that we, who have received education, should stand up and take action, and as Gandhi suggested, 'We need not act differently; we must become different. Such is the evolution we must set going if we are to change the world — as change it we must...' (Radhakrishnan, 1938).

Subsequently, the growth of my educational knowledge helped me to see myself as a 'living contradiction' (Whitehead, 2013). From this experience I found myself imagining what I could do to change the situation. I set up a plan, I acted on my plan, evaluated my actions in terms of my pupils' learning, and modified my actions in the light of my evaluations (Rawal, 2006). At the onset I did not understand what I later came to understand as the action-reflection cycles of an action researcher. I was a novice at researching. I only knew one thing: I wanted to bring about change. My values, such as truth and honesty, made me 'my own stringent critic' (McNiff with Whitehead, 2002, p. 104). At every step I questioned myself, and seeing 'I' as a 'living contradiction' enabled me to look at my fallible pedagogy and bring the changes I valued into my educational practice.

This made me realize the real importance of the question, 'How do I improve what I am doing?' Significantly, the question enabled me to go beyond carrying out an action-research project. This is because I was not only 'learning by doing' – as in identifying a problem, doing something to resolve it, seeing how successful my efforts were and, if not satisfied, trying again (O'Brien, 2001) – but making ontological commitments and trying my best to live my values more fully for the sake of my educational influence. The statement, 'I experience a problem when some of my educational values are negated in my practice', enabled me to take action in order to bring about change. Living Educational Theory took my action research further because I could demonstrate that my knowledge had influenced the learning of myself and others.

Living Theory is a form of 'real-life theorising' (Whitehead and McNiff, 2006, p. 31); I had created a living form of knowledge. Living Theory acknowledges that, 'education is a value-laden, practical activity' (Whitehead, 1989, p. 4). Whitehead and McNiff (2006) suggest that we can often be a 'living contradiction' if we do not experience the living-out of these values in our practice. In this paper I am trying to show how I have lived out my values through the, 'descriptions and explanations of my present practice [which also] contains both an evaluation of past practice and an intention to produce an improvement in practice which is not, as yet, in existence' (Whitehead, 1999, p. 25).

Seeing myself as a 'living contradiction' enables me to remain open to my values as they evolve in my practice and also in my 'living'. As I refined my values, they gave new

direction to my actions. The act of improving my practice is grounded in my passion to ensure that my values of social justice and holistic educational practice, democracy, equality, equity, love and dialogue are lived out as fully as possible. These are the values that give meaning and purpose to my life. In this paper, through my living-theory methodology, you will see these values expressed, clarified, and developed as explanatory principles in the descriptions of educational influences in my learning and in the learning of my students.

### Opening a dialogue

I am a part-time teacher in a small primary school in a little village called Rajpur in Gandhinagar district, Gujarat. The village has a population of 300 and a total of 69 families, all from the OBC (Other Backward Class) community of *Thakors*. The Average Sex Ratio (see Glossary) of the village is 800, which is lower than the National average of 945 (see [www.indiaonlinepages.com](http://www.indiaonlinepages.com)). The Child Sex Ratio (see Glossary) for Rajpur in the census is 783, lower than Gujarat's average of 890. Rajpur village has a literacy rate of 70% compared to Gujarat's 80%. The village-school has 74 students. The first girl to take the 10<sup>th</sup> Grade Board examinations did so in as late as 2008, and the first boy to go to college did so in 2013. No girl has attained a college education. The community has been battling two major socio-economic issues – lack of education, and an addiction to alcohol.

Since 2008, I have been conducting drama-camps in Rajpur during the Diwali (see Glossary) vacations, and have touched on various subjects like democracy and citizenship, understanding emotions, evil social practices (see Glossary), our environment, and The Dandi/Salt March. However, this article is an account of a film-making workshop, which was carried out with a different focus in mind.

In 2014, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) Government was formed. The Honourable Prime Minister Narendra Modi conceived many notable reforms, one of which was the National Skill Development Mission (see Policy Booklet, 2015), which was officially launched by him on July 15, 2015 on the occasion of the World Youth Skills Day. The aims were to create opportunities, space and scope for the development of the talents of Indian youth to develop more of those sectors which have already been put under skill development by the previous government. It was also to identify new sectors for the development of skills. The new programme aimed at providing training and the development of skills for 500 million young people in our country by 2020, covering each and every village.

'Youth' is defined as people aged 15 to 29 (Youth in India, 2017). I had a problem with the policy, as it only targeted those classified as 'youth', so overlooked young children. In India, most underprivileged children still grow up without the skills necessary to succeed in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Even when children from rural backgrounds attend school, the development of their skills lags behind their urban peers. The lack of high-quality primary education, particularly in the small villages that house more than 70% of the Indian rural population, is worrying, as far too many students still have no access to the kinds of education, resources, and opportunities they need to be successful. Inequality and the widening of the gap between rural and urban India is a reality. When children grow up with this kind of unequal education, how can we expect to bridge the deficiency of skills in India, which in itself is a huge challenge? If Indian's youth is not appropriately educated and

exposed to various skills linked to a range of livelihood options in childhood, they will never have job-security, because most rural youth relies predominantly on agricultural or local livelihood-opportunities, which are fast diminishing (Punj and Arun, 2016).

### **The living contradiction of 'I'**

I believe that a high-quality education is one of the most effective ways to reduce inequalities in society. The government does, of course, have a huge part to play; however, because I see democracy as a verb, i.e. an action word, I believe that we, who have received a privileged education, have a responsibility to take this on. In 2012, while preparing a speech for the launch of the Children's Rights and Business Principles – created by Save the Children (INGO), UN Global Compact and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – I came across a vision called 'social imagination', and a beautiful, yet chilling, poem, *In Those Years* by Adrienne Rich (1995, p. 4; see Appendix 1), which is about moving from dismay to possibility.

I looked at my privileged 'I' and, in spite of my valuing of democracy, love and care for the children of my country, I believe I stood, if not wholly, but to some extent, for 'saying I' (Rich, 1995, p. 4). I had looked at my students as 'it', i.e. with an unequal education and fewer opportunities. Suddenly, as we say in India, '*dimag ki batti jalgaae*' [there was a lightbulb moment] and, in a stroke, I understood what Buber (1970) and Whitehead (2003) meant, when they wrote about the 'I-You' relationship.

Buber (1970) suggests that the 'I' or the 'self' is positioned in relation to the world in two ways, with both a subjective and an objective attitude. I-Thou/You is a relation of subject-to-subject, while I-It is a relation of subject-to-object. In the I-It relationship, the self views the other in abstract terms: the 'I' is separated from the 'It', as the 'I' objectifies the other.

It is not a relationship of love, care and empathy. On the other hand, the I-You relationship is a total involvement of self and the other in sharing, empathy, caring, openness, and trust. Only in the I-You relationship is there an encounter and a dialogue (Buber, 1970).

By 2012, I had worked with many children from different social strata. This was when I saw myself as a living contradiction. I had a remarkable relationship with the children I had worked with, like the children in the Rajpur Mari Shala [Rajpur Primary School] and the students of the Bombay Cambridge School where I carried out my doctoral studies. However, the children with whom I had carried out short-term workshops, of, say, a day or two – like the children from urban slums (see Rawal, 2014) – I did not have an unquestionably genuine relationship. Yes, whenever I work with children I love them and since it is an emotion they have rarely or never received, they become 'mine'. Yet I always look at them objectively, as I did when I assisted the Ministry of Human Resource and Development (MHRD) and the All India Council for Technical Education (AICTE) to form the National Vocational Education Qualifications Framework (NVQEF) in Theatre and Stage Craft (NVQEF, 2012–2013, p. 49). I looked at the students for whom I was creating this curriculum in abstract terms, as objects of 'observation, classification, thinking ... never [as] an actual

being-as-a-whole' (Hermans and Hermans-Konopka, 2010, p. 164). In addition, I was preparing a curriculum for youth from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade upwards, never once thinking of the option of pre-vocational learning for primary schools.

My reflections on Rich's poem enabled me to understand that the I-It relationship is not a genuine relationship because it does not take place between the 'I' and the 'It'. I am, at least to some extent, outside the relationship; I am judging and I am observing. Reflecting on the poem and then turning my reflections to my work, my values and my behaviour, made me realise that my 'I' contained two mutually-exclusive opposites: that is, the experience of embracing values such as equality, love and care, and also experiencing the negation of those values. I had distinguished my research as, 'a support to all children and not merely as a study of the situation; as a way to make their world a better place in which to live' (Rawal, 2006). However, after reading this poem, I realised I was not being wholly truthful. My work and the recognition of it, were as important to me as the children. I was teaching what was 'good' for them as if I were obliging them.

When I created the NVQEF Curriculum for Youth, I kept thinking of my students. I reasoned that it was marvellous to be working on skill-building from the 9<sup>th</sup> grade onwards, but my rural students were receiving an unequal education. They are not exposed to a student-centred methodology, which might empower them to blossom as personalities. They were missing out on an enquiry-based, cross-curricular, and creative approach to learning. They did not enjoy a state-of-the-art infrastructure and the latest technology, which could create an ideal environment for learning, evolving and growing. The rural students primarily received a rote-learning methodology. In addition, farmer children, for example, only learned about farming and, when conditions were adverse, several hundred thousand children, mostly girls, sacrificed their education and health to work in the farms and fields. In spite of knowing and understanding this, I never voiced my protest and did not assert the need to draft something for primary schools.

My point here is, if at the primary level students are not exposed to a range of vocations and a variety of skills, how can they hope to acquire excellence in different professions? If you asked a village child what he or she would like to become when they grow up, the answer would invariably be a police-officer or a teacher. To add to this, schools emphasise performance-outcomes, not competencies. In many parts of the world, children are expected to take initiatives in their learning-process and become critical thinkers and self-reflective learners; they are challenged to become active learners, not passive receivers. However, in the villages, it is otherwise. The doomed prospects of the excluded children in the village-school was something I neglected when I was creating the NVQEF Curriculum for Youth. I failed to say we should create something for the primary schools. I only thought about it but did not have the fortitude to explain my opinion.

I felt I was not doing enough to enable changes in education and in the lives of the rural and marginalised children. I realised I needed to look more deeply. India is a country of so much diversity: '*Kos kos pe badale pani, char kos pe vani*' [The taste of water changes every 3 kilometres, and the language changes every 12 kilometres]. And so do the needs of its children who are born into this diversity. I realised there were so many things I had not done, so many needs I had not studied and understood, so many situations I had not tried to improve, so many papers I had not written and so many risks I had not taken.



I stopped looking at the children I worked with through the I-It lens and embraced the You through an I-You relationship. I became conscious of the fact that when ‘the great dark birds of history’ would scream and plunge into [my] ‘personal weather’, I did not want to be caught ‘saying I’ (Rich, 1995, p. 4).

This poem helped me to enter into an I-You relationship with all the children. I then took a bold step and negated the contradiction I experienced and decided to throw caution to the wind. I decided that the children are more important to me than the idea of the world appreciating my work. Moreover, I decided to do something that would, hopefully, make the ministries and education-boards take notice.

This brings me to the second moment of learning – a vision called ‘social imagination’ (Greene, 1995, p. 5). Social imagination allows us to envision a life different from the one we live, to ‘look at the world as if it could be otherwise’. It is the human capacity, both creative and moral, to ‘invent visions of what should be and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools’. The social imagination (Darling-Hammond, 1998) is a way in which we can share our lives through a complete understanding of meanings within an educational set of processes for democracy. In this constantly changing society, we must each strive to act out our social imagination to make sure all children have equal access to knowledge. ‘Social imagination not only suggests but also requires that one take action to repair or renew’ (Greene, 1995, p. 5).

In India we clash over the idea that certain communities and castes will always be unable to learn: it is ‘impossible’ to educate them. I reflect on Morrison’s (1970) metaphor of the seeds and the ground, and associate it with education and development. Claudia in *The Bluest Eyes* says, ‘I talk about how I did not plant the seeds too deeply, how it was the fault of the earth, our land, our town.... Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear.....’ (p. 206). I chose not to ask ‘why’ they will not bear fruits but, taking on the responsibility I chose to ask, ‘how can I make certain that they will bear fruits?’ ‘How do I improve? How can I improve the situation here? How do I improve what I am doing?’

Kozol (1991) suggests that unequal educational experiences for minority-students due to funding issues are at the root of achievement-gaps. School dropouts are a result of poverty and the unequal educational system, not a lack of individual motivation, gifts, and talents. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) shows that 13 out of every 100 Indians between the ages of 5 and 29 do not attend school, or drop out because they do not consider education ‘necessary.’ This proportion is significantly higher for school-going children between 10–14 years old. In this category, one out of every three people who are not attending school said they considered education ‘unnecessary’ (Jain, 2015). I, like Kozol (1991, p. 26) wanted to give schoolchildren, ‘something so spectacular, so wonderful and special’, that they, ‘might be able somehow to soar up above the hopelessness, the clouds of smoke and sense of degradation all around them.’

## Creating something special

Keeping this in mind, I decided to create a wonderfully-special pre-vocational education workshop, and chose the discipline of film-making as the target vocation. The other reason I actually started off working hands-on was because I was tired of telling the system and education ministries what to do. I have argued for the presence of drama, theatre and the arts in classrooms *ad nauseam*. I chose to make this aspiration concrete by describing a pre-vocational educational curriculum I created to teach my students film-making. This paper is about 'I did this', but it also moves beyond merely describing a workshop, because I believe that the very effort of describing 'a lived experience into a narrative can be a source of meaning-making' (Greene, 1995 p. 75).

There was so much to learn for the children and me. I had to learn what it means to be behind the camera, to tell a story as a moving image-text, and importantly, how to teach film-making. For the children, it was about learning film-making from scratch. When most people think of film-making as a career, they only consider acting or directing, and only afterwards consider cinematography. However, I sought to introduce my children to all the other occupations involved in film-making, like editor, assistant to the director, set-designer, costume-designer, dresser, and make-up artist.

I wanted to inspire my students, as my father had when he introduced me to the enchantment of the performing arts. In my teens, thanks to him, I had read about some of the greatest film-makers and saw their great works. I read about how they were exposed to the arts in their childhood, like the 'Master of Light', Sven Vilhem Nykvist, who was the solo camera-person in two of Bergman's Academy Awards-winning films, *The Virgin Spring* and *Through a Glass Darkly*. His enthusiasm in the visual arts was infused by his father, who was an amateur photographer of the wildlife of Africa. Nykvist purchased his first 8-millimetre camera when he was only fifteen years of age.

As a young actor, I remember reading and thinking how remarkable it was that as a child, Steven Spielberg made his first film using his father's 8-millimetre camera (Open Culture, 2012). By the time he was 12 years old, he had actually filmed a movie using a cast of actors. He said in an interview (CBS Interactive, 2013) that during most of his formative years he was considered an outsider, and what saved him was a camera he had received from his dad. Making films was a way he found to accept himself, as he realized that he could do something well.

Wong Tung Jim was another unhappy 'outsider' who got his first camera at the age of 12 and grew up to shoot some incredible films like *The Rose Tattoo*, *The Old Man and the Sea* and *Funny Lady* (Faulkner, 2009).

When my sons were growing up, they would make plays with our neighbours' children and invite all the families living in our apartment complex to see them. This is similar to Spielberg's actions. He recalls, 'They were just little dramatic exercises. It was a hobby and nothing more, although subconsciously I was beginning to take it seriously' (Open Culture, 2012, unpaginated). He began screening his films for children in the neighbourhood. One of his sisters would make popcorn and he would charge 25 cents for admission as a way of making money to buy more film.



This was the enchantment of the performing arts and also of the school's summer holidays. My sons were not tutored to make a drama in their free time, nor were there any adults present when they wrote, blocked and created the play. Additionally, they learnt many skills besides the arts. They learnt to work as a team and to develop skills of creative thinking, problem-solving and decision-making.

However, my village-students had no such inspirations, no such summer holidays to stimulate their creative imaginations. I reflected that, if they were not exposed to different arts and various vocations, how were they even to think of different opportunities? Another hurdle was the assertion of genetic determination, or the idea that we are connected to our individual creative talent through our personal genetic build (Tan, 2007). However, rather than thinking that certain children could not achieve anything because of their genetic predisposition, race, culture and religion, I looked at it as a matter only of exclusion and neglect.

### **A blueprint for learning**

‘If I have any teaching wisdom, it is that I have learned to know  
the struggle is the learning process; and the skills of teaching lie  
in making this time slow enough for enquiry;  
interesting enough to loiter along the way;  
rigorous enough for being buffeted in the matrix of ideas;  
but with sufficient signposts seen for respite, planning,  
and regathering of energy  
to fare forward on the way.’

(Heathcote in Shuman, 1978, p. 6)

### **Intuition**

‘Intuition is my instrument’, said Bergman (Jones, 1983). I decided to create my film-making curriculum as I created my doctoral curriculum (Rawal, 2006), on the basis of my intuition, by throwing ‘the spear of intuition into the dark’ (Bergman in Jones, 1983). However, the process does not end at throwing the spear: after one has decided something intuitively, it is necessary to follow it up intellectually by sending ‘an expedition into the jungle’ (*op. cit.*, p. 10) in order to find the way to the spear and to try to understand why the spear fell where it did and not somewhere else.

My background in films and theatre helped me to create a curriculum in film-making (Appendix 2). I created it by bearing in mind that the instructional target was to teach the students the film-making skills, and the instructional objective or outcome was to enable the learner to create a film. Each day's lesson was planned, while paying attention to smaller instructional objectives – for example, being able to shoot a 20-second film without cuts, or being able to edit and hunt for a location.

Besides these instructional objectives, I wanted to enhance their life-skills – for example creative, critical, and logical thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, empathy and so on. I believe that the curriculum, its aims and execution, should be founded on the educational philosophy, beliefs, and values of the curriculum developers (Dewey, 1938). Thus, I planned a learner-centred curriculum (Woolfolk, 2013) or ‘plan of action’, to make sure that the students were active learners making choices and discovering important ideas, using a methodology similar to process-drama. This method explores the curriculum areas being carried out through inquiry and improvisation, ‘putting the students on the inside of their learning’ (Taylor, 2000).

Yet, because of the nature of moving image-texts, I knew that this curriculum would have to be different from the one I had designed for my doctoral work in drama (Rawal, 2006). This is because, when films are recorded, they are not ephemeral and neither are they transitory like drama. They materialize into a product, making it possible for the students to see their creation. Additionally, and for the first time in my teaching-practice, I was teaching a ‘discipline’ and not using arts as a method to teach another subject.

I designed this program to enable hands-on training and actual production experience, and as an integrated and basic study in all the major film-making disciplines, including cinematography, directing, screenwriting, producing, and editing. I wanted every one of my students to write, shoot, direct, and edit their own short films, while knowing they had had no previous film-making experience. I sought to extend and deepen their in-class learning by producing a short 10-minute film.

I wanted my students to learn about:

- the various careers in film-making
- the fundamentals of digital film/video production and digital editing
- the ground rules in acting craft and directing actors
- a basic screenwriting craft
- pre-production (including casting, rehearsal, and location scouting)
- how to shoot, direct and edit a sync-sound narrative film of up to 20-seconds
- to participate as a crew member on fellow students’ films and group-projects.

I selected strategies that would help me to achieve the goals and objectives through the enhancement of learning experiences that would provide the students with meaningful learning. However, learning is not a simple and steady process but a complex, changing, and on-going one that requires a dynamic lesson-plan. Mindful of this, I created an emergent timetable, as I knew I would have to improvise according to my students’ learning and needs.

At every stage of the curriculum planning I thought about the assessment of learning. I believed that a studio product would not be sufficient to demonstrate the children’s learning. As learning happens in small steps and in a non-linear fashion, time for reflection was included in every unit of learning.

The final question about eliciting evidence of learning will be dealt with later in this article.

### Seeing what is to be seen

I am using videos I generated in a visual narrative style, to share and present details of my practice, my students' learning, and the students' and my interactions. Video-recordings are increasingly being used as primary-field materials, which are later treated as 'data' for particular research-questions (Erickson, 2006). Video is an emergent kind of data that needs to be 'layered and saturated with interpretation' (Goldman, 2009, p. 17). Even though a person can 'see', a reflexive account of video data is required in which 'things become visible because of how we see them, rather than simply because they are observable' (Pink, 2006). To persuade readers of the validity of my claims of educational influence in the learning of my students and myself along with the videos, I therefore present you with my reflections as well.

In the film *A different kind of magic* (Video 3), I have used a selection of video clips to create a compelling narrative of my classroom. The film is used to generate my account of an event, to enable insights on my point of view, and to facilitate the readers to learn more about the meaning of my practice as I taught children skill-building. I have used video data rigorously and systematically to examine the resources and practices through which we learnt film-making as we talked, through our facial expressions, gestures and body language. This kind of record cannot be made available using any other technology because, by using this medium, we can see 'the human face in movement' (Bergman in Jones, 1983).

In this article I include three complete films or movie-based stories, two 10-minute films, *The Promise* (Video 1) and *Making of The Promise* (Video 2) created by the children, and *A different kind of magic* (Video 3), which is a moving image-text I made in order to showcase the film-making workshop/camp. However, the complete reality of the workshop would be incomplete without an effort to describe our rich experience. With this in mind, I have used a multi-media style of communication in the presentation of this article, using the four films, raw video-footage, photographs and my own reflections.



Video 1 [The Promise - The story of the Pied Piper](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X52E4fkADg)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3X52E4fkADg>



Video 2 [Making of The Promise](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDLXfd-jaSQ)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XDLXfd-jaSQ>

Before I continue, I would like to explain: a film generally refers to a fictional or scripted, and edited motion-based story, whether it be celluloid, digital video or magnetic tape; video generally refers to the hardware used as the initial-capture process of the moving footage, and the conversion of other media into its many editable formats. Currently, both films and videos are captured digitally because celluloid and video-tapes are both redundant. In this article when I use the word 'film' I am referring to story-telling with moving images, a completed motion-picture, or a non-fiction documentary film. When I use the word 'video' I refer to the raw video recording of someone or something. Additionally, all film-making terms used in this article can be found in the Glossary.

## Let the madness begin



**Video 3.** [... a different kind of magic](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IAR-jd9qf4)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5IAR-jd9qf4>

### The cast

There were 41 children, all studying in Grades 5–8 from Rajpur Mari Shala, Lavad Primary School and Dehduki Primary School. There were also some children from private schools in Baroda and Ahmadabad and some who had home-schooling. In addition there was myself (Swaroop) and Nima, my assistant teacher.

### The credits

Screenplay	All the children participating in the camp
Chief facilitator/director of program	Swaroop Rawal
Assistant-teacher	Nima Parekh
Director of photography	Kanchi Pandya
Art Department and Sets	Bindu Zala
	Ex-students of Rajpur Mari Shalla
Mentors- with reference to film-making	Students of a film school in Gandhinagar

VFX- Visual effect teachers

Students of a film school in Gandhinagar

Editor

Swaroop Rawal and Lavesh Jain

Music

Prashant Thackeray

Running time: minutes 23:55

Produced at Rajpur Mari Shala, Gandhinagar during the Diwali vacations, 1915.

## Day 1

To begin with, I played two drama-games, 'I am... and I like', and 'Changing Objects' (Appendix 3) and then the children settled down in the circle.

### Reflections

I believe for a group to work together successfully the people need to feel comfortable in each other's company and trust each other. Relationships are very important for a positive and successful learning environment. Starting a workshop by playing drama games enables the participants to become acquainted with one another in a friendly, low-key, non-threatening way. Drama games were played every day, except when we started shooting the final 10-minute film. I used games for ice-breaking, physical warm-ups, group dynamics, and to encourage creativity. By playing games students were able to understand a new concept or idea and take on a different perspective more easily. For example, when I wanted to teach about instant acting (see Unit 4: Instant acting) I used the game *Walk* (see Appendix 3). *Walk* was used as a warm-up exercise and to help my students understand new concepts: acting and improvisation.

Usually at the end of the day, between 5 and 6 pm, we played active games like the *Bottle Game* and the *Detective and Murderer Game* (Appendix 3), and so on. The children look forward to playing these games as they are great fun and diminish stress.

### Unit 1: Understanding films or moving image-texts

This include:

- elements of a film
- what is needed to make films
- different kind of films or moving images.



**Video 4:** [Unit 1 Understanding films or moving images](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JbO795FIT4)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6JbO795FIT4>



**Video 5:** [Unit 1 Different kind of films](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOpiXIDBL6o)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UOpiXIDBL6o>

## Reflections

The aims of this unit were to unravel the codes and conventions of film-making, and to see how films are produced. The lecture format of teaching is not effective in this situation, because a better understanding is gained in practical sessions. However, it was necessary to introduce the children to the language of cinema in a non-threatening way. It was important that they realized that all kinds of moving image-texts were present in their normal lives. In the class, I explained what films are (Video 4), resources necessary for film-making (Video 4), and the different kind of films or moving image-texts (Video 5).

I introduced the idea of moving image-texts by asking them what comprised the elements of a film. The children answered eagerly, as watching films is a very popular source of entertainment in both urban and rural India. After drawing on the children's own experiences with the medium, I slowly moved towards enlarging their knowledge about films, and introduced what is needed to make a film.

As you'll see, Kartoom raises his hand to answer (Video 4). I ask him to wait a bit and



turn to the others, who look a bit blank. Kartoom attends a quality urban-school and his father has recently attended a film-making workshop, so he knows a bit about film-making. The rest are hesitant to answer in spite of having the experience of seeing films being shot in their own school. This is the reason I asked these simple questions, as I wanted them to come up with the answers from their own experience.

Essentially, I tried to get the children to grasp the different aspects of a film, after which I drew their attention to different genres of films. I did this mainly because I wanted them to understand that, besides full-length feature films, documentary films, newsreels, commercial or advertising, all films are 'films'. I wanted to convey to them that they may be non-fiction yet have a story to tell. I said:

... a film tells a story ... any kind of a story. It could be a story about your school in Rajpur... It is not necessary for a film to have a hero and a heroine. Sometimes a film is made about an insect...and sometimes about a leaf, or a stone. (Video 3, 2:06-2:21)

Because the idea of making a film can be intimidating, I realised I needed to initiate the idea of making a film gradually, while still creating a curriculum. I did not want to put my students at a disadvantage from the beginning. I wanted to build a bridge between the familiar and non-familiar. So, as you can see in Videos 4 and 5, I started with what they knew or had already experienced.

### **Unit 1: Various people involved in the profession of creating films or moving images**

#### **Reflection**

After introducing them to the elements of film-making, I introduced them to the identification and understanding of the different audiovisual professions in the film-industry. This was an educational process through which I tried to inform the children about the qualities, attributes and requirements of the audiovisual professions in the industry. This was in order to gain insightful knowledge into potential areas of future employment. Beginning with the director, cinematographer, screenplay writer, we also identified professionals such as make-up artist and costume designer.



**Figure 1:** Different audiovisual professions from the industry listed on the board

## Unit 2: Story-telling – using tableaux / freeze frame to tell a story



**Video 6:** [Unit 2 using tableaux freeze frame to tell a story](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X827NyqsLZo)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X827NyqsLZo>

### Reflections

I did not want to reduce the workshop to mere information-giving, so I continued the lesson with the idea of storytelling. Most importantly I wanted the children to have practical experience in film-making. Reiterating that film-making can be a daunting task for children with no experience, I set the process in motion by asking them to create tableaux or statues. This was a way to initiate story-telling and choreography in small steps and was in line with the tasks my students were already capable of carrying out independently. Improvisation and movement, if introduced too soon, can lead to the students producing artificial work. In addition, it could make them feel vulnerable and exposed.

A 'tableau', or a 'statue', are terms used when participants create unmoving images with their bodies, in order to capture a moment in time, to depict an idea or to isolate a moment in drama (Rawal, 2006, p. 11). However, 'freezing' the action was not the final step. I also encouraged them to voice their thoughts as they were demonstrating their tableaux.

## Unit 3: Using a director's viewfinder



**Video 7:** [Unit 3 What the camera sees](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXFALvmQjZw)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xXFALvmQjZw>

### Reflection

In art school we used a viewfinder to frame the object we were drawing, in order to focus on a particular area. Viewfinders are usually adjustable frames, which can be used as tools for cropping subjects for artwork. They are also used to eliminate elements that distract from the main subject by visually cutting them off, helping the artist to focus. However, in film-making the viewfinder is your eye to the world and source of your creativity. It allows you to frame your subjects in the same way you frame objects and people when you look through the camera lens.

Directors' viewfinders are small, lightweight optics that allow the director to frame a shot using the correct focal length, film size and aspect ratio, without having to manoeuvre the whole camera-rig into place. They do not usually give an accurate simulation of the depth-of-field of the image, but permit the director to walk around and find the framing of the shot-to-be.

The viewfinders I gave my students were black card paper with a cut-out in the centre that had the same shape as the viewfinder of a video camera. Looking through the cut-out they could shift the focus of their vision and get the first feeling of looking through a camera, and understand what they could 'see' in the 'frozen' image, and how the images are positioned in the frame.

This was an extremely successful activity and the children ran all over the place with their viewfinders. At the same time, they were also beginning to understand the concepts, such as framing a shot and precise framing that I wanted them to learn without my having to tell them in so many words (see Video 3 – 3:02 to 3:34).

### Unit 4: Instant acting



**Video 8:** [Unit 4 Instant acting](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7ZKXzoGHx0)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=g7ZKXzoGHx0>

### Reflections

My experience in film acting made me create this unit, which I have termed, 'instant acting'. I chose to teach my children something like switch-on-switch-off acting. This was carried out in order to prepare the ones who are acting in the film, especially to the practice

of starting to act the moment the director said 'action'. It was an extremely helpful exercise as the children were then comfortable as we shot the film.



**Video 9:** [Unit 4: Instant acting result](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ICr6uaqCQPA>

### **Unit 5: Seeing films**

Watching a film can effectively engage children. The film-show at the end of each day served many purposes. First and foremost, watching films should be enjoyable, so the films I had downloaded were all entertaining. However, it was also essential that the children learn the rules and codes that govern moving-image media, as well as developing the use of technical language. Therefore, I downloaded films and videos that included different styles of animation, live action, and drama, abstract, factual, documentary, short films and advertising films (Appendix 4).

### **Reflections**

Watching films was a planned and purposeful activity. While the children watched them, I would 'pause' the film to explain the concept of shots or cut and so on. But to make it clear, we first saw all the films without pausing to retain the element of fun. The children loved watching the films especially the Charlie Chaplin ones which, at their insistence, I had to re-run.

I was extremely lucky that Kanchi, my film-making assistant and DoP, had recently worked with a crew who made the Amul Milk advertisement film (Appendix 4). Besides sharing the film, she shared the storyboard so that the children could easily understand the concept of a storyboard when we went through it the next day.

I had included Reflection Time during this unit as well, which synchronises with my view that even though we can 'see' a video, a reflexive account of video data is still necessary. Reflection, during the watching of the film and afterwards, enabled them to understand film-making more fully. For example, while watching the re-run of a film, I made a game of identifying the shots in the film and counting the cuts.

## Day 2

### Unit 6: Introduction to digital storytelling

I introduced the concept of digital storytelling by asking the children to shoot a short 20-second film. The students' goal for making this film was to tell a story of the tableaux they had created on Day 1 Unit 2: Story-telling using tableaux/freeze frame. The children were given all the various visual capturing tools available at the workshop, like High Definition cameras, cell-phones, still cameras in video-mode and tablets. The goal was to shoot a film without cuts, i.e. in one continuous shot of 20 seconds. This was not intimidating to the children, as they had now already created their tableaux and studied them through their 'viewfinder frames'.

In the following two videos you will see how the DoP (Director of Photography) adjusted the position of the actor to create a smooth film.



**Video 10:**

[Unit 6 digital storytelling \(part 1\)](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sFhb3IWNp3E>



**Video 11:**

[Unit 6: digital storytelling \( part 2\)](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UwFqam1DiyU>

### Unit 7: What the camera sees: shot size and angles

The children were taught five shot-sizes and angles, namely, three shots taken at eye level: 1.long shot, 2.medium shot and 3.close-up. There was also a low-angle shot and a high-angle or a top-shot (Video 3 at 5:15- 6:04).

#### Reflection

The activity of seeing films and reflections on the films can facilitate a smooth entry into this unit. The children slowly, but steadily, understood the difference between trying to tell a story in one continuous shot, and using shorter and more specific shots, to construct a scene the same way as it is in filmmaking.

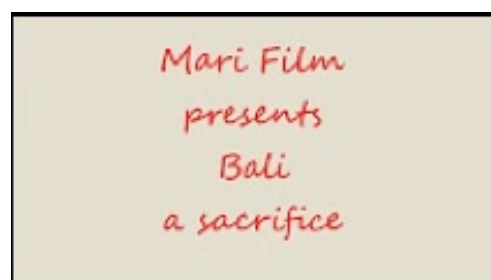
A long shot is drawn on in order to establish the scene for the viewer, and allows the audience to see the subject and the immediate environment clearly. The medium shot typically frames subjects from the waist up. These shots help to show people in the context

of the background. The medium shots help to prepare an audience for the close-up shot. The close-up shot is used to reveal the emotions and/or details of the subject, essentially to draw an audience closer to a specific feature or detail in a shot or scene. A low-angle shot of a character or subject often makes them appear bigger in the frame and can make the character look heroic and/or dominant. A high-angle shot makes the object seem smaller and less significant, depending on how extreme the shot.

Some of their reflections after completing this exercise were that:

- nature looks more beautiful when you focus on details
- the trees change positions when you look through different 'eyes'
- we can see details through the frame
- top shots or high-angle shots and low-angle shots all change the size and appearance of the things we are watching.

Because it was already afternoon by the time we started this unit, I asked them to execute a continuous film and not cut it into separate shots. I did this as there was not enough time to complete the activities of shooting the film in separate shots and editing them, which would be the next goal. Besides, I reflected that the more practice the children had in operating the camera, the better.



**Video 12:** [Bali a sacrifice](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_F6jwoIPPQ)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z\\_F6jwoIPPQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=z_F6jwoIPPQ)



**Video 13:** [Unit 7: What the camera sees: Shot size and angles](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQCqSDHw1_8)

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQCqSDHw1\\_8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pQCqSDHw1_8)



## Day 3

### Unit 8: Storyboard

A storyboard comprises a series of pictures that shows how each shot in a scene will be filmed. It visually tells the story panel-by-panel, something like a comic-book. Most commonly, storyboards are drawn in pen or pencil. However, the drawings do not have to be intricate, and can be done using basic shapes, stick-figures, with simple backgrounds.

The children were asked to revisit the first story they captured and then asked to shoot it with five shots. However, before they could do that, I asked them to create a storyboard. (Video 3 at 7:13–8:00)

### Reflections

I began Day 3 with a card which read, '*I could tell you my adventure beginning from this morning, said [the DoP] a little timidly, but it's no use going back to yesterday, because I was a different person then*' (Carroll, 1984). I did this because the children were 'changing'. In other words, there was now a greater confidence in their demeanour. The blank looks they had given me when I asked them questions relating to film-making were gradually changing to ones of confidence and self-assurance. The DoP I referred to above was Srujan, a very quiet girl who was becoming extremely confident with the exposure intended in this group. The mentors were impressed with her deft handling of the camera when she filmed the movie *The Bali* (Video 12). They were equally impressed with the way the children drew their storyboards, and confided that they themselves, in spite of being film graduates, could not create storyboards.

In my early twenties I had the opportunity to meet the great director Satyajit Ray at his workplace. The famous storyboard he shared with me has left a lasting impression. I too, want the beauty of drawing, art and filmmaking to make an equally lasting impression on my students.

Here, as in the previous 'Unit 7: Shot-size and angles', the children grasped the concept of the storyboard immediately, because they had seen the storyboard and the making of the Amul advertisement the previous evening. A filmmaker friend, who also teaches in one of India's prime film-making schools, remarked:

Swaroop, they understood the concept of shots and angles so beautifully and you can see it in the storyboard picture of the broom close-up. It is remarkable that beginner filmmakers can understand that a close-up shot does not have to be one of a face: it, could be anything, even an inanimate object. (S. Rawal, personal communication, November 12, 2016)



**Figure 2:** Storyboard of Video 13

## Unit 9: Editing

The children were introduced to professional editing software – *Premiere Pro CS6*. They saw how it worked and how to capture and import video and audio, assemble and refine a sequence, add transitions and effects, mix audios, export and save a project.

Each group went on to work on their project separately, and the mentors only needed to show them how it was carried out. The children did not actually edit their films, yet they learnt a lot by watching. (Video 3 at 8:41–8:56)

## Unit 10: The story narration

(See Video 3 at 8:58-11:08)

### Reflection

I chose the poem *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* for the film-making project and narrated it. I chose this story because it had a large number of characters. This was an important issue, as I was working with 41 children, and I understood that when we made the film I would have many children desiring to be actors, and I would have to accommodate them all.

Another reason I chose the poem was because of its theme, which touches on issues of greed, loss of a generation, honouring an agreement, and the importance of keeping one's word. The issue of politicians making empty promises and failing to keep the guarantees offered while campaigning for elections, was another interesting issue to my mind. I believed this poem could raise a number of moral questions, which in turn could provoke insightful debate with my students.

## Day 4

### Unit 11: Deciding our role

This comprised the first step to the film production. Each child had to decide what they wanted to do, and which responsibility they would assume, in order to make the creation of the film possible (see Video 3 at 11:43–13:17).

### Reflections

After three days of acquainting the children with the process of film-making, at last I encouraged them to decide exactly what they wanted to do, i.e. whether they would be the director, DoP, editor, still-photographer or actor. As there can be only one director and one DoP in a film unit, I decided to create two 10-minute films, i.e. the actual film and a 'making of the film' project. As a result I had two units working simultaneously.

Deciding what they would do was confusing for them, as they had not yet completely understood the functions of each of the industry's professional roles. Bearing this in mind, I went back to what I had taught in Unit 1, i.e. about various people involved in the profession of creating films or moving image-texts. This time the children gained a greater understanding of the various professionals and their roles, and I was pleased that they came up with different names as well, some of which I had not even mentioned. For example, Heral (from Lavad Primary School, whose father is a farmer) said, 'If there is a make-up artist

there should also be a hair dresser’. Her fellow student Ankit said, ‘If there are costumes there should be a tailor...a weaver...and somebody who does embroidery’.

After making a new list of the job-descriptions, I asked them what they wanted to do. It was not surprising that most wanted to be actors or still-photographers. This is because these were the two jobs they had experienced. Imagining that they could direct a film or be cinematographers was beyond them. After some time, and a bit of coaxing, many decided to change and chose different jobs instead.

It was heartening to see my girl-students wanting to take up the leadership position of director and editor (see Video 3 at 12:45–12:48). It was equally elevating to see one of my students with a speech and language disorder and low self-esteem, insisting that he most wanted to be a DoP and in addition being confident he would do a good job of it (See Video 14).



**Video 14:** [Ashik](#)

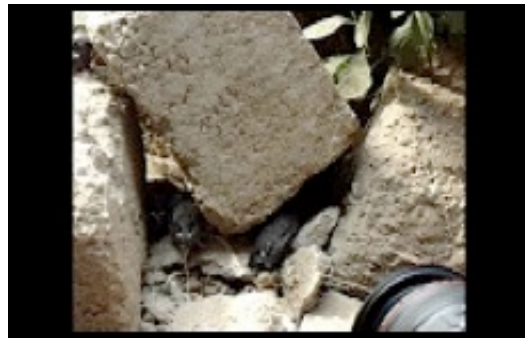
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DHHp9dhtMBg>

## **Unit 12: Getting on with film making and film production**

This unit was aimed at each person understanding their functions, thinking about them and planning what they would do (Video 3 at 13:22–14:25).

### **Reflections**

So much had to be covered before we could actually get down to shooting the film. In normal film productions, the director visualizes his/her film, but in this production it wasn't like that. We carried out all the tasks through decisions made by all the participants. For example, the issue of the portrayal of the rats arose, and how we would depict them was a question first raised by the director. The children then sat together and debated all the options and concluded they would request the art-department to make small models of the rats (Video 15).



**Video 15:** [Solving the problem of the portrayal of the rats](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLbrH55yfs8)  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zLbrH55yfs8>

The hunt for a location or 'recce', was carried out in two groups with the mentors. The children were instructed to take photographs of the locations they liked, and then the whole group would finalize the shooting locations. They came up with extremely creative ideas and locations. For example, they found highly imaginative places for the scenes with the rats. See Figure 3 and the screenshot from Video 15.



**Figure 3:** Scouting for locations/recce

### **Unit 13: Developing the Script**

Movies tell stories with visual images and sound. In reality, the movie-stories originate in the mind of a writer, who creates a screenplay or script. However, we worked on the screenplay in unison, using the method of hot-seating. In hot-seating, questions are asked of someone sitting in the hot-seat, who answers in character. The basic idea is that a student who plays the role of a character in the story takes questions from an audience of classmates. It is an excellent way of fleshing out a character, a device used to 'get inside the head' of the person concerned. Hot-seating encouraged the students' ownership of the process, by voicing authentic ideas, questions, and opinions.

### **Reflections**

This was a successful strategy I used to enable the creation of the screenplay and dialogues. At no time did I want to burden the children to say lines 'foreign' to them, and to have to spend many hours learning the dialogues. Moreover, I wanted the children to be the

creators of this film, in other words, how the characters would behave, what actions they would take, the direction the story would take and so on, were all meant to be created by them. Kartoom shared an appealing view during reflection-time, when he said, ‘in my mind I had already become the sarpanch’ [village head]. (See Video 3 at 16:03–16:07.)

Colby (1982, p. 24) suggests that, ‘drama by its very nature has the power to yoke the competencies of the moral reasoning task, thus allowing those with greater visual/spatial and or kinaesthetic intelligence to bring their talent to bear on the problem.’ I was delighted by the way they took on the ethical issues of the drama, by exploring issues of justice, vengeance, trust, and forgiveness. Remarkable developments concerning the ethical issues of the story took place during the hot-seating of the Pied Piper/Rangeelo [colourful one]. The children asked the Piper where he took the children, whether the children would return, why he did what he did and so on. After listening to the Pipers’ answers and debating with him, the group decided that the children would not return because the adults had broken a promise, and we couldn’t be sure they would not break it again. In addition the Piper had taken them to a ‘better’ place, where people follow the rules of equity, equality and truthfulness.

From this interpretation came the most beautiful shot of the film in which the children are not actually taken into a cave as in the original story, but go instead into the ‘sun’. Additionally, the children fashioned the Piper as Lord Krishna, who plays the Indian flute, and his entry was shot in a mystical manner with, first, his shadow being seen



**Figure 4:** Children being led by the Pied Piper

The children also decided to break the linear story-telling style by deliberating about, and choosing from, three story-ideas:

- Children find an old tattered diary belonging to their grandfather, which has the entry of ‘the Piper experience’ of his childhood
- A grandmother narrates the story
- The handicapped child who was left behind narrates his experience.

The last idea was finally chosen.

## Day 5

### Unit 12: Getting on with film-making- film production, Unit 13: Script Development (continued)



#### Video 16 [Blocking the scene](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJkm7avt0cY>

### Reflections

The Video 3 card for Day 5 reads:

'I can't believe that!' [Nima] said. 'One can't believe impossible things.' 'I daresay you haven't had much practice,' said [Swaroop]. 'When I was your age, I always did it for half-an-hour a day. Why, sometimes I've believed as many as six impossible things before breakfast'.

This is a bit of an in-house joke because Nima, my assistant teacher at all times, uses the word 'impossible' whenever I share my plans and modules. (See <http://ejolts.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=147> and <http://ejolts.org/mod/forum/discuss.php?d=137>.)

However, the children had learnt beyond our imaginations, because I believe in 'a pedagogic practice, through which the impossible, by virtue of the strength and conviction with which it is dreamed and announced, becomes possible' (Webb, 2010, p. 336).

Very rarely are marginalised children considered gifted. This brings me back to the negative attitude of the claim of genetic determination (Tan, 2007). I believe it is a falsification of children's capabilities. My educational concern is that poor and students from minorities undergo educational experiences that destroy their craving for learning, and deprive them of their purpose and sense of direction. Bits of knowledge, muddled museum-trips and merely having to listen to music, for example, do not support the skills required for art. We have to teach our students to understand, to try to identify with art and to try to see what the artists are showing us, and what the music is saying. They have to engage directly with art and change their vocabulary of thinking. I believe Greene (1995, p. 135) has communicated the issue unambiguously when she suggests that we have to enable our students to 'both engage in art as a maker and experience existing artworks', have more informed encounter with the arts, in order to release their imaginations so that they can develop more fully as people.



## Days 6, 7 and 8

### Unit 14: shooting the film



Figure 5: Blocking the film



Figure 6: Using the viewfinder to 'see' the film

## Day 9

### Unit 15: Editing the film

Three days of the workshop were allocated to filming and shooting of the film, and the final day for editing and screening it.

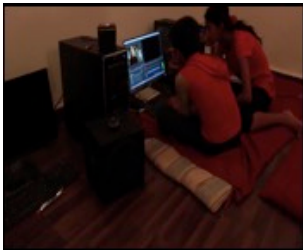


Figure 7: Editing

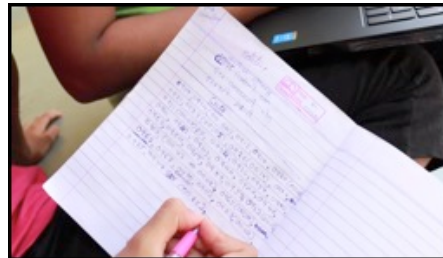


Figure 8: Editors logging the sequence before the edit

### Unit 16: creating publicity material



Figure 9: Creating the poster

## Reflections

It was a joy to see all the children performing their chosen tasks responsibly and with enjoyment. What really impressed me was the way they tackled all the challenges they faced in creative ways. The director knew exactly where and which scene he wanted to shoot, as he had first blocked the entire film using the tableaux.

The actors knew their scenes as they had participated in the tableaux and then rehearsed the scenes. Hot-seating had facilitated them to write their dialogues and because they were in their own language, they were very comfortable.

The DoP had reconnoitred the locations and also 'seen' the film through the paper -frame or the director's viewfinder. He knew where he wanted to place his camera. When we were shooting the lengthy shot of the children walking into the sun (Video 3 at 20:26–21:04) the mentors wanted to cut it earlier, which was as soon as a number of children had already passed by. However, the director and the DoP kept saying, 'Wait, we will tell you when we want to cut the shot'. After the handicapped child entered the frame and walked a fair distance, both the director and the DoP said, 'cut' simultaneously.

At no time do I want to give the impression that they shot the film without any help from the adults, because film-making is extremely complicated and my students had had just a glimpse of it. Issues such as focusing the camera, ensuring that the light was right, correct shot-divisions and so on, were mainly handled by the mentors. VFX or visual effects were completed by the mentors with the students as assistants.

For me the most enduring image of the workshop was that of little Mahavir, the assistant-director (Figure 10). He squatted wherever we shot, usually near the camera, writing down the shot continuity in his huge log-book, exactly as a 'proper' assistant-director would. His 'quiet please' echoed in the out-doors and every single one would immediately keep quiet, knowing the next call would be 'camera-rolling', after which the director would count five seconds and call 'action'.



**Figure 10:** Assistant-director

## Signposts of learning

The participants learnt the fundamentals of cinematography, and worked in teams to produce two short 10-minute films (Videos 1 and 2). However, as I maintained earlier, I strongly believe that a studio-product is not sufficient to show that the children learnt. I would like to share evidence of the children's learning that

lie above and beyond issues discussed in my reflections.

These comprise random reflections, for example when Sangram (a child from Lavad Primary School) said, 'now I can consider the thought of a career as a film director'. This does not guarantee that I have definitely opened new career options for my students, but I can say I laid the groundwork for, and sensitization to, the world of work. Furthermore, I created an opportunity to enable knowledge-based career choices for my students.

The project assisted positive behaviour and improved psychosocial competence in the children, and this did not end when the workshop was over, but spilt over into their normal school days and work; they applied their filmmaking workshop learning in their day-to-day school-life. Most importantly, within a short span of nine days, there was a gain in self-confidence and self-esteem. Mastering the subject built their confidence because there is something special about participating in the arts. While learning filmmaking and creating the two films, the children stepped outside their comfort-zones and, as they progressed and saw their own progress in their actions and in the concrete example of their film, their self-confidence grew.

Bindu, the school-teacher from Rajpur Mari Shalla, suggested that there was an improvement in academic achievements as a result of the workshop:

- Karan (still photographer): I could see direct results in the class work due to his raised self esteem. He was 'sav zero' [absolutely bad] in his academic skills, now he is making tremendous progress.
- Pankaj (actor): this camp was like a 'step' to jump up in his studies.
- Aarti (actor): a huge gain in confidence.
- Ashik (DoP): he has developed a strong sense of himself as a capable person, his class work has improved and so has his confidence, he now feels he can do things he wants to do. The reflective diary writing carried out in the workshop has helped his thinking skills and also his writing skills. (S. Rawal, personal communication with Bindu Zala, February 5, 2017)

Nima, the teacher from Lavad Primary school, suggested that 'Now they know they have the ability to achieve beyond what is taught to them in their school. Now they do not accept blindly what the teacher says but question the teacher, cross check and ask 'why?' Their skills of observation have improved and so have their lateral thinking skills.'

- Mahvir (assistant director) has become very dependable and carries out tasks assigned to him with great responsibility, to the extent that I never have to crosscheck. The augmentation in his diary-writing skills reflect in his thinking and writing skills, now there is a great improvement in his essay-writing and the way he writes his long answer.
- Heral (actor) had become very confidence but sadly has not had more opportunity to learn further so she has become quiet.
- Ankit (director) has moved on to secondary school. A few teachers from this new

school visited us and asked me how many children like Ankit will my school send this year? They said he is good at studies, respectful, focused and balanced.

- Maitri and Mahrshi (editors) are children who school at home and Kartoom (actor), who attends a private school made an independent short film in their subsequent holiday.
- Srujan (DoP) who comes from a very progressive family but is overshadowed by her family's successes has gained in self-confidence and from being a shy quiet girl has become more outgoing. (S. Rawal, personal communication with Nima Parekh, February 5, 2017)

The workshop strengthened problem-solving, decision-making, creative and critical-thinking skills. In all of the children there was a gain in visual-spatial skills. Importantly the film-making workshop was a leveller – children related to it no matter what their family background or learning abilities were.

### Some final thoughts

I believe by way of this workshop, I the 'favoured one', 'questioned the language of dominance, efficiency and efficacy' (Greene, 1985, p. 111) in which I was brought up. I 'participated in the shaping of literacy', to enable my students to enter a field of possibilities. This was realized because I chose to negate the contradictions that I had experienced as a teacher-educator. I believe that, when we transform our practice and strive to answer the question 'how can I improve my practice?' while holding on to our values, we are negating that contradiction. In the same way that I look at the word 'democracy' as a verb, I also believe we should see values as not only nouns but also as verbs. For example, 'care' is both a noun and a verb and I believe we should see 'freedom' as an action of releasing undue restrictions and a process of emancipation.

As a rule, my approach to creativity is perceived more as a means to an end than as the goal itself (Rawal, 2016). However, in this workshop creativity was the goal. I worked on a pre-vocational education programme in order to set an example by carrying out an act of responsibility. Through my way of teaching I hoped that children and young people would not be looked on merely as 'human resources' for policy-implementation, in order to support the economic growth of our countries. We need to break the 'inertia of habit' (Dewey, 1934). We need to question the taken-for-granted, and begin 'imagining that things can be otherwise'. Our 'social imagination is the first step towards acting on the belief that they can be changed' (Greene, 1995, p. 22). And then, when 'the great dark birds of history' scream and plunge into 'my personal weather', I will not be standing alone saying 'I'.

'There can be no final solution, but there is time – always time – to reject somnolence, to choose to begin' (Greene, 2010). When Nima told me that Heral 'had become very confidence but sadly has not had more opportunity to learn further so she has become quiet', I immediately thought the following:

- What can I do for her?
- What can I do to make my pre-vocational education sustainable?
- What more can I do to move the concerned ministries?

- What can I do so that I can help fulfil the dreams of little girls like Heral, who choreographed little dances while listening to the songs played on distant radios we can barely hear; and support little girls like Srujan who filmed the dances using still-cameras on a video-mode to become professionals?



**Video 17:** [Heral](#)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sVyZQq3EN78>

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## Appendix 1: Poem

In these years, people will say, we lost track  
of the meaning of *we*, of *you*  
we found ourselves  
reduced to *I*  
and the whole thing became  
silly, ironic, terrible;  
we were trying to lead a personal life  
and, yes, that was the only life  
we could bear witness to  
But the great dark birds of history screamed and plunged  
into our personal weather  
They were headed somewhere else but their beaks and pinions drove  
along the shore, through the rags of fog  
where we stood, saying *I*  
(Adrienne Rich, 1995)

## Appendix 2: Workshop Curriculum

# on all days

- Warm up games to begin on all days except when actual shooting starts
- Reflections on all days including shooting days
- Active games to the end of the day except on days when we start shooting the film.

Day 1

- Unit 1: Understanding films or moving images texts
  - Elements of a film
  - What is needed to make films
  - The different kind of films or moving images texts
  - Various people involved in the profession of creating films or moving images texts
- Unit 2: Story-telling – using tableaux / freeze frame / statues to tell a story
- Unit 3: Using a director's viewfinder
- Unit 4 : Instant acting
- Unit 5 : Seeing films – films will be shown nearly every day if possible

Day 2

- Unit 6: Introduction to digital storytelling
- Unit 7: What the camera sees: shot size and angles

Day 3

- Unit 8: Storyboard
- Unit 9: Editing
- Unit 10: Narration of the story for the final film

## Day 4

- Unit 11: Deciding our role
- Unit 12: Getting on with film-making – film production
- Unit 13: Script Development

## Day 5

- Unit 12: Getting on with film-making- film production (continued)
- Unit 13: Script Development (continued)

## Day 6, 7 and 8

- Unit 14: Shooting the film

## Day 9

- Unit 15: Editing the film
- Unit 16: Creating publicity material
- Unit 17: Seeing the film

### Appendix 3: Games

#### I am ... and I like

Objectives: Warm up and first step of expressing about oneself.

Procedures: Stand in a circle. One by one each child steps into the circle and says his/her name and then tells the class what she/he likes.

Variation: The second round of this game entailed saying one's name aloud and striking a pose or making a statue.

#### Most of all –

Objectives: *getting to know each other*

You need: matches/beans/lentils/chickpeas *etc.*

Method: Each gets three to five beans. The group members are supposed to have fast changing conversations in which the words 'yes' and 'no' are forbidden. The person who says yes or no must hand over one of his beans to his partner.

#### Changing Objects

Objectives: *getting to know each other*

Each participant gets an object (there should not be too many similar ones). Then the group moves about the room. Each participant introduces him/herself to another person, handing over the object and receiving one in return. (*'I am Renu and this is my comb'. 'I am Urvashi and this is my watch'.*) Then she carries on walking and says his name, then hands over the object, and names its owner. (*'I am Renu and this is Urvashi's watch'.*) Carry on doing this for a while. Finally the group forms a circle and the objects should be handed over to the people to whom they belong.

#### All same change places

All the participants form a circle and sit on chairs / stand in circle. One participant is identified to be 'it' and stands in the middle of the circle. The facilitator calls out for some common feature/thing in the group and the participants that share that thing/feature run and exchange places with each other. The 'it' has to try and grab a place. Some possible features or things can be number of siblings, participants from the same village or town, participants with the same colour clothes, participants with long hair, participants with bangles / anklets *etc.*

**Reflections:** Playing this game we can realise that we have so much in common with others in our group.

### **Walk**

There are many different ways to walk. The walk can be changed in a number of different distinctive ways. They are listed below but in the lesson they are generally introduce one at a time, with time for reflection in between. As the students walk the side-coach directs e.g. 'Don't stop! Keep walking!' – through the space. Side-coach them through each of these changes – e.g. 'Okay, everyone, now let us walk on hot, hot sand....it is really hot...move as fast as you can so as avoid getting burnt.'

Change the size of the movement, which can be made wider or narrower, higher or lower. One can make the walk wider or narrower by widening or narrowing the stance and swinging the arms further away or closer to the body. One can make the walk higher by walking on tiptoe ... 'Walk as high, as tall, as you can! Now let's see how low to the ground you can be and still walk...'

Change the speed of the movement: A movement can be made slower or faster.

Change the mood of the movement: Side coach by saying 'how would you walk if you were happy?'...' You are called to the principal's office...you are in trouble how would you walk'... 'think of your body how will it move...?'

Change the body tension while in movement: the muscles can be loose and relaxed or tense.

Change to an animal walk: move like a rabbit or an elephant.

### **The Detective and Murder**

Objective: practise eye-contact, warm-up fun game.

Procedures: all the participants form a circle; one of the participants will be identified as the 'Killer' who will murder/kill the participants by winking at them. The person killed will scream and fall down with great drama. All participants are asked to keep looking around the circle and try to establish eye contact with others. The murderer will be chosen by the facilitator so that no one besides the murderer and the facilitator knows who is chosen. This can be done by the facilitator taking a round behind their circle and identifying the killer by a small pat, pinch *etc.* so that no one gets to know.

Another participant from the group is identified to act as the detective, who will stand in the middle of the circle and try to catch the killer as she/he winks.

Once the killer is caught, she/he will become the detective and the facilitator will identify a new killer.

### **Bottle Game**

Objective: leadership, fun game

The participants are divided in three groups and made to stand in a line. Ensure that there is enough space between the two lines to facilitate quick movement and/or running. Take three bottles which have to be passed from the first person in the line to the last person in the line. The style of passing the bottle is explained – the first person passes it between her/his legs to the second person; the second person passes it from above her/his shoulders to the third person; the third person passes it from between her/his legs to the fourth person; fourth person passes it to the fifth person from above her/his shoulders to the sixth person and so on. The last person in the line who receives the bottle runs to take the first place and the game begins again. The game is complete when the first person to pass the bottle is back on her/his place in the front of the line.

## **Appendix 4: List of Films**

- Best Child labour Film <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=E7f7q8n0abo>
- Ambu [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXb-yEXw\\_9A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FXb-yEXw_9A)
- "Imagination" - Short Film that explores a child's imagination  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bZPoOMfsVg>
- Art of Sitting <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qpBWgMKaH9w>
- The Vagabond <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9dVjXN1vmn4>
- The Rink <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HZrPM1iUCAM>
- The Pawnshop <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvXs66gqowJ8>
- Making of Bahubali <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ab86hTGc0cU>
- Making of Bahubali VFX Breakdown  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GF8yAwf0f4k>
- Avatar VFX Breakdown <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OJ1JzYPj0>

## **Appendix 5: Glossary**

- **Pre-vocational education** is mainly designed to introduce participants to the world of work and to prepare them for entry into further vocational or technical programmes.
- The **Sex Ratio** is a term used to define number of females per 1000 males. It is a source to find the equality of males and females in a society at a given period of time.
- The **Child Sex Ratio** is defined as the number of females per thousand males in the age group 0–6 years in a human population.
- **Evil Social practices** or ‘social evil’ was a term coined by Gandhiji. Evil, according to Gandhi, was a by-product of the social structure. India is facing a large number of social issues such as the caste-system, child-labour, illiteracy, gender-inequality, superstitions, religious conflicts, and many more.
- **NVQEF** National Vocational Quality Education Framework

- **Diwali** one of the most important Hindu festivals

### **Film Terms**

- **Angle / Camera angle:** the viewpoint from which the subject of the shot is depicted
- **Art Director / department:** the person responsible for the look and feel of the film's set; responsible for set construction, design and props (number, type and placement).
- **Blocking:** deciding where actors will move and stand so that lighting and camera placement can be set.
- **Close-up:** a shot in which the subject is larger than the frame, revealing much detail.
- **Cross dissolve:** a dissolve is a gradual transition from one image to another; it is term used in editing.
- **Cut:** a change in camera angle or placement, location, or time. 'Cut' is called during filming to indicate that the current take is over.
- **Director:** the principal creative artist on a movie set; a director is usually (but not always) the driving artistic source behind the filming process, and communicates to actors the way that he/she would like a particular scene played.
- **DoP (Director of photography):** the head of the photography of the entire film; supervises all cinematographers and Camera Operators.
- **Editor:** the film editor works with the raw footage, selecting shots and combining them into sequences to create a finished motion picture.
- **High / Top angle shot:** when the scene is filmed from above; often to make the subject(s) appear smaller.
- **Low angle shot:** when the scene is filmed from below; often to make the subject(s) appear larger.
- **Mid / Medium shot:** camera shot from medium distance, typically above the waist; allows viewers to see body language, but not facial expressions.
- **Raw Footage:** footage is the raw, unedited material as it had been originally filmed by a movie camera or recorded by a video camera.
- **Recce:** derived from reconnaissance; refers to a pre-filming visit to a location to determine its suitability for shooting.
- **Screenplay:** a script written to be produced as a movie, providing a detailed roadmap for the director and other members of the film-making team; the screenplay includes all the words spoken by the characters (dialogue), stage directions that indicate all nonverbal actions by characters, elements of setting, sound effects, design and music – in short, the screenwriter writes everything intended for an audience to see and hear.
- **Storyboard:** sequence of pictures created to describe each scene in the film production; usually indicates camera angle and movement, blocking of actors, and size of the frame.
- **VFX-Visual effects:** the processes by which imagery is created or manipulated outside the context of a live action shot.