

Voices from the Field 2021

Field Report from the Teachers and Administrators

A report by **Udaya Gaonkar**

Preamble:

I would like to share with you certain points that have emerged on interviewing 16 teachers among the 41 Grantees (who received grants under the auspices of IFA from 2013 up to last year) to manage Art-integrated projects under the Learn-Teach program. I have also spoken with officers of the Education Department who indirectly participated in these projects. I have known many of the interviewed teachers and their work. The experience of my having personally worked in a couple of teachers' projects may have its influence on this report. All the interviews have been interviewed over phone.

The effect of COVID 19 on the school activities is hard even to imagine. But those whom I have interviewed had their project planning completed during the pre-Covid period and this has been the reason for not being affected so much by the pandemic. All the same, we may expect huge changes in the academic interaction pattern during the coming years. Market interests may use the situation created by Covid to promote long-distance learning. If it turns out so, this will have adverse effects on art-integrated education that guarantees experiential learning. Possibility may pose itself of our adapting future projects to the aesthetical restructuring of the ways in which arts are going to be performed and appreciated.

This interview is carried out with the intent and expectation that art is within the reach of all the senses and is going to play a part in the uplifting of society.

List of grantees interviewed:

Serial no.	Name	School	Motive of the project
1	Dr. Ningu Solagi	Govt .Higher Primary School, Mundaragi, Gadag	Games played at home
2	Rajiva Gowda MJ	Kuvempu Centenary School, Chimangala, Chikkaballapura	Math and Language – integrated learning
3	Sadananda Byndoor	Govt. High School, Koni, Udupi	Reading Poetry and Child's expression
4	Kaladhara S	Govt. Higher Primary School, Kannamangala, Chikkaballapura	Reflective Reading and Writing
5	Ashok Totanalli	Govt. High School, Jakanapalli,	Doddata – Re-discovering Local Art

		Kalaburgi	
6	Gururaja L	Govt. High School, Jahagir, Gudadoora, Koppala	Theatre and Learning
7	Satyana Koderi	Govt. Higher Primary School, Maravanthe, Dakshina Kannada	Art based learning in post Nali-Kali classes
8	Ravichandra D	Govt. Higher Primary School, Malkapura, Raichur	Learning through Folksongs
9	Kotresha B	CRP, Pagadadinni, Raichur	Enhancing interest in reading and writing through Children's News Paper
10	Gundurao Desai	Govt. Higher Primary School, Maski, Raichur	Reading of stories by Masti Venkatesha Iyengar and creative expression through short stories.
11	Prajna Ganapathi Hegade	Govt High School, Bisilukoppa, Haveri	Sannata-Documenting Local Culture
12	Madhukara ML	Govt. High School, Gumbali, Chamaraja Nagara	Art of Puppetry-making in school contest and Exhibition
13	Bharathi A	Govt. Lower Primary School, Koppa Chikkamagaluru	Children's Creative Writing
14	Kavya	Artist, Bidadi	Learning through Movement Art
15	Nagaraja M Hudeda	Govt. Lower Primary School, Bylandora Gouliwada, Uttara Kannada	Documentation of Gouli Dialect words 'Shabda Kosha'
16	Gangappa SL	Govt. Lower Primary School, Kiravatti, Uttara Kannada	Stories of Gouli community migrations

Participants/ officers who took part in the interview			
	Name	Post	District
	Keerthivathi	Special Teacher	Dharwad
	RD Ravindra	Teacher/Education Coordinator	Chikkamagaluru
	Gopala Shetty	BEO (Retd.), Kundapura	Udupi
	Shobha Shetty	Lecturer, DIET	Udupi

	NR Hegade	BEO, Yellapura	Sirasi Educational
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Method

We were ready with ten questions to interact with the teachers, artists and authorities (list given above) who participated in the projects. Although the questionnaire had ten important questions, because of the informal character of the interview, sub-questions, auxiliary questions too were part of this discussion. Based on the objectives of the questions, we could group them as below:

- Questions aimed at understanding the projects of teachers who were grantees
- Questions aimed at understanding the challenges and possibilities at the stage of implementation
- Questions aimed at understanding the support provided by the IFA
- Questions aimed at understanding the project's impact and reflection
- Questions aimed at understanding how the grant should be in the future

After grasping the answers in their entirety, we have grouped them as given below so as to facilitate study.

Observations

The broad form of Art-integrated Learning Projects and their effect

a. Revival of Traditional Arts:

Of the teachers who interacted with us, three have been successful in integrating, through their projects, local theatre forms to a way of learning. Ashok Thotnalli introduced the *Dodddata* and Madhukara ML introduced the Leather Puppetry and Prajna the *Sannata* to children. They have given children the required training to perform, and have through this, rejuvenated the local heritage. They have given children opportunity to interact with and get trained by the local artists so that they could exhibit these special art forms. This interaction has paved the way to a very creative way of learning and through this method learning could succeed in its different dimensions and it has contributed in its own way for learning to progress beyond the objectives prescribed by the syllabus. The efforts of Ashok Thotnalli to transfer the art of *Dodddata* from senior artists (who are like the last links of a generation that has been traditionally performing the art form of *Dodddata*) has not only activated the cultural memory of the entire town but has also helped for the emergence of respect for their own art-tradition in the children of the town. Thotnalli felt that the process has done the work of building a bridge between the school and the community by inviting artists to visit the school. After local artists were invited to school to teach *Sannata* to children, the *Sannata* performances, that had stopped years ago, picked up again, recalls Prajna. Gururaj has, through children, rejuvenated the expression of a special dance form we see during Muharram observances and the *Sobane* lilt of pure folk tradition.

Education within Community

The nourishment of coexistence that exists between communities is a dominant aim of art education. It is the method art-integrated education, too. Madhukara told us that he not only

brought the Leather Puppeteers to school, but also ensured that school children engage themselves in the process of puppet making—right from drying of leather to giving puppets the final shape. They used language, math, science and social science texts to prepare a theatre-text and turned it into a puppet show. As children get engaged at all levels, this has been formalized as another method of managing school learning. Instead of leather, synthetic materials too have been used to modernize this art form. All the four teachers mentioned above are teachers of theatre arts. Professional dance teacher Kavya says that through the art form of Bharatanatyam, one could bring about qualitative changes in the overall expression of children. Facial expressions of children became more suffused with confidence and are seen to be exhibiting the right body language, she told us. Other teachers of the school too are in agreement.

Ravichandra D of Malkapura School is known for his book *Makkala Mandara*, a children's magazine. He invites local artists who have kept the tradition of folk songs, folk art alive and has made use of this art associated project to explore folklore with children. This process has made the entire town to become active and has discovered new possibilities for children's expression. Ravichandra reminisced that parent who had abstained from meetings, even when invited, came of themselves, thanks to this project, offering suggestions and instructions. They were seen involved in teaching children the art that resides in them with enthusiasm.

Gangappa SL and Nagaraja Huded teaching in Kiravatti Taluk in Uttara Kannada, have been active in documenting the culture of a special community of Gouligas, inhabiting the sphere of their action. They have, by carrying out this project, made an attempt at culturally involving the members of the community visiting their school premises. Huded has not only got the textbook songs translated into Gouliga dialect, but has composed a Gouliga traditional dance too for each of them. Gangappa has documented the experiences of migrant Gouligas, originally from the Maharashtra region. Nagaraj Huded says that these two activities are the first studies on the Gouliga society of Uttara Kannada.

Education that fuses aesthetic elements in Play and Lessons

Dr. Ningu Solagi has, through the project of "Games played at home", documented the folk games that the children of North Karnataka play. In this process of documentation children have learnt games, that were not in vogue, from their elders and have enjoyed playing and continue to play them during their free time. Dr. Ningu Solagi with the help of teachers of Mundargi Taluk, has documented the educational significance of these games. Smt. Keerthivathi, a special teacher of inclusive education, Dharawad block, observes that this is an incomparable project. She also told us that the teachers of Dharawad and Gadag too, apart from those of Mundaragi Taluk, are making use of these games, with hardly any changes, as activities to develop and strengthen some specific capacities in students at the Nali-Kali level. The game of "Sari-Besa" played using Tamarind seeds is an instance. A child playing this game grasps a handful of Tamarind leaves in its hand. The child playing with him has to guess whether the number of seeds in the first child's hand is even or odd. To check the correctness of the answer, the first child goes on grouping the seeds into groups of two and if nothing eventually remains to be grouped concludes that the number is even and if only one remains in the end, the number is odd. If the second child's guess is right, then all the seeds belong to it. The second child, now, continues the game. This game, integrated into it the Tamarind tree, the importance of its cultivation and all the cultural memories associated with it, is played over and over at school. To have documented hundreds of such games, re-introduced them to children and to

have popularized them by sharing among the district's teachers is not only educationally important, but as a special effort in keeping the local culture alive this project is important, appreciates Keerthivathi. The fact that each and every game of this kind is also an expression of the child's artistic temperament is what makes these games special.

The National Curriculum Framework-2005, while discussing art education, rightly points out that art forms of popular and ostentatious types are being encouraged of late. To base ourselves on the cultural memory to nurture artistic beauty is essential even to obtain the inspiration of the soil. We may remind ourselves here that NCF stresses on the necessity of learning methods involving visual and performing arts.

Projects that got directly associated with learning

Rajiv Gowda has, with his efforts, broken down the walls between subjects and made an attempt to make knowledge holistic by integrating Mathematics with Languages. He has gone further and designed an alternative textbook based on this principle. Sadananda Byndoor has attempted to bring out the subtle insights that reading of poetry opens up in other fields and in expression. The process that started with the running of workshops on writing poems and stories went on to bring out a magazine of children's contributions. Children were trained for theatrical expression of poetry too. I too have closely watched his efforts during my tenure as the Education Coordinator at the Block Education Office in Kundapura. Block Resource Officer Shri Gopal Shetty and the Block Resource Centre's Smt Shobha Shetty recalled that they too were involved in this project. They both feel that in this stifling situation wherein schools have become tuition centers, these activities make children breathe novelty. Gundurao Desai of Maski gave an impetus to reading of literature by motivating students to read short stories in Kannada of the incomparable story teller Masti Venkatesh Iyengar. This reading also provided inspiration to weave stories based on children's day-to-day experiences, says Gundurao Desai. In the projects of Sadananda Byndoor and Gundurao Desai can be seen efforts to make children's expression responsive through literary creation.

Kotresha B, Kaladhar, and Bharathi in their projects have attempted to make children discover a new world through writing. Through Pencil magazine, Kotresha, who has made children's writings available to all literates of the town, adds that this magazine has connected the whole town together. Town's artists, Town's events, its culture, special cuisine, temples, mosques, historic monuments, trees, rivers and streams have all become food for children's writing. To do this, children had to interview a lot of people. This project has influenced children in many dimensions. This has given a sense of respectability to the work of children. This has made the residents of the town feel proud about the children, about the school, about town's people, traditions and culture, says Kotresha. He also recollects how an article on the Muharram practices of the town once allayed a possible communal flare up. The fact that he is a recipient of the National Youth Award because of the Pencil Magazine was proudly revealed by Kotresha. He says the donation by IFA has made all this possible. *Shamanthi*, a children's magazine designed by Kaladhar, has shown a lot of concern in encouraging children's creative expression. Kaladhar is of the opinion that art gives a sense of enjoyment to children. It makes children experience their time. Art gets merged in one's character so that a life of art can be lived for a long time. His standpoint is that this project has neither the goal nor the insistence to achieve specific formal learning through art. Despite this, he agrees that these attempts have raised the level of child's self-confidence and expression. It has, at the same time,

encouraged indirectly their learning too, he says. Bharathi of Chikkamagaluru, instead of assigning children's writings to small magazines, had them printed on large flex banners to be displayed in BEO and Panchayat offices. She kept changing these displays periodically and brought to vogue the concept of a Flex Magazine. According to Education Coordinator (of Koppa block) and a resource person of "Nali-Kali" fame, RD Ravindra, this is a novel attempt. Not only the writings of little children of primary schools have become available to all through this Flex Magazine, they have filled all with a sense of wonderment. He feels that the fact that children of this school participated in the state level Children's Literary Fest and a student by name Impana of the school secured the Extraordinary Talent Award is an accomplishment of the Learn-Teach project. Publishing the writings of children in their own handwriting has contributed to the handwriting of the children of this school becoming prettier, Bharati pines.

Challenges and limitations

Projects managed by the fifteen Grantees that I contacted for interviewing are not the representative projects of Art-integrated education of the Learn-Teach program. I list some things that I have observed keeping in mind too that these interviewees were handpicked randomly.

Visual arts, theatre and other performing arts have a much better scope in refining and enriching children's artistic expression. Their use can bring about multi-dimensional study and results. In addition to this, to manage these arts there is a need for adequate funds. As per NCF 2005, any art education such as this will naturally be an art-integrated education. Not only does this make children learn to savor their aesthetic experience and theory, this opens up to them a perspective of a different form and a different flair. This gives scope to continue this art form as a topic of special study too.

Tradition of occupation is an important and productive art form. Tradition of occupation has its significance even as a study local technology, local raw materials and local cultures. There is a need to encourage grantees to select projects that include these. We need to develop the perspective of seeing occupation as a part of art. In the coming days, we can redress the lack of projects that include its creative and aesthetic elements.

When activities take on the form of a study, there is a possibility that contributions to the main purpose of children's artistic expression may dwindle. Though through the project many Socio-cultural objectives have been met, the need to enrich children's expression through purely aesthetic things remains.

Projects in performing arts, like the theatre, are designed only by the theatre teachers. The success of this type of projects has shown that there is scope for IFA to support them so that others too can manage them. Besides, IFA can help in eliminating obstacles or managerial and academic limitations that some teachers of general subjects (like Sadananda Byndoor, Satyanarayana Koderi and others of the list provided above), though trained in theatre, are facing.

Project Implementation – notes and suggestions:

- RD Ravindra feels that if the grant amount is decided on the needs of the project, it is possible to reach even more beneficiaries. He may have made this statement keeping in

mind that many grantees have carried out such activities without grants in the past. If more teachers get monetary help, more students can be reached out.

- Regular evaluations and evaluations with lesser intervals between them may make the aim and efficiency more exact. Many grantees desire continuous feedback from the part of IFA. They desire to be ascertained that the grants received have been utilized well.
- After receiving the grants, five grantees have confided that there have been, between them and other school teachers, misgivings and feelings of jealousy. There is need to create an understanding in each and every school regarding this. This problem has not surfaced in a lower primary school with only two teachers.

Probable New activities for Kali Kalisu projects

- Each town has a store of memory of its traditional knowledge. There is need to pool together and document this kind of knowledge. Things like quilt stitching, worship of guardian spirits, home remedies are all in consonance with art. Documentation of oral tradition too is art-integrated education.
- A town itself is a repertoire of different experiences. To collect its art forms with the help of digital technology and to broadcast through YouTube and other social media channels.
- Floating of a channel focusing on the town's culture.
- Broadcasting school's educational activities on YouTube Kids channel.
- Editing online magazines.
- Human Library: conducting interviews of people, video graphing their skills and publishing the same in blogs.
- Using the possibilities of children's voice to podcast speeches, puzzles, songs, humor, stories and other forms.
- Decorating and beautifying the town's library, meeting places, bus stands and other public places using local art forms.
- Documentation and exhibition of the variety in local cuisine
- Video graphing local religious and cultural festivities, carnivals and a written documentation of the same.
- There is no occupation other than farming that is integrated so well with art. A digital documentation and an exhibition of those is desirable.

The foregoing notes have as their basis interaction with grantees and other partners. Most of these grantees are teachers and I have to admit, that my having a foreknowledge of their work might have influenced the opinions and suggestions offered here.

To have involved me in a work like this has not only extended the scope of my understanding but has also given an inspiration to my own work.

Thanking you,

Udaya Gaonkara
Government High School, Siddhapura,
Dakshina Kannada District

Annexure Va

Appendix: Questionnaire

For Teachers:

1. How does your project cultivate a learning environment that encourages risk-taking, community-building, and student engagement? What kinds of activities were offered?
2. Were the objectives of the project fulfilled successfully? What parameters do you use to measure success?
3. What was the educational outcome in your project? What tools were used in mediating these outcomes?
4. Have you personally gained from/ expanded your knowledge or practice through your project?
5. How has your project influenced the attitudes of peer teachers' and students towards arts education?
6. What are the political, social, caste, gender and economic challenges that you came across during the project?
7. How were your personal relationships and engagements with the peer team, community members, SDMC and administrators?
8. What do you think needs to be done to expand access and deepen the quality of arts education?
9. In the light of COVID 19 and this unprecedented crisis how does online pedagogy impact the sustainability of arts education?
10. What could be other creative learning systems IFA uses for arts education to enrich our work within the government school system?

For Administrators (BEO's, BRC's, BRP's, CRP's, and Head Masters)

1. How did arts integrated projects add value to the school?
2. Do you think integrating arts education with core curriculum will motivate learning abilities of a student?
3. What are the main difficulties in expanding and enriching arts education in schools?
4. Do you think that IFA's capacity building teachers' training workshops and Kalayatras are adding values to the schools?
5. What challenges do schools encounter while engaging students in community arts and their lived experiences ?
6. What role can IFA play in creating receptiveness with the policymakers about arts education?
7. What does IFA need to do to expand access and deepen the quality of arts education?
8. Other than teachers' trainings and making grants, what else can IFA do in arts education?
9. In the light of COVID 19 and this unprecedented crisis how does online pedagogy impact the sustainability of arts education?
10. What could be other creative learning systems IFA uses for arts education to enrich our work within the government school system?