

VOICES INTO ACTION: WORKSHOP ACTIVITIES WITH LEARNERS

Introduction

This document suggests activities that could be carried out in the context of a workshop with learners, ending with a group session in which participants can present their (art)work and comment on their different views. A flexible format allows for spontaneous interactions and discussions at any time.

It is often useful to document or record the activity and its outcomes for later reference. This may involve recording what participants are asked to do and the steps they take, including interactions with other participants or adults. Researchers or organisers should aim to accurately document the participants' points of view, without making their own interpretations. For activities where participants have created artworks or other artefacts, it is recommended to describe the image or process, rather than attempt to interpret the creator's meaning.

If using audio recorders, it is advisable to use several recorders to capture the individual and large-group discussions. Organisers can also take observational notes to support the recordings and the pairing of artwork with the explanations. Organisers may treat artwork/visuals as supplemental data.

As an outcome of this kind of activity, organisers can create a booklet that presents the activity outcomes, illustrated with participants' own artwork and quotes. They disseminate this among participants, their community and other relevant stakeholders.

Example of a workshop structure

Session	Activities
Workshop session 1	Welcome (introduce aim and process) Icebreaker activity Video presentation; discussion on video Activity

Session	Activities
Workshop session 2	Activity Presentation of the topic (introduce topic-related questions) Group activity Presentation of ideas from each group
Workshop session 3	Short video/input Presentation of the topic (introduce topic-related questions) Wrap up – summary of outcomes (in a presentation or orally) Decide together how the outcomes will be presented Exit cards

Activity 1: ‘Who is in your classroom?’

Working in two groups, the learners draw on a flip chart paper the different ‘types’ of learners they can find in their class.

They can have relevant visual stimuli on their table, such as the [Blob Tree](#).

Activity 2: ‘Things that I like and don’t like in school’

Working individually, learners draw themselves in the centre of an A4 page and write down different things they like doing in school or they draw themselves in places they feel most comfortable in school.

Participants can also have more time to produce a large-scale drawing about any aspect of their experience. They can produce a short story or a comic about their school.

Activity 3: ‘Photovoice’

Give participants a set of pre-selected images around the topic of discussion. The images need to express something (e.g. an experience, feeling, fact) about the topic and may be selected to encompass broad themes that the organisers want to focus on (e.g. inclusive experiences).

Divide participants into groups of 3–5 people. Each participant can choose the picture they most identify or connect with, describe it to the group and explain why they selected it. This is followed by a large group discussion, where each image is projected onto a screen and participants can comment on it.

Organisers will need to look for a portfolio of images to use in this activity, either via direct contact with artists or via research (internet, libraries, etc.). In both cases, consider the copyright of the images used.

The organisers might also choose to ask participants to bring their own image or drawing related to the topic to discuss.

Activity 4: My ‘cheers’ and ‘fears’ in school

Learners write on a post-it-note things that they are excited about in school and things that make them feel nervous in school. They place the respective post-it notes in the ‘cheers’ and the ‘fears’ list, displayed on a wall.

In a different version, coloured hoops can be put on the floor, each one representing a place or aspect of school life. A picture or symbol can reinforce each hoop’s designation. Learners can then move to ‘places’ or ‘aspects’ of school life that they like/dislike/enjoy, my best/my worst, etc. Participants can suggest topics.

Organisers can ensure that only one aspect or place is used at any one time, with learners returning to a neutral starting point after each topic. Organisers, or a team of participants, can choose how to keep a record of how many learners go to each hoop, thus giving an overview of emotions and attitudes in relation to the topics.

Learners who do not wish to move around can place items like a ball, bean bag, picture, symbol, favourite toy or coloured ribbon in the hoops.

Activity 5: ‘A soundless world’

All participants wear earplugs and watch a short, interesting video related to the topic of discussion. After the video, they are asked to write down answers to a few questions on the video they saw. Discussion follows around the different learner views on the video.

Activity 6: The ‘best lesson’

Working in small groups, the learners discuss and write down ideas and organise a short play of a best lesson.

Activity 7: ‘If I were ..., I would ...’

This can be done as a group or individual activity, depending on the participants’ preferred ways of working. The activity can be short, with each participant adding one statement to the discussion, or long, with more in-depth discussion.

In some groups, the participants can organise themselves into roles, such as interviewer, reporter, scribe, illustrator or another role, with one or two being asked to report back to

the other groups. This activity requires minimal resources, but can involve flip charts, paper and pens, individual white boards, symbols, etc.

Suggested topics around school might be: 'If I were the head teacher, I would ...'. Other examples are 'the Prime Minister', 'a sports teacher', 'the bus driver', 'serving the lunch', 'working in the library', 'teaching geography'.

The participants can choose roles and share suggestions for improvements. These can be discussed briefly or at length. Participants can state they 'agree', 'disagree' or are 'not sure' using thumbs up, smiley faces, favourite toys, cartoon characters, pop artists, etc.

Activity 8: Exit slips

Teachers use the exit slip strategy (Fisher & Frey, 2004¹) widely. Facilitators can use this strategy to conduct a workshop with learners (see [examples of exit slips](#)).

Participants respond to questions or prompts on a piece of paper (slip) that they pass to the facilitator at the end of the session (5 to 10 minutes before the end). These slips provide the facilitators with immediate information that can help them assess learners' experiences and gather feedback on the workshop.

Examples of questions could be:

- What is the most important point you remember from today's workshop?
- If you had only one request for decision-makers/policy-makers, what would it be?
- What is the biggest change you hope for?
- What are your impressions of today's workshop?
- What are you taking home from this workshop?

Activity 9: Statement activity

This activity aims to identify how learners feel about certain statements relevant to their perceived experiences in school. It involves creating a list of statements and corresponding feelings and can take about 30 minutes to conduct. Learners respond to the statements and discuss their choices.

Introduction to the activity

'These sentences are talking about how you feel about your school. These are some faces/symbols showing different types of feelings. Please read the sentences and choose the faces/symbols that come closest to showing how you feel about them.'

¹ Fisher, D. and Frey, N., 2004. *Improving Adolescent Literacy: Strategies at Work*. New Jersey: Pearson Prentice Hall

Feelings

Agree	Neither agree nor disagree	Disagree
		
		

Examples of statements

Statements	Feelings
1. I feel welcome at this school	
2. I feel proud to be a learner in this school	
3. The school makes it easy for learners with different backgrounds and abilities to come to this school	
4. When I have a problem, I ask the teachers for help	
5. Other learners help me when I am stuck with my work	
6. People at this school are friendly to me	
7. I think the teachers are fair towards learners	
8. I take part in lots of activities (in the school)	
9. In lessons, teachers are interested in my ideas	
10. Other learners listen to my ideas	
11. It's good to have learners from different backgrounds and abilities in this school	
12. When I am given homework, I usually understand what I have to do	
13. My parents/carers think this is a good school	
14. I have some close friends (in this school)	

Statements	Feelings
15. I work well with other learners	
16. I sometimes join in clubs or play sports after school	
17. My parents help me with my homework	
18. Teachers help me to learn new things that are difficult	
19. I enjoy school breaks/lunchtimes at school	
20. I am satisfied with the timetable at school	