

Our teacher development process had been more face-to-face, but COVID-19 forced us to explore other possibilities; to explore alternative methods to reach our teachers. In the early stages, we had educative conversations through teleconferencing, but this method had its limitations. There was an urgent need to find a platform to have effective communication with teachers. Finally, after much thought, Mallikarjuna Sajjan, our Cluster Resource Person (CRP) came up with an idea. 'Let us develop a simple studio from where we can communicate effectively with all our teachers', he said. Though none of us knew anything about it, we all felt that this was an innovative idea and wanted to try it out.

### Background

As social distancing became necessary for the control of COVID-19, it was equally necessary and important to keep engaging with teachers in their academic activities. At first, teachers created *WhatsApp* groups in their respective clusters, but later, to discuss and build communication channels with teachers, we started using the teleconferencing method with toll-free numbers. However, teachers said that the discussions were not effective since it was only verbal sharing. People wanted *interaction*, something visual, something more dynamic. They thought audio-video online lessons should be initiated for continuous and effective interaction. The idea was that there should be a platform where the facilitators could communicate with the teachers.

We wanted to use the blackboard (or whiteboard), teaching aids and learning materials so that the facilitators could articulate the concepts well and explain them properly. It was then that Mallikarjuna Sajjan came up with his plan of establishing a studio in the teaching-learning centre.

### Creating the studio

Generally, a studio is a place from where we can communicate with a large number of people. To make the communication effective and interesting, it is equipped with audio and visual aids, technical support to monitor the audio and visuals, different

materials to explain concepts and enhance our communication. A studio usually has an organised system of a podium, lights, camera etc to enable people to focus on different aspects and highlight the most important ones.

We did not have any of these things. We just had some space in one of the rooms in the Government Higher Primary School, Aminagad. Although all of us wanted to build a studio, with no knowledge and resources, we were struggling.

### *Building the studio*

Although we did not have a full-fledged studio, our work with the teachers had to start. As we began communicating with them, we got to know what was needed and what the shortcomings were. Immediately after every session, we would want to equip our studio with things that were needed but were not available! Every time we had online conversations, we were able to identify the flaws and set them right. After four or five online sessions, we had made some basic arrangements, such as a place for the speaker to sit and speak comfortably.

As we were filming from our mobiles the resolution was very low, so the quality of the images and sound was poor. One of our colleagues had a good mobile which he gave us. To increase the brightness, Mallikarjuna Sajjan brought a very bright lamp from home. With these changes, the visuals came out very good. Another colleague, Shivananda Sajjan, brought some tools like a tripod stand to support the camera phone.

### Initial problems

Teachers began feeling that having to listen to speakers continuously was monotonous and boring. We, as the core group, began a discussion about how to make the sessions interesting. Many ideas were shared. The most interesting suggestion was to use the projector to project images on a screen *behind* the speaker. We had a projector in the Teacher Learning Centre. All this was very exciting for us as we could experiment with many things.

### Equipping the studio

We needed the following things to create a studio:

1. Two mobile phones with good cameras
2. A tripod stand
3. Table lamps with high powered bulbs
4. Laptop and screen
5. Bluetooth headset
6. A large room where silence could be maintained for a few hours
7. Adequate TLMs

### Collaborative work

We got a lot of positive response from teachers as we improved our technology and projected relevant parts. We made interesting PowerPoint presentations and short videos. We were also able to source effective video clippings and use it in the session.

Initially, there were a lot of hurdles. For example, recordings were disrupted due to lack of coordination. We learned to work together, divide work amongst ourselves and plan systematically for coordination. We developed a very good understanding and ways of sharing amongst ourselves. We started working as a team – the studio team!

### Learnings

Besides discovering that preparation is the key to success, our other learnings were:

1. A few days prior to a session, we met and worked out the session in detail. We discussed the textbook, syllabus, content and supplementary material to be given to the facilitator. The whole team would sit together and discuss and come up with ideas to help improve the session.
2. The facilitator took the help of other resource persons and decided on the teaching aids and materials required with the core team while the others made them.
3. The team helped the facilitator to conduct a trial session before the final one; evaluated, reviewed and made suggestions for improvement. This also helped the facilitator to manage time.
4. A lot of practice was provided to the facilitator to get used to the technology: audio, video, PPT and TLMs. Team members supported this effort and provided necessary materials as and when needed.
5. We sent the link to the group so that all members

and teachers could join the discussion on time. Our members were there to assist with any problems.

6. We were able to train teachers on using technology effectively by giving them both oral and written instructions and guidance. After each meeting, elaborate oral and written reviews were given to help improve the sessions.

### Working together

Geeta Madam and Rangapura Guru, who are trained in the *Nali-Kali* methodology, took valuable sessions on collective group activities. Shashidhar, Shreyas, Geeta and Manjula Madam, the CRP and all of us formulated a timetable to discuss *Nali-Kali* and maths concepts along with the kits.

Other resource persons demonstrated alternative methods of teaching and the use of teaching aids. The teaching methods of *Nali-Kali* and the *Nali-Kali* Group Movement made teachers come up with challenging questions which led to debate and discussion. Similarly, for grades IV and V, maths kits helped in progressing from the concrete to the abstract.

### Impact of the studio

The Education Department officials were happy with the way the online sessions were conducted and the online processes on several topics have been developed for different groups. Other groups have been asked to take our help to create a studio. Along with this, the Department conducted special five-day training programmes for the teachers of *Nali-Kali* and for grades IV and V and higher primary school teachers of the *taluk* through *Google Meet* and our type of studio. The head teachers from the *taluk* have already started the process of conducting model online lessons with their school teachers.

### Way forward

The road map for the future has been thought out. These are the main features:

1. Designing different concepts to be taught through the online sessions using the studio effectively, especially primary teachers of *Nali-Kali* and teachers of grades IV and V.
2. Creating opportunities for teachers to draw up lesson plans which use the methods and aids which can be disseminated from the studio.
3. Equipping the studio with necessary materials to help in better sessions.
4. A few clusters and head teachers have shown

interest in establishing simple studios and we plan to help them do this for effective online sessions.

5. As a team, our major learning was that the entire process was mainly building our capacity in content and pedagogy. The studio just helps us to reach more teachers.



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