

## Teachers' and students' perception of Art Integration in Icchawar Block of Sehore District

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### Abstract

*Art Integrated Learning (AIL) is one of the innovative and interdisciplinary approaches in teaching various subjects which promises to inculcate 21st century skills in the students. Teachers use arts to enrich the learning experiences of students through hands on activities and to move from abstract to concrete. This paper presents the teachers' and students' perception of art integrated learning as a pedagogy as well as their opinion on Attendance, Training of Teachers, Time management, Art form, Learner participation, joyful learning, discipline, parent and community support and professional development. A qualitative survey was conducted to gather the opinion of the teachers and students on the above-mentioned issues. The teachers taught primary classes in the Icchawar Block of Sehore District, M.P. The data analysis of the results of the survey revealed that AIL is capable of bringing a positive change in learner participation, attendance, confidence, innovation, values and cooperation. Students reported joyful learning in the AIL class and welcomed the use of games and toys. However, both teachers and students reported that to inculcate critical thinking and connections to real world, AIL strategies need to be improved. An AIL framework may be prepared which can be implemented in the Icchawar Block of Sehore district for further improvement in areas like development of critical thinking and interdisciplinary relations.*

**Keywords:** Art Integrated learning, joyful learning, teacher's perception, student's perception

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### Introduction

Art integrated Learning (AIL) is placed at the center of innovative ideas for developing the 21st century skills like critical thinking, creativity, communication, and collaboration in children. There are many researches that have proved the benefit of art integrated learning on students. Research has proven that AIL leads to improvement of conceptual understanding, academic improvement, increased student achievement, increased science vocabulary in different subjects like geography, science and also artificial intelligence (Sharma and Kaur, 2021; Basu and Mohalik, 2020).

Apart from this AIL is also known to stimulate a positive school climate (Brouillette &

Jennings, 2010; Brown & Sax, 2012; Chermi, 2014; Lynch, 2007; Snyder et al., 2014) and also provide opportunities for higher-level thinking. In the AIL class, students gain more autonomy in learning which helps to develop critical thinking and creativity [Liu and Lin (2014)].

Art integration promotes experiential and, joyful learning in different subjects. Integration of arts in learning may be difficult for teachers as they move from traditional or rote learning in their core subjects. Importance of AIL has also increased as we move from STEM to STEAM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics). Teachers have benefited from the use of AIL (Bresler, 2011; Iiyambo, 2005) in planning teaching-learning strategies.

It has definitely helped them to teach more rigorously and adopt new strategies for teaching-learning. However, teachers also face many obstacles in the successful implementation of AIL in their classrooms.

Art integrated learning is classified into visual arts and performing arts. Visual art comprises of drawing, painting, mask making, puppet making, clay work, visual arts, and crafts, etc. Performing arts consist of a variety of folk and classical forms of music and dance, theatre, puppetry and story-telling. Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal conducted the AIL training workshop in the year 2018. In a short period of time, 681 teachers were trained on different techniques of integrating AIL in the classroom. The duration of training was from 16th July 2018 to 1st September 2018 (48 days). In 2019-20 a concurrent evaluation study was conducted for the Art Integrated Learning Program which is ongoing in the Icchawar Block of Sehore district, M.P. Improvement in the quality of school education through innovations in the teaching-learning process has been the priority areas of NCERT. Various workshops and training programs are regularly conducted by NCERT and its constituents. A survey of the learning levels of students in basic school subjects was done through learning outcome-based tests developed for National Achievement Survey in the year 2017-18. It was found that the achievement of students especially in mathematics, science and social science was below the expected level. Hence, to improve the learning achievement, it was decided by NCERT and RIE, Bhopal to train the teachers in creating AIL resources and integrating AIL in the classroom.

In this paper, we present the result of perception of teachers and students about using AIL pedagogy in the classrooms in Icchawar Block of Sehore district, M.P. These results can further help in the improvement of the program.

## Methodology

In this study, a research design involving qualitative analyses has been used to study the teacher's perception about AIL. As pointed out earlier, AIL was implemented in the Icchawar Block of Sehore district since 2018 onwards.

To best assess the impact of an initiative, baseline data and suitable comparison groups are required. Unfortunately, neither baseline data related to teacher aspects, classroom processes and students' achievement prior to the implementation of AIL nor a suitable comparison group was available. A total of 681 teachers were trained in 2018 in different batches which extended for a period of 48 days.

## Objectives

- To study the perception of teachers and students about implementation of AIL on different dimensions
- To identify bottleneck vis-a-vis suggestion for further improving the implementation of the programme.
- To provide a framework for the effective implementation of AIL in the schools of the study area i.e. Icchawar Block of M.P

## Operational Definitions

**Art Integrated Learning** - Art Integrated Learning (AIL) is an educational approach that combines the study of traditional academic subjects with the arts. It seeks to enhance the learning experience by integrating various art forms, such as visual arts, music, drama, dance, and literature, games into the curriculum across different subject areas like mathematics, science, social studies, and language.

**Qualitative Analysis**- Qualitative analysis is a research methodology used to explore and understand phenomena in-depth by examining non-numeric data, such as words, images, and observations.

**Interview Schedule-** An interview schedule is a structured plan or guide used by researchers or interviewers to conduct interviews in a systematic and organized manner.

**Focus Group Discussion-** A Focus Group Discussion (FGD) is a qualitative research method that involves a small group of individuals (usually 6 to 10 participants) engaging in an open and interactive discussion on a specific topic or research question.

**Bottleneck-** A bottleneck refers to a point of congestion or restriction in a system that hinders its overall performance or capacity.

## Research Design

### Sample

10 clusters of Ichhawa block were selected for the study. In each cluster five schools participated in the survey. Hence data was collected from 50 schools. A sample of 223 teachers and 59 students belonging to different clusters was used for the study. The clusters that were included in the study were Balondiya, Bhaukhedi, Brijesh Nagar, Dewadiya, Dhamanda, Ichhawa, Kheri, Ramnagar, Semli Jaded, Veerpur Dam.

### Tools

Finalization of the tools was done through a workshop with experts of the field. Experts had validated the tools through content analysis according to the objectives of the study. Hence the tools were validated through content validation method. Based on the evaluation questions and objectives, the following tools were developed to collect the data from teachers and students.

#### Interview Schedule for Teachers

The main aim of this tool was to examine various aspects of AIL and to ascertain the awareness of the teachers about of the

program. The tool has questions, which are open-ended in nature. Interviews were conducted privately on the school premises with AIL teachers (teaching classes 1-5). All interviews were undertaken in Hindi, and it took about 20-30 minutes to conduct each interview. The interview schedules were mostly semi-structured, containing many open-ended questions and hence aiming to collect qualitative data regarding various aspects of AIL. The field staff recorded the information during interviews on the prescribed schedules.

The interview schedule for teachers was designed to assess teachers' perceptions about various components of the AIL such as, training, learning materials, and evaluation strategies. Teachers were also asked for their opinion on the impact of AIL on schools and classrooms, teachers, children, community and achievement. Challenges faced during implementation were also probed.

#### Interview schedules for Focus Group Discussions

Interviews for Focus Group Discussions were conducted for students. Students were asked to give their opinions on various aspects of learning in AIL classrooms such as subjects taught using AIL, learning materials, classroom processes and assistance available to them. The interview schedules were mostly semi-structured, containing many open-ended questions and hence aiming to collect qualitative data regarding various aspects of AIL. The field staff recorded the information during interviews on the prescribed schedules.

## Results

Art integrated learning (AIL) is pedagogy of experiential learning. The effect and impact of this pedagogy cannot be achieved merely through theoretical interactions. For 100 per cent participation of the learner and quality

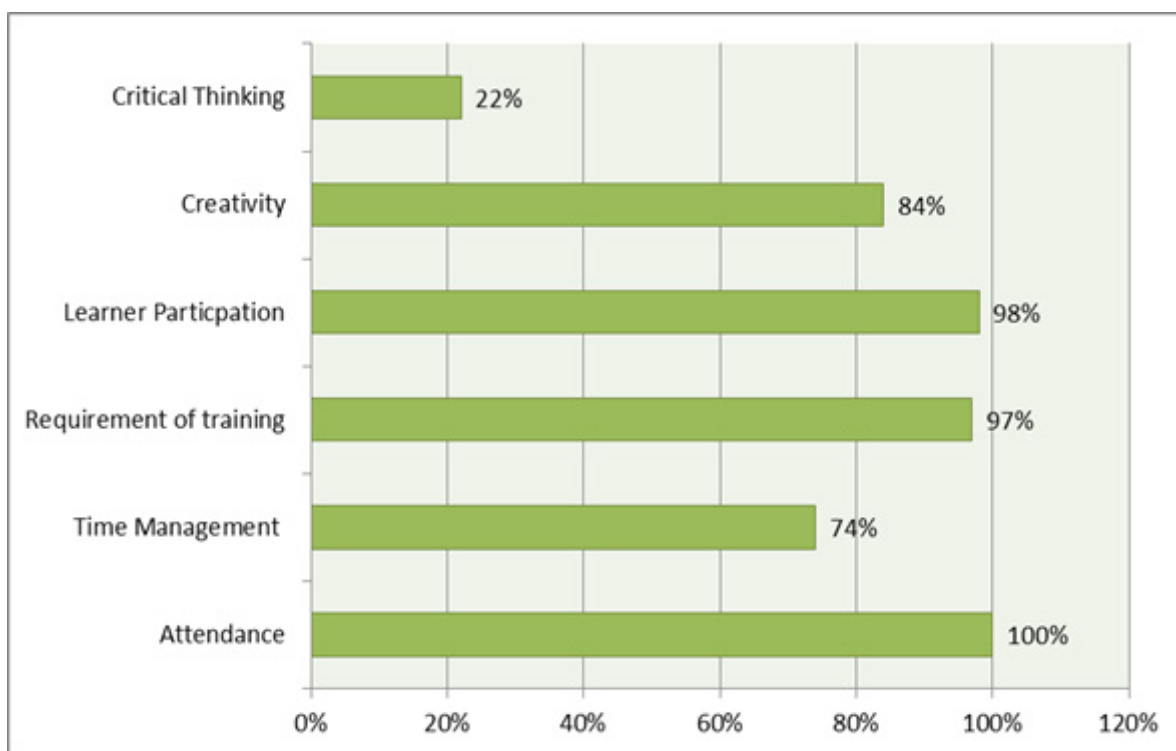
learning, it has to be a completely hands-on practice — a pedagogy, where art becomes the basis of teaching-learning process. An opportunity for students to experience visual as well as performing arts to build their understanding of different concepts and subjects. Understanding of ‘Arts’ as a pedagogical tool and its impact on the holistic development of a child is an area of study. Skill of planning and organizing age-appropriate art experiences to make learning of different subjects appealing is a challenging task.

AIL utilizes the possibilities of Visual (painting, photography, print-making, stage-art, clay-modeling, sculpture, applied art and craft) as well as Performing arts (dance, vocal music, instrumental music, theatre, puppetry, mime, storytelling,

martial arts, magic performance, cinema etc). In AIL, we work with the arts at the center of the curriculum. The abstract concepts of subject are explored using different art forms.

### ***Perception of Teachers***

Teachers gave their opinion on various benefits of integrating arts in their lessons as shown in Figure 1. The major areas which had substantially improved were learner participation, attendance and creativity of the students. However, a large number of teachers believed that critical thinking of the students had not improved despite of using the AIL pedagogy. 97 per cent teachers felt that they would require training for better art integration.



*Figure 1: Perception of teachers on various attributes*

### ***Development of communication skills and cooperation through AIL***

A majority of teachers felt that through AIL lessons, better values have been

imbibed in the students and cooperation among them has improved. However, the communication and leadership skills of the students would require further improvement (Figure 2).

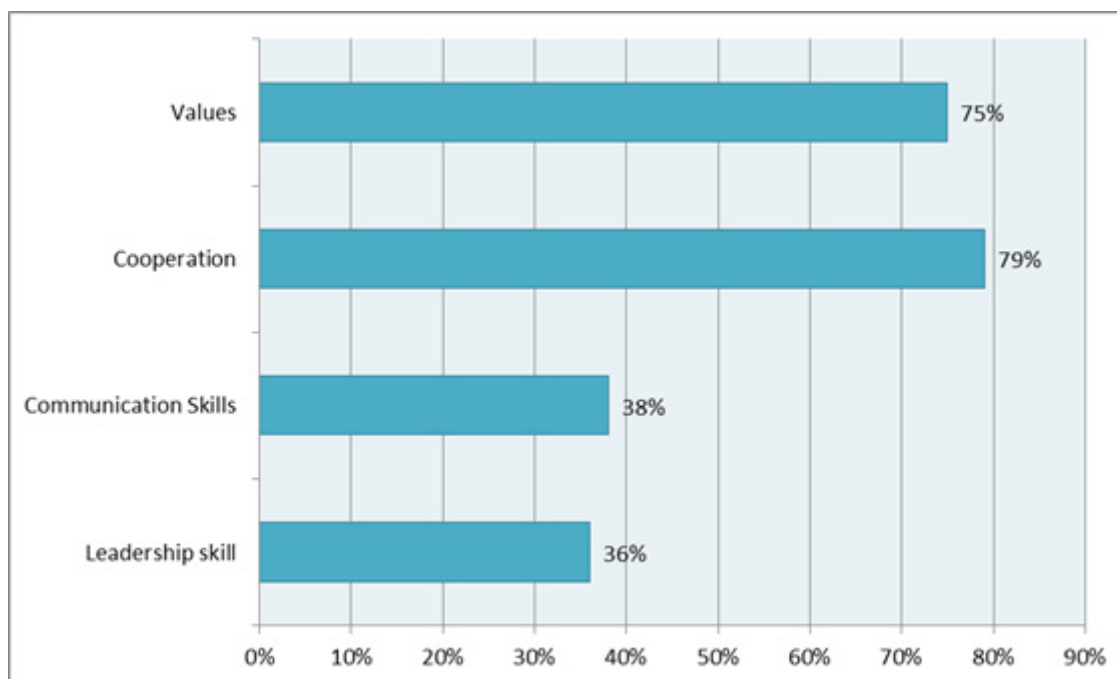


Figure 2: Teacher's response of development of various skills through AIL among students

### ***Discipline***

Figure 3 shows teacher's response to maintaining discipline in the AIL class. 64 per cent teachers reported that there was

no problem in maintaining discipline in the AIL class. 21 per cent said that they faced difficulty in maintaining discipline and 15 per cent said that sometimes discipline is an issue (Figure 3).

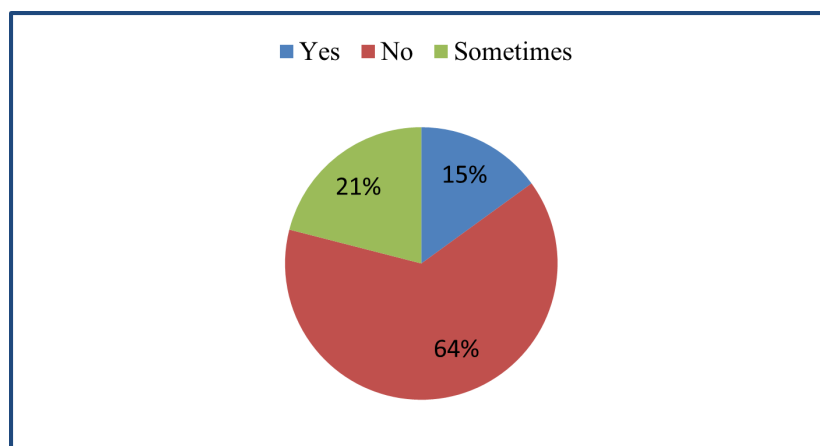


Figure 3: Discipline in the AIL class



### Professional Development of teachers

A key element in understanding teachers' perceptions of art integration lies in understanding their perceptions of their own abilities as a teacher of the arts. After receiving training on AIL teachers felt more

innovative and confident in designing the AIL lessons (Figure 4). Their leadership skills had also improved. However, they were still struggling with communication skills and understanding of technologies which needed to be improved.

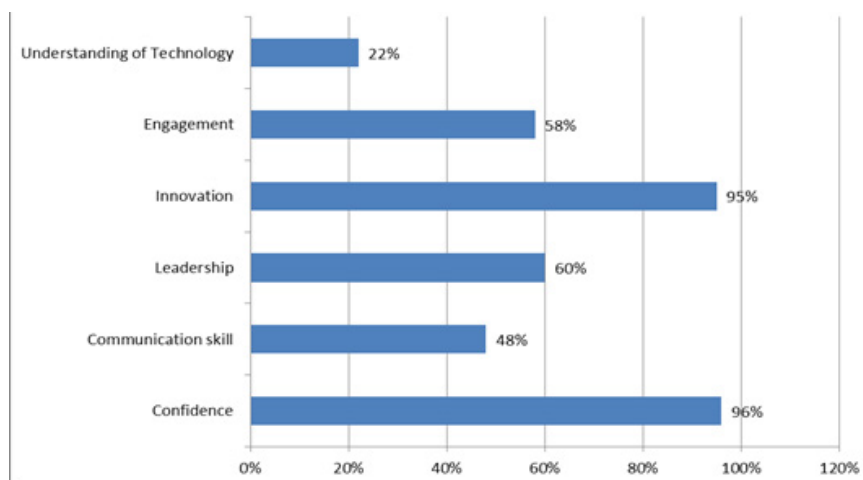


Figure 4: Teacher's beliefs about different factors related to professional development

### Perception of Students

The perception of students was collected with the help of focus group discussions (FGD) by the field investigators. The following domains were discussed.

#### Joyful Learning

In Figure 5, students were asked in which subjects they enjoy learning through the AIL approach. The subject in which they enjoyed the most was Hindi followed by EVS,

Maths and English. In Hindi, teachers were using a variety of art forms like storytelling, songs, role play, flash cards for akshar gyan. In EVS, teachers mostly used charts, pictures, leaves and other surrounding materials available for art integration. In Mathematics, games using pebbles, match sticks, flash cards, seeds were used for art integration. In English, although teachers used a variety of art forms like storytelling, songs, role plays, flash cards but students did not enjoy much.

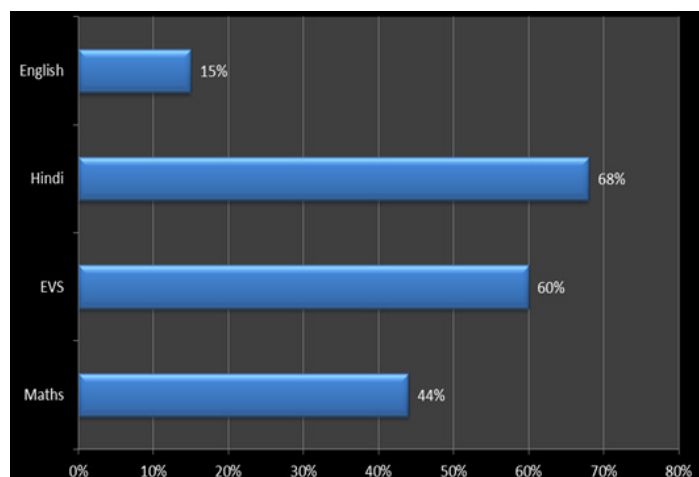


Figure 5: Student responses to Joyful Learning in different subjects using AIL approach

### **Art forms which best spark your creativity**

The next question assessed different art forms that would best spark their creativity. These art forms included: Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Games or they had the option of

choosing none. The results of this survey are shown below in Figure 6. This information was helpful as it allowed us to become more familiar with the form of art students felt they could be creative with. This could be helpful in planning future art integrated lessons.

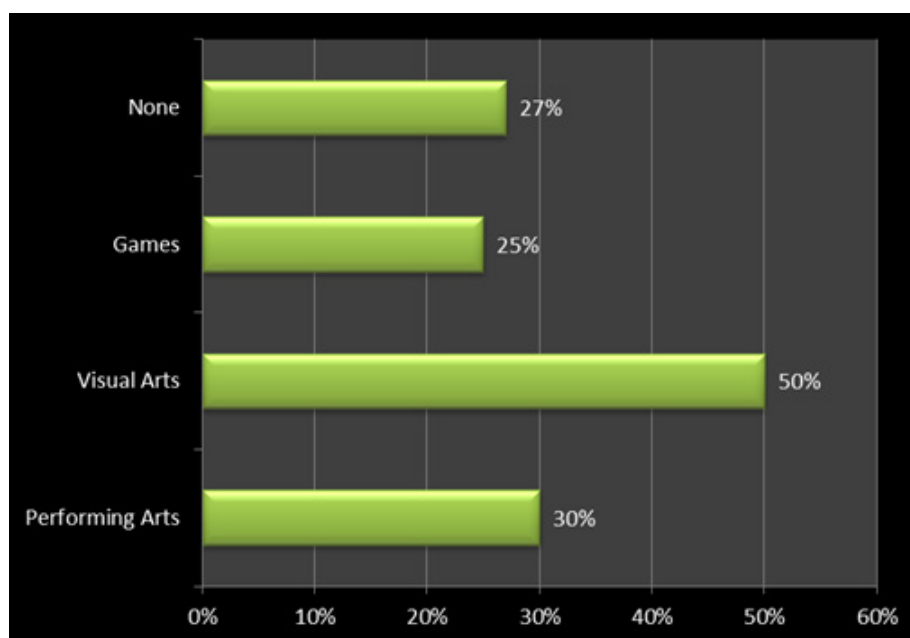


Figure 6: Student's response to art forms which best sparks their creativity

### **How art integration in the lessons helped the students**

After reviewing the data from our research, the findings show that integrating the arts into the curriculum had a positive effect on student learning through increasing motivation,

staying focused and creative response. When it comes to expressing ideas and thoughts, a majority of the students reported that the lessons provided them with the opportunity to express their creativity in a variety of ways. However critical thinking and connections to real world need to be improved (Figure 7).

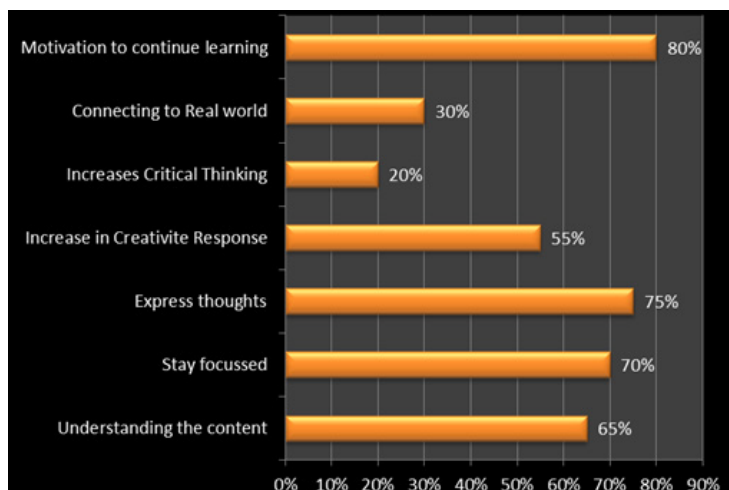


Figure 7: Student's response to how art integration in the lessons helped them

### 3.2.4 Difficulties encountered by students in the AIL class

As shown in Figure 8, most of the students responded that they still struggle with the general content of the lesson and on focusing. Most students named a personal struggle that they faced, such as, understanding the basic details of Mathematics and English. Some students also reported of fear during

the AIL class. When asked about what kind of fear they had, they said that it was fear of not being able to express themselves and also fear of teachers. Students expected the teachers to behave in a friendlier manner during the lessons. There were some students, however, who simply answered “nothing.” Although this wasn’t necessarily the answer we were looking for, the students were being honest with what they thought at the time.

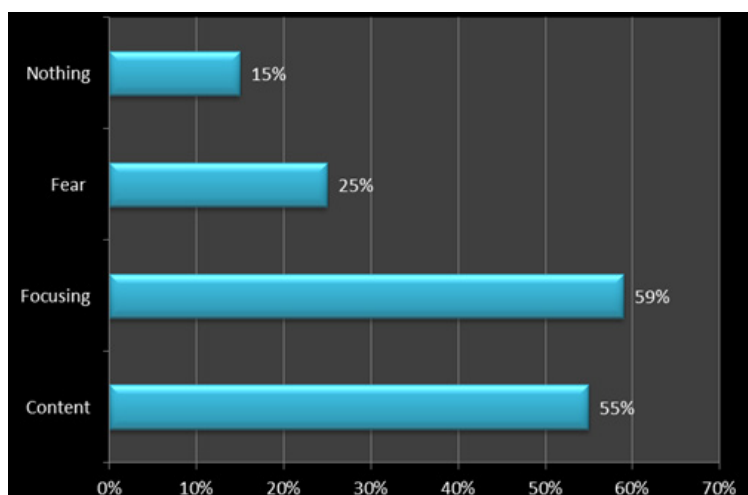


Figure 8: Difficulties encountered by students in the AIL class

### Suggestions of students to improve the effectiveness of AIL integration

A majority of students felt that hands-on activities during AIL lessons would be

helpful in improving the effectiveness of AIL. Use of games and toys was also welcomed by the students. Lowest reported category was the use of visuals in art integrated lessons (Figure 9).

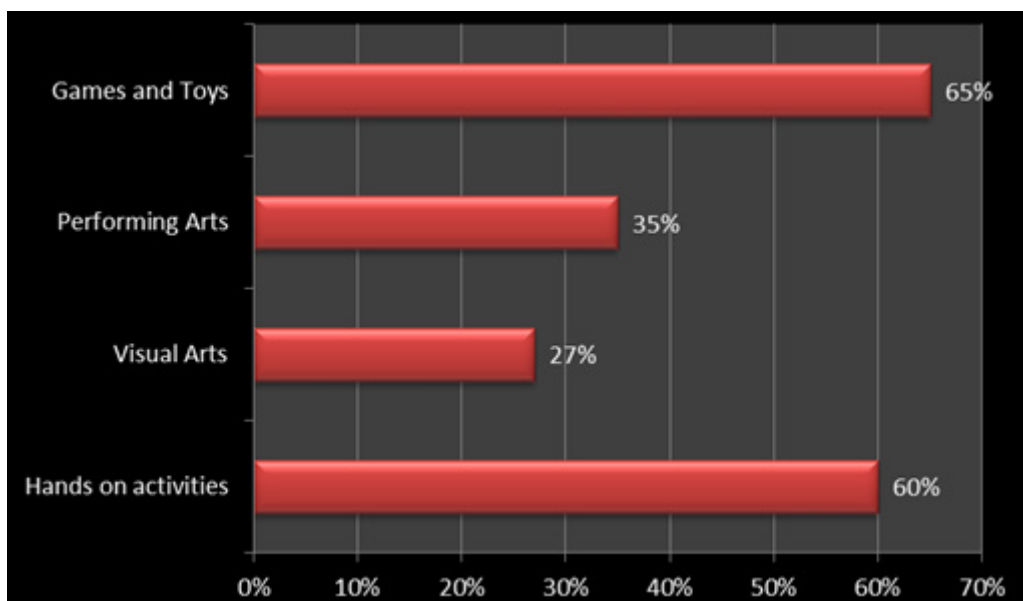


Figure 9: Suggestions of students to improve the effectiveness of AIL integration



## Discussion

Data analysis reveals that AIL as pedagogy has been able to promote joyful and experiential learning in the primary schools of Icchawar block of Sehore district. As mentioned in the NCERT's Guidelines on Art Integrated Learning, an impact study of AIL was conducted by a team of teacher educators. Resource persons involved in this study opined positively on the capacity of teachers to comprehend and apply AIL pedagogy in their schools. They reached a consensus of AIL being an effective innovation that has the ability to create a long-lasting symbiotic relationship between the teacher and the taught. Apart from this several other works have proved the effectiveness of AIL in promoting inclusive education, joyful and experiential learning. (Basu, 2020; Niranjana and Arjun, 2021). However, art integration should not merely decorate the classroom; rather it should be used as a cross-curricular pedagogical approach that utilizes various aspects and forms of art and culture as the basis for learning of concepts across subjects. Many of the works shown by the teachers that were created by the students showed that art was not being fully integrated into the lesson with integrity. Art integration was often used to fill up extra class time in the schedule and was viewed as fun busy-time doings. Although being busy in school implies something positive, such as, working hard. If the busy work does not reflect learning or critical thinking, then it is mundane and without thought. For example, in EVS, student's artwork mostly comprised of posters and they were involved in drawing and coloring only. The data also shows that only 22 per cent teachers themselves think that art integration promoted critical thinking. Students also felt that critical thinking and connections to real world required improvement. To improve critical thinking, students need to participate more intensely in the learning process and take charge of their learning (Robert, 2011). Also, a majority of the students responded that they still struggle with the general content

of the lesson and on focusing. In light of the results presented in the paper, the following suggestions are given:

- **Training of teachers in AIL pedagogy**

Capacity building of teachers in planning different activities, which empower students to learn through discovery and developing the ability to construct knowledge themselves. This allows learners to experience the challenges, joys and satisfaction of breaking new ground or discovering something new. NCERT in collaboration with the Regional Institute of Education, Bhopal has already provided training to teachers of schools of Icchawar Block. Training of teachers on hands-on experiences using methods and materials of different art forms, planning of subjects/stage-wise activities, mock sessions and presentations was conducted. Training workshops, covering a range of topics from defining art integration, to music in the classroom, to art integration with technology, to develop strategies for AIL is an interdisciplinary approach, to using arts education incorporating a variety of art forms (art, theater, dance, music) and using it effectively to deliver the subject content should be planned on a regular basis. These workshops may be attended by classroom teachers, arts teachers, and administration together. Participants should also be given the opportunity and support to develop Art integration lessons that would match their content background. Artists from different art-forms background may be invited and paired with the selected teacher. Teachers who attend these workshops should be encouraged to present new ideas and strategies to the other teachers in the school.

- **Planning before conducting AIL activities should be done by the teachers**

Teachers are not planning the art integrated lesson plans in advance. They do not have written record of

lesson plans. As reflected from the data, teachers are mostly using games for art-centered learning. Different techniques and methods to engage children in group activities with a variety of art forms are to be used by the teachers. These techniques and methods should lead to stimulated thinking through the arts and higher-level cognitive abilities, e.g., integrating knowledge and ideas and problem solving in creative and effective ways. This can easily be done if the teachers from different disciplines including arts, health and physical collaborate with each other. Orientation of teachers may be done in preparing model lesson plans. Collaboration with teachers of different disciplines including art, health and physical education should be encouraged while preparing the lesson plans. NCERT has already prepared an exhaustive package on the guidelines of Art Integrated Learning in both English and Hindi. These guidelines are meant to apprise all our stakeholders of school education with Art Integrated Learning as pedagogy and its innate relevance to education. It systematically explains all aspects of the innovative pedagogy of Art Integrated Learning: if followed in true spirit, they can help create vibrant AIL classrooms where we can hear the students singing, or see them dancing, acting, and creating works of art—all in ways that reflect a growing understanding of their core scholastic concepts. This document has some activities for planning AIL lessons in subjects like Hindi, English and Mathematics. For planning the ice breaker activities, training package on Art Education for Primary Teachers is also available. Also, the art integrated lesson should be aligned with learning outcomes developed by NCERT for different stages of school education. The raw materials required for the planning the AIL activities may include different colored chart papers, pencils, sketch

pens, markers, flip charts, thumb pins, brown sheets or drafting paper, string to arrange displays, colors, drawing sheets, clay for modelling, scissors, glue, sound producing instruments, raw materials for preparing costumes, necessary items for stage setting, etc. as per the need of activity etc. While organizing the materials, it is recommended to go for low-cost or no-cost locally available materials. Orientation of School Heads and teachers on project-based learning activities, skill of presentation and exhibition of children's work needs to be done.

- **Formulating interdisciplinary connections through AIL activities**

In the primary stage, arts should be integrated with all subjects and used as an approach for teaching and learning of different concepts. This will help children freely express their ideas and emotions. They will also develop all the senses through keen observation, curious exploration and spontaneous expression. As is the system in most of our primary schools, one teacher teaches all subjects to her class which gives her the freedom and scope to plan art experiences in a way that cater to learning of multiple disciplines. While planning activities for this stage, the teacher should keep in mind that students are able to form interdisciplinary connections during the activities. Orientation of teachers in planning interdisciplinary activities especially STEM and STEAM activities is essential. These activities should be able to improve the analysis abilities of students by using approaches from different disciplines.

## Conclusions

The data analysis of the results of the survey revealed that AIL is capable of bringing a positive change in school climate based on teachers' and students' perception. However, an AIL framework may be prepared which

can be implemented in the Icchawar Block of Sehore district. This framework should include the design and implementation of an instructional model that integrates the learning of different art forms into the core content areas. This model should also include teacher-driven activities that include sustained and focused professional development, curriculum writing, and

curriculum implementation. Also, suggestions for art-related enrichment activities in different subject areas may be included in the framework with more involvement of the community.

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