



Systems Design Project

Progress Report

Week 3

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Introduction

In this report, we'll show you our progress this week. We will begin with a brief *recap* of our previous work. Following that, we *narrowed our area of focus* and looked at *possible approaches*. We presented this in a discussion on Thursday, 8th April, and we shall include the *feedback* that we received. We then conducted an *interview* and gathered *insights* based on that.

Keeping these in mind, we broke down the *curriculum* we were planning to work on and chose a *focus topic*. This was followed by the *ideation* process and the *possible interventions and outcomes*.

In the end, we'll take you through our plan for the coming weeks.

Recap

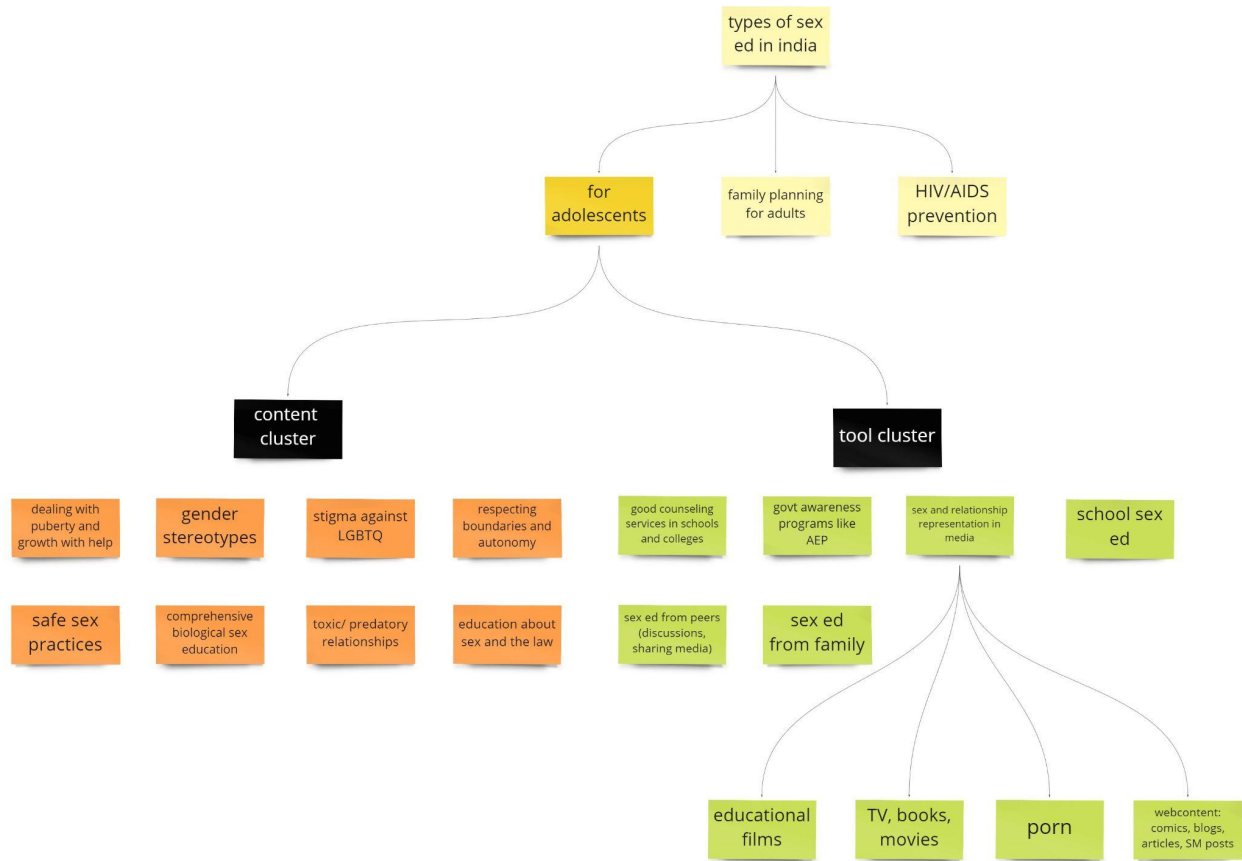
Through the first two weeks of this project, we decided to centre our project on sexual health and social well-being in the past week, what we have termed **Social and Intimate Maturity**.

We had started with primary and secondary research into this field, which we had presented last time. We made *causal loop diagrams* and identified systems and subsystems with those insights, each of which we looked into further during *research*.

Narrowing area of focus

Of the three kinds of sex education popular in India, we narrowed our focus to *education for adolescents*, an age not only in desperate need of SIM but also where what you teach will leave an imprint for the rest of their lifetimes. We eliminated parts of our system loop that we would not focus on and studied what was left.

From our causal loop diagram, we identified variables as content, tools, and others. We grouped these as the **content cluster**, i.e. the information that must be made available and isn't as accessible as it should be and **tool cluster**, i.e. available tools and infrastructure that may help distribute the information.

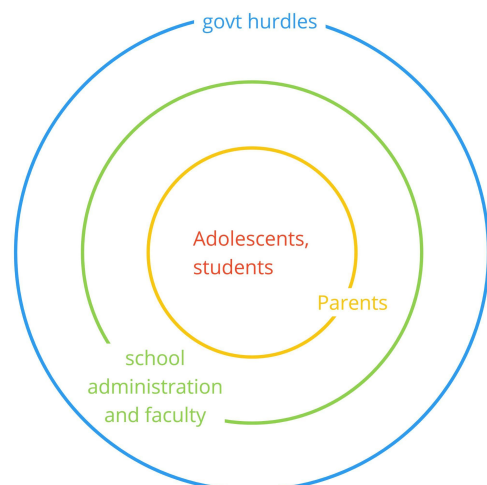


We then came up with possible approaches to the project outcome, mainly revolving around the curriculum and different methods of outreach of the system, focusing on what intervention is *needed*, what is possible within this *timeframe*, what is within our *skill-sets* and the *scope* of this module etc.

At the time, we felt that *designing a curriculum* for the project we proposed was of utmost necessity and that we would then figure out how to use this curriculum effectively.

Navigating backlash

We looked at how to navigate any backlash that our intervention may face, keeping in mind the three main hurdles one must cross to reach adolescents. Introducing sex ed to school curriculums generally faces hurdles of the government policies and getting approval, then the school administration and the faculty that must teach this and the parents who are against teaching this.



We planned to judge if our proposed curriculum would be accepted by means of a survey. If successful, we would use the school system, and if not, then we look at independent organisations to do this.

This approach was reconsidered post feedback that we got on Thursday,

Feedback

We were advised that trying to design the entire curriculum would likely be out of the scope of this project. The topic is too vast, and it would take too long. We were advised *to focus more on the delivery systems and design a way to get across the information to the adolescents*. Or, if we are keen on designing the curriculum, then we could *narrow it down to a particular topic or age group and then design for that particularly*.

Interviews and insights

We talked to **Mayura Datar**, a recent alumna of IDC, who worked on similar topics for her P2 and P3. Her focus was on safe sex practices and adolescence and puberty, for which she worked with two organisations, **Prayas Group** and **The Akanksha Foundation**.

Facilitator Model

Both of Mayura's projects used a 'facilitator model', about which she felt very strongly. She explained that it was almost always important to have a trained facilitator conducting sessions and leading activities. These facilitators are trained and spend time with the community until they are perceived as part of the community themselves.

She stressed that NGOs know their communities very well and that it's often beneficial to use the scaffolding of an NGO to bring a solution into a community. Presenting a solution as a foreigner usually is not well-received, and backlash is limited when a pre-established NGO is involved. If a solution is unnaturally introduced into a pre-existing system, it might momentarily disturb the system and leave no lasting effects.

Additionally, facilitators can act according to a crowd's response and attitude, which is simply not possible in a fully mechanised system where content is expected to stand alone. However, these are not perfect systems either - experiences with a facilitator are not private, and individuals might find it difficult to open up or share.

Curriculum

Similar to the feedback we got on Thursday, Mayura expressed to us that we are not the experts when it comes to deciding curriculum and content - in this case, it might be best to assume that good curriculum material exists and focus on how the curriculum reaches audiences. This feedback from both sources has influenced our work henceforth.

Along with these, she highlighted some harmful yet common lessons taught as part of sex education — lessons that portray girls as victims of a system where they are only preyed upon, curricula that ignore boys and their development in adolescent years, and teaching that makes sex seem shameful.

Peer education

In the context of peer groups, Mayura mentioned that it's always easier to open up with a friend than someone older, who can be a lot harder to talk to. Sex ed facilitators should be someone with whom the group can identify without fearing judgement or betrayal in the form of not keeping secrets.

The model used at Akanksha was to simply conduct a conversation with the students rather than hold a lecture. In addition, Akanksha culture dictates that all teachers and staff be referred to as *didi* and *bhaiya* to promote a trusting relationship.

Online media

On the topic of online solutions, she explained that an online approach was one of her first ideas. However, though they seem simple, they can get very complex - even answers to simple questions tend to change with context.

However, they have blessings too. Anonymous interactions help people open up and seek help, provided one is supplying reliable information. Mayura also felt it would be a good VC challenge to create a good portal for information. Existing ones, like **secca** and **let's talk sexuality**, have gaps that can be filled through good design.

Attitudes

Finally, when speaking of attitudes towards sex education, she felt that facilitators need to be skilled, socially and emotionally. To get kids to cooperate, too, it's essential to first let the naughtiness out of their systems and then impress upon them the seriousness of the situation. An interesting problem to look at, she felt, was *how to develop positive attitudes in facilitators* during their training.

Looking back on the organisation she worked with, she noted that while they did wonderful work, all organisations face issues of their **prejudices and biases** clouding the info they pass on.

Curriculum breakdown

Identifying scope

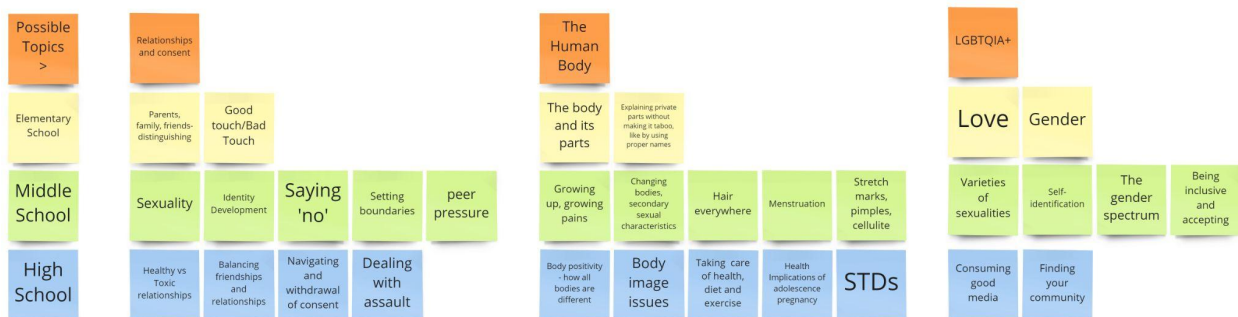
With advice from multiple sources to reduce our intervention points, we decided to pick only a small chunk of the larger curriculum to create a **wholesome delivery system**.

To proceed with understanding how to break the curriculum into smaller parts, we went through the AEP training guides for teachers and identified the various areas they had focused on:

- Physical Development, which included info about biological changes and puberty
- Social/Cultural Development
- Gender Roles, including definitions and discussing stereotypes
- HIV/AIDS education and
- Drug Abuse

Topic mapping

With that reference, we looked into breaking down the curriculum, primarily by **topic** and then by **age group**. These are a few examples of what we came up with. We explored the ideas of teaching topics like relationships and consent, the human body, the LGBTQIA+ community, etc.



For instance, if the topic we chose was The Human Body, we'd start in elementary school with the body and its parts. Using proper names for parts like the penis and the vagina

would be stressed upon to prevent it from becoming taboo. At this age, we could also cover good touch/bad touch.

For middle school students, topics like puberty, changing bodies, secondary sexual characteristics, menstruation, hair growth will be covered. Body positivity and normalising natural physical traits like stretch marks and pimples would be given importance.

Finally, once the child reaches high school, topics that bother that age group the most will be addressed. We would discuss more about body image issues and self-esteem. We would also talk about looking after your body, maintaining proper health through diet and exercise, something that's often neglected at this age.

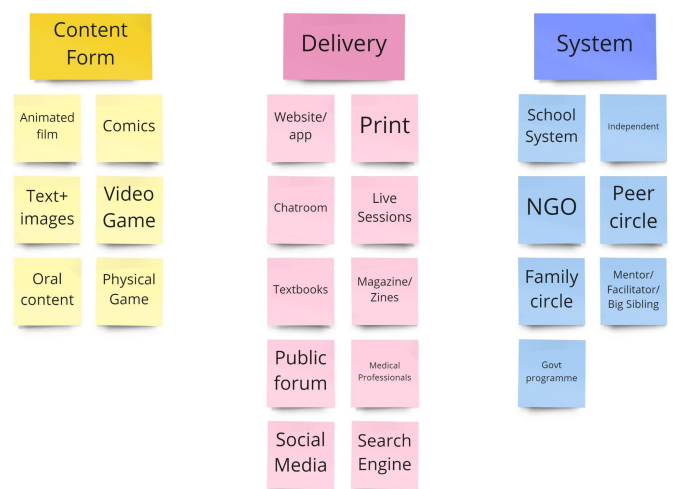
For this project, we decided to focus on a group of topics of **Social and Intimate Maturity during Coming of Age**. This would include puberty, body image, identity development, and the myth and misconceptions surrounding these topics. It would also touch upon **physical and emotional changes** during adolescence, **bullying, self-esteem, relationships** with parents and peers, and the concept of **attraction**.

Ideation

We started the ideation process by defining these three parts of our outcome. The form of the content, the specific delivery system and the larger system in which all this will fit. Each of these components is necessary to create an image of a complete system in our context.

Ingredient list

We came up with the following ingredient list - options for each system component. We had different **forms of content** and media options, like animated films, comics, games, regular text with images, etc. Possible **modes of delivery** were ideas for how this content media would reach children like a website or app, a chatroom, textbooks, public fora, social media, print, etc. Finally, we wrote out the different **larger systems** that would house our



delivery methods. These included the school system, NGOs, peer circles, or even independent options.

As we did this, we kept in mind the topic we wanted to focus on: the **Social and Intimate Maturity during Coming of Age**.

Possible interventions

With this ingredient list, we could now mix and match components to create various mini-systems that would each result in a different kind of intervention in the more extensive system we had explored with our causal loop diagram. Using our ingredients, we came up with three major models. These are an online resource, a storytelling platform, and a facilitator-providing service.

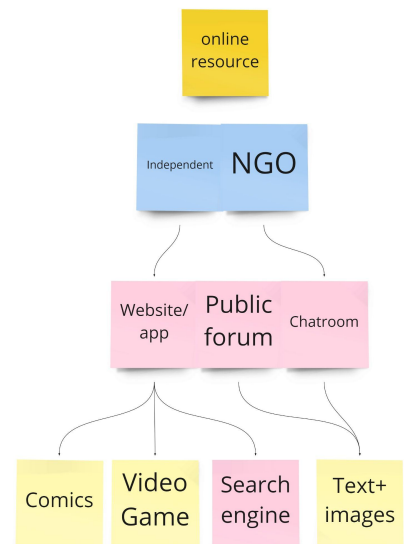
Intervention groups

Online resource

The first idea is an online resource that exists **independently of the school** curriculum yet may be recommended by schools. This online resource would be backed by an **NGO** of trained volunteers who *create content and talk to site visitors*. Digitised content which can be **accessed privately** helps students shake their **fear of humiliation** when seeking answers to personal questions.

This online resource would feature **articles** and **illustrations** about topics that are new to students who are coming of age - be it bodily functions like vaginal discharge and hair growth or social changes like attraction and fitting into a group.

Kids in this day and age are comfortable with the idea of talking to people on the internet, and this can be leveraged via a **chatroom** where students can ask questions anonymously to a **trained facilitator**, who can point them towards resources that will help them answer their questions.



Such a system serves primarily to **bypass risk** from unhealthy peer education and provide a framework for sex education by **filling gaps** in formal systems and **promoting positive outcomes** in causal loops.

Pros:

- anytime, anywhere access
- independently accessed
- privacy, anonymity
- the embarrassment of asking questions bypassed
- replaces risky googling and misinformation

Cons:

- based on the individual initiative: low reach
- limited to internet access
- because it is private, doesn't help address the feeling of taboo

Constraints:

- content driven website prototype
- time-intensive

Facilitator service

The third was a facilitator service to provide **trained personnel** to schools to take **live sessions** and adopt **guidance counsellors**. These facilitators would be trained in the context of the community and would have healthy *discussions about health, puberty, and social maturity*.

Using a combination of curated material in the form of **films, books, and games**, they would lead **discussions** and answer questions that students might have. Besides taking semi-regular sessions, they would be available for **private discussions** with individuals or small groups of students seeking personal help. The service would provide the curriculum, training, and materials.



Regular sessions would allow them to follow a serialised, coherent curriculum that builds information from the ground up. With time, they'll be able to form **bonds of trust** with students as well. Systems to allow students to submit questions anonymously would help

dispel anxieties about asking personal questions, and including this education in the school system would encourage the **largest reach** possible.

Pros:

- part of the school system: greatest reach
- wholesome, structured curriculum
- student access to a trained mentor who can help with personal problems
- speeding up the process of systemic change in the school system

Cons:

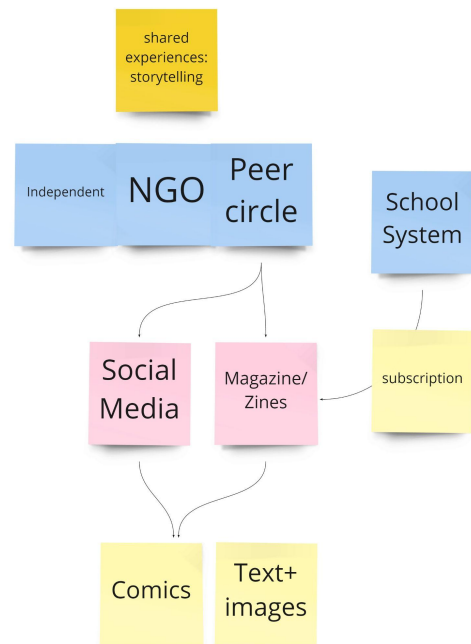
- bound to school's conservative attitude
- curriculum needs to be contextualised for a given community
- very dependent on a facilitator
- most expensive
- hard to form bonds with students in a formal setting

Constraints:

- no tangible proof of concept save for sample curriculum

Storytelling- shared experiences

The second idea is a storytelling system that works on education and **support through shared experiences**. As we saw through previous work, the surveys, interview, and causal loop diagram, students are embarrassed to approach parents and teachers and increasingly depend on their peers for information and support. Thus, stories and shared experiences are extremely helpful in socio-cultural development as it's a good source of information as well as support - it's essential to their development to *recognise that they are rarely alone in their experiences*.



In this system, pre-teens to older teens can **anonymously submit** their questions and **experiences**, which are then published, as **illustrated comics** and **articles** to social media and a **magazine**, much like a Tinkle edition. These would also include **vocabulary glossaries** to help students articulate the new experiences they are having, along with **informative articles**. Schools would be encouraged to provide **subscriptions** of these magazines to students, which would be branded as adolescent development guides.

As a system, it **bypasses discomfort** and hesitation in seeking answers. It encourages and acts as a framework for **discussions** on social and intimate maturity and helps maintain a **positive attitude** towards speaking out about problems and seeking help.

Pros:

- catharsis of expression
- gateway to increasing comfort of sharing
- promotes discussion
- high reach potential if adopted by schools
- greater sense of community and belonging

Cons:

- less of a structured curriculum
- to be school-acceptable, content would have to be trimmed/cater to schools
- hinges on community participation

Constraints:

- tight project timeline

Future steps

Upcoming week:

We would flesh out the finalised system. This would involve:

- Create and organise details of content
- Describe through diagrams the delivery system

We also got a few contacts of sex ed facilitators from Mayura, as well as some of her research. We would also be looking through those to help develop our system.

End of Module

By the end of the next two weeks, we hope to:

- Provide proofs of concept for content and delivery systems
- Adjust content and delivery system into larger systems
- Talk to parents/teachers, get user feedback an idea of the possibility of backlash.