



## **2.2. MAKING CURRICULUM RELEVANT TO LOCAL NEEDS**

For applied learning to be meaningful and effective, it needs to connect with students' interests and their local context. Designing activities around community needs, real data, and cultural relevance helps students see how applying knowledge can make a genuine difference.

Pause to consider how your current lessons connect with students' lives. The questions below will help you identify where small contextual shifts can make learning more relevant before you read the scenario.

### **? QUESTIONS / ARE YOU WONDERING?**

**What local issues or community needs could connect with my subject area?**

**How can I make learning activities more relevant to students' everyday lives?**

**Who in the community could contribute knowledge, experience, or mentorship?**

**How can I help students apply theory to analyse or solve local problems?**





### SCENARIO: LOCAL CONSUMER RIGHTS AUDIT

**Setting:** Higher secondary Legal Studies Class on Consumer Protection Act 2019

**Problem:** Students study consumer rights theory in their legal studies subject. In the local community, *kirana* (grocery) shops and vendors have limited awareness of the Consumer Protection Act 2019. Many of these shops and vendors lack clear pricing and return policies, which results in minor disputes on a daily basis. This reveals a disconnect between the law and what is happening in the local area.

**Solution:** The teacher developed a task for the class, which involved working on a 'Consumer Compliance Simplified' project. There were three main parts:

1. The students audited local vendors to identify common gaps in their understanding of the Consumer Protection Act 2019 and the kinds of disputes they experience.
2. The students consulted a local advocate to clarify key legal provisions.
3. Students prepared a *Simplified Compliance Checklist* and a *Know Your Rights* flyer, both in the local language. These were distributed to *kirana* shop owners and vendors with the aim of increasing compliance with statutory law and improving retail transactions in the local community.



### PRACTICAL TIPS

- Include at least one local project every semester.
  - » Choose issues that relate to students' surroundings such as local business practices, environmental changes, or cultural events. This helps to make learning personal and relevant.
- Enhance textbook content with local data or surveys.
  - » Even when working within a prescribed syllabus, where possible, replace textbook examples with local data, community case studies or statistics that students can access and verify.
- Link global themes to local experiences and traditions.
  - » Show how global ideas such as sustainability, innovation or digital literacy apply in students' neighbourhoods, encouraging them to think globally and act locally.
- Invite local experts to mentor or review student work.
  - » Professionals, parents, and community members can offer valuable feedback and contextual insights, turning school projects into authentic experiences.

Making curriculum relevant to the local area can support engagement by making abstract concepts relevant and useful through application to the real world. Activities that have a visible impact on the local community create authentic learning experiences and encourage civic responsibility.

## HOW CAN WE ADAPT CURRICULUM TO ENHANCE STUDENT ENGAGEMENT?

Curriculum design should create opportunities for students to have a voice in what they learn, how they learn and how they demonstrate their learning. When students make choices about topics, they take greater ownership of both process and outcomes.

Think about how much choice your students currently have in learning or assessment. Use the questions below to reflect on how you could strengthen their sense of ownership then read the scenario.

### QUESTIONS / ARE YOU WONDERING?

How can I introduce small but meaningful choices within the classroom and/or assessment activities?

What opportunities can I create for students to set criteria for success?

How can self- and peer assessment become regular parts of classroom practice?

In what ways can students' interests influence project topics or outputs?



### SCENARIO: INCREASING STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

**Context:** A senior secondary Business Studies and Entrepreneurship class.

**Problem:** Students created marketing plans for a fictional holiday resort, following the lesson plan exactly as prescribed. Because they had different interests, most students felt compelled to complete the task rather than inspired by it.

When teachers later reviewed performance, many students said they found the topic uninteresting and wanted a say in future assignments.

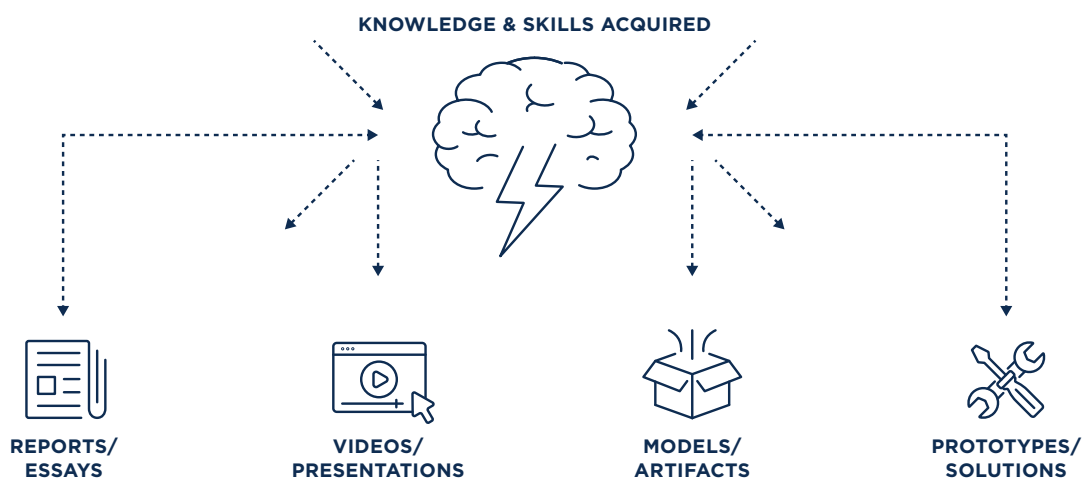
**Solution:** Based on this feedback, the teachers introduced project options for upcoming units and involved students in planning and decision-making. Engagement increased and students took greater pride in their work.

## PRACTICAL TIPS

A well-designed applied learning curriculum gives students greater ownership and autonomy in their learning. Offering students a degree of choice and highlighting the relevance of what they are learning can strengthen motivation. Applied learning can develop students' ability to reflect on their learning, strengthen accountability and build confidence.

- Offer three to five real-world challenges and let students choose the topic of most interest.
  - » Involve students from a range of different backgrounds in the design of the real-world challenges.
- Keep key skills and learning outcomes consistent across all options.
  - » Focus on the application of knowledge and skills to real-world problems requiring research, analysis, or design.
  - » Collaborate with colleagues to ensure core curriculum expectations can still be met.
- Provide multiple formats for presenting final work.
  - » Offer options like reports, videos, models, or prototypes to suit varied interests and encourage creativity in demonstrating knowledge and skills acquired.

### MULTIPLE FORMATS FOR FINAL WORK



- Include structured self-assessment and reflection activities.
  - » Encourage students to use rubrics to evaluate their progress and reflect on what they learned about both content and process, along with what steps they can take to continue building their knowledge and skills.
- Create feedback loops that involve students.
  - » Use short review sessions or digital polls to capture student voice after each learning/assessment activity and adjust upcoming tasks accordingly.
- When topics are pre-decided, offer students the freedom to select the example (or issue) they wish to explore, and use rubrics to reflect on their progress.