

THEATRE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Submitted by Erick Mukiira, 2025, while serving as Drama and Theatre Teacher at Aga Khan Academy Mombasa, Kenya



LEARNING PLAN OVERVIEW

Subject(s)	The Arts
Grade Level (s)	Upper Primary (ages 8-11)
Systems Tool(s)	• Sustainability Compass • Behavior Over Time Graphs • Systems Mapping or Causal Loop Diagrams
Purpose of Using Tool	• Research • Inquiry • Critical Thinking • Discussion
Summary	Students will take a journey of understanding the connection between sustainability and Theatre. There will look for connections between the systems thinking tools, Sustainability Compass and skills/techniques from Theatre Practitioners.

Learning Objectives

- Understand the relationship between sustainability and theatre.
- Explore the Sustainability Compass and Systems Thinking tools.
- Use these tools to create a theatre production that demonstrates interconnectedness of nature, society, economy, and wellbeing.
- Engage in active discussion and collaboration in a creative environment.

Material and Settings

- Sustainability videos
- Manilla
- Whiteboard and whiteboard markers
- Projector and a laptop

- Teachers and departments within the schools
- Costumes and props
- Books:
 - "The Sustainability Compass" by David Suzuki (for background on sustainability concepts).
 - "Theatre for Social Change" by Jan Cohen-Cruz (explores how theatre can address social issues).
- Videos:
 - [The Power of Nonverbal Communication](#)
 - [TEDx Talk by Vanessa Van Edwards](#)
 - [Systems Thinking 101 - Systems Thinking Primer](#)

Learning Context

- Inter disciplinary grounding-connecting areas of knowledge.
- Critical thinking and systems thinking-the students will learn how to analyze complex systems and understand the connections between many things including: nature, society, economy and wellbeing.
- Sustainability awareness: students will understand how sustainability principles apply and how they affect/apply into the theatre world.
- Creative problem solving: the students will be able to use the tools to design sustainable theatre production, students will be able to work around challenges to seek for solutions.
- Project management: they will gain skills like planning, organization, ability to manage time and resources.

Purpose of Using the Systems Thinking Tools

They assist in inquiry where students definitely have to do fieldwork and get to know how Theatre practises are connected to sustainability practises.

Impact on Participant Learning

- Sustainability awareness: students will understand how sustainability principles apply and how they affect/apply into the theatre world.
- Creative problem solving: the students will be able to use the tools to design sustainable theatre production; students will be able to work around challenges to seek for solutions.
- Project management: they will gain skills like planning, organization, ability to manage time and resources.
- Ethical concerns: the students are able to know policies put in place by different authorities including the government that concerns the sustainability practises put in place.

Learning Plan Step-by-step Description

Activity 1: Ask students to list down ideas when they hear the phrase: The future of our planet

Let the individual students share in class. The students can list all the SDGs they know and briefly discuss what they represent.

Activity 2: Introducing the System Iceberg, Causal Loop Diagrams

The teacher will introduce this system and show the diagram to the students. The key concepts will be introduced, and the teacher will have a discussion with the students on how the concepts connect to theatre. The students will check on how these elements can be presented in a play using Casual Loop Diagrams as well as using casual loop to show how all the elements are connected.

Activity 3: Field work

The students will have to go to different teachers around the school and school departments and seek information on how sustainability can impact different aspects related to Theatre and annual school events and annual school productions. They are to collect findings and present them in class. Using Casual Loop Diagrams the students can seek for information what would happen if some sustainability ideas are applied.

Activity 4: Theatre Creation Building a story

Based on the Casual Loop Diagrams (cause and effect) the students will work in groups and create a short scene for a play that embodies the interconnectedness of sustainability issues. The students will create characters that represent the four elements (nature, economy, society and wellbeing), e.g. a factory owner-economy, activists-nature, social workers-wellbeing etc.

The students will have physical theatre, symbolism and use of placards as Theatre techniques.

The students will include Bertolt Brecht as a practitioner to inspire their work and Theatre of the Oppressed as the theatre movement to loop into their work.

Activity 5: Theatre of the Oppressed and Bertold Brecht

The students will research and discuss on Theatre of the Oppressed and Bertold Brecht techniques and see how they are connected to the sustainability lessons/elements.

Ideas-connections-Theatre of the oppressed can give a voice to the marginalized communities and the disadvantaged people (oppression, inequality, collective empowerment). The students can also use forum theatre to have discussions after the play or before the play to discuss societal wellbeing and how theatre addresses environmental and social sustainability through creative expression.

Activity 6: Physical Theatre

The students will look at ways to tell the story using body movements and visual elements to explore abstract ideas, emotions and social issues. This can be used to convey and deal with complex ideas that can be difficult to write words or scripts and can be told powerfully using visual elements and body movements. The students will borrow ideas from Theatre groups like Complicite.

Activity 7 and 8: Editing the script and rehearsals

The students will edit the script and start their rehearsals. They should be able to present their work after three more rehearsal sessions.

Activity 9: Audience feedback and reflections

The students will look at the impact of their performance and what solutions have been achieved from the audience and also from the actors from their field research and performance. They will check on how Theatre lessons and the entire project have helped them understand the interconnectedness of sustainability. They will have peer feedback on Theatre skills improved.

Activity 10: Behavior Over Time Graphs tool

Introduce the concept of Behavior Over Time Graphs. Show a simple graph or diagram that demonstrates a particular change over time. The students will assess how some of the decisions and ideas have changed the issues over some period of time. Impact on environment, social engagement and even financial decisions and how all those ideas will create a long-term impact.

Reflection: Plusses**SDGs and Sustainability Compass**

- The students were able to place the SDGs along the Sustainability Compass and this helped them to understand the Sustainability Compass.
- The students enjoyed connecting their findings from fieldwork to the causal loop diagram.

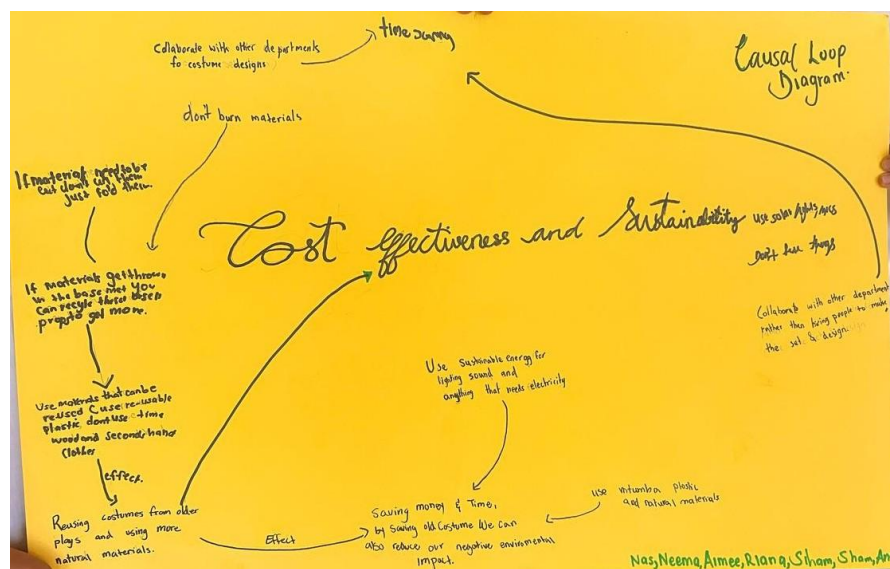
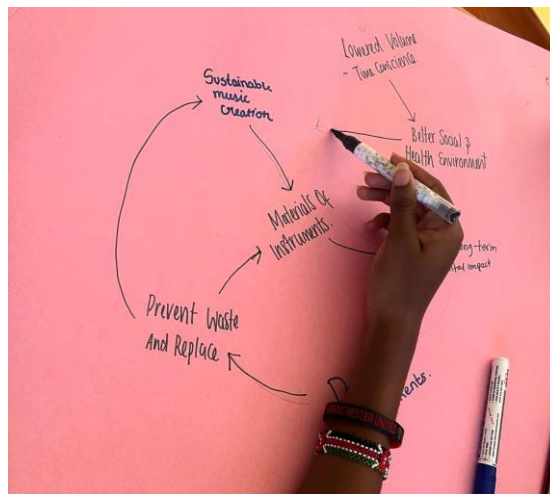
Field Work

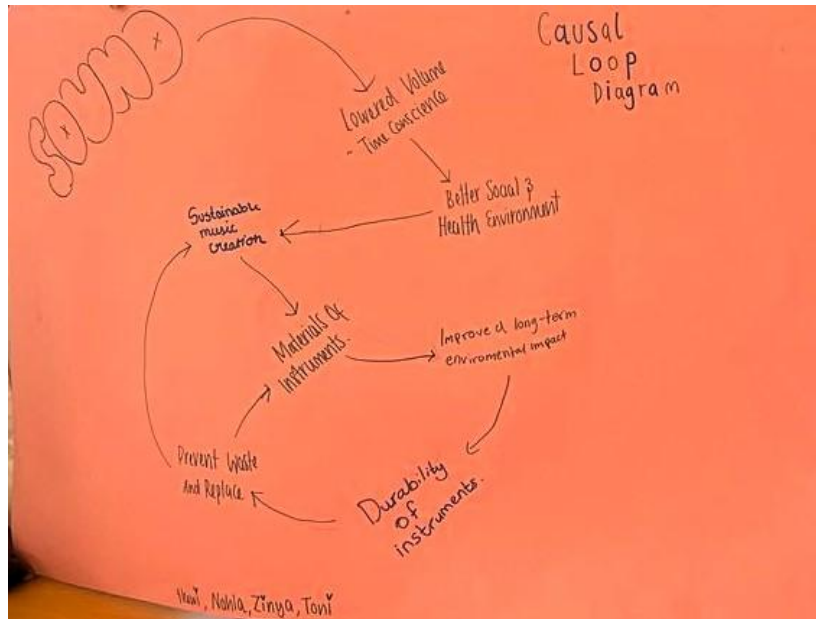
- The students were able to carry out a successful fieldwork research and get numerous findings related to Theatre.
- They created research questions for the fieldwork and used the local community to get information (teachers, heads of departments, heads of school)

Areas for Improvement

- The students need more scaffolding on the SDGs. I will need to have more videos that can be used as tutorials within the areas of Casual Loop Diagrams and Sustainability Compass.
- The students can assist me create a unit plan next time-if we create lesson outcomes together, this can be a powerful way to own the sustainability projects.

EVIDENCE





Ms.Nancy

1. Recycle stage set costume,sustainable energy
2. Use materials that can be removed reused (plastic, don't use wood, use mtumba)
4. Use outside performances (natural light)
3. 8.they get thrown in the basement ,you can recycle and sell the set
4. 10. Mtumba, plastic,natural materials
5. 14. Don't cut the pieces js fold the material
6. 22. Hajui Lakini ai

Ms Paula

1. Recycling materials for designs
2. Collaboration w other departments (if you need paint come to art)
3. Don't burn things
4. Use solar lights,mics

Set design construction

- 8.After every play preserve materials
- 10.Papyrus reeds etc
- 22.Solar panels and ai
- 14.)Recycled plastic for the pots for water

Mr Ernest

- How do you implement sustainable practices in creating music? **Look at the volume, is it too loud? Look at the time, in a home setup he cannot be playing music at midnight unless it's witchcraft or he'll give people heart attacks. Do it in a studio or controlled environment.**
- Sustainable options for sourcing or creating musical instruments **using different materials, wood to plastic etc plastic is more durable cause at some point it'll wear off. Handling, storage**