

UGC Minor Research Project

**Enhancing Student Performance through Co-operative
Theatre Skills in the Classroom.**

Dhempe College of Arts and Science, Miramar, Goa.

(Active Voices)

A Report



Principal Investigator: Isabel S.R. Vas. Associate Professor, Dhempe College of Arts and Science, Department of English; theatre person.

Introduction.

The typical classroom in most schools and many colleges in India is a place of boring passivity. Though education has been a high priority for successive government planners in Independent India, one cannot claim that our educational system has delivered optimum results. The performance of countless numbers of students across the education levels has remained below par – unforgivably so, despite increasing investments, improvement in infrastructure, attention to updating syllabi, etc. Students continue to perform at mediocre levels, to find school work uninteresting, and often to drop out of school with their self-image dented and self-confidence shaken.

Increasingly, the students in our schools come with less than privileged profiles in terms of language, caste or geography. In school situations that are conservative and now inappropriate, vast numbers of our children are vulnerable to being ‘devalORIZED’. Urgent attention is required to enhance student performance by valorizing the student as a co-creator and sharer of knowledge: then only will his/her performance develop academically and in a holistic manner. It is our conviction that one vital and urgent intervention necessary is in the field of sensitizing teachers. Creative strategies must be devised to break through the deadening passivity that lurks in the classroom. Dr. S. Radhakrishnan once said that education, be it in schools or college, is only as good as its teachers. If so, the principal position of the teacher is that of one who validates the student’s worth, and frees it from bondage. It has been the principal aim of this project to study and facilitate quality improvement in classrooms by interacting with teachers in active service, discussing their experiences, sharing insights from theatre, and thus arriving at more relevant, just and exciting attitudes, methodologies and skills to dramatically dynamise classroom learning.

Origin of the research problem.

As teachers/ theatre persons/trainers it is apparent to us that one major factor in turning the classroom atmosphere into an un-creative and frustrating space is the passive role relegated to students. In the overwhelming majority of classroom situations, the source of information and power is located solely in the teacher; the student is the passive recipient (and 'regurgitator'!) of 'knowledge', which he/she often does not even assimilate for a variety of reasons. The more "successful" students are those whose memory serves them well, whose upper middle-class background exposes them to diverse stimuli, and who have picked up fluency in the English language – at home! Woe to the student who struggles with problems of lack of self-confidence and timidity of voice, maladies which she/he has most often insidiously contracted within the school set-up. The large majority of students at best survives the deadening experience of passivity for some ten to fifteen years in classrooms. For the teachers, too, the experience of parroting information and drumming it into generations of students that they see as mere recipients, can be a stultifying one.

Our exposure to theatre has repeatedly revealed that learning can be exciting, fertile, and progressive when passive turns to active. Actors, directors, and text, interact very dynamically to create a theatre performance.

Adapting the insights of theatre, the teacher can learn to place part of the process of learning into the hands of each student. This must not be done in an unstructured or irresponsible way. Methods are to be evolved to structure the class so that each single student, working co-operatively with colleagues and teachers, learns and helps others learn – actively, enthusiastically.

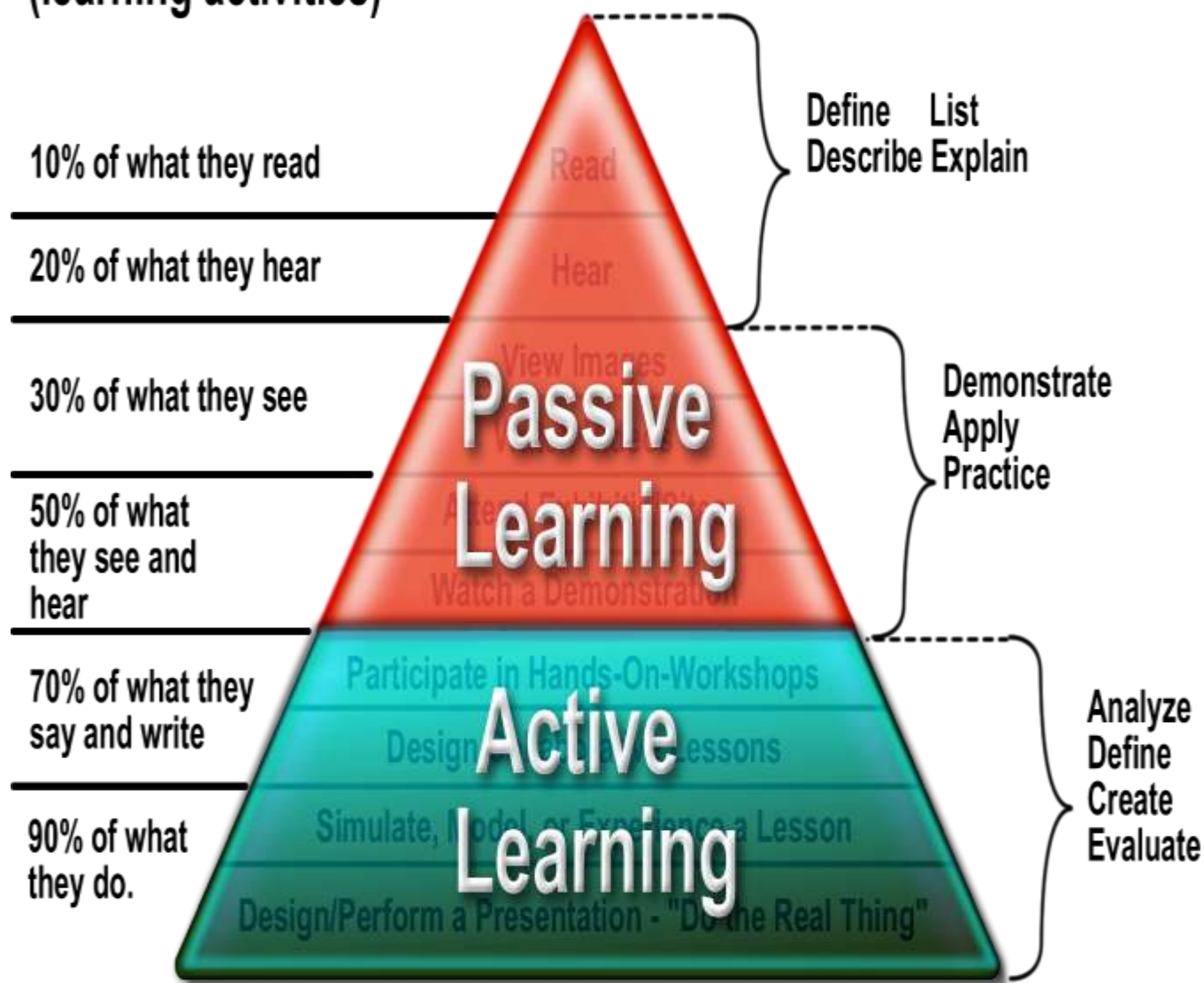
Introducing such co-operative and active processes into a class requires the sensitizing of teachers. It is actually a matter of winning teachers over to new attitudes, and equipping them with some new skills, many of which work superlatively in theatre settings. They will not be teaching theatre: they will be teaching their own chosen subjects of specialization more effectively with the use of participatory theatre techniques.

Enhancing Student Performance through Co-operative Theatre Skills in the Classroom.

(**ACTIVE VOICES**), consisted of such an attempt to sensitize teachers to the need to make the students in their class active participants in learning; in a series of workshop held at various locations in Goa, groups of teachers met and worked together to understand their experiences and analyse them, they were exposed to a variety of theatre techniques and attitudes that would foster greater student participation in learning. The underlying principle was what is known as Edgar Dale's Cone of Experience and Learning. Based on extensive research, this educationist emphasized that active and participatory and experiential learning is the most effective learning. A student who is looked at as worthy of participating, one who is applauded for that participation, gains new eyes as to his/her own strengths and can begin to evolve in unimagined directions.

People generally
remember...
(learning activities)

People are able to...
(learning outcomes)



Edgar Dale's Cone of Learning

An overview of the process



The following is the Report of the UGC Minor Research Project entitled **Enhancing Student Performance through Co-operative Theatre Skills in the Classroom** conducted by Dr. Isabel Santa Rita Vas.

The Project was initiated in the year 2008 and has continued into the year 2010. The vision that drove this project was to discover ways to dynamise education in our schools. The goals were to learn to:

- (a) to transform classroom teaching from a passive and apathetic affair to an exciting and active process,
- (b) sensitize and energise teachers by imparting to them participatory and co-operative theatre skills,
- (c) enhance the quality of student performance,
- (d) and create an interface between the school and the community.

Workshops for Teachers:

The Assistant Investigators together with the Principal Investigator planned in detail the schedule of the entire project, and after detailed consultations, conducted the following sessions for the following teachers:

1. Out of the Box



THINK OUT OF THE BOX!



Teachers	Schools
i. Nolita Pereira de Andrade	Don Bosco H. School, Panaji
ii. Mariazita Chagas Silva	Don Bosco H. School, Panaji
iii. Marinella Filinto	St. Xavier's Academy, Old Goa
iv. Shefali Lendhay	Vidya Vikas, Margao
v. Perpetua Couto	St. Xavier's Academy, Old Goa
vi. Cecilia Esteves	St. Bartholomew H.S., Chorao
vii. Antonet de Souza	St. Bartholomeu H.S., Chorao
viii. Pamela Torcato	Vidya Vikas, Margao
ix. Perpetua Couto	St. Xavier's Academy, Old Goa
x. Maria J.P. Fernandes	St. Bartholomew H.S., Chorao
xi. Juliet D'Souza	St. Bartholomew H.S., Chorao
xii. Michelle Gonsalves	Don Bosco H. School, Panaji
xiii. Sandra Teles	Don Bosco H. School, Panaji



Workshop Dates: The workshops for these teachers were conducted on the following dates:

1. 19th April 2008 – Introduction. The Rationale and Goals of the Project.
2. 9th July 2008 –Can You See Me?
3. 10th July 2008 –Can You See Me?
4. 5th February 2009 –Can You Hear Me? AND -Do You Need Me?
5. 6th February 2009 –Can You Hear Me? AND - Do You Need Me?
6. 18th April 2009 –Do You Trust Us?
7. 20th April 2009 –Do You Trust Us?
8. 21st April 2009 –Out To Celebrate.
9. 22nd April 2009 –Out To Celebrate.

Report of Workshop Sessions:

1. **19th April 2008 – Introduction. The Rationale and Goals of the Project.** This first Session introduced the aims and objectives of the Project and the Plan for the coming workshops. The participants were introduced to Edgar Dale’s Cone of Experience. All were encouraged to do the exercise of the Passion Test to identify their own priorities as persons and as teachers. Prof. Eutemia Fernandes of the Nirmala Institute of Education, Panaji, Goa gave an instance of a creative exercise to make learning interesting and interactive: this was a song

composed and sung by her with the purpose of teaching a lesson in Geography. The group began to share their views about their classes.

2. **9th July 2008. Can You See Me? Focus: Self-esteem, Motivation, Mutual Self-respect.**

Bhagyashree facilitated Story Writing and Reading Poetry. Sarvishta conducted sessions on Mime and Free Movement. Isabel assisted the participants in Interviewing one another and in Writing Poetry. Ameena shared her experiences of being a student in Indian and American classrooms. All these theatre-based activities were held with the underpinning motive of helping teacher-participants discover how they can enhance Self-esteem, Motivation and Self-respect in a class context.

3. **10th July. 2008. Can You See Me? Focus: Self-esteem, Motivation, Mutual Self-respect.**

Each participant conducted a short class using interactive techniques on their own subject of expertise based on principles highlighted the previous day. This was followed by a group discussion on the use of interactive theatre techniques and their possible effects.

4. **5th February 2009– Session1. Can You Hear Me?** The objective of the workshop was to highlight the processes of **Effective Communication, Group Discussion and Points of View.**

It was reiterated that students are to be encouraged to think analytically, listen attentively and respect different points of view. The class then becomes a space to listen, hear and grow. Isabel opened the session with Mime and Movement exercises. Ameena followed up with Free Style Writing and the participants all wrote short poems. Isabel then introduced the concept of Jigsaw Learning, and participants studied a poem using the dynamics of Jigsaw Learning.

Session 2. Do You Need Me? Isabel began the session with a talk on the concept of **The Value of the Learner in Learning**. Sarvishta conducted a Mime and Movement Session. Bagyashree conducted Voice exercises. The Participants conducted 5 minute classes each on a topic from their syllabus.

5. **6th February 2009 –Session 1. Can You Hear Me? Effective Communication, Group Discussion and Points of View.** Isabel started with Movement and Imagination exercises. Ameena conducted a session on Free Style Writing. Kiran's session consisted of the use of Puppetry for learning. Roger came in to help with brainstorming about "What group/theatre activity can be used in my class for my subject?" **Session 2. Do You Need Me? Focus: The empowerment of the student.** Neville shared his experience in making a short film in the Mass Communication Class. Each Participant was asked to shoot an interesting scene on the spot and edit it on the computer.
6. **18th April 2009 –Do You Trust Us? Focus: Trust as the Basis of Meaningful Interaction.** The Participants were given an experience of Trust exercises used in Theatre. They discussed ways and means of building trust in the class.
7. **20th April 2009 –Do You Trust Us? Focus: Trust as the Basis of Meaningful Interaction.** Each participant presented a short play improvised and directed by them.
8. **2^{1st} April 2009 –Out To Celebrate. Focus: Performance.** The Participants learnt about scripting, improvising, advertising their production and inviting their audience. They scripted their play, designed costumes and rehearsal their performance.
9. **22nd April 2009 – Out To Celebrate. Focus: Performance.** The Performance by the Participants was conducted at the Don Bosco High School Oratory Hall, and teachers,

parents and children from Bookworm, the Library for Children, attended and enthusiastically appreciated the show.





2. Theatre for Active Learning – 15th July 2009 a one-day workshop (class

demonstration and discussion) was conducted by Isabel and her team for Primary and Secondary School Teachers at Our Lady of Perpetual Succour High School, Cortalim, Goa , with the participation of 20 students and the following 24 teachers:

i.	Mr. Presley Barreto	Mae dos Pobres H.S., Nuvem
ii.	Mr. Avinash Palni	Mae dos Pobres H.S., Nuvem
iii.	Miss Aldina Rodrigues	Mae dos Pobres H.S., Nuvem
iv.	Miss Philomena Gonsalves	Mae dos Pobres H.S., Nuvem
v.	Mrs. Rosy Noronha	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
vi.	Mrs. Margarida Fernandes	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
vii.	Mrs. Sheila Rodrigues	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
viii.	Mrs. Milagrina Barreto	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
ix.	Mrs. Magdalena Pereira	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
x.	Mrs. Filomena D'Cruz	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
xi.	Mrs. Cynthia Cardoso	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
xii.	Mr. Guruprasad S. Naik	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
xiii.	Mrs. Vishaka Khandeaparkar	St. Joseph's C. H. S. Nagoa
xiv.	Mrs. Olimpia Pereira	St. Joseph's C. H. S. Nagoa
xv.	Mrs. Shailencia Diniz	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
xvi.	Ms. Gleny Baptista	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim
xvii.	Mrs. Martha D'Mello	Bl. Joseph Vaz H.S., Sancoale
xviii.	Mr. John Pacheco	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim

xix.	Mrs. Pia Carvalho	Bl. Joseph Vaz H.S., Sancoale
xx.	Ms. Limsy Gomes	Bl. Joseph Vaz H.S., Sancoale
xxi.	Mrs. Sara Costa	Bl. Joseph Vaz H.S., Sancoale
xxii.	Mrs. Teresa Xavier	St. Joseph's C. H. S., Nagoa
xxiii.	Mrs. Rose Mary Fernandes	St. Joseph's C. H. S., Nagoa
xxiv.	Mr. Hemant Sawant	St. Joseph's C. H. S., Nagoa
xxv.	Mrs. Regina Faleiro	Our Lady of P.S., Cortalim

3. Theatre of the Oppressed On 9th, 10th and 11th February 2010 a workshop on Theatre-in-education (Theatre of the Oppressed) was conducted at Dhempe College of Arts and Science, Miramar, Goa. Nine College teachers participated.

i.	Clarinda Dias	Dept. of English
ii.	Vandana Sardesai	Dept. of English
iii.	Kiran Popkar	Dept. of Hindi
iv.	Arina Frank	Dept. of Biotechnology
v.	Shilpa P. Panandikar	Dept. of Economics
vi.	Siddesh A. Silimkhan	Dept. of Economics
vii.	P. Jyoti Kiran	Dept. of English
viii.	Vinod Kankonkar	Dept. of History
ix.	Bianca Fernandes	Dept. of English

Theatre in Education (Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed) Workshop Contents

9th, 10th, 11th Feb.2010 – Dhempe College

Day 1

1. Purpose of Workshop- To understand the dynamics of oppression and empowerment.
2. Walking Exercise (Warm-up)
3. Go/Stop (Conditioning)
4. Trust: Blind Walk, Mirror, Say something interesting about someone in class.
5. Hypnotic Trance (How People Are Often Oppressed)
6. Introduction to Theatre of the Oppressed
7. Role Play: Optimistic and Pessimistic Neighbours talking. (Pairs)
8. Images (Pairs) of oppression
9. Discussion

Day 2

1. Music and free movement.
2. Dance (Freedom to move)
3. Images, internal monologue, dialogue.
4. Theatre of the Oppressed.
5. Discussion

Day 3

1. Walking Exercise (Use of Space; Communication.)
2. Theatre of the Oppressed, Joker, Interventions.
3. General Discussion, Feedback.

Certificate



This is to certify that ~~~~~

enthusiastically participated in the

Theatre-in-Education Workshop

on 9th, 10th and 11th February 2010, conducted under the
Theatre-in-Education **ACTIVE VOICES** programme

(UGCsponsored minor research project) by Isabel
S.R. Vas at Dhempê College of Arts and Science,
Miramar, Goa.

Isabel S.R.Vas

(Chief Investigator, T.i.E Programme),

Dhempê College, 11th February 2010

Resource Persons: The initial process at the start of the project was one of identification of resource persons who would assist the principal investigator. The following persons were identified and worked through the duration of the project:

1. Kiran Bhandari – School Teacher (M.A. B.Ed.), Theatre Person.
2. Sarvishta Israiel Gaonkar – Corporate Trainer, Theatre Person.
3. Baghyashree – Medical and Psychiatric Social Worker, Theatre Person.
4. Ameena Bukhari – Theatre Person and Teacher of Language to Foreign Students.

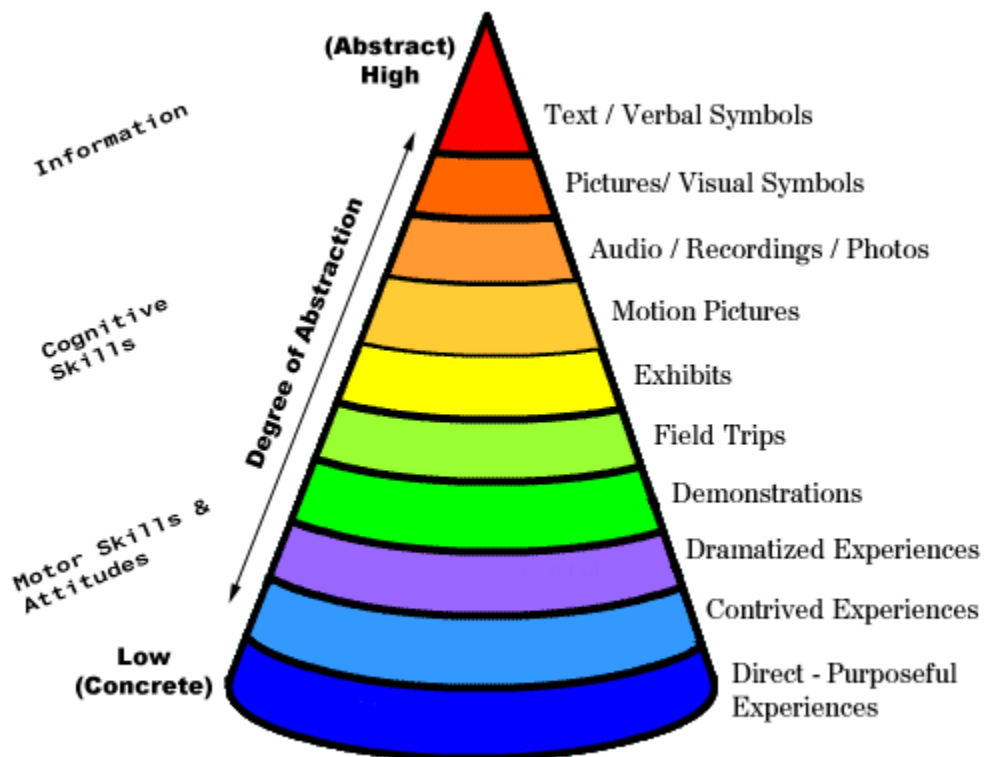
Inputs for Creative Analysis - The Assistant Investigators interact with students:

Theatre for Confident Learning - 26th, 27th, and 28th October 2009 – Aga Khan Jamat Khana, Campal, Panaji, Goa.



Happy to Learn

and Perform



Graphic courtesy of Edward L. Counts, Jr.

Theatre for confident learning

Theme:	Focus:	Objectives:
Body and Voice.	The essentials of the actor as a performer.	Exploration of personal potential
Expression of Emotion. and expression.	Body and Mind and Imagination.	Enhancing personal freedom
Improvisation.	Creating characters and plot.	Individual and team work.
Story-line.	Understanding a good story.	Theatre as story-telling.
Space.	Exploring inner and outer space.	Understanding the various dimensions of theatre work.
Putting together an original play.	Creativity.	Skills in creating an effective performance.
Actual performance.	Theatre as art.	Experience of being an actor and director and manager.





Theatre is an energizer.



PARENTS and FRIENDS WATCH CHILDREN PERFORM WITH ZEST...



AND LEARN TOO...

**CHILDREN, TEACHERS, THE COMMUNITY : ALL LEARNERS, ALL
WINNERS...**











Dramatized Experience can Enhance Learning Dramatically

OUTCOMES: The Project was conducted over a period of approximately two years, from 2008 to 2010.

Four 'blocks' of participants were involved:

1. A group of twelve school teachers from various schools, rural and urban, participated intensively through 11 workshop sessions/performances; the experience culminated in a short theatre performance for other teachers, parents and students.
2. Twenty-five school teachers and twenty students were involved in a day long workshop cum demonstration and brain-storming session.
3. Ten college teachers were initiated into the rationale of theatre for education and justice.
4. The assistant researchers were involved in working with a group of students over a period of three days, culminating in a performance for parents and friends.
5. **A brief manual for teachers was evolved entitled: Some Signposts for Teachers Who Believe in Dramatic Learning. (This is appended at the end of this report.)**

Each of the proposed goals was addressed:

- a. To transform classroom teaching from a passive and apathetic affair to an exciting and active process.
Every effort was made to help teachers discover ways of teaching their own subjects in participatory ways which valorize the student and what he/she brings to the class. Each participating teacher demonstrated their methods to the rest of the class.
- b. Energise teachers by imparting to them co-operative theatre skills; teachers learnt that cooperative skills are too often bypassed in favour of competitive skills, thus making learning discriminatory and lopsided.
- c. Enhance the quality of student performance; students were observed to respond enthusiastically when they were treated with respect and were called to participate actively in what was being studied.

- d. Create an interface between the school and the community. Teachers and resource persons interfaced with parents, students and the community at large in their own time and also together, in public performances.

Feedback: Teacher-participants shared that --

1. The Active Voices approach was indeed energizing, but expressed reservations about how they would be looked upon by their colleagues and administrators.
2. The Active Voices approach impelled them to be creative and innovative.
3. The Active Voices approach led them to see students as the central component of the class dynamics rather than the teacher himself/herself. The student was given more responsibility to learn.
4. The Project enabled them to meet teachers from other schools and locations so that shared experiences enriched all.
5. Teachers noted that students seemed to enjoy the interactive team activities they introduced and retained information and attitudes better than when they were just 'taught' or lectured to.
6. The theatre-related activities helped build confidence in the timid students, made them recognize their talents and enhanced their hope in their own success.
7. The class became a more pleasant space where teachers and students felt safe to interact.
8. Participants who had expressed reservations about 'completing the syllabus' in the given time, admitted that using collaborative techniques need not upset schedules if proper planning was done.

From: [Azmina Pradhan](#)

To: [isabelGMAIL](#)

Sent: Thursday, September 23, 2010 6:01 PM

Subject: Re: Theatre Workshop

Good evening madame,

How are you? I and all the participants of the theatre workshop are doing well and we all still cherish every moment of the wonderful theatre workshop conducted by you and your team.

Yes.. I have many pictures of our theatre workshop and i will surely email it you by the end of this week. Please convey my regards to Amina mam and Kiran sir.

Regards,

Azmina.



Drama in the Classroom:

A few signposts for teachers who believe in dramatic learning.



Hello Teacher

If it's ok with you,

Let's talk for a little while, listen for a little while.

I'm confident you're one of those many teachers

Who believe that what happens in our classrooms

Is of extreme importance

To the student

To us, teachers

To the school

To the community

To the planet.

I believe in you. You believe in learning. You believe that students can learn.

Perhaps you and I want to be good teachers.

We do want to be good teachers.

But can you see that there's something a little problematic with that statement?

We want to be good teachers.

How would it look if we aspired instead to have **students** learn?

Then what happens is that we, teachers, move to the periphery



And the student moves centre-stage.

Of course!

We are here for our students,

For learning,

For clearing a space in the midst of all the noise

Of completing the syllabus, writing reports, conducting exams,

Grading the people in our classes...

Yeah, sure, we must all do these things or we'll be out on the road

But in there, in the centre space of our class

Is our student

Come to live and learn.

Can I see him/her?

Can I hear her/him?

Can we discover that we need each other?

Can we trust one another?

Can we come in and go out and celebrate life as we learn about it?

It's possible to have drama in the classroom

And by that we don't have to mean chaos and disruption

We can mean that what happens

To us, among us,

Is dramatic, interesting, exciting,



We're learning together.

Is that really feasible? Is that acceptable? Is that possible?

Yes!

There are many many ways to see this happen.

One way to have the learner centre-stage

Is to create drama in the classroom.

We need to have borders and limits and clocks and timetables, but

A little stretchable at times

Because the important thing is to arouse curiosity

The important thing is to assist in discovery

The important thing is to learn to respect one's own worth and that of everyone else.

That's a lot of important things!

And we stumble upon more as the days unfold

Because class is now a space for us to experiment in,

To work hard

To enjoy learning.

Drama or theatre techniques are helpful in creating this open space

Whatever subject we may teach.

Do you know how one can begin a class with a student as the first voice?

It's simple actually: each day a girl or a boy or a group makes a 2 minute presentation.

See? It lasts a couple of minutes really

But the glow for the participants lasts right through the class.

What will Shali make a presentation about? She chooses

Maybe to read something from a newspaper she's brought along,

Or relate an incident that's moved her, or the mouse in the corner of her room...

What will Shankar choose to present? Perhaps

His interest will be to make a collage or talk about the movie he's watched

He gives his opinion about what he saw Shahrukh Khan do.

Naa, it's not a waste of time.

You see, everybody claps for the one making the presentation

And if you so wish and have the time

There can be a short discussion on what has been presented.

It's all about presence.

And the lesson planned for the day is not sacrificed

The syllabus is certainly not abandoned

Much can be done when we use our imagination.

After all it's a matter of life or death

For the creative space in the class.

Most of us teachers in India work in small classrooms

With less than ideal facilities and under less than ideal conditions.

So then...

So then we work with what we have, we work with our imagination

With our love for being in our class among young people who can learn.

We learn to stretch what little we have.

A classroom can turn into a magic space when we explore it with glowing eyes.

And, who knows, if the administration can see good things happening

We may find allies in the creative process.

What if we teach Geography or Mathematics or Physics or English or Chemistry?

What room for drama then?

There is always scope to nudge the student to participate.

That's what makes learning dramatic.

When we use our imagination, a cell-phone camera or a magazine article or a feather

Can turn into instruments of learning through sharing and discussion.

But look! We can't turn the whole class into a free-for-all can we?

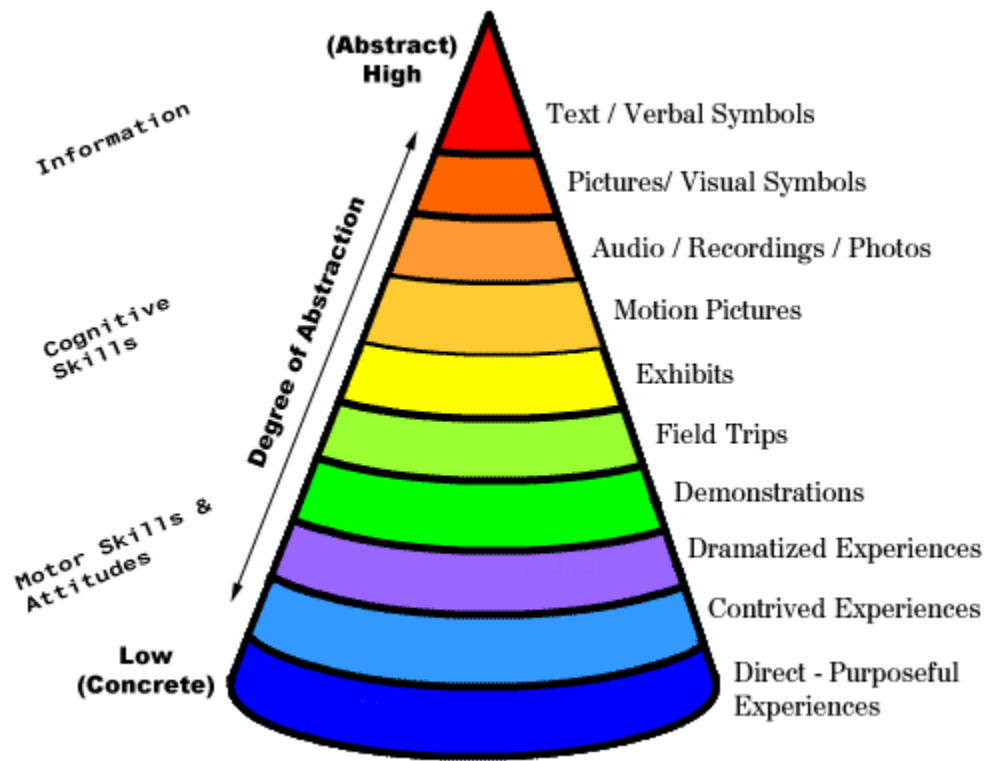
No, we don't have to fall into traps, if we plan the class and leave some room for

Flexibility.

Of course the teacher has to provide inputs.

Of course hard concepts and facts need to be understood and perhaps memorized.

True. When we're working in an atmosphere of mutual respect all that is possible.



Graphic courtesy of Edward L. Counts, Jr.

Edgar Dale's Cone of Learning

Edgar Dale, an educationist, built his research on what Confucius had discovered centuries earlier.

"I see and I forget, I hear and I remember, I do and I understand." - Confucius

Edgar Dale illustrated this with research when he developed the "Cone of Learning" –

He states that after two weeks we remember only 10% of what we read, but we remember 90% of what we do!

Of course we know this in our bones. We learnt this when we received our training as teachers.

Then we let go of what we knew. It flew away.

Perhaps it was cynicism, or laziness, or the line of least resistance. We forgot.

But we can re-learn. Together with our students we can learn again.

Can theatre practically suggest methods of eliciting participation?

Oh, yes, theatre can do many things.

A simple exercise when students walk in the class/corridor/garden

Frees the body and the imagination.

An imaginative interview of Einstein by his fictitious neighbour

Can turn two students and a giggly class into active learners.

Turning a *filmi* tune into a song with new lyrics

Adapted to the lesson in History, what happier way of recreating the past

And maybe relating it to the present?

Mime and Improvisation and role-play lend themselves to learning languages without pain.

Voice exercises can be perfect to study poetry, Games to teach mathematics.

Puppetry, Face-Painting, Masks made of newspaper, ah these are the stuff

That theatre lends to us teachers.

Expense? Well, we use what we have, and a class of full of students is rich in imagination.

Wastage of time?

What time are we wasting when we build together a spirit of challenge and discovery?

Challenge? In the class?

Wouldn't it be appropriate for us to challenge ourselves to stretch our limits?

"First in the class", "she's better than you", "how many marks have you got",

ah, what a sorry waste of time, these stock phrases that feebly attempt to measure the intangible

Worth of people

When the challenge is actually to learn what we did not quite understand yesterday...

Flexibility? In the class?

Every student has different eyes, ears, nose, time-frame, birth-place, family values, dog, breakfast,

How can we afford not to be flexible among these mysterious thickets of existence?

Performance.

A nice word?

It depends.

It's a hard bruising word when we declare the student has failed to perform.

It's a humbling word when we realize the teacher has short-changed his/her own dreams.

It's the market word where profits and percentages determine performance

Where credibility depends on 'learner control' and 'performance feedback'.

Can we perhaps turn the word on its head? Why not?

Theatre often turns words on their heads. Catharsis!

In drama Performance means being and doing what one values.

It means preparing and coordinating and co-operating and rehearsing.

The Performer conquers her/his nervousness and acts out her/his lines

For the enjoyment of the audience

For the thrill of expression

For the knowledge that he/she is an Actor.

Action borrows from Thinking and Feeling and Imagining

And turns empty space into beckoning places

That tell of life and love and anger and grief and hope.

Actors learn about courage.

The class needs no curtains to rise

For the student to discover what it is to perform.

The teacher wipes the board clean

And the Performance can begin.

Co-operation in the Classroom?

Students co-operating with teachers, yes, of course.

Ah, but that's only a small part of the process.

How about the teacher co-operating with the persons in the class

Co-operating with knowledge

Befriending learning?

How about boys and girls discovering that they are co-operators

In weaving and understanding the web of life?

How about competitiveness being dismissed to the darkest corner of the classroom

Because winners who must win at any costs

Lose the texture of fellowship and the work of many hands?

How easy to adopt market strategies straight into the classroom

Where they mindlessly rupture community!

Listening in the Classroom?

But that's not part of the syllabus...

No? Then it ought to be. Why not? Communication is so disjointed

Unless we listen to Voice other than ours

To points of view that we may not agree with

When in the creative space of our class

Those who listen

Give face to the one being listened to.

How simple. How difficult. How indispensable.

Our classrooms is where we celebrate our time together

Learning

How to learn.

But that's only where our celebration starts.

It soon overflows into the community and the earth we inhabit.

If there was no celebration

Only dull-as-ditchwater routine

The dullness may well shadow our footsteps into the street and the neighbourhood.

If there was aggression posing as concern

We may carry a cupful of unquiet resentment hidden under our jacket

And the bitter dregs may pollute our ground.

If there was indifference to all but pay-day

The legacy we leave behind will be ignorance and rage.

What weapons will then rattle and rubble our world?

If there *was* celebration...!

We come away knowing about the gentleness that awaits the blossoming,

We do not forget the toughness that resists hopelessness.

Only the foolish among us can expect

Our seeds of sterility to yield crops to feed

Our children to come.

But if there was celebration

In the class it may quite easily walk hand in hand with celebration

Men and women with clear brows

Who act with integrity.

And we may find ourselves grinning

To imagine

That we too had a bit-role to play.



Theatre Games/Exercises/Activities for the classroom:

Activities for enhancing participation do require careful planning so that they do not seem trivial or wasteful of time and energy; but they can be adapted simply from familiar games and common actions. Each subject-teacher will be able to create what is most suited to his/her discipline, age-group and culture. Such activities are meant to be short and dynamic. They require enthusiasm and optimism on the part of the teacher as these are truly infectious! The results will be positive in terms of class relationships, growing self-confidence and improved skills and subject knowledge. The following indicate how flexible and easy to plan these activities can be.

1. **Ice-breaker games** can include walking round the room, walking as if in a park, walking as if in a crowded street, shaking hands with other 'walkers' and introducing oneself briefly, calling out the name of the 'walker' they encounter as they move; practicing a kind of *Antaakshari* of words or co-related concepts in any subject rather than film songs.
2. **Revision games** can be devised by imagining a telephone conversation between friends, imagining interviews with interesting personalities, using cross-word puzzles on the blackboard, each student declaring what she/he liked best in the lesson studied.
3. **Group activities** can include making a collage with newspaper clippings to emphasize a topic, which then the group elaborates to the class; role play that may include some kind of conflict and resolution; chanting a stanza or a phrase in diverse ways; guessing the name of a historical/relevant person with the use of short clues on pieces of paper; mime of a particular event which calls only for movement and sound and not language; finding partners who are given matching clues on bits of paper.
4. **Individual participation** can be elicited after the students have gained confidence and feel that the class is a safe space where they will not be mocked or devalued. A student can be given a picture from a magazine and be asked to give his/her interpretation of it; a student can speak to the imaginary occupant of an empty chair and argue a topic or express an emotion; a student can take a photograph or draw a picture at home or in the neighbourhood and comment on it for the benefit of the class; a student can sit in front of the class and be the Expert of the Moment and answer questions about the topic from her/his classmates.

Teachers would do well to remember that

- group tasks are less threatening than individual tasks.
- Short do-able exercises work best. Success in these builds confidence.
- The difficulty of the exercises needs to be graded according to the proficiency of the class, age and comfort level.

- It is best to avoid at all costs comparisons between students which only lead to unnecessary devaluing one person versus another.
- No negative remarks should be directed at the student, though the way the activity is being performed can be corrected or refined.
- The teacher **MUST** plan the activities, so that no chaos disrupts the class. If the students realize that they can enjoy the activity **AND** learn, they will be cooperative and enthusiastic.
- Every student who performs must receive applause and words of appreciation.
- What the student brings to the class in terms of culture, orally transmitted knowledge, innate skills, positive attitudes must be emphasized rather than the gaps in his/her knowledge and any of her/his weaknesses. Performance will gradually become a positive experience not to be unnecessarily dreaded.



Every Person's Performance is an Occasion for Growth and Learning.

Some Aspects of Theatre that can be of interest to teachers:

1. **Movement.** The teacher can begin asking the group/class to walk around the room; faster, slower, in circles, etc., etc.; to add hand movements, arm, head, leg etc. even as the students keep moving. It is good to always begin a class with a few minutes of movement exercises, to warm up and free the body.
2. **Dance.** Free movement coupled with music can create rhythm and free the imagination. Slow or fast music will produce different moods and movement. Later, small dance sequences in groups; in later weeks/months this can be in pairs; finally, when the students are more confident, some of them will be able to dance solo.
3. **Role-play.** (The usual time for preparation for such exercises is about 5 minutes) Small groups can be asked to play little roles: parent and child, buyer and seller at the market, dentist, doctor, someone running for the bus, etc. This can be silent (mime) and in later days, using words.
4. **Improvisation.** (In mime and later in words. 5 minutes for preparation) The student is asked to act out a small episode, e.g. inquiring about an address, cooking dinner, fighting with a neighbour, etc.
5. **Use of space.** The student needs to learn how to use the stage space, not just concentrating on one portion of the stage; also using the floor or the upper space with hand/arm movements; how to cross the stage without turning their backs to the audience; how to stand talking to other actors so that the audience can see and hear them clearly, yet they should look natural interacting with one another on stage.
6. **Story-telling, Story-writing.** Students can be encouraged to act out small improvised silent stories; later, stories with spoken dialogue made up on the spot; later they may be asked to write out the dialogue – to begin with a very short conversation between two people; later, a short play.
7. **Team work.** Theatre is a great opportunity to learn how to work with others, not for one's own self. Working in groups is to be encouraged, making sure everyone participates even in a small way. Comparisons (e.g. "he's better than you") are to be completely discarded. Everyone learns from everyone. The capacity to work well within a team is to be commended. The team may make a presentation, of work on a collage, or write a poem together. Even comparisons between teams ("this team was better than that") should not happen. Relative strengths of individuals and teams can be highlighted instead.
8. **Voice.** Short and simple exercises often repeated can help the student learn to use his/her voice effectively. Students may walk all together around the room repeating a word (any word) in different volumes, tones, pitches. Then each one speaks a sentence – all at the same time. Then

the student can speak on his/her own, so as to learn to speak clearly and audibly. A 'stagey' declaiming of lines is to be discouraged. The student must learn to speak very naturally on stage.

9. **Mime.** Small scenes and then bigger stories can be done in mime. No words at all are to be used, only sounds made orally, and careful attention to movement.
10. **Street-play.** Even young students can learn to create a short play on various themes: child-labour, violence against women, cruelty to animals, etc.
11. **Costumes.** Old clothes or newspapers or discarded hats or socks can make good costumes. An assortment can be collected and the students can be asked to select and use them during various performances they carry out. Masks can be cut out from newspaper or paper bags or made from papier-maché. Students will enjoy painting and using them, preferably making them for each other.
12. **Face-painting and make-up.** These can be fun. Some poster colours and brushes and lipsticks and eye shadow can come in handy.
13. **Stage set.** Students can plan their stage set – even if it means placing a few tables and chairs on stage and draping some cloth over them. They must learn to be economical and imaginative.
14. **Posters and announcements.** Those who like to paint can learn to make posters and advertise/announce their play creatively.
15. **Direction.** Actors also need to learn to direct a tiny play (10 minutes) in a small group.
16. **Audience.** Performers must learn to be a good audience too; to listen attentively and with respect, in silence, when others speak, and to applaud their friends' performances.
17. **Feedback and discussion.** After every class, one can spend 10 minutes squatting on the floor discussing the exercises, performances and processes of the day. Students must feel free to ask why some exercise was done, and teachers should encourage them to share their experiences as they lived through the exercises.
18. **Performing a scene from a great play.** Students can begin to appreciate great dramatic literature if they are exposed to the work of noted playwrights. This is a project that requires regular rehearsals and commitment.

Theatre is many things to many people. Let people discover what it means to them. They may also discover much about themselves.

Have fun.

The United Nations Recommend the Use of Theatre in Education.

“ Theatre arts has the power to transform education;
to communicate to pupils/students in a language that demonstrates concepts,
reveals symbols and forges connections with all aspects of their lives. Theatre Arts
promotes interdisciplinary learning, multicultural understanding and develop
problem-solving skills. The eclectic nature of Theatre Arts provides the framework
for developing pupils’/students’ in various areas of the arts. Experiences in Theatre
Arts provide opportunities for participants to learn about themselves and their
Identity”

UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION [UNESCO]

Arts Education in Latin America and the Caribbean. Conference Paper

Prepared by Nolma Coley-Agard Ph.D.

Further Reading:

- *Drama in Education*. Rao, Dr. Usha. Himalaya Publishing House, Mumbai, 2005.
- *A Handbook for Using Drama in the Second Language Classroom*. Ann F. Burke and Julie C. O’ Sullivan. Heinemann, Portsmouth, 2002.
- *The Language Teacher’s Voice*. Alan Maley. Macmillan, Heinemann. ELT. 2000.
- *Drama*. Charlyn Wessels. Oxford University Press E.L.B.S. Oxford, 1987.
- *Arts Education in Latin America and the Caribbean*. Conference Paper. UNITED NATIONS EDUCATIONAL, SCIENTIFIC AND CULTURAL ORGANIZATION [UNESCO]

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