

Workshop: „Acts of Facts – Easy Theatre Methods to deal with Conflicts “

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Workshop content/theme

Short introduction in history and methodology of the *theatre of the oppressed* by Augusto Boal.
Practising *Forum Theatre* by developing short scenes out of the participants daily experience with conflicts in and around school environments.

Aims

Exploring theatre work as a relevant method for coping with real existing conflicts for students and teachers. Acting ‘as if’ helps to develop new perspectives and alternative strategies.

- Very participative method – everybody can join the scene (acting, watching, discussing,...)
- Very useful in groups with a highly diverse level regarding the use of words and language for discussing and combating (e.g. students-teachers, groups with different languages, ...)

Approach

1. Warm Up Exercises

- Name and Movement:

Circle;

One participant after the other

a) makes one step towards the centre of the circle

b) says his/her name and

c) makes at the same time a significant movement with his/her arms.

All the other participants watch him/her, make a step towards the centre and repeat name and movement.

Everybody goes a step back again. Now the next person at the right side does the same with his/her name and his/her own movement.

After this exercise everybody has been seen and has been heard!

Everybody has watched very carefully all the other participants.

This exercise fosters individual

- Stop-Go:

The whole group stands spread all over the room. As soon as the first person starts to walk, everybody walks. As soon as the first person stops, everybody stands still.

This exercise works without talking, raises very quickly energy and concentration of the overall group and shows how easily we communicate as a social system even without talking.

2. Short History of the Theatre of the Oppressed (Augusto Boal)

3. Developing Scenes

- Story Telling: Small groups of max. 5 persons; Task: ‘Do you remember a situation within the last year, where a conflict regarding Intercultural Dialogue happened to you? Or at least, where you watched such a conflict?’ Trainer gives two examples.

Important:

- the conflict should show very clearly different attitudes or perspectives of two persons or groups which belong to a different culture (social groups, national groups, peer groups, political groups, religious groups,...)

- there should be no 'real or good solution' for the time being. The story teller should still have an open question (How could I have interferred? What could we have done?) and truthfully be in search for answers, possibilities, opportunities,.....!
- *Theatre of the Opressed* has the idea, that we can not change the 'opresser', but we can change the behaviour of the 'opressed person'. And this new attitude will have an impact on the whole system. In our cases we focus very clearly on the person who has the conflict and we try to find out how he/she could act differently next time.

- **Rehearsal:** Now the group is chosing one of the stories to show it in a short scene (max. 5 minutes). All roles should clearly be defined and the scenes should stop with the conflict. Try to have clear answers to these three questions and make them visible in your scenes:
 - Who is the main person?
 - What is his/her problem?
 - What is your main question that you would like to have answered by the audience?

4. Performances

Trainer's preparation: The room should represent a theatre atmosphere: stage, chairs for the audience, if possible simple background (black curtains hanging over a pinboard,...) so that everybody can easily concentrate on the scene and not on all the other things around.

Before the first group starts the trainer will ask all performers of the first scene to come to the stage and introduce themselves as roles: For example '*I am Gina, I am 13 years old, I live in an Roma Village close to an Austrian town.....*' and what else is considered to be important for this scene.

Now the group performs the scene.

The trainer asks the audience what they have seen, where the problem comes from, out of their opinion and if somebody would like to replace the "conflict person" – the role which has the conflict.

If a replacer can be found, the scene starts from the beginning and the new 'Gina' tries to act differently. All the other roles try to act like before. But if the intervention of the new person is strong enough, they have to change to their behaviour.

After the new scene the trainer will ask the replacer but also all the other roles what was the new strategie and how everybody felt: Did this new strategy change something for you? How were your feelings, what did you perceive, how was your reaction?

Also the audience is involved in the discussion and can tell the actors what they watched and felt.

Hopefully 2 or 3 more persons will try to replace the 'conflict role' and give new perspectives.

At the end the 'story bringer', the person who really experienced that conflict will tell the group which strategies gave new ideas, were attracting his/her attention.

Further tips, sources, resource material or links

If you google 'Augusto Boal' and 'Theatre of the Opressed' you will find thousands of documents and webpages dealing with it. It is very probable that you will find a theatre company or a theatre pedagogy group practising this method also in your region.

Questions for workshop reflection

Students:

Question:

“Do you find *Forum Theatre* a usefull method for dealing with conflicts?
Could it be interesting for your fellow students to work with it?”

Answers:

- Use it for students of the first class – it helps to know each other and to be prepared for school conflicts
- During the act they can face the conflict, realize what is the problem and how to solve it
- Ideas come easier. It is fun too. And we can work on it all together.
- The most important thing is to have fun, not to be stressed but be relaxed.
- These methods would be good for parents too, or teachers.

Teachers:

Qestion:

“What are important/interesting things you learned about “Intercultural Dialogue”?”

Answers:

- Brave enough to try dialogue
- Overcome fear through dialogue and contact
- Try to find different solutions together
- Be aware of your own viewpoint, how it effects others and how it can change for the better
- Be aware of others problems or insecurities and to be sensitive to that
- Be aware that you are not the owner of the ONLY solution, there are other possibilities

Question:

“How far can you use and adapt the methods of the workshop at school, in the lessons or in your project?”

Answers:

- Yes we can use and adapt these methods to resolve conflicts or misunderstandings
- By using these methods we are able to realize that people from a variety of answers and backgrounds have similar blocks/fears to overcome.