



Θέατρο & παραστατικές τέχνες στην εκπαίδευση: Ουτοπία ή Αναγκαιότητα;

Theatre/Drama & Performing Arts in Education: Utopia or Necessity?

Επιμέλεια: Μπέττυ Γιαννούλη, Μάριος Κουκουναράς-Λιάγκης
Edited by Betty Giannouli, Marios Koukounaras-Liagkis

Αθήνα, 2019

ISBN: 978-960-9529-05-1



Πανελλήνιο Δίκτυο για το
Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση

μέλος του Διεθνούς Οργανισμού για το Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση (IDEA)



Hellenic Theatre/Drama
& Education Network

member of International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA)

Theatre in Education: Connecting Children with Entertaining Education

Sisir Dutta, Mousumi Chowdhury¹



Το άρθρο αυτό είναι προσβάσιμο μέσω της ιστοσελίδας: www.TheatroEdu.gr
Εκδότης: Πανελλήνιο Δίκτυο για το Θέατρο στην Εκπαίδευση
Για παραγγελίες σε έντυπη μορφή όλων των βιβλίων: info@theatroedu.gr

ΔΙΑΒΑΣΤΕ ΤΟ ΑΡΘΡΟ ΠΑΡΑΚΑΤΩ

Το άρθρο μπορεί να χρησιμοποιηθεί για έρευνα, διδασκαλία και προσωπική μελέτη. Κάθε αναφορά στο άρθρο ή σε μέρος του άρθρου μπορεί να γίνει με παραπομπή στην παρούσα έκδοση.

Theatre in Education: Connecting Children with Entertaining Education

Sisir Dutta, Mousumi Chowdhury¹



Introduction

Every nation needs an education system that excites and stimulates children, providing them with the learning they need and deserve to fulfill their potential; in short, a curriculum of practical and creative learning alongside academic study.

This need for change has never been more vital. The simple fact is that the world has changed fast – however, our education system has not changed fast enough. Indeed, it is largely based on a system developed over a century ago; like a plant in a factory, where children are placed on a learning process according to their so-called intelligence.

In modern day and age there is no reason for such a top-down, one-size-fits-all education system that does not enable all children to thrive in their own way. We must recognise that young people are individuals with different talents and dreams. As such, not all children learn in the same way. We need to move towards a system based on a strong common core of essential skills and knowledge, which allows young people to develop their own particular talents and aspirations.

We must support young people in discovering what they enjoy and are good at - and who they want to be in life. We also must encourage and support teachers and schools in responding to these different needs. Young people will learn if they consider learning to be important, meaningful and worthwhile.

Purpose of the article

The purpose of this article is to explore how behaviour-change campaigns, especially entertaining education, can be helpful in changing the perceptions of social norms, in achieving adoption and in sustaining improved behaviours. At the same time, the article aims to validate the interest of the global intellectuals in combining education with entertainment, especially in order to make learning more enjoyable.

The BITA process: A journey towards creative development

BITA initiated a unique culture-based approach where the empowerment process starts its journey by building a relationship with communities through communication, supporting them by raising awareness, facilitating them in transforming their trust into internalisation capacity to visualise self-development, and making them confident of moving away from the position of observers and becoming actors. This leads them to make right decisions about their well-being and, as result, a community development process takes place, which ultimately brings recognition for them as change maker for the society.

BITA also believes that this human development process is the basis for Theatre in Education. It is indispensable to cultivate cultural education for a delightful learning environment. The environment might be initiated in the classroom and it is also necessary for it to extend outside the classroom - because the largest number of students are in primary and secondary education, aged mainly between 5 and 16 years. A phase of utmost importance is self-preparedness and self-construction.

Picture 1. The BITA Approach: Moving Towards Community



In South Asia a children-friendly education system has been missing for ages. Since an entertaining education system is absent and there is less room for participation, cultural activities are absent from schools. As per the Convention on the Rights of the Child, cultural education is an integral and important part of children's rights. Bangladeshi children, in particular, are deprived of enjoying the rights of participation in cultural activities. Therefore, it is necessary to bring changes to the education system and teaching methods. It is necessary to search for an alternative but delightful education system. In this regard, theatre arts could play a vital role. In this process, theatre arts or, in other words, Theatre in Education could be considered as an active education system in our country.

BITA started practicing Theatre in Education, highlighting children's rights, different problems and curricular issues, in order to extend education through entertainment. The aim is to empower children to use their observation, imagination and mimicry, to motivate them, to stimulate their creativity and to enable them to reveal their latent talents and abilities.



Theatre in Education: At a glance

<p>Name of the activity</p> <p>Theatre in Education</p>	<p>Objectives</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To create a learning space for children in a joyful environment; ▪ To enhance children's knowledge and positive attitude towards real-life matters; ▪ To enable children to discover their dormant aptitudes and abilities.
<p>Target group and age</p> <p>Children and youngsters; children of all ages, from different cultures, religions, races and backgrounds.</p>	<p>Materials / room</p> <p>Typically, a theatre company or professionals make a presentation in an educational setting (i.e. a school) for the youth. This can be done both indoors and outdoors.</p>
<p>Total time</p> <p>The preparation time varies depending on the context, content, etc. The dissemination period is 45 minutes, including interactive dialogue.</p>	<p>Number of people</p> <p>Any size, preferably 30-40 students for a classroom-based presentation.</p>

Theatre in Education: An applied innovation in education

Theatre in Education promotes and strengthens entertaining education. Children are naturally drawn to processes which involve participation and doing something interesting. It is an indispensable task to cultivate cultural education including traditional practices and associated activities for a delightful learning environment.

BITA recognises that our students, particularly in schools, do not get enough experiential, hands-on learning exposure in formal educational settings. It seems like they get through education instead of internalising it. They don't find inspiration to explore their latent talents. It is imperative to bring changes in the education system and teaching methods. In this regard, theatre arts could play a vital role. In this process, Theatre in Education could be considered as an active education system in our country.

The content may come from learners, the school curricula or extracurricular subject matters. The content could include local and global issues, such as the environment, climate change, education, science, human rights and child marriage, etc. The dissemination period is 45 minutes including interactive dialogue. For its translation into practice, BITA analyses the context and determines the key issues for the use of theatre in participatory ways. The potential issues, texts and performing forms of dissemination are consulted with stakeholders. The performing form is then finalised and disseminated in schools or communities. Children perform in Theatre in Education in some phases, accompanied by presentation by peer performers.

Expert members of the BITA Theatre core team and skilled local theatre activists do the activity with primary and secondary school students. Another notable aspect is that teachers become skilled at the facilitation of the learning methods employed during a classroom lesson in an attractive presentation style.

Eventually, for the performers, Theatre in Education stimulates their imagination and helps them to be able to act as different people and see both sides of situations. For the audience, i.e. children, it also stimulates their imagination, inspires, entertains and teaches them.

Key successes

- Achieving a balanced education is one of the key benefits of applying theatre to the school curriculum.
- Creative expression helps students to be better equipped in order to respond to future challenges.
- Children have the opportunity to develop cognitive abilities that complement the study of other topics.

- Students gain important life skills as they learn the value of critical feedback, both positive and constructive.
- Communication between peers is accelerated, as students are exposed to group activities. This experience also gives students the opportunity to display cultural leadership qualities.
- Children discover they are natural problem solvers or leaders. Creative expression is a great way of building self-confidence and can be particularly beneficial for introvert and reserved children.



Ideas for the future

To turn the possibilities into reality, we consider the following recommendations as vital for future planning.

- To undertake initiatives to include the entertaining education process in the education system of the country. Policies and pragmatic strategies should be formulated, engaging experts through the Ministry of Education.
- To develop training guidelines, making Theatre in Education a compulsory course in the Teacher Training Curriculum.
- To initiate a diploma course through establishing separate Teacher Training Institutes. This course to be made compulsory for those joining as teachers; hence, to become possible to recruit at least one art teacher in every school.
- At the university level, to include Theatre in Education in the curriculum of the Theatre Arts Department, so that graduate students can incorporate this experience and learning in their respective workplace.
- To employ alternative methods which incorporate theatrical processes in the education system, through coordinated efforts of non-government organisations working with Theatre in Development initiatives and governmental cultural institutions.
- Theatre in Education could be considered as a way of entertaining education on critical topics for better communication. The governmental educational curriculum in this regard needs to be consulted with experts for better performance.
- Reproduction health is a major concern today in a densely populated country like Bangladesh. Theatre in Education can be another effective medium for educating adolescents and the youth about reproductive health care issues.



Conclusion

Children are the seeds of change - but they won't automatically grow. In order to flourish, they need to be recognised and nurtured. They need the support of the nation; their parents', teachers' and the community's support. We need a new approach, a new paradigm. Theatre in Education could be the best means of bringing changes in the mind of young people for a playful education with entertainment. Ultimately, entertaining education has a greater scope of contributing in mainstream education, so that it reduces dropping out and coming back to school for children who face challenges when it comes to continuing school.



Notes

- 1 Bangladesh Institute of Theatre Arts (BITA)

