

A Case Study on the Use of Theater as a Tool in Promoting Positive Discipline for Children in Ozamiz City

Felimon Bonita Blanco, La Salle University, Philippines

The Southeast Asian Conference on Education 2020
Official Conference Proceedings

Abstract

The study aims to present a qualitative descriptive inquiry in using theater as tool in educating communities on positive discipline for children. It seeks to know the impact of play to the parents and family heads in relation to positive discipline for children. The study uses the Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura as the main framework of the study. Case study was adopted as tradition of inquiry in this study. Participants of the study were ten (10) parents who watched the play staged in their barangay. The study revealed that the use of theater is an effective tool in conveying message/issues to the community. It revealed also that communities prefer theater over traditional lecture as method to educate the communities. The results of the study also showed that staging plays leaves an impact to the parents and family heads in relation to positive discipline for children. This case study concludes that the participants have varied perspectives on the use of theater to impart messages to its audience. Secondly, the use of theater is indeed an effective tool to convey message/issues to educate to the communities. Theater, being live art, easily connects with the audience, thus, learning of the message is easier and clearer. And finally, the play changes some mindset among parents in relation to corporal punishment and positive discipline for children.

Keywords: theater in education, positive discipline for children, educational theater, social learning theory, teatro guindegan, la sale university

iafor

The International Academic Forum
www.iafor.org

Introduction

Theater is considered to be a collaborative form of art. This is because it employs the use of all other art forms. It uses dance for scenes that need choreography and movement. It uses music for background and accompaniment. It uses visual arts and architecture in the case of set design and stage construction. It uses literature for the dramatic texts used in the performance. And recently, theater employs film or multimedia to support specific scenes on stage. Thus, we can say that theater is the convergence of all arts. Theater is an activity where interacting persons mimicking some action present themselves to another group of persons. These two groups are separated – one acting the other watching – of which the latter performs in an imagined time and space (Fernandez, 2007).

For centuries, the practice of theater has been an indispensable part of human expression in all cultures. It has been said that theater was the earliest form of entertainment, as the first human invention. Stephanie Arnold (1998) in the book *The Creative Spirit* stated that human beings reflect on their new experiences and imagine new possibilities through theater. She further added that making theater is a way of understanding the world around us and our place in it. Theatre cannot be imprisoned inside theatrical buildings, just as religion cannot be imprisoned inside churches, the language of theatre and its forms of expression cannot be the private property of actors, just as religious practice cannot be appropriated by priests as theirs alone (Boal, 1998).

Theater has been used in many cases as an effective tool to educate communities regarding social issues and health practices. In Africa, the use of theater has been employed to increase educational awareness on HIV/AIDS cases. In India, the use of theater (forum theater in particular) is also used to raise awareness on health education among rural communities. In a study published in the Perspectives by the African American Research entitled *Theater as a Tool to Educate African Americans about HIV/AIDS: The Role of Historically Black Colleges in Addressing the AIDS Epidemic in the African American Community*, the researchers noted on theater's ability to provide opportunities to recreate reality in a safe environment in order to explore possibilities for change (Nina Smith, 2010). They further stated that through theater different life roles can be experimented and new behaviors can be explored to promote positive life changes.

Initially, the use of theatre in a development environment has involved performing plays to convey strong social messages, with little or no audience participation. Gradually, the potential of theatre as a platform of discussion and of exploring pertinent issues within a particular community is being realized (Scott-Danter, 1999). In the project report of Health on Stage organized by Asia Europe Foundation and FSL India in India, the project evaluators concluded that forum theatre can be an effective way to raise awareness and to create a dialogue about water-related issues in communities in India (Asia Europe Foundation, 2011).

It is through these that the researcher conducted this study to assess whether theater is an effective tool in educating the communities on positive discipline for children. This study was aimed at determining also the impact of the performances of *Istoryahe*

Lang Ko to the change of personal, relational and familial perspectives of positive discipline for children.

Background of the Study

Teatro Guindegan, the resident theater company of La Salle University, signed a contract with Philippine Educational Theater Association (PETA) in 2013 for an advocacy campaign on positive discipline for children, as part of PETA Advocate Right to Safety Zone for Children Project (PETA ARTS Zone). This engagement was under the Gabay Teatro Program on Social Transformation of the company. The group adapted Liza Magtoto's Rated PG play into a local Cebuano version called *Istoryahe Lang Ko*. The final outputs of the engagement were the performances of the play to ten (10) select barangays in the City of Ozamiz. *Istoryahe Lang Ko* tackled the stories of corporal punishment vis-à-vis positive discipline.

This study, which is descriptive in nature, is designed to gather information from the participants to know whether theater is indeed effective as tool to be used in educating communities about positive discipline for children. In like manner, the study seeks to determine whether the play itself has created changes to the personal, relational and familial perspectives to positive discipline for children.

The researcher limits the study to select parents from the barangays through semi-structured interviews. Parents are selected as participants since they are the major players in discipline practices in the households.

The study seeks to determine the use of theater as an effective tool in educating the communities on positive discipline for children. It likewise seeks to know if the play *Istoryahe Lang Ko* has impacts to parents and family relations.

This research study will add on to the bodies of researches proving the effective use of theater as a tool in communicating or conveying message to the communities. This study will be of great significance to civil society organizations (both national and international) who are looking for appropriate strategies and methodologies to convey message or to educate communities. In like manner, this study will be of importance to theater practitioners who focus in using theater in their advocacy works in the communities.

The main case being studied here is the participants' experience in watching the performance of *Istoryahe Lang Ko*, which is an advocacy play on positive discipline for children. The participants of this study are limited only to parents or adults who have watched the performance. Children as participants is a limitation of the study. This research is mainly focused on parents or adults because they are the key players in children discipline practices in the communities.

Literature Review

Drama is probably a more recent art than painting or singing because of its complexity: it is an activity that requires many people (often in the hundreds) with different skills, all working together – not to mention the large group of people who gather at one place at one time to witness it. Drama is a public art, requiring, in

addition to the inspiration and skill demanded of all artistic creation, a sophistication of social organization (Cohen, 2000).

The scholarly ties between a theater and its culture expand well past simply political concerns: specifically, the theater has at some time served as a ground for the discourse of each social issue possible. In modern times, Cohen (2000) noted that theatre has been used to discuss issues such as alcoholism, homosexuality, venereal disease, prostitution, public education, racial prejudice, capital punishment, thought control, prison reform, character assassination, civil equality, political corruption, and military excess. He further added that the best of these productions have exhibited these issues in all of its complexity and have extended solutions not as dogma but as food for thought – for great theatre has never sought to purvey pure propaganda. He further added that theatre is in a strong position to force and focus public confrontation with social issues. It succeeds in bringing the audience into touch with its own thoughts and feelings about those issues.

It is particularly the collective and public nature of the theatre that makes it such a potent social force. The theatre is a gathering place for the public presentation of ideas. It creates an intensely emotional experience for the audience. This is because ideas are expressed through characters caught in difficult or dangerous situations. More so, the impact of the work is then magnified by the number of people present; in this case, the audience that watch the performance. A collective emotional response is a force of enormous energy and can function in different ways. It can become a collective sigh of relief, an emotional release. Sometimes when a group of people have laughed very hard together or cried together, they feel that they can more easily accept the difficulties of their daily lives or the pressures that face the entire community (Arnold, 1998). She further added that theatre can be part of social debate, part of the free exchange of ideas, or it can be used for the dissemination of propaganda.

Cohen (2000) stated that theatre is a storehouse of pleasures. He further added that theatre includes any form of drama that profoundly stirs our feelings and heightens our awareness of the human conditions. Entertainment in theatre means “that which holds the attention.”

Theatre is live and human: it uses voice, speech, language, the body and emotion. It brings life and human reality to the audience as well as players. It makes people think and respond. We are all actors playing different roles in our lives, and the world is our stage (UNESCO-CCIIVS Project, 2006). Moreover, theatre groups can create space for storytelling and discussion. Theatre can convey information and still remain popular and entertaining too.

In the book ACT, LEARN AND TEACH: Theatre, HIV and AIDS Toolkit for Youth in Africa, the collective authors at UNESCO-CCIIVS listed the positive impact of theatre:

1. Grab the attention and interest of a great number of people. This is because theatre is performed live and based on reality. It combines oral communication, physical expression, dance, image, music and song, which work together to maintain people's interest over time.
2. Bring people together to openly discuss a problem.

3. Arouse strong emotions. The whole person is involved when participating in a drama – the mind, emotions, prejudices and passions; therefore, the experience and learning is not easily forgotten.
4. Be adapted to local realities, because plays can be performed anywhere, at any time and in local languages presenting real life situation.
5. Sensitize a community on priority issues and create collective ownership of individual stories.
6. Promote tolerance and mutual understanding by allowing the audience or actors to experience a different point-of-view or a role.
7. Encourage participation and self-expression, especially from those who often go unheard.
8. Provide entertainment! Many people learn best while enjoying themselves.

Theatre reaches the heart and the mind in a way that reading a pamphlet or listening to a speech likely will not. What happens to the characters, and the emotions one feels while participating in a Forum Theatre scenario, strikes people in a unique way and will likely be remembered long after the play ends (UNESCO-CCIVS Project, 2006).

Theatre offers entertainment while at the same time providing education to its audience. It has a strong power of persuasion. Entertainment-education dramas can persuade because they show characters who change their behavior to improve their lives. Stories have unique power and nuance to describe people's behavior and interactions, and their consequences. When audience members see that they could be in the same situation as the characters, stories can move them to change, too. E-E is particularly able to influence behavior rooted in traditions that are hard to change (de Fossard, 2008). E-E uses various forms of entertainment. Dramas on radio and TV, animated cartoons, popular songs, street theater, and other formats can both educate and motivate as they entertain. In E-E, there is no clear demarcation line between entertainment and education. The two should be seamlessly woven together.

E-E uses drama, music, or other communication formats that engage the emotions to inform audiences and change attitudes, behavior, and social norms. It engages the emotions as well as the intellect. This helps explain its power to change behavior. It can evoke a range of emotions. Entertainment is more than amusement. An emotional reaction often leads people to reflect about themselves and their own attitudes and behavior. At the same time, E-E presents role models who can show the audience how to adopt healthy behaviors.

Audiences identify with characters and settings. Audiences respond emotionally to E-E that is realistic, culturally appropriate, and creatively produced (de Fossard, 2008). When characters express their feelings, or when the story itself is dramatic, the audience responds emotionally. The audience feels a sense of empathy, and characters come to seem like friends. When characters face a problem that evokes emotion, audience members who identify and empathize with them may be motivated to solve similar problems in their own lives in a similar way.

Seeing how the characters in a drama solve problems can give audiences the sense that they, too, can control their lives and solve these problems. This sense of being in control and able to solve problems is called self-efficacy. Observing the success of others and trying new behavior and succeeding can lead to self-efficacy. Thus

audiences come to believe in their own ability to change and to succeed like the characters in a story.

Papa (2000) stressed that entertainment-education provides the general community with examples of behavior for modelling which can be either desirable and undesirable attitudes enacted by media characters that are either appealing or non-appealing for the masses. He further explained that the process of change takes place when people in the group share their own stories about coping up with same experienced problems. In the same line, there is another function of the use of theater; that is to educate the communities.

Theatre productions are entertaining for young children, pre-teens and even adults. Many of the evaluations of live theatre productions as an educational method have found a positive influence on knowledge and behavioral intentions. Despite its considerable use, the effectiveness of live theatre as an educational method with children has been minimally explored in the literature to date, and the available evidence is of differing quality which limits these findings (Child Health Promotion Research Centre, 2012).

Theatre productions may also be used as a springboard for dialogue about the issue post-performance. It can be a platform to find solutions, ways and means to solve issues in the communities. Theatre can be a strategy to combat issues of corporal punishment especially in rural communities.

One of the local action initiatives of the PETA partners of the first cycle of ARTSZone for Children Project was the stage play *Sang Upuan Lang (Just a Sit Down)* by the Mariano Marcos Memorial High School in Santa Ana, Manila. Balanon (2012) observed that different parents practice different methods of disciplining their children, which often led to corporal punishment. She further added that after the parents watched the play, they realized that positive discipline is the proper way to discipline the children.

Theater, in various forms and styles, is used to effectively convey message to the communities without having the need to forcefully inject into the consciousness of the audience. The theater performance provides platform for choices of decisions on the issues at hand. The audience is given the power and freedom to decide which will be taken and which will be not. Theater develops critical thinking and judgement among the viewers. Accordingly, it offers opportunities for debates and discussions over issues that directly affect the social communities.

In past studies and practices, the use of theater has been proven to be effective in communication and education. It offers great potentials for the education of the communities on certain issues and problems because of its power to challenge and question decisions of the people. The ephemeral nature of theater makes it an interesting form to use to stir discussions of social issues in the communities.

Theoretical Framework

This research used Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura as the main theoretical framework of this study.

The major premise of Social Learning Theory is that people can learn by observing others. The theory hypothesizes that people learn from one another, via observation, imitation, and modeling. In the online article entitled *Social Learning Theory* (Joey Lee, 2016), the authors listed the necessary conditions for effective modelling: Attention, Retention, Reproduction, Motivation.

Bandura's theory suggests that people learn through a process. First is attention; people focus on someone or something. Second is retention; people store information from what has been observed. Third is reproduction; people perform the same observed behavior. Fourth is motivation; people are motivated to imitate the modeled behavior.

Schunk (1996) mentioned that Bandura's work should do a good deal to increase our awareness of the importance of models in child-rearing and education. Teachers or parents teach by example which can be influential modelling. If a parent spanks a child (attention), then this will give a child an idea how spanking can physically control other people (retention). If the same child spanks someone younger than him/her (reproduction), and enjoys in the process then he acquired such behavior through modelling (motivation).

In the same line, observational learning is one of the more important concepts in social learning theory. Once a new behavior is acquired through the process of observation, then learning is said to be cognitive. O'Rourke (2006) stressed that observation teaches us the probable consequences of new behavior; we notice what happens when others try it. Observational learning can occur through observation of modeled behavior with the accompanying cognitive activities.

Bandura believed in "reciprocal determinism"; that the world and person's behavior cause each other. Behaviorism states that the person's environment causes the person's behavior. Further, Bandura suggested that behavior causes environment. He then later considered personality as an interaction of three components: environment, behavior and psychological processes.

In his book *Social Learning Theory*, Bandura (1971) stressed that behavior partly creates the environment, and the resultant environment influences behavior. In this two-way causal process, the environment is just as influenceable as the behavior it controls.

The three factors environment, people and behavior are constantly influencing each other. It is said that behavior is not simply the result of the environment and the person, just as the environment is not simply the result of the person and behavior. The environment offers models for behavior. Observational learning occurs when a person watches the actions of another person and the reinforcements that the person receives (TCW, n.d.).

Method

This case study on the use of theater as effective tool in educating the communities used qualitative research approach. A case study was employed to gain understanding of the use of theater as effective tool to convey message / social issue or educate the

general population. Case studies are conducted for post-facto (after the event) studies, rather than ongoing issues or questions.

Interview data collection was employed to obtain the necessary data from the select key informants. The researcher used semi-structured interview. The researcher has identified key questions to outline the research interest, but it also opened for probing far beyond the answers from the prepared questions. The method was conducted through individual, face-to-face interviews using an interview guide.

Purposive sampling was used in the selection of participants. This means that the researcher specified certain criteria in selecting the key informants. Below are the criteria used:

1. There shall be 10 target informants (one from every barangay where the play was performed).
2. The informants must have watched the performance of *Istoryahe Lang Ko*.
3. The informants must be parents already (either father or mother).

Findings of the Study

The participants of this study proved that the use of theater is an effective tool in conveying message/issues to the community than traditional lectures.

The study revealed that community like theater because (a) it is educational, (b) it has purposes, (c) it can entertain, (d) it has lessons, (e) it is a good strategy, and (f) it can get the focus or attention of the community.

Theater is an effective tool in conveying message because it captures audience attention; the audience can easily connect with the message being presented. Theater is performed live, hence, easier to interpret and understand. To them, theater is a like a reflection; it makes the audience easily react, interact and recognize the situation. It develops internalizations of the message that is being given to them. Theater makes people active and alive. The perspectives of participants toward use of theater in educating communities is anchored on their experience in watching the play *Istoryahe Lang Ko*.

The findings validate the previous researchers on the effects of theater among community people. According to UNESCO-CCIVS Project (2006) theater provides entertainment; in which many people learn best while enjoying themselves. This also validates previous researches made on the use of theater as effective tool in educating communities: on the effects of smoking, fruit and vegetable consumption (Child Health Promotion Research Centre, 2012); on increasing AIDS awareness in Africa (Harvey, Stuart & Swan, 2000) among others.

The play *Istoryahe Lang Ko* leaves an impact to the parents and family in relation to positive discipline for children. The participants revealed that after watching the play the parents (a) understood better how to discipline their children and realized that punishing is not a direct discipline, (b) learned the value of respect inside the family, and (c) were entertained and inspired but somehow emotionally touched.

They learned that to discipline a child is not to punish immediately, but to talk to the child and explain the mistake/fault. The communities even proposed that this type of play should be presented during pre-wedding seminars in order to expose the young couple for ideal child discipline practices just before they enter into marriage. However, the participants also revealed that there are still some forms of corporal punishment among children that happened in their barangays. Corporal punishment practices cannot be immediately stopped because the campaign for positive discipline for children needs to be more strengthened in the barangay level.

This finding validates the study of PETA on the impact of the play Rated PG to corporal punishment and positive discipline. As Ochoa, Yacat & Torre (2014) pointed out that the play seemed to be effective in improving the favorability of positive discipline than in lowering the endorsement of corporal punishment. This also validates the research findings that theater opens the way for discussions among people. Theatre productions, according to Child Health Promotion Research Centre (2012), may also be used as a springboard for dialogue about the issue post-performance. However, as Ochoa, Yacat & Torre (2014) noted that there is a need for widespread dissemination of the advocacy. They said that there are indeed more works to be done in this aspect.

Conclusion

After conducting the study and interpreting the findings, the researcher has come up with the following conclusions:

1. The participants have varied characteristics and perspectives on the use of theater to impart message to its audience.
2. The participants revealed that the use of theater is highly effective in conveying message/issues to educate the communities. The live performance in theater captures audience attention making the message easier to understand.
3. The participants of the study reported that the play *Istoryahe Lang Ko* leaves an impact to parents who watched the performances in the barangays. The play educates them that disciplining means talking and explaining to the children the mistakes they committed. However, they affirmed also that there are still few reported cases of corporal punishment in their respective barangays.

References

- Alampay, L. P. (2014). *Parenting in the Philippines*. In H. Selin and P. Schvanevelds *Parenting Across Cultures: Childrearing, Motherhood and Fatherhood in Non-Western Cultures*. The Netherlands: Springer.
- Arnold, S. (1998). *THE CREATIVE SPIRIT An Introduction to Theatre*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Asia Europe Foundation. (2011). *Health on Stage Evaluation Report*. Singapore: ASEF.
- B. Harvey, J. S. (2000). Evaluation of a drama-in-education programme to increase AIDS awareness in South African high schools: a randomized community intervention trial. *International Journal of STD & AIDS*.
- Balanon, F. (2012). *Rated P3G Pamilya, Paaralan, at Pamayanan: A PETA Cultural Campaign*. Quezon City: Philippine Educational Theater Association.
- Bandura, A. (1971). *Social Learning Theory*. New York City: General Learning Press.
- Boal, A. (1998). *LEGISLATIVE THEATRE Using performance to make politics*. London: Routledge.
- Bruce Berg, H. L. (2012). *Qualitative Research Methods for the Social Sciences*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Child Health Promotion Research Centre. (2012). *The use of Theatre in Education (TIE): A review of the evidence*. Australia: Edith Cowan University.
- Cohen, R. (2000). *Theatre 5th edition*. Mountain View, CA: Mayfield Publishing Company.
- Cresnel, J. (2007). *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (3rd ed.)*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- de Fossard, E. L. (2008). *Entertainment-Education for Better Health INFO Reports, No. 17*.
Baltimore, MD: INFO Project, Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public.
- Eslit, N. (2014). *Positive Discipline Research in Ozamiz Coty*. Ozamiz City: Gitib, Inc.
- Fernandez, S. P. (2007). *MAKING THEATRE the craft of the stage*. Iligan City: IPAG.
- Gershoff, E. (2002, June 26). *Is Corporal Punishment an Effective Means of Discipline?* Retrieved from American Psychological Association: <http://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2002/06/spanking.aspx>

- Gill, P. e. (2008, March 22). *Methods of data collection in qualitative research: interviews and focus groups*. Retrieved from British Dental Journal: <http://www.nature.com/bdj/journal/v204/n6/full/bdj.2008.192.html>
- Gonzales, C., & Nicdao, R. (2016). *PD+ A Handbook on Positive Discipline*. Quezon City: PETA.
- Joey Lee, J. N. (2016). *Social Learning Theory*. Retrieved from Learning Theories: <https://www.learning-theories.com/social-learning-theory-bandura.html>
- Nelsen, J. (2016). *Child Discipline: To Punish or Not*. Retrieved from Positive Discipline: <https://www.positivediscipline.com/articles/child-discipline-punish-or-not>
- Nicdao, R. (2016). *Nature, Goals, and Stragegies of Positive Discipline*. Quezon City: PETA.
- Nina Smith, J. N.-B. (2010). Theater as a Tool to Educate African Americans about HIV/AIDS: The Role of Historically Black Colleges in Addressing the AIDS Epidemic in the African American Community. *Perspectives*, 71.
- O'Rorke, K. (2006). Social Learning Theory & Mass Communication. *ABEA Journal*, 72-74.
- Ochoa, D. P., & Torre, B. A. (2016). *Parenting Research in the Philippines: A Review of Literature from 2004-2014*. Quezon City: PETA.
- Ochoa, D., Yacat, J., & Torre, B. (2014). *Theater as advocacy: The influence of Rated PG on children and adult viewers' endorsement of corporal punishment (CP) and positive discipline (PD)*. Quezon City: Philippine Educational Theater Association.
- Papa, M. S. (2000). Entertainment-Education and Social Change: An Analysis of Parasocial Interaction, Social Learning, Collective Efficacy, and Paradoxical Communication. *Journal of Communication*, 31-55.
- Save The Children. (1999). *Educate, don't punish!* Coimoff S.A.
- Schunk, D. H. (1996). *Learning Theories: an educational perspective 2nd edition*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ:: Prentice-Hall.
- Scott-Danter, H. (1999). Theatre for development: a dynamic tool for change. *FORCED MIGRATION*, 24.
- TCW, T. (n.d.). *Social Cognitive Theory*. Retrieved from University of Twente: https://www.utwente.nl/cw/theorieenoverzicht/Theory%20Clusters/Health%20Communication/Social_cognitive_theory/
- UNESCO-CCIVS Project. (2006). *ACT, LEARN AND TEACH: Theatre, HIV and AIDS Toolkit for Youth in Africa*. Italy: UNESCO.

Wong, P. (2016). *Theatre for Social Change and Development*. Retrieved from
Academia:
https://www.academia.edu/6137582/Theatre_for_Social_Change_and_Development

Contact email: fb1973@gmail.com