



# MALAYSIAN ONLINE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL MANAGEMENT (MOJEM)

JULY 2014, VOLUME 2, ISSUE 3, 53 - 69

E-ISSN NO: 2289 – 4489

## FORUM THEATRE TECHNIQUE: ENHANCING LEARNING IN MORAL EDUCATION CLASSROOM

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### ABSTRACT

Implementing instructional techniques designed to maintain student interest, especially in the Moral Education classroom is still a major challenge for teachers. The conventional classroom teaching seems difficult to attract the attention of students to engage themselves physically and mentally in the learning process. Therefore, this article introduces Forum Theatre as a technique that can be utilized to improve the effectiveness of teaching and enhance learning. After describing the framework of the Forum Theatre (develop a script, anti-model play, forum and intervention play), the article also describes how this interactive technique could enhance learning, its impact, and how it can be used as a teaching tool. The study also showed that Forum Theatre increases student engagement and their ability to explore real moral issues which they facing in their daily lives.

**Keyword:** Moral Education, Forum Theatre, anti-model play, intervention play



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## INTRODUCTION

Teachers need to perform teaching duties effectively in a classroom environment that is arguably complex and fluid (Cohen & Geier, 2010). Classrooms are said to have complex environments due to factors such as students, teachers and physical conditions affecting the student's learning process. The classroom environment is fluid because all the events happening inside or outside of the classroom will have an impact on the students. In this situation the teacher must play a role in implementing good teaching techniques designed to maintain student interest.

Appropriate teaching techniques are important in the classroom because satisfaction and enjoyment in teaching depend on leading students to cooperate. Besides providing a safe and comfortable learning environment, teaching techniques can also build self esteem and motivation (Hess, 2009).

The role of teachers as transmitters of values and moral content and students as passive receptors has been a teaching pedagogy of Moral Education in Malaysia (Vishalache, 2009). One way method of teaching and exam oriented pedagogy (Liau et al., 2003) makes the subject boring for students. Students are not interested in attending the Moral Education class (Barone, 2004). Lack of interest in this subject contributes to the unwanted behavior among school children (Ibrahim Bajunid, 2012). There is a gap between the moral syllabus and how the students approach moral conflict in their daily lives (Vishalache, 2011).

In this context, the ability to communicate is an essential component for successful teaching (Roche, 2011). Research by Robinson and Lai (2006) show a normal means of communication cannot attract the student attention to focus on learning in the classroom. Conventional technique of teaching is unable to inspire them to get involved in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom.

Teaching is essentially a performance (Alam Sher Malik, 2012). A performer needs to be familiar with different ways of presenting ideas and have the skill to implement them. In order to enhance this intuitive ability, teachers should explore artistic approaches, that is, approaches which focus on the facial expressions, vocal characteristic, gestures and body movements. Artistic fields of study in education such a theatre normally produce the desired response from students.

One way of working creatively to enhance learning in the Moral Education classroom is through a technique called Forum Theatre. Forum Theatre techniques have features such as active learning and providing direct experience to students and it is a student-centered learning approach (Osburn, 2010). Artistic approaches to teaching such as Forum Theatre help students become more intuitive and adaptive in their learning (McClimens & Scott, 2007).



### **Forum Theatre**

Forum Theatre is an empowering art form created by a Brazilian dramatist, Augusto Boal (Harbrecht, 2013). Boal (2008) used theatre to address oppression (defined as social injustices, such as exclusion, exploitation or domination) to stimulate individual and social change.

Forum Theatre has been a revolution in the world of theatre (Harbrecht, 2013) because the gap or boundary between actor and audience has been eliminated. In conventional theatre everything moves from the stage to the auditorium. Emotions, ideas and issues of morality move from the stage toward the audience and none of that moved the other way. In conventional theatre, the audience is made up of passive and powerless individuals (Harbrecht, 2013).

In Forum Theatre, Boal (2008) has empowered the audience. Everyone is encouraged to take part in the play that is being staged. Forum Theatre invites viewers to contribute and participate and try out their own ideas. Viewers are given the opportunity to intervene in the ongoing acting to provide comments on the action, to intervene directly in the action and try to bring the play to a different conclusion. The role of the audience (spectators) will be transformed into a “spect-actors” in the Forum Theatre. For Boal (2006), the theatre is the art of looking at ourselves and all men are actors (they act!) and the audience (they are watching!). Boal (2006) designated the audience-actor as “spect-actors”.

In this study, Forum Theatre has been used as an interactive teaching and learning technique that requires students to participate actively in the process of developing a script, memorizing, engaging in forums, acting and expressing ideas. It allows students to appreciate the value and think about what they are doing. Students also have the opportunity to engage in intellectual, emotional and physical development (Osburn, 2010). There are four steps involved in the Forum Theatre techniques:

#### *Forum Theatre as a Teaching Technique*

Students were involved in four steps of Forum Theatre as recommended by Boal (2008). These four steps are (a) develop a script (b) anti-model play (c) forum, and (d) intervention play. The following is a discussion of student participation in all of the four steps of Forum Theatre and a detailed account of how the student used them, and how it all worked out in the Moral Education classroom to enhance learning.

#### *Develop a Script*

In this session, students are asked to develop a script based on their own experiences of daily life and that has to do with a theme in Moral Education. The objective of this session is to train participants to develop a script based on their own experience. In this study, the participants collaborated in developing a script about their shared challenge. In this context the focus was “moral conflict” and the scenario could be almost any topic which resonates with “oppression”. Participants had written three



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scripts to demonstrate the problems causing the oppressive situation. Script A related to conflicts between road users and police officers, script B involved a conflict between students and teachers in the school premises and script C is about conflict between children and parents in the family.

### *Anti-model Play*

After composing the script, students have to act out the script developed earlier. The developed script was acted out by the students for class viewing. This moral conflict scene is performed as the anti-model play. It is compulsory for the scene performed to display oppression or pressure situations, where a character being victimized failed to overcome the persecution. Thus, the issues were clarified and the students appeared to empathize with what they experienced. The original performance always ends with an undesirable challenge for the victimized character.

### *The Forum*

After anti-model play is completed, immediately another session was conducted by the “Joker”. The Joker discussed with the audience the problems that appeared in the presentation and possible solutions proposed to overcome the above problems. The Joker then asked the audience to figure out the right solution or idea that can be implemented to resolve the conflict experienced by the oppressed characters in the play. Discussion, improvisation and audience participation is known as “forum” and it was conducted very well by the Joker. The appropriate solutions were discussed in a forum session by the participants.

### *Intervention Play*

During intervention sessions, anti-model play was presented for a second time. Audience members participated after stopping the action (freezing) of the scene. An audience member took the place of an actor to demonstrate his or her ideas for resolving a problem. Some of them (audience) joined the scene as new characters.

At this stage, the audience (spectator) changed into the role of actors called “spect-actors”. Boal (2006) wanted the audience to be active members of society, to cooperate in tackling existing conflicts in society. The audiences are referred to as “spect-actors” as they are encouraged to observe and interact with the performance at different stages of the process (Boal, 2006). “Spect-actors” would offer solutions through interaction such as stepping in and out of role as well as discussion, reflection and debate. Through intervention play, the conflict was resolved, highlighted in a moral manner and resulted in benefit to society.



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Hammond (2012) called the involvement of the “spect-actors” in action as “role-reversal”. The aim is to provide participants with a safe and supported space to share their views and to give an opportunity to take part in a rehearsal for reality (Boal, 2006).

## RESEARCH OBJECTIVE

The purpose of this study is to identify how the Forum Theatre technique conducted in the Moral Education classroom could improve the effectiveness of teaching and enhance the learning objective of Moral Education. Thus, this article describes exploring the use of Forum Theatre techniques in a government-aided rural secondary school. Specifically the goal was to find out how this tool could enhance learning, its impact and effectiveness to student learning in the classroom setting.

## METHODOLOGY

### *Research Design*

This study was conducted using qualitative sampling (Creswell, 2012). A purposive approach to sampling was undertaken (Richards & Morse, 2007). Form Four science students (18 male and female of Indian and Chinese ethnicity) from three schools were selected for data collection purposes.

### *Data Collection*

As a form of data triangulation, this study used multiple ways of obtaining qualitative data (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The main method was focus group interviews, in which the selected group of students was interviewed. All interview sessions were recorded, transcribed and data were coded for analysis purposes. All transcribed verbatim reports were returned to the interviewees for them to check the accuracy of what they had said. Apart from that students’ journals were used for analysis from the students’ perspectives about the teaching technique and their involvement in Forum Theatre. Other sources of data such as classroom observation to investigate teachers’ performance were also used.

### *Instrument*

Instruments such as classroom observation protocol, interview protocol and journal writing method were used to collect relevant data. The content validity of the instruments was assured through comments and criticism from experts in Moral Education and Theatre Education.



### *Data Analysis*

The thematic approach introduced by Braun and Clarke (2006) was used for data analysis. With the thematic approach, the coding scheme was initially guided by the research questions which provided the main themes and key coding. However, the possibilities of other emerging themes that might emerge from the data were also accepted. Data from various sources and transcription codify into concepts, sub-themes and themes (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Data were compiled according to the order based on the breakdown of data into simple categories. Coding in qualitative research such as open coding, axial coding and selective coding is the process of identifying correlates of data into an idea, theme or category (Boeije, 2010). The inductive-deductive cycle of thinking constantly happened in our data analysis process in order to derive at the most valid codes and concepts to answer the research questions. Findings were categorized according to several themes.

### **FINDINGS**

Although Forum Theatre is great fun to play with, the researchers were serious in their desire to make it work in the classroom. Forum Theatre is successful in stimulating the learning process by (a) creating an environment conducive to learning, (b) facilitating experiential learning and (c) facilitating co-learning and moral behaviour. In the following sections, the researchers will discuss how Forum Theatre techniques used to achieve these outcomes and enhanced students learning.

#### **Forum Theatre Creates a Conducive Environment for Learning**

Forum Theatre was able to create a highly interactive learning environment. It succeeded in creating a classroom environment that supports student learning. Students involved in four steps of Forum Theatre showed a high degree of group trust and willingness to take risks. They are engaged in learning in the classroom physically and mentally through Forum Theatre. Outcomes following interview data indicate that student participation in the conducive classroom environment.

Participant 2: "...in Moral we can see that we can use Forum Theatre techniques. We already see the fun antics of our friends acting ... it caught our attention. This balance varies with the normal way of teaching. In a typical drama viewer cannot give the idea ... in Forum Theatre we can give ideas ... and act out ideas through forums and intervention sessions. This collaboration created group cooperation [SMKSuria/inter/5.2.13] (Author's translation).

The following is a journal entry of participants:

*"All members of the group are very cooperative when it comes to training, some brought the play's prop, some are willing to buy props like a police hat and if problems arise we together solve the problem. All team members have the attitude and determination to write the script and acting in unity" [SMKSinar/Jour/27.2.13] (Author's translation).*



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Classroom observation shows participants are also having fun. They focus and concentrate while performing activities such as discussion (forums) for developing a script, writing a script, participating in an anti-model play and intervention play.

In the meantime, some of the participants commented that the Forum Theatre:

Participant 3: *"It's ... it ... stimulate students enjoy ... easy ... but we must have a lot of guts ... and creative .... Teacher must give a lot of time for us to be ready ... then... ok ... if all of us work together then easy for us to create a play. Acting is interesting... and we quickly understand what is shown. We'll really see and hear, the anti-model play takes place in front of our eyes the acting is lively so we can understand better"*[SMKCahaya/inter/22.2.13] (translated version).

In the journal entry, participants noted that:

*"It is fun. We are not stress ... no tension now .... if not before ..... many say Moral is boring subjects ... as we always write notes .. notes.. and memorize the values . ... if students do not memorize the moral standing to class exhausted ... for shame ... that's why many of us skip Moral Education class. Now when there are activities such as anti-model play, intervention and theater games, it's more fun ... , reduce stress"* [SMKSinar/jour/7.3.13] (Author's translation).

Forum Theatre provided an opportunity for students to create and nourish the moral emotions, particularly in alerting them to the range of feelings in themselves and awareness of the feelings of others. The finding is consistent with studies by Gourd and Gourd (2011) that the Forum Theatre helps students achieve the ability to "feel", imagination and show empathy to others. Forum Theatre creates an emotional connection to learning [SMK Suria/obser/11.3.13].

The following interview excerpts support this conclusion:

Participant 4: *" ... Usually, if read alone, the situation from the textbook ... I do not understand ...it is not 'interesting' ...But in Forum Theatre there is an activity .. This is interesting because we are playing the character and we can understand more about the conflict ...it is really nice .... because acting involves such thing as feeling , ... action ... and more fun because we working together with our group of friends "* [SMKSinar/inter/24.1.13].

Researcher: Does Forum Theatre help you to understand your own feelings?

Participant 3: *"Yes. ... because it's our own story and we wrote the story with emotions... For example, I act as a kind policeman ... and I feel happy and excited to be a good character ...I can internalise the feelings like kindness, guilt, regret, pleasure and pride by acting in the character..."* [SMKSuria/inter/12.3.13] (Author's translation).



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Participant journal entries show Forum Theatre helps them to understand the feelings of others:

*“When the people act, we can see and understand their feelings.. When he's angry ...we see their angry faces in action. We understand themselves ... they get angry.... through their actions. We see and hear their own stunts of acting in front of us”* [SMKCahaya/jour/12.4.13] (Author’s translation).

In addition, Forum Theatre is also able to stimulate aspects of moral reasoning of students. They will be able to apply reasoning to the situation displayed through anti-model play and can provide a solution to the problems raised by the play in intervention sessions. These processes involve the development of moral reasoning of students in a sequence of three elements of reasoning: reasonable thought, careful consideration in making the decision and justification for the action taken [SMKSinar/obser/5.3.13].

The following interview excerpts attest to the researchers’ claim:

Participant5: *“Dramatizing the situation facilitates us to understand better the issues ... and facilitate us to understand the rationality of an action performed by a character. Because, play is live in the classroom ... and we watch the play by ourselves ... and we can think and see whether the act of a character is right or wrong ... and in intervention play we can make a difference ... it's easy to understand”.*

Researcher: Can you give an example?

Participant2: *“For example, in the anti-model play ... we have seen the problem between Wilson and the Policeman (anti-model play’s character). We discussed that the problem appears because Wilson does not respect the police and [is] angry at the police. We solved this problem by asking who starred as Wilson (our friend Wei Loon) to practice the respect for the police. When Wilson respect the police, call the police ... like “Mr. cops” well the policeman also start to respect Wilson. After that ... conflicts do not arise here ...”* [SMKCahaya/inter/31.1.13] (Author’s translation).

Moreover, Forum Theatre also improves classroom discipline. Problems such as aimless chatting were resolved. Students actively engage with their team members in developing the script, theatre activities and acting during the intervention sessions. Forum Theatre enhances classroom interaction and student engagement in learning. Anti-model play and the intervention play also attract the attention of the students to focus on what is happening in front of the classroom space. For example, participants who become spect-actors are so busy focusing on anti-model play to analyze how to overcome the problems faced by the character Tan (script B) who antagonized the school counselling teachers [SMKSuria/obser/26.2.13].

This is also evidenced by the following excerpt:



Participant 6: *“In their acting, students need self-discipline ... for playing a character like,.. responsible trainers or a teacher who cares. While acting, the actors can see the value of the character, ... they can realize the value of it and the effect of the good and bad behaviour of the character.... An actor ... understands all this when they do (act) their own. So they have to pay attention to anti-model play, to create the intervention play...later”* [SMKSinar/inter/28.2.13] (Author’s translation).

While anti-model play and interventions take place, all students become increasingly present, focused and energetic. The entire classroom stayed highly engaged for 10 minutes when anti-model play lasts and for 20 minutes while spect-actors were acting in intervention sessions. Theatre plays such anti-model play and intervention creates a sense of belonging through shared creation and humor. Forum Theatre helped to increase classroom energy [SMKSuria/obser/8.4.13].

Participants also agreed:

Participant 2: *“After successfully perform the anti-model play, we are very happy. Our other friend also like to congratulate and also pleased us ... we are proud to be perform well ... All of us was not aware the moral subject passes quickly... all my friends give moral support and co-operation for us to act again. This is really fun and happy moment”* [SMKCahaya/inter/22.2.13] (Author’s translation).

In addition, students of moral education class became used to getting up out of their seats, focusing on the lesson (moral issues/conflict) and engaging actively in their presentation, listening very carefully to each other and responding with keen attention and respect

### **Forum Theatre Facilitates Experiential Learning**

Forum Theatre is also able to facilitate experience based or active learning. This finding is consistent with previous studies that indicate the effectiveness and value of involving students in their learning experience through experience and simulation (Boggs, Mickel, & Holtom, 2007). Chickering and Gamson (1987) described experiential learning as a best practice for students. They emphasized the process which makes learning meaningful as follows: *“learning is not a spectator sport...(students) must talk about what they are learning, write about it, relate it to past experiences, and apply it to their daily lives”*(p. iii). Our key teachings in moral education required attitude shifts of our students. Direct experience and first hand exploration which students gain from Forum Theatre activity seemed to be the best way to get there [SMKSuria/obser/8.4.13].

Participants declare in a journal entry that:

*“We get experience in acting ... and the experience of being in a situation that we are playing ... and this facilitates quickly makes us recalls all the values we are played ..... We have the experience to find the values that correspond to the situation.... and try out in*



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*the intervention play... We believe we can use the same method to solve problems in real life" [SMKSinar/jour/7.3.13] (Author's translation).*

Classroom observation shows that among the key aspects identified through experiential learning is an aspect of creativity and leadership among students. Students are very creative in writing stories together. They are able to write creatively daily experiences encountered by them in the form of an interesting acting script. In one scenario (script B), for example, students are able to show the conflict faced by students and teachers in the school premises well. Conflicts such as one involving a sports teacher who is unaware of student problems, attitudes that do not comply with the classroom rules, the teacher's negligence while on duty and the problems in friendship can be described by the anti-model play for the students [SMKSinar/obser/26.2.13].

Participants were also creative in describing the atmosphere of tension existing between the students and teachers at the school field and in the counselling room well. Researchers felt that the class was energized by the experience and the creative product were "owned" by all the participants.

Participant5: *"Forum Theatre makes us think ... think out of the box ...and be creative. Students show creativity as we write scripts, write dialogue ... we also have to have the imagination to pretend to be the teacher counsellor, teacher ... Man ... and other characters. .... And ... We also need to be creative while acting in intervention play to find an idea, create a role-playing situation, to resolve existing problems and to draw the attention of the audience "[SMKCahaya/inter/12.4.13] (Author's translation).*

The aspect of leadership is also evident among the students. The group leader has to perform his duties, and delegate tasks to each member. A handyman was appointed to write the script. Two of the participants went to work, using the idea given by a friend to build sentences as well as the dialogue script. During this discussion the group leader also chose the members to hold the group and play the protagonist and antagonist character. For example, the leader appoints members to act out the character of the policeman and the character of the road users who did not obey the laws of the road (script A), the character of the teacher and student (script B) and the character of their parents and family members (script C). Joker character and side character was determined and each student is given the responsibility to fulfil their roles, by the group leader [SMKCahaya/obser/10.4.13].

Even though the discussions and overall Forum Theatre activities were interspersed with laughter, jokes, teasing, little noise and mocking jest, in the end, all the students were quite serious about their duty and all of them always obey the leader's order.

Meanwhile, the interview results prove the admission of participants.

Student 3: *"The strength of this technique is that we learn more.. a lot of fun. We understand how to compromise with our friends ... helping ... sympathy and patience with a friend who did not know how to act. The group leader also patiently taught us the way of acting in intervention play ... the love and sympathy among our friends also can be seen. As a group we*



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*help each other and always accommodating to enact in anti-model play and acting in intervention play” [SMKSuria/inter/5.2.13].*

Participant journal entries show that:

*“Theatre made me more responsible to help my team. I, as head of the group has [have] give the task to everyone equally. I prepared a training schedule for my team members (every evening). I have hold training sessions to all, that's why ... our team win . I do not want our team to lose. I show my responsibility to all my friends and I make sure they listen to me ... and I also guide them how to do props, and memorize character dialogue in the play very well” [SMKSinar/jour/28.2.13] (Author’s translation).*

Students carried with them into discussion the sense of joy and accomplishment they experienced from having interacted successfully in this way. Forum Theatre cultivate their discursive interaction, a sense of connection with their peers and leaders, careful listening, creativity in their performance and respect for each other’s ideas; which is a core values and objective of moral education program in Malaysia (Moral Education Syllabus, 2004).

### **Forum Theatre Stimulates Co-Learning and Moral Behavior**

Forum Theatre activity stimulates co-learning and moral behavior among participants. Students greatly enjoyed the activities and researchers noted a very high level of participation from all the students in the classroom. The process of acting in an anti-model play or an intervention play prompted laughter and some competition among students. This element of Forum Theatre stimulated participation from all class members. Group members helped each other to solve the problem addressed by the other group through anti-model play. Each group of students generated rich and significant content about their own experiences to create a solution for the problem through intervention play. A deeper understanding of course material was achieved, along with a wealth of connections such as students to material and students to each other [SMKCahaya/obser/8.3.13].

This is evidenced by the following interview:

Participant 5: *“If you use Forum Theatre in the Moral Education subject is good.. more nice, because there is no stress. It will create a 'critical thinking' ... students can cooperate .... and the relationship between teacher and pupil better .... because there is cooperation...and studying is fun” [SMKCahaya/inter/12.4.13].*

Researcher: How Forum Theatre create critical thinking?

Participant 6: *“When we compose the script .. we compose it creatively.. ... while acting in anti-model play..we ... also include a 'sense of humor' ... think of how we can get students' attention ... well ... how to act...” [SMKSinar/inter/24.1.13] (Author’s translation).*



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In addition, classroom observation also shows the Forum Theatre can develop some moral practices among the participants. Among the moral practices identified and real is the practice of performing the tasks given, cooperation, tolerance, self-confidence in abilities, courage, self-reliance, mutual help, punctuality, politeness and hard work. This finding also supports the study of Middlewick, Kettle, and Wilson (2012), that the Forum Theatre has the potential and is a powerful educational tool for teaching and learning in the classroom setting.

Refer to the following interview results:

Participant3: *“Learning is fun with Forum Theatre.... there is no tension, no stress ..., we understand how to collaborate ... to help each other, ....we sympathy with a friend who cannot act, ....at the same time..we show our love to friends also. Our relationship with the teachers also good because there is a cooperation in building the script and intervention play between students and teachers”* [SMKSuria/inter/12.3.13] (Author’s translation).

Students show their practices when performing active duty to express ideas, opinions and comments such for authoring the script with full commitment. Students regardless of religion and race co-enact the anti-model play, determine intervention strategies, build props, find costumes (actor/s costumes), help to make up another friend, correct errors in acting and stack equipment (setting) before and after the play. They also show patience and do not tell off the participants who could not act, and friends who forgot the dialog while acting [SMKSinar/obser/26.2.13].

Students were also accommodating; they compromised and showed tolerance with friends who like to interrupt when the play is in progress. This is supported by the following excerpt:

Participant 5: *“My job is to provide props such as police hats, sign board and police whistles. My friends and I will prepare all this. I also have a duty to help friends who are organizing props, chairs and tables before acting and clear stage after the play”* [SMKCahaya/inter/31.1.13] (Author’s translation).

Students without acting experience boldly come forward to act in the anti-model play and interventions. The Joker is also able to handle forum sessions with courage and daring. Participants also dare to discuss, argue and express their opinions during the forum. They also dared to criticize the character of teachers, police and parents, as portrayed in the anti-model play for failing to be a moral agent in society. Students’ self-reliance in writing scripts, formulating the concept of the story, doing their own practice, finding props, costumes and drafting tables to their rehearsal is a meaningful learning experience for the classroom community. They did everything themselves without spoon feeding or depending on their teacher [SMKCahaya/obser/10.4.13].



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This conclusion is supported by the following excerpts:

Participant 1: *“Every group member was chip in the idea... All of us discuss together before create the script...the script is our own self-authored script ... We prepare the props ourselves “.*

Participant2: *“Acting... even our own ... we train on our own after school hours ... 20 minutes every day... usually we use school hall for training every day ... Sometimes we like to watch a YouTube to find a way to act” [SMKSuria/inter/9.4.13] (Author’s translation).*

Participant journal entries show that Forum Theatre helps them speak in a more bold and confident way:

*“Yes, ..confident.. use expressions like ..... well .. let say if we attend our scholarship interview..we have to speak with confidence and courage ... we need to use good expression ... we can learn things through the Forum Theatre ... we experiencing how to 'behave', bold and good in acting” [SMKSuria/jour/9.4.13] (Author’s translation).*

Mutual help or aid was clearly seen in how the participants carried out the process of composing and typing scripts, preparing costumes and lending equipment such as laptop computers, finding the props, providing a scenario, correcting the style of acting partners as required fictional character, making-up and helping a friend in dressing. Participants preferred the interest of the group (team-work) to achieve planned goals in the classroom.

Refer to the following interview:

Participant3: *“More fun to learn moral in this way...we now ... more than happy with moral subjects .... we looking forward for moral time ...we [are] excited to attend moral class because ... there are activities that involve all of us, it’s more interesting and fun ... Other than that, now we are on good terms with all our classmates.. we respect each other ... we also respect the self-esteem of our friends ...we will not fight and hurt our friends feeling” [SMKSinar/inter/28.2.13] (Author’s translation).*

### DISCUSSION

Findings of this study thrilled the researchers. The researchers found that the usually reticent students did show high levels of enthusiasm for Forum Theatre.

However, using Forum Theatre in moral education classes is not as easy as anticipated. The researchers also face many challenges. Some groups of students were not entirely comfortable with intervention play and the vulnerability that comes with it. For some students, fully committing to these activities was not a top priority because no grade was at stake and for others sitting down passively seemed more important. One of our challenges as facilitators was balancing how much time and effort we could spend



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on keeping these students engaged while being aware of the limited time frame we had for the project. Meanwhile, some of the students did not understand the concept of “freezing” and they kept shifting and moving. They did not want to cooperate with the facilitator and refused to perform in the Forum Theatre scenes.

The biggest hurdle was breaking through the barriers of the students. Dealing with students who were texting, talking, uninterested, or playing along to look “cool” to their friends was frustrating at times; seeing the true interest in other students’ eyes was rewarding. Some students spoke with us after the teaching and expressed interest in pursuing theatre.

Although a few felt more uncomfortable with the techniques, the overall impact was very positive. Students’ moral education classes provide support to the teacher (researchers), and the level of trust and cooperation among members of their class in the success of Forum Theatre is also increasing. In addition, Forum Theatre exercises were an impactful way to facilitate experiential learning around themes embedded in the Moral Education Syllabus and students’ own experience of daily life. Similar to other researchers who have brought Forum Theatre into their classroom (Huffaker & West, 2005; Osburn, 2010), the researchers also observed an extremely high level of engagement among students in the teaching and learning process.

Forum Theatre gives moral education teachers another option to associate moral content more creatively. In addition, involvement in the play increases the awareness and skills of students to solve moral conflicts faced in real life (Rutten et al., 2010). This technique gives students the feeling of belonging to a moral issue as agreed by Day (2002). Forum Theatre technique then becomes a tool to highlight the moral issues to self-awareness and the benefit of the society (Dennis, 2009). For example, the issue of bullying which played up, gives opportunity for students to experience the pain of being bullied physically and mentally, which can also increase the awareness of students who watch (Gourd & Gourd, 2011).

Forum Theatre empowers students to engage themselves in dialog about moral issues in public while looking for an alternative resolution. In this way students can speak and act in dealing with social problems in society. Forum Theatre gives “voice” to students as moral agent. Solving skills used in theater can also be used to solve real problems faced in everyday life (Osburn, 2010). Although the topics covered in this technique were nothing new to the students, we think the medium of their exploration was key in engaging them. This Forum Theatre technique gave the students a chance to discuss their issues instead of letting adults discuss it for them. Forum Theatre gave students a chance to work through the consequences of choices and behavior on their own so they might understand, speak out, and be better prepared to act when those situations arise in their own lives. Finally, in Forum Theatre there is no hiding. It leverages the joy of play to create a paradigm of unilateral participation.

### CONCLUSION

In this article, the authors provided readers with some framework for the principles and practices of Forum Theatre in a Moral Education classroom setting. Forum Theatre greatly enhanced students’ classroom experience in learning. In particular, its value in creating an environment conducive to



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learning, experiential learning, moral reasoning, creativity, empathy, leadership, co-learning and moral behavior enhanced the amount of exchange and exploration that took place. Indeed, the researchers have no doubt that engaging with Forum Theatre as a classroom tool has a very positive impact for Moral Education students.

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