Forum Theatre as a Pedagogical Tool for Fostering Creative Thinking among Middle School Students in an International School

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In today's increasingly complex educational context, particularly within multicultural international schools where students encounter diverse social, emotional, and interpersonal challenges, creative thinking has become an essential competency. However, many educational practices continue to prioritize teacher-centered instruction and predetermined learning outcomes, limiting opportunities for imaginative problem-solving and collaborative interpretation. This study explored the potential of Forum Theatre, a participatory drama pedagogy derived from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, to foster creative thinking among middle school students in an international school setting. The study aimed to investigate how Forum Theatre enhances creative thinking, examine students' perspectives on addressing school-related challenges through participatory drama, and explore the value of Forum Theatre as a pedagogical tool in international schools. A qualitative case study design was employed involving fifteen Grade 7 and Grade 8 students from Gateway College Kandy. Data was generated through a series of participatory Forum Theatre workshops, participant observations, audio-visual recordings, and reflective discussions. The data were analyzed using deductive thematic analysis, guided by Torrance's dimensions of creative thinking: fluency, flexibility, originality, and elaboration. The findings revealed that Forum Theatre created an interactive and reflective environment in which students actively engaged with school-related issues such as peer conflict, communication barriers, and academic pressure. Through dramatic intervention and collaborative role exploration, students generated multiple responses to challenging situations, reconsidered problems from diverse perspectives, and proposed innovative approaches to conflict resolution. The participatory nature of the workshops encouraged empathy, critical reflection, confidence in expressing ideas, and problem-solving through performative action. The study contributes to the field of drama-based pedagogy by providing empirical insight into how Forum Theatre can support creative thinking within formal educational contexts. Furthermore, the findings highlight the value of student-centered and participatory learning approaches in international schools and offer practical implications for integrating drama pedagogy into contemporary educational practice.

Keywords: forum theatre, creative thinking, drama-based learning, participatory pedagogy, international school education