

A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF PERFORMING ARTS
EDUCATION AMONGST CHILDREN: DRAMA AS AN
EGALITARIAN IN MALAYSIA

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CULTURAL CENTRE
UNIVERSITY OF MALAYA
KUALA LUMPUR

2019

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**DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE
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**A STUDY ON THE IMPACT OF PERFORMING ARTS EDUCATION
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ABSTRACT

The concept of utilising Creative Drama as a form of education is still relatively new in Malaysia. Nevertheless, the research and effectiveness of drama in education has been proven through the years and there has been a slow introduction and integration within the Malaysian Education system. This research is catered to the understanding of the importance of drama as an education tool specifically as a social egalitarian for underprivileged students in Malaysia. Based on the social philosophy of egalitarianism – which is the removal of inequalities among people; this research examines the impact of drama education in terms of its social-egalitarianism aspect and how it could affect the mentality of underprivileged children. It is to understand the deeper psyche to the role drama plays in helping to develop the mental state of children growing up in unprivileged circumstances by providing them with the necessary tool beyond basic hard skills. The focus of the research is on expression skills and soft skills development where it provides these children with life-skills and confidence through drama that can elevate their fundamental learning abilities. Targeted at Malaysian students, aged 9-12 this research involved students from underprivileged communities. The focus of the research is on specific students from one selected school – Sekolah Kebangsaan Batu Belah in Klang, Selangor that has recently adopted the Enfiniti Academy - Speech and Drama Programme for their primary school students. This is conducted with the intent to further understand how the integration of drama education can affect perception of students towards their current social and economic state between one another and how soft skills education can potentially affect youths in their development that will improve their current socio-economic standing in the future. While soft skills are not confined within the expression of a specific language, this

research used spoken English as a measure of the participants' level of soft skills. Through the analysis, drama can be deduced as an integral part of the solution that will be able to support underprivileged students in this manner. The research findings show that creative drama does function as an egalitarian platform helps improve expression skills, soft skills and confidence through drama activities. The aim is a better quality of life, based on an enhanced potential for developing children from varying social-economic backgrounds through the impact of drama education.

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**KAJIAN IMPAK PENDIDIKAN SENI PERSEMBAHAN DI KALANGAN
KANAK-KANAK: DRAMA SEBAGAI EGALITARIAN DI MALAYSIA**

ABSTRAK

Konsep penggunaan Drama Kreatif sebagai satu bentuk pendidikan masih merupakan konsep yang baru di Malaysia. Walau bagaimanapun, penyelidikan dan keberkesanan drama dalam pendidikan telah terbukti dengan pengenalan dalam sistem Pendidikan Malaysia. Kajian ini adalah untuk mendalami pemahaman tentang kepentingan drama sebagai sosial egalitarian untuk pelajar kurang bernasib baik di Malaysia. Berdasarkan falsafah sosial egalitarianisme - yang merupakan penyingkiran ketidaksamaan di kalangan manusia; penyelidikan ini akan cuba untuk menilai impak pendidikan drama dari segi aspek sosial-egalitarianisme dan bagaimana ia boleh menjejaskan mentaliti kanak-kanak yang kurang bernasib baik. Ia adalah untuk memahami peranan drama dalam membantu membangunkan kekuatan mental anak-anak yang dibesarkan dalam keadaan social ekonomi yang tidak setara dengan komuniti umum - dengan menyediakan mereka dengan kebolehan melampaui kemahiran keras asas. Tumpuan penyelidikan akan dilakukan pada kemahiran kemahiran insaniah di mana ia memberikan kanak-kanak ini kemahiran hidup melalui drama yang dapat meningkatkan kebolehan pembelajaran asas mereka. Disasarkan kepada pelajar Malaysia, berumur 9-12 tahun penyelidikan ini akan melibatkan pelajar dari masyarakat yang kurang bernasib baik. Tumpuan penyelidikan akan diberikan kepada murid-murid dari sekolah terpilih - Sekolah Kebangsaan Batu Belah di Klang, Selangor – salah sebuah sekolah peserta program Speech and Drama diperuntuk oleh Enfiniti Academy. Ini dilakukan dengan niat untuk lebih memahami bagaimana pendidikan drama dapat mempengaruhi persepsi pelajar terhadap keadaan sosial dan ekonomi antara satu sama lain dan bagaimana pendidikan kemahiran insaniah berpotensi mempengaruhi perkembangan belia untuk berkebolehan untuk meningkatkan keadaan sosioekonomi

mereka di masa depan. Walaupun kemahiran insaniah tidak terhad dalam ungkapan bahasa tertentu, penyelidikan ini akan menggunakan bahasa Inggeris sebagai ukuran tahap kemahiran insaniah para peserta. Melalui analisis, drama boleh disimpulkan sebagai sebahagian daripada penyelesaian yang akan dapat menyokong pelajar kurang bernasib baik dengan cara ini. Penemuan penyelidikan menunjukkan bahawa drama kreatif berfungsi sebagai platform egalitarian membantu meningkatkan kemahiran ekspresi, kemahiran lembut dan keyakinan melalui aktiviti drama. Matlamatnya adalah kualiti kehidupan yang lebih baik, berdasarkan potensi yang dipertingkatkan untuk mengembangkan kanak-kanak dari pelbagai latar belakang sosial-ekonomi melalui kesan pendidikan drama.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1.BACKGROUND OF RESEARCH

In the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025, it was stated that the largest equity gap in Malaysia education originates from the socio-economic perspective. This has been observed using three proxies: parents' highest level of educational attainment, states' average household income, and the percentage of students receiving basic financial assistance under the Poor Students' Trust Fund, or Kumpulan Wang Amanah Pelajar Miskin (KWAPM). For all three proxies, the evidence consistently demonstrates that students from poor families are less likely to perform as well as students from middle-income or high-income homes (Malaysia, Ministry of Education). This national acknowledgement is a cause for concern and needs to be addressed efficiently in order to not allow the gap to spread any further.

The lack of emphasis is a cause for concern as Malaysian graduates are finding difficulty in seeking suitable employment due to poor command in language. "A study conducted by Central Bank of Malaysia (2002) also found that the Malaysian graduates are less skilled as compared to the international graduates. The skills include technical skills, problem-solving skills and communication skills, especially in English language" (Hanapi & Nordin, 2013, p. 1056).

The National Education Philosophy for Malaysia, written in 1988 and revised in 1996, establishes that our Nation's vision of education as a means for the holistic development of all children: intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically.

"Education in Malaysia is an on-going effort towards further developing the potential of individuals in a holistic and integrated manner, so as to produce individuals who are intellectually, spiritually, emotionally, and physically balanced and harmonious,

based on a firm belief in and devotion to God. Such an effort is designed to produce Malaysian citizens who are knowledgeable and competent, who possess high moral standards, and who are responsible and capable of achieving high levels of personal well-being as well as being able to contribute to the harmony and betterment of the family, the society, and the nation at large” (Malaysia, Ministry of Education, p. 63)

The philosophy surmised that fundamentally Malaysia’s education objective is to ensure that our nation’s children are being equipped with knowledge and skills necessary for a successful life. Though historically, as many other nations in the world, the Malaysian education system, has a strong emphasised towards the development of content knowledge such as Science, Maths and languages – inadvertently creating an exam-orientated education environment. Very little emphasis has been placed on higher-order thinking skills or soft skills.

“Too many young Malaysians seem inflicted by declining confidence, expression, articulation, and critical thinking- what we like to call ‘soft skills’, as if possessing them is not entirely important or relevant, and we fear that this will translate directly into a loss of economic advantage when dealing with foreigners” (Ng, 2010, p. 3).

Understanding these inadequacies, begs the question of why there is no inclusion of creative arts within the current curriculum and why are subjects like fine arts and music integrated?

The proper initiation to performing arts can open up a world of invaluable life skills, and understanding of materials beyond entertaining presentation. Numerous international studies have demonstrated the positive results for performing arts initiating the development of life skills, especially in children. However, what is it about performing arts in particular that produces these outcomes in Malaysia?

Drama in education is a unique and irreplaceable experience which involves feelings and emotions in a way that results in a more effective form of education. (Best, 1996, p. 3) Through role-play, participants are given the chance to explore and discover both themselves and the wider world in a way that protects them from the consequences that would normally follow in the situations they recreate (Edmiston, 2000, p. 22).

Research has also ascertained the effectiveness of educational drama in improving pupils' interpersonal, in the reduction of aggression, in the cultivation of cooperation and in improving the general climate in the classroom (Joronen, Konu, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2011, p. 27). Therefore it can be argued that dramatic education provides a secure way of confirming identity and of enabling pupils to confront difficult social problems.

Also, as established by Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal through "Theatre of the Oppressed" – theatre can serve as a means of promoting social and political change (Wrentschur & Altman, 2000) – but how were his methods used as a tool for change? How can performance theatre invoke social awareness? What can specific parts of theatre, music and dance help catalyse change? Furthermore, what are the most effective ways to help bring awareness of these social issues and more importantly, summon change?

If there are indeed studies demonstrating how performing arts can directly benefit the development of adolescent and our society in general, how can Malaysian art advocates utilise this form to initiate social betterment? These questions can be analysed by examining current research studies as well as conducting case study of arts organisation with programmes specially targeted to support underserved communities within Malaysia.

1.2 STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

There is a shift of focus from the Ministry of Education to the lack of critical thinking ability and soft-skills training within the Malaysian youth. This is due to the fact that there has been an increase in unemployment rate amongst youths and subsequently widening the social-economic gap between communities.

The Department of Statistics Malaysia in 2011 found that the unemployment rate in Malaysia had increased from 3.2 % in 2007 to 3.7% in 2009. “Based from resources of job vacancies and job placement in Peninsular Malaysia in 2012, it is revealed that job vacancies are increasing from year to year. However, these job vacancies are filled by only a part of the workers. This shows that the unemployment issue is happened not because of the lack of job opportunities instead it happens because of other factors such as the low quality of a graduate” (Hanapi & Nordin, 2013, p. 1056)

Nor Zahidi Alias, chief economist at Malaysian Rating Corp Bhd, said, “many Malaysian graduates could not adequately express themselves at job interviews, adding that their struggles with language also had a negative impact on their confidence level. These clearly present issues for those seeking employment in the services sector, where effective communication is a key skill.” (Alias, 2017) This is a clear indication that our current education system is still lacking in some ways in terms of preparing our children for the working world. If the issue is showing its prominence within the general community, it could be indication that there are greater issues lying within the underprivileged communities that begs to be examined due to obvious social division.

The apparent divide in social difference could also have a deeper sociological impact on children from underprivileged communities. Drawing parallels to international studies, it was indicated that minority youth perceive inequality poses

limits on social and economic mobility; hence they are less likely to believe that working hard in school will have long-term payoff -burrowing deeper into the issue of social divide. (Taylor & Graham, 2007, p. 52)

1.3 SIGNIFICANCE OF RESEARCH

This study is to establish the more significant role that drama education plays in development of students and how the exposure will heavily influence a social impact change to the lives of the underprivileged. It is to institutionalise the role of drama education towards social impact changes within the underserved communities in Malaysia. A study that proves the relevance of drama and performance arts with social change amongst underserved students of Malaysia could revolutionise the significance of performance art study in the Malaysian education and social system. Establishing that performing arts is not just a tool used to propel those who has inclination towards performing but also that drama education is an egalitarian for social division and the role it plays in education will affect the community as a whole by creating a highly-adaptable, critical-thinking, self and socially aware future generation.

The purpose of this study is to show how drama in education can be used as an education tool that can effectively empower young Malaysians of lower social economic background with language and soft skills to improve their social condition. In addition, the definition and nature of the current condition are explored as well as its effect on those involved and the conditions that prevail in underprivileged schools. The study is relevant to educators and all those who participate in the educational process, and, in particular, to those who are involved in drawing up programs to combat equity gaps. Those interested are likely to find interesting material on how drama in education can be beneficial in creating a climate in the classroom that promotes cooperation

between pupils, regardless of social-economic standing and facilitates the learning process. By understanding the effectiveness of this art form in implementing change, art advocates will be able to discover ways to garner stronger support to influence greater social impact.

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1.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

This research study is designed with the aim to understand the impact of drama as an egalitarian in a social context for young Malaysians targeted to those from underprivileged communities. Hence, it is armed with the intention of these two main objectives:

- To observe the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of research participants aged 9-12 from SK Batu Belah pre- and post-participation in the Speech & Drama Programme.
- To examine the potential long-term impact of drama education of Enfiniti Academy's Speech & Drama Programme and how creative drama can serve as an egalitarian platform for students of varying social-economic background.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the objectives, varying questions were derived with the intention of driving the research study to gather necessary information. Hence, this research study hopes to gather answers to these questions deemed pivotal in understanding how drama education can serve as an egalitarian in the context of social division.

- a) What is the current state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence of research participants and the causal factors for any lack of ability to express in Malaysian students from underserved communities?
- b) What aspects of creative drama can most effectively nurture self-confidence and invoke personal change for learners of varying economic backgrounds?

1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS

1.6.1 Social Change

In sociology, the alteration of mechanisms within the social structure, characterized by changes in cultural symbols, rules of behaviour, social organizations, or value systems.

Throughout the historical development of their discipline, sociologists have borrowed models of social change from other academic fields. In the late 19th century, when evolution became the predominant model for understanding biological change, ideas of social change took on an evolutionary cast, and, though other models have refined modern notions of social change, evolution persists as an underlying principle (Wilterdink & Form, 1998).

The social change definition in this research is based on the impact of performing arts towards of the students. It's an attempt to understand through post-education research – whether the course of education has empowered them with the necessary self-confidence that ignited an intent to evolve from their current state into something beyond.

1.6.2. Social Egalitarian Relationships

It was defined by Fabian Schuppert in his essay 'Being Equals: Analyzing the Nature of Social Egalitarian Relationships' that,

“...income inequality and differences in wealth often lead to relative deprivation. Relative deprivation simply means that while a person P has enough income and wealth so as to meet his/her basic needs, in relevant comparison to others this person P suffers from deprivation, since P's income and wealth is insufficient to engage in a range of socially established and valuable practices. Failing to

engage in these practices will block relevant opportunities, lead to stigmatisation and undermine P's status as an equal member of society. Thus, what counts as relative deprivation very much depends on the effects of not engaging in particular activities and the value that is generally attached to being in these particular activities.” (Schuppert, 2014, p. 118)

In regard to this research it is directly related to activities that will enhance critical thinking and social skills – such as presentational skills, heighten esteem level - which will provide better opportunity for the school student to help empower them in an equal measure to those of better social economic background.

1.6.3. Underprivileged / Underserved Children

Merriam-Webster dictionary defines underprivileged as the deprivation through social or economic condition of some of the fundamental rights of all members of a civilised society and of relating to the people within underprivileged areas of the city. (Merriam-Webster, 2018)

In the context of this research the reference to unprivileged students are defined as students who do not receive equitable resources as other students in the free, public education system. Traditionally, these groups include students from low-income family, underrepresented racial or ethnic minorities, and first generation students as well as others.

1.7 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

This research is limited to its number of respondents and interviewees, from those who were participated in the Speech and Drama Workshops, and also from one specific representative school in Klang Valley to represent the general Malaysian students. Thus, the research will not be accurately representing the state of the country.

Prior research studies helped lay a foundation for understanding the research problem although this research is limited in that most literature reviews are from western case studies and approaches, hence cultural factors must be taken into consideration. Especially on the matter regarding the linking drama education to underprivileged communities – there seems to be little research to serve as a basis for investigation. This limitation validates the need for further research on the subject matter.

Understanding its limitations, the research seeks to understand the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of research participants aged 9-12 pre- and post- participation in the Speech & Drama Programme in order to examine the potential long-term impact of drama education. Through this, it hopes to derive a conclusive definition on how creative drama can serve as an egalitarian platform for students of varying social-economic background.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theory of this research is that drama is an egalitarian for social division through improving the soft skills of the children from underprivileged communities - by providing them with necessary confidence to elevate esteem to help improve their current socio-economic state in the future. Hence, this is chapter of which includes the list of readings relevant to the research. It comprises literature on drama education and its relevance to students and soft skills development. Also, it contains materials on the roles of arts and culture in regard to social change and its long-term impact.

2.2 DRAMA IN EDUCATION

Arts education refers to education in the disciplines of music, dance, theatre, and visual arts. There has been evidence supporting the effect of arts education in varying ways including reducing student dropout, raising student attendance, developing better team players, fostering a love for learning, improving greater student dignity, enhancing student creativity, and producing a more prepared working candidate for the future.

In the research publication 'Arts with the Brain in Mind' by Eric Jensen has shown that the arts develop neural systems that produce a broad spectrum of benefits ranging from fine motor skills to creativity and improved emotional balance. "The arts enhance the process of learning. The systems they nourish, which include our integrated sensory, attentional, cognitive, emotional, and motor capacities, are, in fact, the driving forces behind all other learning" (Jensen, 2001, p. 2).

The process in learning arts also provide learners with non-academic benefits such as promoting self-esteem, motivation, aesthetic awareness, cultural exposure, creativity, improved emotional expression, as well as social harmony and appreciation of diversity. This is the focus on the research in order to enhance the further understanding to how art education and appreciation impacts beyond just technical knowledge but also affect the overall development of the student. Certain forms of arts instruction enhance and complement basic reading skills, language development and writing skills.

The relationship between drama and the development of literacy skills among young children is well documented. In the literature by J.R. Goodman, *A Naturalistic Study of the Relationship between Literacy development and Dramatic Play in Five-Year-Old Children*. - state that the use of drama in the classroom provides a beneficial supplemental approach - that the developmental of literacy skills among pre-kindergarteners was fostered when the children were allowed to act out their favourite stories and that dramatic play helps motivate children to learn. (Goodman, 2002)

Also, in Anita Page's article, *Children's Story Comprehension as a result of Storytelling and Story Dramatization: A Study of the Child as Spectator and Participant* – Page surmises that when students had an opportunity to engage in a dramatic enactment of a story, their overall understanding of the story improved. Researchers in this study found that story comprehension effects were greatest for first graders who were reading below grade level. (Page, 1983)

Drama can also be an effective method to develop and improve the quality of children's narrative writing. As a "warm-up" writing exercise, students may be encouraged to use poetry, games, movement and improvisation to act out their story ideas, which could contribute to their improved performance.

In the literature of 'Critical Evidence – How The Arts Benefit Student Achievements' by Sandra S. Ruppert, it was indicated that "schools integrating the arts into the curriculum as part of a comprehension education reform strategy are documenting positive changes in the school environment and improved student performance. Also, the American public, by an overwhelming margin, believes the arts are vital to a well-rounded education; more than half rate the importance of arts education a "ten" on a scale of one to ten." (Ruppert, 2006, p. 1)

Ruppert believes that there is a collective understanding that all students benefit from the opportunity to learn about and experience the arts. The study of arts in its variants of forms – whether as a stand-alone subject or integrated into the school curriculum – is increasingly accepted as an essential part of achieving success in school, work and life.

"A growing body of studies, including those in the research compendium Critical Links, presents compelling evidence connecting student learning in the arts to a wide spectrum of academic and social benefits. These studies document the habits of mind, social competencies and a personal disposition inherent to arts learning. Additionally, research has shown that what students learn in the arts may help them to master other subjects, such as reading, math or social studies. Students who participate in the arts learning experiences often improve their achievement in other realms of learning and life." (Ruppert, 2006, p. 8)

The compilation has identified the major benefits associated with study of the arts and student achievement. Studies in Critical Links use various measures of achievement, including the impact shown on such tests. It was determined that "Learning experiences in the arts contribute to the development of academic skills, including the areas of reading and language development, and mathematics." (Ruppert, 2006, p. 11)

Certain types of music instructions help develop the capacity for spatial-temporal reasoning, which is integral to the acquisition of important mathematics skills. “Spatial temporal reasoning” refers to the ability to understand the relationship of ideas and object in space and time. As explained by Kathryn Vaughn in her article *Music and Mathematics: Modest Support for the Oft-Claimed Relationship* – the rhythm in musical training emphasizes proportion, patterns and ratios expressed as mathematical relations – hence, the co-relation is hard to deny. (Vaughn, 2002) Also, dance has been employed to develop reading readiness in very young children, and the study of music has provided a context for teaching language skills.

Across America, “opportunities for students to participate in high-quality arts instructions and activities are diminishing, the result of shifting priorities and budget cuts.” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 1) - Similar in ways to the Malaysian education system, which has a strong emphasised towards the development of content knowledge such as Science, Maths and languages – inadvertently creating an exam-orientated education environment. Very little emphasis has been placed on higher-order thinking skills or soft skills.

Malaysian’s education in drama is inconsistent. As explain by Dr. Zainal Latiff in ‘Enhancing the Skills of Early Childhood Educators through Acting and Drama’ - Malaysian schooling education only introduces drama as an extracurricular activity or supportive element to the education process. Dr Zainal argues that drama should run across the curriculum to enhance learning via play. This ultimately promotes growth of a more holistic nature in the child. (Latiff, 2010)

Although, the Malaysian education Ministry is also slowly recognising the importance of art education – it is evident through the three Arts Schools set up with the aim of developing talented young Malaysians in the arts who will become future leaders in the arts. Out of the three, two of these schools provide education in music, dance,

theatre and visual arts while one school focuses only on music. Despite that, the progress is still deemed far from ideal – as indicated in the article ‘Visual arts education: A rethink on creativity’ by Malachi Edwin Vethamani, “Arts education should not be seen as elite. And it is not just for a select few. We want as many students as possible to be able to think creatively and have novel ways of addressing issues and problems.” (Vethamani, 2016)

That being said, writings on drama in education are relatively new compared to other areas of the dramatic arts. As stated by Kathleen Gallagher in her book, ‘How Theatre Educates’, it surmises that there is no correct pedagogical model on offer for drama education (Gallagher, 2003). Many training education centres in Malaysia are not based on formal format of education but instead the trainings are based on the trainers’ personal experience – as Enfiniti Academy’s trainers led by academy director, Joanna Bessey who is also a practicing actor and director.

In her book ‘Drama’ by Charlyn Wessels, she justifies drama as a tool in education by quoting Brian Way in the introduction, “‘what is a blind person?’ You might simply reply ‘a blind person cannot see’, and this would probably satisfy intellectually. But if you replied, ‘shut your eyes and try to find the pen on the desk in front of you, ‘ you would be involving him in the actual experience of being blind, and would thus satisfy him not only intellectually, but emotionally as well, and possibly inspire in him feelings of empathy with all blind people. He would be more likely to remember the meaning of the word as a result of this moment of direct experience”.

(Wessels, 1987, p. 7) This in summary explains that drama is an education that needs to be taught and learnt experientially – further establishing the method utilised by Enfiniti Academy in their Speech and Drama workshop implementation.

Drama is a potentially powerful tool for connecting students with learning and content. J. Lea Smith & J. Daniel Herring states in their journal ‘Using Drama In The

Classroom' that learning is an active, constructive process of coming to know. (Smith & Herring, 1993) Through their classroom involvement with students, they have concluded that drama can provide a process for learning by living through or experiencing an event. Drama by its very nature involves students in social contexts where they are required to think, talk, manipulate concrete materials, and share viewpoints in order to arrive at decisions (Siks, 1983).

As indicated in Lilian McCrea's 'Stories to play in the infant school' the thought behind the exposure of children towards a variety of dramatic plays was to provide an opportunity for naturalistic developmental expression of young children, "The aim of providing opportunities for dramatic play in school is not to produce polished performances, but rather to promote the normal development of the children by encouraging them to express themselves naturally and freely." (McCrea, 1956, p. 9)

Theatre is a way for player to know about the world holistically, using their intuition and making syntheses to problem-solve. As indicated by Laura Gardner Salazar in her book 'Teaching Dramatically, Learning Thematically' Theatre is the opposite process to the logical step-by-step answer to questions that most education follows. Theatre is a way to explore subjects using all of the intelligences: logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, linguistic, kinaesthetic, and inter- and intrapersonal. (Salazar, 1995, p. 7)

Theatre, like all other arts, reflects and provides a structure for changes in our lives. Play is the bases of human learning, and it is natural form for the expression of joy and sorrow.

Despite the support and understanding regarding the importance of art being integrated in the formal education, it is a concept that is still new to the Malaysian education system. Therefore, further understanding on the subject matter, especially

more culturally appropriate research needs to be done in order to encourage further developments to be made. Through further investigation on this drama education method further, it may further support the concept on how arts can help alleviate the education programme established for the underserved communities in Malaysia.

2.3 DRAMA FOR CHILDREN

Drama for children can be regarded as an independent art form as it is not an activity that has been invented, but the actual behavior of human beings. It can be integrated in the conceptual form of 'Play'.

'Play is an inborn and vital part of young life. It is not an activity of idleness, but is rather the child's way of thinking, proving, relaxing, working, remembering, daring, testing, creating and absorbing. It is, in fact, life. The best child play takes place only where the opportunity and encouragement are consciously given to it by an adult mind. This is a process of nurturing and is not the same as interfering. It is necessary to build confidence by friendship, and the right atmosphere by sympathetic consideration' (Slade, 1954).

An early conclusion to compare the general findings on Slade and Dorothy Heathcote's Mantle of the Expert is that both approaches are important in its usage of drama as a tool to empower the learner to make choices whilst 'playing' in the classroom. The term 'choices' here is used to defined that learners are encouraged to form their own 'self-expression' through the development of their voice, opinions, and essentially, forming the building blocks to their personal expressions.

In a thesis by Lenka Krivkova, Design of the Workshop, she states, 'drama is used as a tool to achieve learning goals of other subjects. Components like role play and improvisation are useful in achieving disciplines like interview and debates. These

methods are used in a way that they not only accomplish the set pedagogical, but also dramatic goals' (Krivkova, 2011). Which means that drama is an integral tool that propels learners into the developing a mindset to anticipate the acquisition of creative thinking skills, expression skills, and decision making – all encouraged through the participation in the creative drama world that is simulated by the teacher.

Drama brings form and purpose to thought an emotion. To put this in metaphorical terms, drama provides the vessel for the event, and the players fill that vessel.

Susan Kovalik, ties the new brain research to the thematic method of teaching.

“...meaningfulness for elementary students must begin with first hand, being there, here and now experiences. They provide the mental scaffolding for the words which represent the concepts and definitions of things they have experienced.” (Kovalic & Olsen, 1993, p. 43)

Learning needs to reflect the chaos and interconnectedness of opportunities to choose. Thematic drama provides a means for bringing ITI's “here and now” experiences into the classroom, empowering young people as they cannot be empowered elsewhere.

2.4 CREATIVE DRAMA AND ITS RELATION TO CHILDREN'S DEVELOPMENT

Creative drama is an improvisational, non-exhibition, process-oriented form of drama, where participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact, and reflect on experiences real and imagined. Creative drama takes children's natural world, creative play, and

develops it further, using theatre techniques, to create learning experiences which are for the participants.

Drama specialist, Brian Way states in *Development through Drama*, "Theatre is largely concerned with communication between actors and an audience; Drama is largely concerned with experience by the participants."

Creative Drama is not primarily concerned with teaching theatre skills, although this may of course occur. Creative Drama is an integrative process that develops imaginative thought and creative expression in children through the use of movement, pantomime, improvisation, story dramatization and group discussion. Children often acquire language and communication skills, social awareness, problem-solving abilities, self-concept enhancement, and an understanding of theatre with the introduction to creative drama. Rather than an attempt to create professional child actors, the goal of Creative Drama is to guide a child to self-fulfilment through the process of theatre techniques. Creative Drama is also sometimes called "Creative Dramatics" or "Creative Play."

As Kelly Pollock, an integral leader and Executive Director at COCA-Center of Creative Arts in St. Louis, recently quoted saying, "The true purpose of arts education is not necessarily to create more professional dancers or artists. [It's] to create more complete human beings who are critical thinkers, who have curious minds, who can lead productive lives." (Gross, 2013) The purpose of Creative Drama is to use the natural dramatic impulse to facilitate learning in an unlimited number of fields and areas.

It is a very common occurrence for children to naturally act out their perceptions or to try out varying roles, and play "pretend." It is almost a primitive way for very young children to learn about their surrounding world. Creative Drama provides a structure around activities such as thing in order to enable children to be able to explore

their reality and explore topics experientially. That principle of playing “dress-up” is akin to creative drama, in that while ‘play making’, the children take on different roles and emulation, and in doing so, communicate with one another.

Often, the use of creative drama aids the build of language and communication skills better than just about any other activity in school. This is generally regarded as a more commonly acceptable approach for the Malaysian school system; hence it is naturally adopted by varying theatre education agencies as an approach in introducing drama activities to children within the existing school system.

As indicated, Ruppert believes that there is a collective understanding that all students benefit from the opportunity to learn about and experience the arts. The study of arts in its variants of forms – whether as a stand-alone subject or integrated into the school curriculum – is increasingly accepted as an essential part of achieving success in school, work and life. It supports the importance of subscribing to the education of the arts based on substantiated educational research, through the reporting of multiple benefits associated with students learning experiences in the arts. It also describes in nontechnical terms what the research says about how study of the arts contributes to academic achievement and student success. (Ruppert, 2006, p. 8)

This is due to the fact that creative drama helps promote empathy by letting students step into others' shoes through emulation. In order to emulate someone else or another character, students inadvertently learn to observe and develop a level of understanding to the behavioral choices of whom they are emulating. Aside of supporting the teaching of language based schooling subjects; Creative Drama can also be used as a tool to teach to teach a myriad of subjects - if and when lessons are carefully designed to suit the teaching objectives. Ruppert has also identified the major benefits associated with study of the creative drama and student achievement. Studies in Critical Links use various measures of achievement, including the impact shown on

such tests. It was determined that “Learning experiences in the arts contribute to the development of academic skills, including the areas of reading and language development, and mathematics.” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 11) As noted by Way, the wonder of Creative Drama is that since every Creative Drama lesson necessarily involves subject content of one kind or another, one can usually design a lesson around a non-dramatic curricular topic without compromising the dramatic content of the lesson at all (Way, 1998).

Developed by Dorothy over 40 years, Mantle of the Expert has been called a ‘clear system with operant laws’. This is because ‘Mantle of the Expert starts with a problem or task, and, in role, teachers and students explore what knowledge they already have while making new discoveries along the way’ (Bolton, 1995). Dorothy Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert is arguably the choice approach used by many teachers interested in using creative drama, or in this case ‘dramatic inquiry’ in their classrooms.

Thus, through creative drama, students explore both factual knowledge and content concepts while “trying on” social experiences. Heathcote (cited in Johnson and O’Neill, 1984) believes that drama confronts students with situations that may change them because of the issues and challenges they must face in the dramatic playing. (Smith & Herring, 1993, p. 419) Beane states that genuine learning involved an interaction between the learner, the environment, and the content; this interaction integrates what we experience into our system of meanings. (Beane, 1992, p. 36)

Physical activity can lay the groundwork for developing abstract mental concepts. Thus drama provides students with a means of living through content in a way that deepens their understanding and appreciation of the subject. Although teachers may recognise the power of learning through drama for students, dramatization is still a relatively rare event in most classrooms.

Creative Drama is also useful for personality growth and self-esteem. It helps children learn to cooperate and to think out of the box, and aid in problem solving. Drama can initiate this interaction. It empowers students to learn new knowledge and also, enables them to understand more deeply what they already know. Dramatic episodes actively engage students and contribute to ownership of the educational process. By creating imaginary problems to be solved, a creative drama class using Mantle of the Expert will subconsciously move the learners to think on their feet, and communicate a solution.

Viv Aitken in her book 'Connecting Curriculum, Linking Learning' sums the Mantle of the Expert as it, "evokes the idea of learning growing like a mantle, or cloak, surrounding the learner. In some ways the image which is bestowed as a sign of mana, or respect, knowledge and status. However, Heathcote makes it clear that unlike the korowai, the "mantle" in Mantle of the Expert is not a garment to be gifted by another, but a quality that grows from within." (Aitken, 2013, p. 35)

As Heathcote's words imply, the Mantle of the Expert approach places the child at the centre of the learning. The teacher's role is to create the conditions whereby a mantle of leadership, knowledge, competency and understanding grows around the child. This approach assumes a progressive view of learning, responsive to the needs of the child (Heston, 1993). The child centricism begins in the planning stages, with the teacher starting from the children's interests and needs, alongside the curriculum objectives, and continues in the classroom interactions, where the teacher consciously positions the children as competent co-constructors of the learning.

Heathcote's model is similar to Peter Slade's, that the concept of play is integral to the learning experience of the child. In this sense, child drama is viewed not to create entertainment for the stage, but as playing to learn, or in other words, using drama as a

tool (Slade, 1954). Drama always takes place within society; in fact, drama is one of the methods civilisation has invented to examine society at the same time that it amused that very society. Social science topics that may be considered are politics, law, criminal justice, city, village, town, ethnicity and the family. Heathcote has been very successful in basing dramas on anthropology. To which this it supports the idea of utilising art or theatre as an egalitarian to social issues within communities through helping people of varying social class to be able to gather with one objective and empathise with one another through the process of “play”.

“Learning in the arts involves developing skills across a wide range of human activities: verbal and physical skills: logical and intuitive thinking and spatial, rhythmic, visual and kinaesthetic awareness.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 120) Within the curriculum, art or drama education aims at personality development, the transfer of knowledge and the release of creativity in order to contribute to optimal individual participation within the context of society and cultural life.

2.5 CULTURE AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Ensuring effective access to and participation in cultural activities for all is an essential dimension of promoting an inclusive society. Furthermore, participation in cultural and communal activities can also be instrumental in helping people and communities to overcome poverty and social exclusion. A number of the studies have proposed that social and emotional learning could play an important role in raising the attainment of children and young people living in poverty (Hayes, Shaw, Bonel, & McGrath, 2009).

In his book – ‘Theatre for Community, Conflict & Dialogue: The Hope Is Vital Training Manual’ – Michael Rohd, the founder of Hope is Vital, a combination of approach with Theatre of the Oppressed – summarised a series of approaches that guides the Hope is Vital approach. It is believed that “the act of expression is an act of connection – through it we become positive, active participants in our loves and in our communities.” (Rohd, 1998, p. 19) Hence, it can be said that with the power of expression, the format helps create a safe social space for all participating members to be able to share and connect on a rudimentary level in order to resolve any inherent social “issues” that needs to be addressed. Hope is Vital method is regarded as Theatre that solves problems. It utilises performance workshops that actively investigate social concerns through dialogue. It is a series of gradually intensifying exercises leading from fun warm-up to image-building bridge activities.

“Theatre allows us to converse with our souls – to passionately pursue and discover ways of living with ourselves and others. We are all artists, and theatre is a language. We have no better way to work together, to learn about each other, to heal and to grow.” (Rohd, 1998, p. 19) The utilisation of this method is best to address any social “issues” that hopefully can be resolute through a facilitated session. The introduction of such method to the rural communities will help solve some of the

socially inherited issues, such as class divisions, lack of critical thinking and self-motivation, especially for younger children within the community.

To borrow from Augusto Boal, creator and practitioner of the system of theatre known as Theatre of the Oppressed, “Theatre is a language through which human beings can have in active dialogue on what is important to them. It allows individuals to create a safe space that they may inhabit in groups and use to explore the interactions which make up their lives. It is a lab for problem solving, for seeking options, and for practicing solutions.” (Boal, 1993)

In Former lecturer of performing arts at University Sains Malaysia Janet Pillai’s book – ‘Community Based Arts and Culture Education’, it provides an overall insight and guidance that delved into past experiences helps form an understanding in where place-based arts and culture programme is currently like for Malaysian students and its impact. The knowledge it provides help informs the gap that we need to look into and where we need to be focussing our efforts on in terms of students’ art education.

Most formal learning takes place within school classrooms, community members stand to be an untapped resources whose knowledge and abilities can easily be incorporated into formal and non-formal learning play a crucial role in cultural sustainability. The highlight method within the programme encourages a more ‘place-based curriculum’ – that includes the education on more of local knowledge, cultural values, and local resources. Place-based curriculum encourages working outside the classroom and in collaboration with local knowledge bearers within the areas the students are assigned to. This model encourages students to actually move beyond solving textbook problems and to creatively apply the use of modern learning and communication tools and technologies to access, document and further transform on cultural knowledge and practice. Education can be view as basically providing tools, procedures, theories and concepts for reflection. The understanding and application of

this knowledge can actually be better tested in a ‘real life’ problem solving situation rather than in the context of a written examination. (Pillai, 2014, p. 8)

Ensuring effective access to and participation in cultural activities for all is an essential dimension of promoting an inclusive society. Furthermore, participation in cultural activities can also be instrumental in helping people and communities to overcome poverty and social exclusion. A number of the studies have proposed that social and emotional learning could play an important role in raising the attainment of children and young people living in poverty (Hayes, Shaw, Bonel, & McGrath, 2009). “In the formal education system we study the world from an ‘objective’ viewpoint. Young learners rarely have the opportunity to link the information from their textbooks to their ‘subjective’ lives, such as their personal experiences, their collective community lifestyle, or their local environment. Non-formal, place based education programmes or activities provide an opportunity for teachers to help students transform the passive world of textbooks into an active relationship with humans in the environment” (Pillai, 2014, p. 2).

Investigating deeper into the Heathcote’s teaching, it has no doubt given more insight to the idea of drama or theatre education as an egalitarian to possibly combat social issues. As indicated within the literature, it was stated that drama is an opportunity to form “brotherhood” that helps people of varying social class to be able to gather with one objective and empathise with one another through the process of “play” making.

One of the comparisons used in this research is against ‘Theatre for Development’ by Kees Epskamp, a literature that addresses the theory and practice of self-development through participation in a theatre process. Identifying the key roles that communication and creativity play in any effective strategy for self-development, it brings Theatre for Development (TfD) as a methodology that is participatory, not

resource-intensive, and not dependent upon the literacy of its participants or audiences forward. (Epskamp, 2006, p. xiv) This is to draw a comparison of methods on the implementation of Enfiniti Academy of their Speech and Drama Workshop to Theatre for Development (TfD) for comparison on effectiveness also, whether integration is able to enhance the overall effect of empowerment.

“The arts are a major form of human communication and expression. Individuals and groups apply them to explore, express and communicate ideas, feelings and experiences. Artistic works can inform, teach and communicate ideas, feelings and experiences. Artistic works can inform, teach, persuade and provoke thought. They can reproduce and reinforce existing ideas and values, challenge them, or offer new ways of thinking and feeling. They can confirm existing values and practices, and they can bring about change. As a result the arts play an important role in shaping people’s understanding of themselves as individuals and members of society, as well as their understanding of the world in which they live.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 109)

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

To understand the relationship between arts involvement and positive outcomes later in life, the analysis is focussed upon children who came from lower socioeconomic status backgrounds. The rationale was that higher-income, higher-educated families will, on average, provide their children with more opportunities to experience the arts through extra classes, lessons, or opportunities for attendance, perhaps through more affluent schools with extensive arts programs. This requirement is based on the rich-poor relationship theory by Schuppert.

“...income inequality and differences in wealth often lead to relative deprivation. Relative deprivation simply means that while a person P has enough income and wealth so as to meet his/her basic needs, in relevant comparison to others this person P suffers from deprivation, since P’s income and wealth is insufficient to engage in a range of socially established and valuable practices. Failing to engage in these practices will block relevant opportunities, lead to stigmatisation and undermine P’s status as an equal member of society. Thus, what counts as relative deprivation very much depends on the effects of not engaging in particular activities and the value that is generally attached to being in these particular activities.” (Schuppert, 2014, p. 118)

3.1.1 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY OVERVIEW

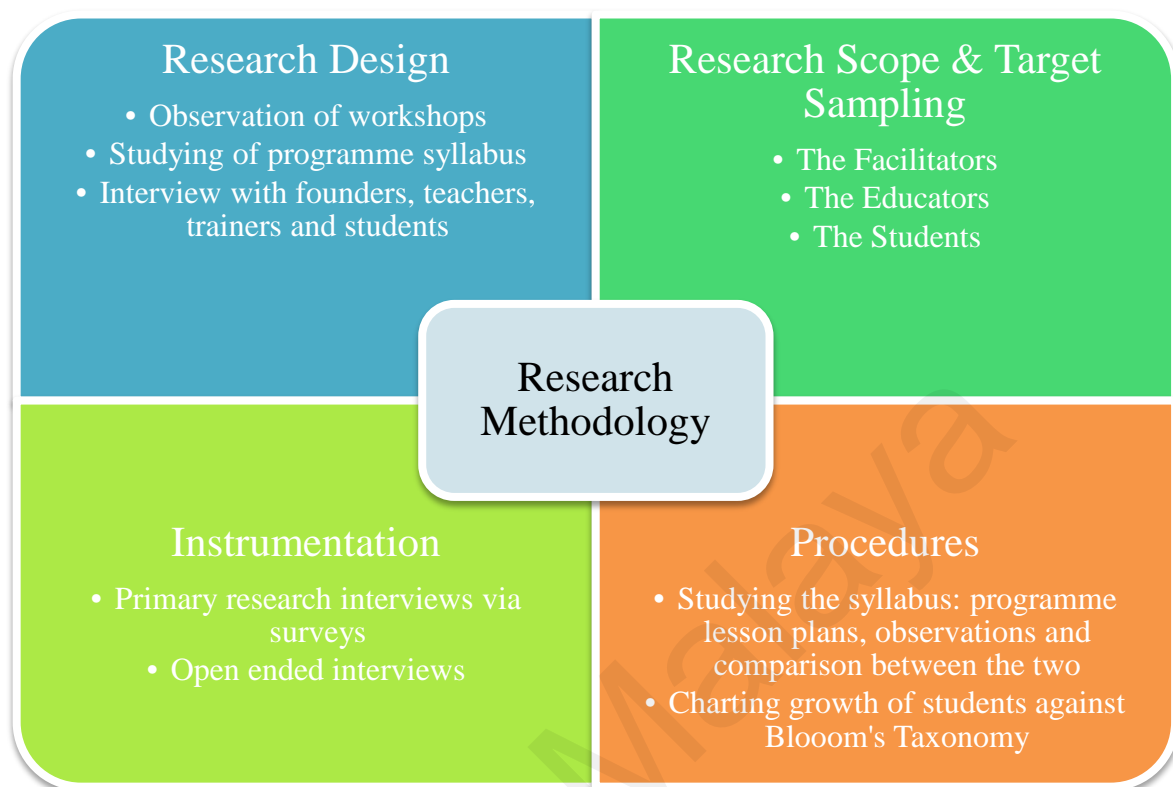


Figure 3.1: Summary of Research Methodology

This research is qualitative in nature, hence relying heavily upon interviews, literature reviews, and class observations of participants at Enfinity Academy Speech and Drama Programme as well as with the programme creator Ms Joanna Bassey as well as the facilitators. In order to fully understand the varying components of which contributes to the impact of drama education in this regard - the research is also supported by a quantitative components to where a survey is conduct before the commencement of the programme and then post programme for data comparison.

The research process started in May 2018 after preliminary readings on the topic was done. Interviews with key persons of Enfinity Academy ensued June 2018 to understand the course better. In order to complete the analysis of findings, three months of observation of periodical speech and drama workshops were conducted between the

cities of Kuala Lumpur and Perak. A total of 20 schools were observed and one school amongst the 20 were selected as the most suitable candidate for further research and observation.

In the selected school, a 4-day workshop was conducted to impart knowledge to 60 selected students to be a part of the programme, together with training specifically with 6 teachers representing the school. The concept of the programme is not just to relay the education to the students but also to impart knowledge on how to conduct the activities beyond just the four-day workshops so that the teachers will be able to integrate the necessary programme within the existing education syllables and extend the longevity of the knowledge.

At the end of the workshop, a performance developed by the students is used as an assessment of the students' growth. It is considered as a practical assessment. Following the conclusion of the 4-day workshop, two follow-up visits were conducted to assess the growth of each student. First follow-up is regarded as a review of how much of the workshop training was retained by the students as well as the teachers. This enables the trainers and programme developers to further adjust necessary components of the programmes that would enhance the impact of the drama education post programme commencement. Second follow-up coincides with the end of the year performance by the students based on the performance developed during the 4-day workshop in order to assess the growth of the students comparative to the beginning of the workshop.

The components of growth from all three observations are also compared with the Bloom's Taxonomy to gauge the different areas of efficacy - utilising a similar process post against the Enfiniti Academy's Speech and Drama Workshop, focusing from its start of program at the start of June 2018, until October 2018. The research process ends in November 2018, when findings and analysis are put into writing.

3.1.2 BLOOM'S TAXONOMY

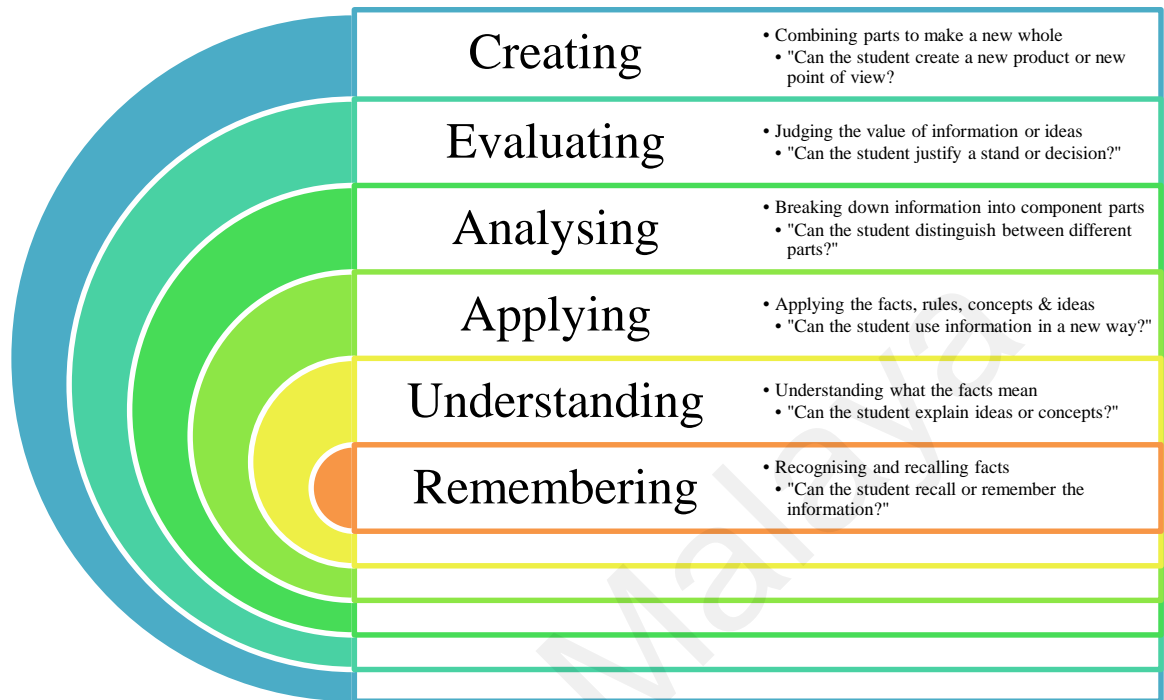


Figure 3.2: Bloom's Taxonomy

One of the most widely used ways of organizing levels of expertise is according to Bloom's Taxonomy of Educational Objectives. (Bloom, 1956) Bloom's Taxonomy uses a multi-tiered scale to express the level of expertise required to achieve each measurable student outcome as indicated in the above Figure 3.2. Organising measurable student outcomes in this way allows an appropriate selection of assessment techniques for this workshop.

3.2 RESEARCH PLAN

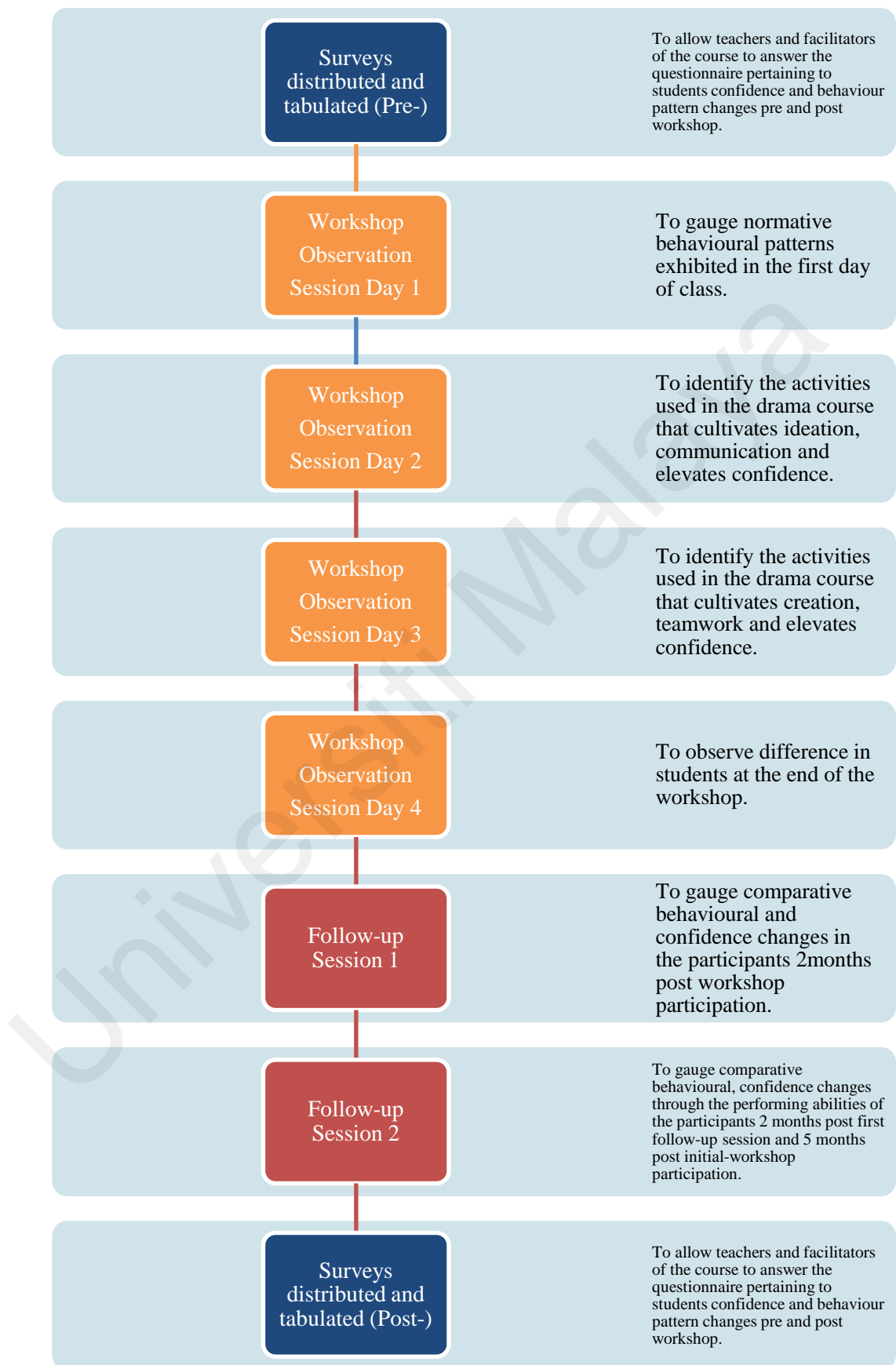


Figure 3.3: Summary of research plan for Enfiniti Academy Speech and Drama Programme, 2018

The above figure 3.3 summarises the research plan of the 5 months on-ground research period. Prior to the workshop execution, the pre-workshop baseline surveys were distributed in order to allow teachers and facilitators of the course to answer the questionnaire pertaining to students' confidence and behaviour pattern changes pre-workshop. This is to enable researcher to gauge the first impression of the student participants' current behavioural state.

Observations are then done throughout the 4-day workshop execution, starting with the Day-1 of the workshop to help observe the normative behavioural patterns exhibited during the first day of class. On Day 2 of the workshop, drama activities that are used in the course to which has the ability to help cultivate ideation, communication and elevates confidence amongst the children are identified. During Day 3 of the workshop it enabled the opportunity to identify the activities used in the drama course that cultivates creation, teamwork and elevates confidence. Day 4 marks the end of the initial workshop section it provided the opportunity to observe initial behavioural differences in students at the end of the workshop comparative to the pre-workshop behavioural patterns.

In order to gauge comparative behavioural and confidence changes in the participants, follow-up observational sessions are then conducted 2 months and then 5 months post workshop participation. This first follow-up session provides an opportunity to observe how the teachers are able to execute the drama activities without the direct support of the programme trainers and also, how receptive the students are to the teachings that are from the teachers. Aside from it providing the opportunity to mark some behavioural differences of the students, 2 months post the workshop and periodical drama activities provided by the in-school teachers. The second follow-up session presented the opportunity to then observe the final school-year presentation by

the students and this allows the chance to observe the behavioural improvements or differences of the students due to the drama education, activities and practices.

Following through with a more thorough qualitative data research a second post-programme survey was then distributed to allow teachers and facilitators of the course to answer the questionnaire pertaining to students confidence and behaviour pattern changes pre and post workshop.

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

In the attempt to fully research on this subject matter, an Action Research design was implemented to where a primary understanding the issue researched through literary reviews of current research done on the subject matter. Following on which research plans were carried out through a form of intervention strategy. This is done through the active participation and observation of the Enfiniti Academy – Speech and Drama Programme. Evaluations were then done through the research data collected through the learning cycle.

Action research is essentially research through action. It is usually a collaborative activity - involving input from people who are likely to be affected by the research - but this is not strictly necessary. A multi-layered interactive shared social experience among the workshop participants, action research proceeds by establishing how participants experience and think of. Action research is about changing an environment, system, or practice, and learning about this context of changing it. To quote action research's instigator Kurt Lewin: "if you want truly to understand something, try to change it". This kind of work is not simply about changing, but it is about improving an environment. As John Elliott says, action research is "the study of a

social situation with a view to improving the quality of action within it” (Elliott, 1991, p. 69).

This collaborative and adaptive research design lends itself to us in this community based research, where it helps to increase the learning, based on experience. Also, due to its learning cycle, there are no hidden controls and pre-emption of direction can't be implemented in the research process. Hence it is deemed the most suitable research process to help examine the impact of drama education within the given circumstance. It will help determine the most organic learning impact regarded to all parties involved due to its collaborative nature due to the experiential based learning. The growth of the participants will be hard to manipulate due this particular participatory research method. Also, the impact on the education upon the student is as highly regarded as the teachers are also very much involved in the workshop training process. This is due to the fact that long-term impact of the programme was taken into consideration.

Action research is a practical research methodology - it is orientated around practice, with a view to developing theory *through* practice. As Carr and Kemmis put it in 'Becoming Critical' action researchers "see the development of theory or understanding as a by-product of the improvement of real situations, rather than application as a by-product of advances in 'pure' theory." (Carr and Kemmiss, 1986, p. 28) This is a means to generate ideas that are relevant locally - to the people who are involved in the research, and to the environment in which it has taken place. Hence, this method takes into consideration the impact of the involvement of teachers are regarded as greatly as the students' in order to ensure that there will be longer term impact on those participated in the workshop than just within the time frame provided. "Because the experiences and stories of participants are taken seriously they stimulate cultural

understanding at a practical level and enable a deeper level of social analysis.”
(Epskamp, 2006, p. 47)

Even though the focus is on the participating students, but the involvement of the teachers are also very much taken into consideration – whereby this can be further regarded as a participatory action research approach. “Participatory action research is used to empower individuals to take practical action as individuals or as a group, sometimes in cooperation with ‘outsiders’ often referred to as facilitators, conveners, catalysts, monitors or promoters” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 47) The activities are mainly guided by the trainers together with the support of the in-school teachers, as the workshop progresses, the trainers would slowly be hands-off of the execution of the training to make way for the teachers to lead the activities. Also, a specific teacher-trainer is onsite to help guide the teachers on the objectives behind each syllable, so that the teachers will be able to replicate similar activities when the workshop programme is completed. This way, it will allow the opportunity for an insight observation to be made on how organically the programme can evolve and impact on the research environment without the eventual direct involvement of the workshop trainers.

However, action research is sometimes criticised for not generating theory that can be generalised globally - though this is a feature of any local intervention. It is a specific study based on much localised impact, truly specific to its research environment. But if the research method and results are proven to be effective, it can be expanded through replication. In effect that it could be utilised through a replication on sampling schools based in communities that are similar to this research school. As noted even within this research process that there are similar Malaysian public schools situated within similar underprivileged communities in Malaysia that are given the responsibilities of educating students who are from similar backgrounds to the research sample group. Hence, if the research method is proven effective, this method could be

replicated through the education of teachers within the schools and community for a more extended impact. “Ultimately, it aims at problem solving and the improvement of the quality of life of the primary stakeholders.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 48)

3.4 RESEARCH SCOPE

This research studies the impact of drama education in the selected Sekolah Kebangsaan (SK) Batu Belah. SK Batu Belah was chosen due to the fact that the school is located within the parameters of underprivileged communities and “approximately 15% of the student body are students whom family is currently Zakat recipients.” (Huda, 2018) This is indicative to an ideal sample of students from varying social economic backgrounds. Also, the enthusiasm of the teachers from the group in embracing new methodologies to reach out to the students is an indication how successful the research implementation could be. The path of least resistance from the educators will ensure a more neutral research grounds that could heavily impact the research study results.

The outreach method of this research study going into the school is through the Enfiniti Academy - English and Drama Programme. SK Batu Belah is one of the 20 selected schools chosen to be a part of the Speech and Drama Workshop under the Highly Immersive Programme (HIP) supported by Malaysia’s Ministry of Education.

Enfiniti Academy is a Performing Arts Academy utilising performing art form to invoke social change amongst underprivileged children of Malaysia. Founded by Tiara Jacqueline, Enfiniti Academy is a boutique academy that offers specialised musical theatre and entertainment arts workshops, as well as affordable weekly drama, dance and vocal classes, under the guidance of academy director Joanna Bessey – an active, award-winning local actor and director.

The research parallels the impact to the efforts of Enfiniti Academy to educate children of Malaysia English through drama with the aim of providing them with a tool to alter their social condition. The Speech and Drama Workshop under the HIP Programme that is used as part of the case study in this research.

3.5 TARGET SAMPLING

The population parameter for this research is based on the group of students who are participants of Enfiniti Academy Speech and Drama workshop. The students participated in the 2018 programme totals to 1200 with 60 students per school and 20 school visitation was made. A total of 120 teachers had participated in each school with 6 teacher representatives for each of the 20 schools. The large number of population hence requires the sample to be further defined.

Therefore, personal visitation to 12 schools was made to narrow the sample down to one school deemed most suited to be the research sample of this study – which was SK Batu Belah – with a total of 60 students and 6 teachers as the sample target. One of the factors for this consideration was made based on the fact that approximately 15% of the SK Batu Belah student body are from underprivileged group within the community. The school has selected 60 students of varying backgrounds to be a part of the programme to represent varying social, cultural and economic backgrounds. All 60 students together with 6 volunteer teachers representing the school were selected as part of the research study.

The sample participants of students for the research are also of the appropriate. Ranging from 9-12 years old, this study specifically aims at Malaysian students as children at this age group has an increased attention span comparative to a younger age group. In terms of sociological development, they are starting to see point of view of

others more clearly. Also children of this age are becoming more independent from the family – a sign of strong personal development.

3.6 PROCEDURES: METHOD FOR DATA COLLECTION

Based on the nature of this research method, both qualitative and quantitative measures were utilised to help conduct further understanding on the subject matter.

The qualitative research relied on interviews, literature reviews and observations conducted during the pre-, during and post programme. The interviewees were based upon the varying parties involved in the education and awareness programme.

3.6.1 The Facilitators / Educators

- Understanding the background of the educators provides an insight into the development of the programme and the method used to conduct the classes. This information is made comparable to other methods available based on literature reviews.
- During the execution of the programme an observation was conducted to observe how the facilitators execute the planned programme.
- Post programme execution, an interview was conducted to gather the feedback of the facilitators towards the implementation.

3.6.2 The Students

- Pre-interviews are important to be conducted with the students to gauge their pre-existing level of soft-skills, language skills and their level of confidence. This was then made comparable to the Post-programme interview in further

understanding the impact of the programme on the methods which worked and those that did not.

- Observations were conducted during the execution of the programme to gauge the level of engagement of the students.

In order to fully comprehend the varying components of which contributes to the impact of drama education - the research is also supported by a quantitative components to where a survey is conduct before the commencement of the programme, per and then post programme for comparison.

Firstly, to understand from the perspective of the teachers who knows the participants behaviours in class much more familiarly compared to the trainers, baseline surveys were given out to all teachers prior to the commencement of programme. This baseline survey is to provide an understanding towards the behaviour of the children in their normative circumstance. The survey focuses on social competence level, English language communicative ability and also the participants' inherent creativity level.

Secondly, a separate evaluation is then given to the trainers of the programme for a separate observation for the basic performing ability of the children. The evaluation is done based purely on the first impression of the participant's abilities.

Divided into 4 main observational categories:



Figure 3.4: Summary of trainer's observational categories

This preliminary observational evaluation summarised in the Figure 3.4 above is to provide an unbiased record on the student's performance ability – which co-relates to their confidence level. The teachers and facilitators were all aware of this questionnaire at the start of the course, and knew that their students would be observed throughout the course.

Breathing patterns, projection capabilities and clear articulation are some of the early behavioural pattern indication that trainers would look out for in order to provide a general gauge on how vocal confident the student is. Following through, would be the observation of their body language, energy and expression. How comfortable they are in conducting themselves in basic day-to-day conversation is an indicative measure to the matter. During varying activities, the students' social abilities are also gauge in the encapsulating form of their stage manners that generalise the concept of their physical awareness of not only themselves but also the people surrounding them. Lastly, the trainers would observe their unique characters both on stage and off, their showmanship & presentation capabilities as an indicative of their confidence level.

3.7 INSTRUMENTATION: INSTRUMENTS FOR DATA COLLECTION

The teachers were first interviewed as a control and the use of a quantitative baseline survey is to understand of the mental state and social capacity of where the students are currently at. It is used to chart the student's behaviour since they have been in the teacher's class to provide a rudimentary understanding of where the student's current level of social behaviour.

The interview questions strived to attain information relating to the drama programme and its cultivation of expression skills, soft skills of students and confidence

level through the activities conducted. Questions posed related to the methodology and techniques used in the programme, reactions and responses from activities conducted, evaluation of students' performance and improvement levels, and problems faced, and suggested ways to overcome these problems.

- Questions 1-5: to document state of soft skills in students before commencement of course.
- Question 6-10: to observe the comfort in utilising the English language
- Question 11-13: to detail the level of persistence in the need for completion of tasks
- Question 14-15: to measure the ability to develop new ideas
- Question 16-17: to observe and document the level of interest to learn and develop in a new environment

Please refer to Appendix 1 for full sample questionnaire.

The first 5 questions collectively document the state of soft skills abilities within the students. It strives to understand how well students work with others, the abilities to resolve issues without any involvement of any aggression, how thoughtful the students are with others, their basic intuition of collaboration and lastly, how understanding they are to other students' feelings. The second portion of the baseline survey, from question 6 through 10, consists of questions to help determine how comfortable the students are in utilising the English language. It questions the frequency of the students comfortably using the English language, their confidence in expressing themselves in English; that they fully understand conversations in English without need for repetition; spoke English fluently and pronounced English words correctly and with the use of appropriate intonation.

Question 11 to 13 provides the opportunity to detail the level of persistence students have, in the need for the completion of a given task. It surveys their level of determination by questioning if the students would continue work on a difficult activity without giving up, focussed on activities until they were finished. From question of 14 to 15 it investigates the students ability to develop new ideas by means of their capabilities in adapting ideas and knowledge already learned to form unique and original ideas. Lastly, the question of 16 and 17 observe and document the level of interest to learn and develop in a new environment from the students through noting how wide their interests are and whether they are interested in learning new or different things. The baseline survey for the teachers aims to excavate research data based on their particular areas necessary to the research.

3.8 METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The rudimentary quantitative data was collected through baseline survey then a qualitative method of observational evaluation and open ended interviews was used to further enhance the understanding and information collection.

3.8.1 Baseline Survey

Baseline survey by the teachers was conducted through a simple scale of 1-4 prior to the commencement of the programme and post programme. Survey chart divides the categories to the understanding of social competence, English communication and creativity level of each student. The measuring options are divided on a score of 1 to 4 – categorising how well each of the statements describes the student’s behaviour. Data collected from baseline survey were analysed based on the response options in the instruments show below:

Table 3.1: Summary of baseline survey points allocation system

None of the time	A little of the time	Most of the time	All of the time
1 POINT	2 POINTS	3 POINTS	4 POINTS

A scoring rubric is a standard of performance for a defined population. It is a pre-determined set of goals and objectives on which to base an evaluation. A scoring rubric is a descriptive scoring scheme that is developed to help guide the analysis process of students' efforts. The utilisation of a point system is to simplify the survey process for the teachers as each are required to personally filling up the survey for 10 students that they teach and know personally. They have to do this process twice, once before the workshop and the second time post workshop. The use of point system also helps to make the data percentage calculation conducted more efficiently. 1 point is given to students displaying little to no abilities from within the category at the time of survey collection. 2 points are given to students who show periodical display of said behaviour during the time of observation. Points of 3 are given to students who display a more consistent display of behaviours observed and lastly, 4 points are provided to students whom behaviour matches closely to the observational statements in the survey questionnaire.

3.8.2 Observation Evaluation

The questionnaire for the facilitators of the course has questions targeted to excavate particular areas necessary to the research. The observational evaluation survey was conducted by the trainers representing Enfiniti Academy Speech and Drama Programme is conducted based on the completion of an observation chart. The evaluation data utilised point scale system of 1 to 5 based on the student's abilities.

Table 3.2: Summary of observation evaluation points allocation system

Very Strong	Strong	Moderate	Weak	Very Weak
5 POINTS	4 POINTS	3 POINTS	2 POINTS	1 POINT

Each student is evaluated based on 4 different basic performance categories:

- Breathe, Projection & Articulation
- Body Language, Energy & Expression
- Stage Manners & Spatial Awareness
- Character, Showmanship & Presentation

Please refer to Appendix 2 for full sample of trainers' evaluation.

Once again a point system is being utilised to simplify the survey process for the 3 trainers having to observe and provide a quick first impression evaluation for 20 students each in the school. They are also required to do this process twice, once before the workshop and the second time post workshop. 1 point is given to students who are considered very weak in the showing of their abilities, especially during their first meet. 2 points are given to students who are weak but show potential in their abilities. Whereas, 3 points are given to students who shows moderate display of their capabilities. With a rating scale consists of an even number of performance levels, since an odd number is used, the middle level tends to become a catch-all category. Then 4 points are provided to students whom abilities are strong and 5 given to those which display strong capabilities in the observational experience of the trainers.

This observation is conducted during the first meeting between the students and the trainers; this is to help establish the existing pre-programme state of the students. Subsequent to the pre-programme evaluation, another observation was conducted 6-months post-programme during the final performance of the students were conducted for a comparative observation on the programme impact and an assessment of skills learnt by the students.

Universiti Malaya

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The first part of this analysis is a thorough look at the speech and drama syllabus of the Enfiniti Academy – Speech and Drama Programme. The analysis would be formed when the components in the syllabus which help enhance the social skills and personal confidence are identified. The activities geared towards training these young actors in the syllabus would be the English language and drama skills learned, while the soft skills produced would be the inherent skills that would be indirectly acquired. According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015, Education is often seen as an enabler for social mobility, enabling children born in poor families to earn higher incomes as adults. As long as socio-economic status remains the greatest predictor of academic success, and the factor behind the largest of all student outcome gaps in Malaysia, this promise will remain elusive for many Malaysians. (Ministry of Education , 2013, p. 11) The analysis is formed when these inherent skills are acquired by providing them with necessary confidence through a form of social equality¹ that elevates esteem to help improve their current socio-economic state in the future.

¹ The term “social equality,” is used differently by varying theorists - including relational equality, democratic equality, social-relational equality, social status equality and social equality. In this research it will be in reference to the idea that all members of society should relate to each other as free and equals.

Table 4.1: Summary of Enfinti Academy’s Speech and Drama Workshop Lesson Plan

Workshop	Lesson Plan	Learning Outcomes	Teaching Exercises
<p>Observation Session Day 1</p>	<p>Drama “How do I use my body as a communication tool?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ways to warm up before acting • How to breathe and get my voice heard • Speaking clearly in English • Drama games – communicating in groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Define communication • Physical warm-ups • Warm-up games <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathing & Breathe Control • Vocal Articulation & Voice Projection • Gibberish • Articulation Warm-up • Tongue Twisters • Drama Game – Passing a Calp • Drama Game – Zip Zap Boing • Drama Game – Passing the Sound • Drama Game – Passing an Imaginary Object • Passing the action

Workshop	Lesson Plan	Learning Outcomes	Teaching Exercises
Observation Session Day 2	Drama “How do I create ideas and communicate a story?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Imagination • Storytelling – How do we enact a story? • Creative thinking development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is improvisation? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Warm ups <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathing & Breath Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocal Articulation & Voice Projection • Gibberish • Articulation Warm-up • Storytelling • What game • Where game • Who game • Why game • Performance <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Closing
Workshop	Lesson Plan	Learning Outcomes	Teaching Exercises
Observation Session Day 3	Drama “How do I create ideas and communicate a story?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction to movement and body language • Drama games – what are emotions? How can we use them to tell a story? • MY skit – storyboards • English words to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breathing & Breath Control <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocal Articulation & Voice Projection • Articulation Warm-up • Tongue Twister • Emotion Game <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Group

		<p>describe my story</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Write my story outline in English 	<p>Movement and Dance Game</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How Do We Create a Story? • Students to Discuss 4Ws • Scripting and rehearsing • Planning Props and Costumes
Workshop	Lesson Plan	Learning Outcomes	Teaching Exercises
<p>Observation Session Day 4</p>	<p>Drama “How do I create ideas and communicate a story?”</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basics of public speaking • Understanding the space around me • Stage manners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rehearsal • Props and costume – What can I recycle & make, to tell my story? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physical Warm ups • Breathing and Breath Control • Articulation Warm-up • Stage Direction Game • Stage Manners <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creating Costumes and Props • Rehearsal • Performance

Please refer to Appendix 3 for full sample of Lesson Plan.

4.2 OBSERVATIONAL ANALYSIS

4.2.1 OBSERVATION SESSION DAY 1

The first day of the workshop kicks off with a registration of all 60 students. This is where the trainers first establish connection with the participants through simple conversational engagement. The conversations range from “Good morning, how are you today?” to “What did you have for breakfast this morning?” The conversations are established in order to gauge the level of competency of the participants in conversing in the English language and this can be co-related to their self-expression and self-confidence. Through the basic conversation, it can be observed the comfort level of the children on how they interact with the trainers. Those with higher level of confidence can usually be seen having a more comfortable manner in their conversation. As this is the first contact, most of the students can be observed to be generally a little reserved and can be determined is without high self-assurance and esteem when addressing basic conversation in a language they are uncomfortable with. This could be due to the fact that the school is within a community area that is underprivileged and most of the student come from families of who is more comfortable communicating in their colloquial language.

Anticipating this, the way that Enfiniti Academy had constructed the programme starts off with the Lesson Plan of the day, which is “How do I use my body as a communication tool?” The objective of the day is to empower the students through activities and games so that they are able to learn how to utilise their body as a communicative device to help express themselves. Physical activity can lay the groundwork for developing abstract mental concepts. Thus drama provides students with a means of living through content in a way that deepens their understanding and appreciation of the subject. Although teachers may recognise the power of learning

through drama for students, dramatization is still a relatively rare event in most classrooms.

The session begins with physical warm-ups of basic stretching to warm up their bodies. Simple exercises help introduce simple use of English language to help students identify and recognise certain body parts, for instance, “Stretch your right arm.” These simple instructions do not only allow the student to understand the difference between left and right, but also to associate their body own body parts that can help them in future exercises. More importantly, it can be observed that through simple instructional exercises such as these, it prepares the students mentally for the upcoming activities that may have more complicated instructions. The warm-ups ready them not by only physically but also, mentally and emotionally.

The warm-ups are then followed with warm-up games that are simple but physically engaging for the participants. The students are required to follow instructions such as, “Look at the ceiling” or “Stomp on the floor” which requires both physical and comprehension skills. They are also requested to touch objects of any specific colours as fast as they can, which is an introduction of elements of colour into the exercise. Proceeding with more physical contact of the activity to say, “Hello, Good Morning” to 7 people in different emotions – e.g. Happy, Sad, Angry, Hungry, Annoyed - which is an introduction to identifying the descriptive of varying emotions to the participants. This exercise helps to initiate the concept of creative drama which takes children’s natural world, creative play, and develops it further, using theatre techniques, to create learning experiences. As noted in Slade’s statement, “The best child play takes place only where the opportunity and encouragement are consciously given to it by an adult mind. This is a process of nurturing and is not the same as interfering. It is necessary to build confidence by friendship and the right atmosphere by sympathetic consideration” (Slade, 1954).

Then Breathing and articulation techniques are introduced to the participants. Basic breathing and breath control exercises are introduced by the request of participants putting their hands on their stomach, and then taking a deep breath in. As they breathe in, they are requested to observe how their hands will rise as the stomach gets bigger, as it would look like an expanded balloon. This is to educate the participants on the existence of their diaphragm and how if they would like to learn how to control their voices, they first need to learn how to control their breathing. It can be observed that many of the children are confused by the concept but are amused with the idea on how their stomach is akin to a balloon and is very willing to try. Though most of them may be breathing 'wrong' hence, they are generally very soft in their projection ability but they are willing to attempt at breathing correctly.

Following that, the lesson plan introduces an activity known as 'Gibberish'. This is where the participants are introduced to the idea of using their body as a communication tool. They are asked to project their voices loudly whilst acting out varying emotions using nonsensical words known as "Gibberish". This exercise is led by the trainers standing in the middle of the drama circle and having the participants repeat after them, both in vocal and physical display. What can be clearly observed is that most students are generally very amused by the activity and mainly when in the comfort of their friends and other participants, they will very much try to emulate as closely to trainer as possible. When given the opportunity to lead the group, most students suddenly clamps up and will be very self-conscious about being loud or even properly conducting the physical action as necessary. This can be observe through a particular Student A, whereby when they were part of the group, they were very boisterous and involved, but when given the opportunity to perform the exercise, Student A suddenly became truly self-conscious with physicality that does not reflect how they were when 'hidden' amongst friends.

This reaction is observed to be replicated in many of the other drama games that are subsequently introduced to the group. As the lesson plan of the day were follow up with drama activities that are of the nature that requires the participants to first work in a group, then subsequently requires the students to try and act out independently. The games were Passing the Clap, Passing the Sound, Passing an Imaginary Object and Passing the Action. All of which requires the students work in a group and pass on a clap, sound, imaginary object or action, which most are happy and eager to partake. Then the students are required to act out an action eg. washing clothes, dancing, swimming, eating. Then the next person asks a question, “What are you doing?” of which the first student answers in full: “I am combing my hair.” Followed by the second person copying the action and adds on their own while repeating the sentence in full: “I am combing my hair.” This is when it can clearly observe a similar trait that many of the students acting reserved to the concept of acting independently. This is exceptionally clear with Student A.

The main take away for the first day of workshop was that there are many ways in which we can communicate. Hence, it provided an opportunity for the students to explore these options through the exercises and drama activities. Most of the participants are observed to have reacted very well to the games and activities as the day’s teachings are all very well hidden within fun games but it is through this participation in games, that we are able to observe the students in their most naturalistic behavioural reactions. It is due to the fact that the students are so focussed in completing each game and activities that they naturally allow their guard to be down and react in ways that is not defensive. This is when; we can observe whether or not they are truly comfortable within the given environment -following the ideals as stated by both Slade and Dorothy Heathcote’s Mantle of the Expert, learners are encouraged to form their

own 'self-expression' through the development of their voice, opinions, and essentially, forming the building blocks to their personal expressions.

4.2.2 OBSERVATION SESSION DAY 2

The second day of the workshop revolves around the topic of "How do I create ideas and communicate a story?" The lesson objectives are to assist with the development of imagination, supporting the participants to enact a story through storytelling exercises, creative thinking development and introducing the concept of improvisation.

The workshop day starts similarly with physical warm ups, breathing exercises and vocal articulation warm-up. Due to the fact that the students were introduced to some of the exercises previously, it is apparent that the participants are a lot more comfortable in terms of execution. Beane states that genuine learning involved an interaction between the learner, the environment, and the content; this interaction integrates what we experience into our system of meanings. (Beane, 1992, p. 36)

Hence, the trainers are able to increase the level of difficulty to some of the warm-up exercises by introducing details to some of the articulation exercises which engages with the breath, lips, tongue and teeth for clear pronunciation.

This practice of gradual increment on the level of difficulty can be observed to help engage the students because the participants seem to react well to challenges. When presented with a challenge, the students would be more engaged and be willing to rise up to find ways to meet with the challenge. This is a slight difference comparative to the first day, where they are more tentative when approaching challenges.

The main workshop activity focus of the day is the introduction to Storytelling, where the trainers explain the concepts to the keywords “Who”, “What”, “Where” and “Why” and provide opportunities for the students to explain the meaning in their own words in order to display understanding of the keywords in a sentence. This explanation leads into a series of Charades based on the keywords. Charades is a drama activity to where everyone sits in a circle, and then individual students or pairs enter the circle and pick a slip of paper with varying actions written on it. Then without saying what the action is, the individual or pair acts out the activity. The rest of the circle has to guess what they are doing. Charades provide the opportunity for the students to create a deeper understanding to basic concepts and also embolden them with confidence by giving them a chance to act out actions that are familiar through a concept that may be foreign. The juxtaposition helps in introducing new elements to the students’ typical learning process, hence keeping the experience fresh and intriguing.

Through charades, the students are also given the opportunity to learn about the rudimentary introduction of improvisation. When making up ideas and act them out for the first without any planning or rehearsal, the practice is recognised as improvisation. This is when things are made up on the spot, without practicing and it is helpful in creating new ideas. The rules of improvisation in drama is thought to follow the Four W’s – What, Where, Who and Why. With this basic understanding, the participants are given time to discuss and create a short story/skit. Each team performs their skit and the audience guesses why they are in a particular situation. This is the opportunity for the participants to focus on the aspect of “Why” – which is the backbone of the storytelling concept. Also, through this activity, the students are observed to be able to grasp the concept of improvisation and storytelling a lot more openly. The random grouping also allows the opportunity to observe how students interact and create with one another with other participants whom they are not naturally familiar with.

4.2.3 OBSERVATION SESSION DAY 3

On the 3rd day of the workshop is based on the topic of “Creating and writing story in English” The lesson plan of the day begins with an introduction to movement and body language. Then it moves onto drama games that hopefully helps answer the questions of “What are emotions?” and “How can we use them to tell a story?” which then proceeds into creation of storyboards and writing the story outline in English. The element of utilising the English language is important, because this is a test to help students explore the element of creation through a language that they are not necessary most comfortable with. But it can be observed that through the discomfort, students are then pushed to be more creative in the attempt to express themselves. Hence, it could be concluded that their limitations help exacerbate creativity. ‘Mantle of the Expert starts with a problem or task, and, in role, teachers and students explore what knowledge they already have while making new discoveries along the way’ (Bolton, 1995).

Focussing on integrating the work of previous days and moving towards creation through emotion, one of the main activities of the day is Group Movement and Dance Game. This is where the students walk around the room and different emotions are introduced to encourage students to show their expressions and pace. The control of the activity is through the introduction of freezing which is staying still and not moving. Then songs are introduced to allow the students to move according to the emotions of the songs and freeze once the song stops. This provides an opportunity for the students the platform to express themselves physically through the form of dance according to the rhythm of every song. Students whom are observed to be rather reserve through the first and second day of workshop can now be seen expressing themselves a lot more freely. They are less reserved and willing to explore their own instincts and emotions. As noted in the earlier understanding of the literature on impact of drama education on children, drama brings form and purpose to thought an emotion.

To put this in metaphorical terms, drama provides the vessel for the event, and the players fill that vessel, as Susan Kovalik ties the new brain research to the thematic method of teaching, "...meaningfulness for elementary students must begin with first hand, being there, here and now experiences. They provide the mental scaffolding for the words which represent the concepts and definitions of things they have experienced." (Kovalic & Olsen, 1993, p. 43)

Riding on their willingness to observe and contribute to the process, a structure of storytelling – BME, Beginning, Middle and End are introduced to the participants. Participants are encouraged to create a story based on the structure provide with the creative contribution that they are developing through the exercises. The idea of a skit is introduced as a short dramatic story acted out in front of an audience and the participants are then led to creating their own skit with the understanding of Beginning, Middle and End by creating a rough idea and integrating characterisation into the story and navigating how they feel or their emotions and lastly, what they look like.

This is when it can be seen that everyone is in a level ground despite their varying backgrounds and the environment provided really encourages them to contribute in the ways that they are comfortable with as students are often encouraged to be supportive of one another despite any difference in opinion. This is exemplified by Student B, as from the start of the workshop session, they were marked as being one of the more vocal students in providing opinions, and hence it is not a surprise to observe that in this creation session, Student B started to impose her ideas on others and trying to navigate the story to their way. But with the interception from trainers, Student B was encouraged to share the opportunity with the rest of the team and because this creative process works a lot better and more efficiently with the help of all parties involved, Student B quickly fell into the pattern of accepting others and listening to other's ideas as well.

4.2.4 OBSERVATION SESSION DAY 4

During the last day of the workshop, the focus of the lesson plan is on “Rehearsing and staging a story in English.” The expectations of the day is to impart the basics of public speaking, introducing the concept of space and understanding how to utilise space by learning stage manners. Lastly, the students are given the opportunity to rehearse the story or skit of which they have created on day-4 of the workshop.

Once again, the day starts with the now familiar routine of physical warm-ups, breathing exercises and articulation exercises. Follow up with drama games that were started with Stage Direction Game – that introduces the concept of stage and audience to the participants. Trainers will model why stage directions and utilising the whole stage is important in a performance. Trainers will also state stage rules by modelling examples of good and bad stage manners – for example participants are taught never to turn their backs on the audience whilst on stage in order for audience to be able to see them and also hear them clearly as one of the main rule of acting is “Actors must be seen and heard.”

After the basic rules of acting are taught to the participants, they are then given the time to create their own costumes and props utilising scrap materials. This session of the activity is once again a hurdle provided to help encourage the students to development their problem-solving mind-set. Given the limitations of using old newspapers and recyclable materials, what can they do to create convincing questions and props necessary? It can be observed that in this process, because of the items used in the creation are recyclable and inexpensive, the participants feels more liberated to try and make errors and try again to create the perfect costume representation. They are only limited by their own imagination and have the motivation to keep making and creating. It is clear that most students are very inspired to try and motivated to create during this session of the activity.

Lastly, the students are then given the necessary time to rehearse and practice their skit for the highlight of the day – the performance. This part of the workshop is very important as stated by drama specialist, Brian Way states in *Development through Drama*, “Theatre is largely concerned with communication between actors and an audience; Drama is largely concerned with experience by the participants.”

Essentially, the end product created is a direct result of the combined efforts from all active participants. Despite the mistakes and mishap that may happen throughout the presentation, it is clear that all the students feel an immense amount of pride to the work that they have exhibited. The sense of accomplishment that they gather throughout the whole process is the exact encouragement that we see drama education is able to provide to the participants. It not only help elevates their sense of confidence, but it provides almost an instant gratification that will hopefully entice the students to keep trying. More importantly, even if they made any mistakes, the students are able to soldier on, as they realised that their other teammates are depending on them in order to complete the storytelling. Hence, they all came together to work and help complete the necessary task despite of their personal reservations at the start.

At the end of the 4 day workshop, trainers are encouraged to congratulate students on their performance and provide feedback on the areas they’ve grown in over the course of the last 4 days. Students are not to be discourages by any perceived flaws during the final performance as it is recognised that the performance was their first attempt. This is because the trainers will then return for 2 other follow-up visits, that ends with a visit to witness their final performance.

Through the observations done on the 4 days of workshop, it can be concluded education has a crucial role to play in providing participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to change their own socio-economic prospects and those of the larger community of which they are a part. This part of the Creative Drama can be responsible

for enabling young people to gain aesthetic experience and develop expressive skills. Students can also gain terms of social and personal learning, using the arts as a medium to explore and learn in other areas of the curriculum. As Ruppert has identified, the major benefits associated with study of the creative drama and student achievement - studies in Critical Links use various measures of achievement, including the impact shown on such tests. It was determined that “Learning experiences in the arts contribute to the development of academic skills, including the areas of reading and language development, and mathematics.” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 11)

In a thesis by Lenka Krivkova, *Design of the Workshop*, she states, ‘drama is used as a tool to achieve learning goals of other subjects. Components like role play and improvisation are useful in achieving disciplines like interview and debates. These methods are used in a way that they not only accomplish the set pedagogical, but also dramatic goals’ (Krivkova, 2011). Which means that drama is an integral tool that propels learners into the developing a mindset to anticipate the acquisition of creative thinking skills, expression skills, and decision making – all encouraged through the participation in the creative drama world that is simulated by the teacher.

Learning needs to reflect the chaos and interconnectedness of opportunities to choose. Thematic drama provides a means for bringing ITI’s “here and now” experiences into the classroom, empowering young people as they cannot be empowered elsewhere.

4.3 BASELINE SURVEY

According to the baseline survey conducted by the teachers prior to the commencement of the programme and post programme, it can be surmised that in the general category of social competence, English communication and creativity, on average there is a general percentile increment on each category. The measuring options are divided on a score of 1 to 4 – categorising how well each of the statements describes the student's behaviour with the composite scores subsequently converted to a percentile measurement.

The average percentile scoring for all of the 60 students summarised in this table:

Table 4.2: Summary of average scoring percentile pre- and post- workshop survey evaluation of SK Batu Belah students

	Baseline Survey (%)	Post Workshop Survey (%)	Average %
Social Competence	71.8	82.5	10.7
Communication (English)	54.4	58	3.6
Creativity	54.1	66.3	12.2

This increment as indicated in the summary of Table 4.2, provides an overview on how the students responded to the drama workshop based on the evaluation of the teachers whom have detected changes within the students' behaviours pre and post

participation of the drama workshop. It signifies that there is an improvement in the students' overall social competence, communication abilities and also their creativity levels.

The following analyses how each of component produce a set of skills enhancing expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of the students based on the analytics of the 4-day workshop observations and quantitative data analytics from the surveys collected and tabulated from both teachers and trainers.

4.4 BREATHE, PROJECTION & ARTICULATION: SPEECH, LANGUAGE AND VOCAL TRAINING TO CULTIVATE CONFIDENCE

The speech and drama programme from Enfiniti Academy developed the programme specifically for students of 9-12 years old to learn English through drama activities. The main objective of the course is to increase speech and language confidence of the students through varying drama activities. As stated in the International Journal of Academic Research by M.Samantha Reddy in the article Importance of English Language in today's World, "In a globalised and interconnected world the importance of English cannot be overstated..." it also confirms the importance on how "...knowing English opens opportunities of job employment. English is the communication medium" (Reddy, 2016, p. 179). A typical vocal training class would see the trainer explaining the need for these exercises in English. The consistent use of the English language encourages the students to participate using English – hence encouraging further usage of the language outside of the class.

One of the main tools in achieving speech confidence is by using vocal training. Vocal training is important to following a series of physical warm-up. This is due to the fact that the uses of the body and vocal excises are closely interconnected – where the

mouth region, the tongue, and the stomach need to be unified in order to produce 'voice'. The vocal training constitutes breathing and projection exercises to enable the students to communicate in a clear manner with appropriate articulation. Volume, pitch, pace, rhythm, style and dynamics are made distinct to the student in modulating and learning how to use the voice for communication. Students are put through a series of vocal training every time at the start of every session. This is a step towards building confidence, as it helps to develop a public speaking technique that enhances confidence - as confidence comes from being in control and control comes from having a good technique. As noted by Charlyn Wessels in *Drama* "Vocal flexibility is the result of experience, lots of practice, and attention to many small, but important, factors that many people are not aware of or do not care about." (Wessels, 1987, p. 62)

Activities such as tongue rolls, vowel and consonant emphasis, and projection exercises are basic techniques that are commonly used to develop vocal abilities. In general, Malaysian students are not usually exposed to this form exercises and find it rather peculiar but due to the fact that most of these excises are implemented in the guise of a game – the children adapts relatively quickly.

Based on researcher's observation, an activity that the students usually respond to really well is known as "Gibberish" that encourages the utilisation of the voice and emotions as a communication tool. The students need to project their voice while acting out different emotions a series of random phrases and words or "Gibberish". A student is picked to display an action, emotion and also a random phrase followed by the entire group following exactly what was performed. This activity sharpens the students' vocal techniques by showing how to project their voice and also the varying degree and control of volume to use when performing. 'Gibberish' also requires an action and emotion that correlates to the phrase used – hence it also requires a level of performing

confidence from the student – unbeknownst to them, they are indirectly utilising all of the basic drama tools to perform.

Projecting the voice to a target seems like a playful task, without proper guidance and explanation, the term ‘projection’ seems to be a foreign concept to the students but when analyzed it teaches the student to gauge the correct level of volume to use to the prospective audience. Enfiniti Academy’s Speech and Drama programme engages the student to pick up confidence in speech through these simple games and exercises. In the final presentation of the students’ there is a marked difference in the students’ level of projection as compared to the initial sessions.

Through interviews of the workshops conducted, these are some of the feedbacks collated from the students and teachers;

‘I sound louder after warm-up sessions’.

‘It’s interesting to witness the children using their imagination in pretending their stomachs are balloons to identify their diaphragm for better projection. It gives them a visual of what they are supposed to be identifying’.

Essentially, the vocal exercises help build the students’ vocal confidence. Utilising simple drama exercises helps them to discover their voice hence providing them with a foundation of confidence, vocally. The ability to be able to speak effectively will help the students feel more connected and effectively heard. Empowering the students to speak confidently empowers them with the ability to feel enthusiastic and confident, more importantly to communicate effectively.

4.5 BODY LANGUAGE, ENERGY & EXPRESSION: UTILISATION OF PHYSICAL TRAINING IN NEUTRALISING GENDER DIVISION AND IMPROVING CONFIDENCE

The speech and drama workshop integrates a large amount of time on physical training. At the start of every program day is led by a series of physical warm-up that not only prepares them for the physical activities but also to allow them the opportunity to be more aware of their own bodies. The programme is developed with the intention to enable participants to understand their physical capabilities beyond just bodily function. It is regarded as a tool of communication. Physical theatre is regarded as thoughts or an expression of self via the use of the physical body, which includes facial expressions, body movements, dance and gestures.

Drama games such as 'Passing an imaginary object', 'Passing an action' and 'Charades' are all activities within the Speech and Drama Workshop used to encourage the utilisation of the physical body as a communication tool to help relay thoughts, feelings and ideas. Regardless of the social background of each of the student, the physical exercises enabled the students to completely immerse themselves in the activity without being self-conscious; because in drama, the body is a form of expression.

A clear observation that was done is how when they activity starts, female students will generally crowd around female students and vice-versa. But as the activities progresses, it is clear that the gender division is clearly abandoned and everyone is focus on being a part of the bigger construct. No one is restrained due to their race, religion or gender, they were a larger part of an equation as unit – despite the fact that in a public schooling system and the students being in an age that starts to be body aware, where gender curiosity may be prevalent, they seem to be confident in

shedding any preconceived gender barriers². There seems to be a lot of respect being displayed towards one another regardless of gender despite the fact that it is common practice for boys to only socialise with boys and girls with girls – there are no awkward self-division and most seems to work very well together as a team. This affect that serves as a gender egalitarian between the gender division that is prevalent in schooling formats in Malaysia. Drama can be perceived as “a process that changes the distribution of power both in interpersonal relations and in institutions throughout society.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 70) Speech and drama here serves neutraliser between the gender factors and empower students to be able to embrace and display their capabilities and not limited by social construct or limitations.

With the Physical activity and exercise are also factors that have the potential to stabilize or enhance physical self-perception. (Tommy Haugen, 2013, p. 139) This relates to the concept of how confidence is shaped by physical appearance. Of which is support by social psychologist, Amy Cuddy’s *“Your Body Language Shapes Who You Are”*, where her argument was of that body language and how it ultimately affects the others view us as well as how it changes how we in turn see ourselves. As emphasised by Wessels, “‘body language’ – facial expressions, gestures, the positions of our limbs, and non-verbal sounds, (which) can be as eloquent as words.” (Wessels, 1987, p. 11) The expression of the physical body or body language is an ability that can only be garnered through experiences, it is not something that can necessarily be taught but instead experienced and learned. Hence, the closest stimulation will be from the stimulated realities of Drama creation. For example, in the school one of the groups developed a story based on superheroes and in mainstream media, most superheroes are depicted by men, but a female student volunteered herself not only as just another

² In many cases these biases form part of a societal practice of gender misrecognition, which not only might have adverse effects on a person’s conception of herself and her self-respect, but also presents a violation of social equality. The reasons social equality can be violated through gendered relationships are thus i) that within these relationships a person is not seen as an equal, ii) that sociocultural practices of gendering often create stigmatizing conceptions of gendered social roles, and iii) that repeated instances of gendered misrecognition can both undermine a person’s self-respect and lead her to adopting “conforming” behaviour, that is, behaviour in line with existing biases. (Schuppert, 2014, p. 123)

superhero but as the protagonist to the story. After a series of rehearsals, she successfully displayed a fight sequence with confidence that may not necessary had been there should it not be the opportunity provided by the programme.

4.6 STAGE MANNERS & SPATIAL AWARENESS: ENSEMBLE TRAINING IN SPEECH AND DRAMA TO ENCOURAGE SOCIAL SKILLS AND EGALITARIAN

Ensemble training is one of the main elements within the Speech and Drama Programme. Much of drama exercises are used to cultivate ensemble work to develop a sense of collaboration between the people involved. Ensemble is one of the fundamental learning of drama. The speech and drama workshop helps to develop it, through much of the ensemble work. Most of the activities require the participants to actually work together, this sense of working together to solve problems help to develop social skills. As indicated in *Critical Evidence – How The Arts Benefit Student Achievements*, “Students who participate in arts learning experiences often improve their achievement in other realms of learning and life.” (Ruppert, 2006, p. 8)

Due to the very silo way or learning in conventional schooling environment, speech and drama workshop provides the opportunity for the students to work together to solve problems. Many of the activities require the students to collaborate with one another to help resolve given tasks with immediacy. For instance charades exercise requires for them to work together to develop a scenario with only physical display. This encourages the students to work together to reach the most efficient solution within the given time – so the quality that matters most is not based social construct but instead it is based on capabilities - highlighting the quality of egalitarian within the paradigm of such drama exercises. As highlighted in “Community-based Arts & Culture Education”,

author Janet Pillai, “Cognitive, affective and sensual learning is activated when participants use artistic tools to interact with, inquire. And analyse how and why things come to be in their environment and community, and then express their perceptions through the arts.” (Pillai, 2014, p. 7)

One of the emphases of the workshop is to learn stage manners that also help increase spatial awareness. Whereby, the exercise introduces technical staging lingo as well as creating an understanding on how do you treat the audience as well as fellow actors during staging so that performing quality could be heightened. Simple introductions such as how to be aware of your fellow actors, so that they are not being blocked or speaking clearly and loudly so that fellow actors are able to take cues – are introductions that create an environment of respect between fellow actors. Due to the repeated opportunities provided through the exercises to not only express themselves but have mutual respect for one another during the creation process, many of the students whom are deemed quieter during the start of the workshops eventually find their confidence and voice to also contribute their thoughts. Again, noted by Wessels in Drama, “Even shy or weaker learners can become more involved in the activities by functioning as part of a group in which their contribution is just as important as that of the more extrovert learner.” (Wessels, 1987, p. 28) This is because the construct of a drama program encourages open contribution – the idea that is no right or wrong answers drummed into the psyche of the students help emboldened them to try and be a part of the solution. This is also encouraged by the fact that student who contributed are often taken into consideration, this affect those who may not be vocal to attempt as it breaks down their preconceived notion of having to provide a “right” answer. This practice of encouragement through the creative development process helps the students deconstruct the idea that they should only contribute when they have the right answer – by introducing the idea that there is no such a thing as right answer – it removes

personal barriers the students may have set for themselves through traditional social constructs and hence enforcing the idea of egalitarian between all student participants.

One example would be, there is one particular “troubled” student, Student C noted by teacher – due to reasons unknown, seems to always miss classes or absent, when they do attend classes, they are mostly uninterested and pays no attention to the lessons. The teacher suspects that due to Student C being from an underprivileged background, they receive no proper encouragements to do well in school or even to go to school. Initially, when Student C started the programme, they would be rather reserve as they are most times in regular classes. But the teacher and trainers noticed that as the workshop progresses, they find that Student C is contributing more and more in the activities. They seem excited to take part, a lot more active and vocal about their opinions. More importantly, regardless of history on being one of the “troubled” students, the school mates are welcoming to the contribution. As a result, the teacher noticed a notable difference in terms of their general participation in class and also Student C’s overall attendance rate had increased tremendously, especially during the days of the workshops. This seems to verify the fact that ensemble work encourages the development of other aspects in an individual towards building self-confidence and social esteem³. As Espkamp noted, “The degree which participants identify with the undertaking, accepting it as their own, may be considered as an indication of the level of participation achieved. Ownership and participation are two concepts closely related to the process of empowerment.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 70)

³ Inequalities in wealth often seem to lead to inequalities in esteem, for instance because the wealthy enjoy more *opportunities* to get esteemed, or because the wealthy have greater influence on *determining* what kind of skills, achievements, or deeds will be esteemed. (Schuppert, 2014, p. 121)

4.7 CHARACTER, SHOWMANSHIP & PRESENTATION: DRAMA ACTIVITIES TO DEVELOP PROBLEM SOLVING AND CREATIVE THINKING TO FOSTER SOCIAL SKILLS AND EGALITARIAN MENTALITY

When students come together in an ensemble they are working towards a common goal and sharing a common interest, building connections and relationships with those around them. In the ensemble training spirit, the drama training gathers the students together as a team to solve a problem together. Whether is through a basic drama activity or creating a presentation together – it's an opportunity for the students to come together to form bonds in groups. The supportive environment with the powerful vehicle that is drama helps propel cooperation and fuel trust between the students.

Creating an ensemble based environment is also the perfect place for the students to build up self-confidence. Especially in the public schooling system, there is very little control on the background of the students of which is a part of the system. In the example of SK Batu Belah, there is a significant percentage of students coming from the underprivileged background – which is an indicative of social-economic issues that may be derived from there – low-self-confidence being one of it. As explained through Schuppert's essay, "the educational system plays a key role since schools supposedly filter pupils according to "natural" inequalities (i.e. differences in intellect and ambition) not social inequalities. If, however, early differences in school-readiness, which often are directly connected to background inequalities in the parents' wealth, fail to be addressed and mitigated social inequalities will become "naturalized." (Schuppert, 2014, p. 120) Hence, having the avenue such as this speech and drama programme enables the students to share the fruits of their work with others and see how it contributes to the overall outcome of something beyond just what they imagine they are capable of. This awareness of personal progress helps promotes their self-confidence.

Also, during an ensemble activity, varying students are given the opportunities to be a leader. “drama helps to create a need to speak by putting learners in situations where they feel compelled to speak. It could simply be a response to others during role play sessions, or becoming caught up in a situation that demands a solution, or by taking responsibility for a group activity as group leader.” (Wessels, 1987, p. 27) That form of command of attention will further build up personal confidence for the students. As noted by the head of the English Department of SK Batu Belah feedback, “I’ve heard the voices of the student that I haven’t heard in class before! They are so willing to participate and contribute (their thoughts).” (Huda, 2018)

The task of having to working as an ensemble towards a final presentation as part of the Speech and Drama programme, students are able to learn from one another. There are many things a teacher can teach but nothing speaks with more resonance than when a student can discover “why” and one of the most unique opportunity that can be offered through drama is that it encourages students to learn from one another. As the creative opportunities provided is solution based, it allows students to think outside the box for creative solution and hence anyone could step up on the plate to offer a solution. Seeing that anyone could also contribute naturally motivates those who are quieter to learn to be more vocal to contribute. This is apparent as noted by the teacher’s on how they are hearing the enthusiasm of the quiet students when they participate in the activities. Many of them notice that the quiet students are actually contributing ideas and being vocal during activities so much more compared to class. “Many drama activities are specifically aimed at these weaker learners, to help them gain confidence in a non-threatening environment.” (Wessels, 1987, p. 28) This is a clear indicative of the rise of confidence through the egalitarian platform that is drama.

Being in an ensemble also allows students to develop social skills, as a successful collaboration requires the sacrifice of one’s ego to benefit the team. As in

one incident where one of the students is an influential student - student D's mother is a teacher within the school and they are known for being confident and bright as well. During the process of development of the play to be presented by the student group, after spending a day on coming out with the concept and script, Student D came in the next day with a whole new script and insisted for everyone in the group to read and perform their piece instead. No one else in the group agrees with it but due to their domineering attitude and ego, no one wanted to directly confront Student D. Hence, the trainer stepped in and encouraged an open discussion regarding the matter. When given the opportunity, the other students started voicing out their concerns on working with the new script. After the facilitation, a vote was taken and everyone, including the student in question agreed to proceed with the previously agreed upon script. During the presentation, due to the fact that most of the group enjoyed the script and felt that the collaborative experience produced a better experience – including the Student D as they were willing to let go of their ego and work together with the rest, hence enjoying the process as well. This helps Student D to learn how to respect their peers as contributing members of the group – as the creative process is a democratic one that encourages character building. “the use of drama games and warm-ups can contribute significantly to good group dynamics. None of these activities will work unless the students have accepted each other as people and are willing to cooperate with each other.” (Wessels, 1987, p. 75)

Participating as part of a drama ensemble is truly an experience for academic and social-emotional growth. When a student participates in an ensemble, they are not only forming life skills, they are also forming relationships. They are given the opportunity to be creative and to challenge the normalised social construct of their pre-determined condition. They are placed in a neutralised platform, where everyone is equal and their capabilities are full encouraged to be on display regardless background.

Within an ensemble, students make friends with like-minded “creators/performers” – if the relationship can be extended through their love for the experience, they may be able to forge deep, long lasting relationships, which inevitable affect their self-development and confidence.

Through observations done throughout the course of research, there is an obvious reflection of the students’ perception about their community – the lives they have outside of their classroom. An example would be, one of the stories developed by the students is a family drama, where the conflict stems on how the adults behave rather abusively to one another. Based on a deeper understanding from the teacher and trainer, they know that this is a common occurrence within the student’s family. But through the process of creation, the children helped resolve the drama through everyone apologising to one another for the abusive behaviour. This is a reflection on how they feel like they are able to resolve the issue.

This development is akin to the Theatre for Development strategy – where the overall objectives are to stimulate behavioural change. “...discussions (between people) are instrumental in creating awareness of a subject, in exchanging opinions and in exploring courses of action –perhaps leading to changes for the better.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 67) This shows how the students functioned as a group to form an idea and ‘solve’ a problem which they have imagined based on reality. They related to the characters, and formed opinions, feelings, and sympathy towards the protagonist; all qualities of a young person with empathy that would help them develop and possibly make changes that could affect their lives.

According to the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2015, the leadership skills, strong universal values such as integrity, compassion, justice, and altruism, to guide them in making ethical decisions are key criteria for them to navigate “a world fraught with challenges, from environmental degradation to armed conflict, on a scale that has

never been seen before” (Ministry of Education , 2013, p. 13). Based upon this, it supports the idea that speech and drama is a valid tool in helping students to fully comprehend and examine their current status quo and discover ways to improve. This is evident, when left to their own devices, it was observed that how the students would take turns taking charge, and listening to one another. In the book *Teaching Thematically* by Laura Gardner Salazar, the above is quoted as well. “Theatre is away for players to know about the world holistically, using their intuition and making synthesis to problem-solve.” (Salazar, 1995, p. 7) Being the opposite of process to the step-by-step answer to questions, “theatre explores subjects using all of the intelligences: logical/mathematical, spatial, musical, linguistic, kinaesthetic, and inter- and intrapersonal.” (Salazar, 1995, p. 7)

The creative development process of having the groups create a short play within the duration of the workshop, the challenge encourages the participants to problem-solve in a most creatively expressive form within the given amount of time. In order to resolve the matter, it can be clearly observed that students were very vocal and inclusive to try and develop a solution. The time constraint of the workshops plays an important role here as it encourages the students to develop the skill of concentration, to be able to focus and execute a solution to resolving the task at hand. This encourages the ability to be “living in the here and now in a persona different from their own” (Salazar, 1995, p. 7) as noted in *Teaching Thematically*, which proves that the opportunity for the students to be able to disassociate the identity that they socially associated with in their daily lives. Students seem to be able to adapt into the role of leaders and team players very comfortable due to the fact that the task is not regarded as problem-solving. “An important element in empowerment is the ability to solve problems and take decisions affecting one’s life” as stated by Epskamp, “Most problem-solving and decision-making procedures are group activities, the result of group

processes, affording people a chance to play an active and participatory role in their own environment.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 74) The neutral and all encouraging environment of developing a presentation in drama allows the students to feel more liberated to participate and not intimidated and limited by their usual social construct, hence leaving them empowered in their own environment.

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CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

5.1 SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH

The research is conducted to highlight the importance of drama can serve as an egalitarian platform and its potential long-term impact. The field of study for this study is drama in education, and the literature review focuses mainly on how the components of drama in education connect to its object of study, the students of SK Batu Belah through Enfiniti Academy's Speech and Drama Programme. The topic of research for this study is drama as an egalitarian, in particular how the education of Speech and Drama can cultivate the personal confidence for students to break pre-conceived general construct and rise above social division.

The objectives of this research are 1) To examine how creative drama can serve as an egalitarian platform for students of varying social-economic background and the potential long-term impact of drama education through Enfiniti Academy's Speech & Drama Programme. 2) To observe the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of research participants aged 9-12 from SK Batu Belah pre- and post-participation in the Speech & Drama Programme.

The literature review of the research is divided into readings on drama, and readings on culture and social change. Readings on drama produced information on child drama, drama inquiry, drama education, and drama education on the impact of children in Malaysia. Readings on culture produced definition and understanding of participation in cultural and communal activities can be instrumental in helping people and communities to overcome poverty and social exclusion.

The research is mainly qualitative in nature to where observation, interviews were conducted and supported by readings pertaining to the research topic. Interviews with the trainers were conducted to understand the methodology behind drama classes. Execution of the workshop conducted by the trainers was observed for a comparative understanding based on the lessons plans. A questionnaire to understand the level of pre-existing level of the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level students prior and then once again post workshop conducted by both teachers and trainers was collected. Replies from the questionnaire were used as part of the analysis, to compare with the observations conducted. Interviews with students and teachers were also conducted to gauge their feedback towards the workshop.

The research analysis was done over a span of six months (2018), which accounts to a full duration of the speech and drama workshop. Observation and interviews were done in 2018, while in 2019, the analysis was put into place and writing.

5.2 CONCLUSION

This section attempts to provide findings based upon the objectives of the research in order to examine how creative drama can serve as an egalitarian platform for students of varying social-economic background and the potential long-term impact of drama education. Also, to observe the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of research participants' pre- and post- participation in the Speech & Drama Programme.

When placed against Schuppert's definition of social equality, "institutions of society must indeed be designed in such a way so as to treat all members of society as equals. Doing so implies giving special attention to those who are less well-off (in whichever respect) in order to make sure that "trivial" inequalities do not become institutionally transformed into relevant social disadvantages." (Schuppert, 2014, p. 120) Through the analysis, drama can be deduced as an integral part of the solution that will be able to support underprivileged students in this manner. The research findings show that creative drama does function as an egalitarian platform helps improve expression skills, soft skills and confidence through drama activities. Drama through means of expression such as traditional tales, plays, dances and songs are all a part of communication and it helps stimulate, sustain and increase the ability of people to know how to think, how to work and how to solve problems. The aim is a better quality of life, based on an enhanced potential for developing children from varying social-economic backgrounds.

To help students achieve a level of necessary expression skills and confidence, specific components in the drama syllabus could be used. The level of expression and soft skills sets can be pre-determined by the drama activities that were conducted as not all drama activities will yield the same results from students. Hence, it suggests that in order to help yield specific level of skills from the students, the function of the activity

has to first be pre-determined. This in turn should help fully maximise the use of the activity to fulfil its overall potential.

In general group-problem solving activities can help tighten the bond of the students together but the unique role of which drama exercises could play is with that it can help in opening the students up. Art education appears to empower participants through a social learning process: they acquire new knowledge and skills and the sense of confidence necessary to adopt new ways of behaving such as group formation, decision-making and leadership skills. There is a creative empowerment through the process of drama exercises that is not found in the format of formal education. The emotional aspect involved in the exercises and activities is something that encourages this development. “The basic idea of non-formal education programmes is that learners should be stimulated to improve their circumstances through their own efforts, and that the acquisition of new knowledge and skills plays an essential part in this. Learning groups are set up within which skills are acquired that may help to solve problems regarded as important by the members of the community.” (Epskamp, 2006, p. 114)

With reference to the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of research participants’ pre- and post- participation in the Speech & Drama Programme, it is apparent that through participation in the Speech & Drama Programme, there are two groups of students - those who are outspoken, who genuinely interested to pursue the understanding of art and performance further and those who are more reserved and shy and have no particular interest to actively pursue acting. Yet, in general almost all of the students are interested to partake in the programme if given further opportunities. It can be surmised to the fact that the process of art education is disguised in a series of active games that is not direct result oriented but instead process oriented. Hence, the students are willing to participate despite the lack of active interest in becoming professional actors or performers.

The traits of these students are usually shy, introverted and reserved but after the brief workshop process, it can be seen that these students open up a lot further comparative to the prior to the workshop process. Comparative to the more outspoken and active will not only open up but take on roles as leaders and educators by sharing the knowledge gained from the workshop with other students who were not selected as part of it. Both of these groups are clearly driven by personally-elevated confidence gained from the process.

There is a mark difference between the attendance rates of the students within the group of participants in the workshop. Attendance is one of the issues plaguing most schools within under-privileged communities but it became apparent to the teachers that the introduction of the Speech & Drama workshop has improved the school attendance in general. As noted by one of the teachers, the student from a broken family – she had never have any interest in coming to school and the family has never taken any interests in her education. But as she was one of the 60 selected to be a part of the programme, her attendance and punctuality rate has gone up. This is encouraging as attendance is the first indication on interest to the development for change.

Also, there is a general distortion in the social division between the students from varying social-statuses. The example most significant is the student who came from a more authoritarian background – just based on the fact that she is related to a teacher, she is already regarded as someone of a higher social status compared to the rest of the students. Hence, the fact that by the end of the workshop she was willingly giving up the natural power she had to work better for the team in general is indicative on how drama exercises can help perpetuate the egalitarian mentality within communities that has such apparent social-division. This can also be said about the students who were more timid and shy due to their backgrounds and their normalised

condition on being quiet as they are generally not paid attention to or have no interests are now speaking out to contribute solution to be a part of an ensemble.

To conclude, it can be surmised that through the Speech & Drama Programme, despite varying degrees of growth, students are able to expand their knowledge in communication and embrace the concept that arts is an interactive and experiential process that they can embody despite their social backgrounds. With drama they are better equip to communicate themselves and through this expression they come to a better understanding of their community and be better informed to make more appropriate choices regarding it.

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5.3 RECOMMENDATIONS

This section aims to provide recommendations on how the Speech & Drama programme can be further positioned as an egalitarian platform for students of varying social-economic background by improving the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of students – particularly those who are from underprivileged communities.

It is from the researcher's personal standpoint that there is an obvious gap within the Malaysian public formal education system. There is an alarming lack of communication and critical thinking component in the local education system that can be supported by the introduction of creative drama education.

The proposal is for Speech and Drama to be made into a compulsory subject in school, not necessarily to cultivate the students to be actors or even just effective public speakers, but to aim at personality development. Through participation in creative drama, students are able to learn the ways of communicating as it is an active as well as an interactive and experiential process. Students are able to make sense of their personal experience and construct a range of critical frameworks that will empower them to evaluate these experiences and make analytical decisions that could impact their future undertaking.

Also, as an interactive process, art education should be integrated within the formal curriculum as it enables students to be able to engage with their artistic, social and cultural understanding of not only themselves but one another that could help perpetuate egalitarian mentality that will help tighten the social-economic gap that is a large concern within the 2013-2015 Malaysian Education Blueprint highlights.

Hence, the recommendation is of a gradual implementation of Speech & Drama as a part of the public schooling system. The least invasive method would be through

the English language subject, as demonstrated through the Enfiniti Academy's Speech and Drama Programme. Through integrating the Speech and Drama exercises into the already existing English education format, this will be less invasive introduction to the education system. Schools may also be anxious about adopting a brand new subject in school, hence using the tools available within Creative Drama education to instead teach the formal academic requirements may be easier and also elevate the format of education to a different level.

In conclusion, the researcher would like to state that drama has shown its inevitable potential to serve as an egalitarian platform for students of varying social-economic background by improving the state of expression skills, soft skills and confidence level of students – particularly those who are from underprivileged communities. The evidence of the final assessment to where the children having shown obvious improvements in personal confidence, leadership capabilities, enhanced social awareness, just by attending a drama workshop of a few days - comparative to before they started, is very encouraging. This is of course challenged by the limitations of understanding to the potential social impact change that drama education may bring. Hence with the benefits of drama demonstrated through this research, it is hopes that students from all over Malaysia - especially those impacted most from social division - may eventually be able to benefit from the social-egalitarianism that is drama.

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