

ONLINE FORUM RESPONSES: DAY TWO

Hello everyone, and thanks so much for your comments and interesting responses to the questions posed for today.

With regard to the question about the difference between theatre and theatre in education, participants wisely suggested that the biggest difference between the two is the intended effect--i.e. learning new knowledge or skills, or exploring attitudes. In other words, one might say that while the primary goal of theatre is to entertain and to enlighten, the primary goal of theatre in education is to provide new knowledge, effect a change in attitude and hopefully effect a change in behaviour.

In the model that we (Cydelle and Ken) have created and use in our trainings with participants around the globe, we start with educational objectives. These educational objectives are the clearly stated goals for the theatrical material that will be created by participants. Educational objectives state the intended effect regarding new knowledge or skills, attitudinal or behavioural change. We of course want to create as artistic a product as we can, but our intended health message must be clear.

Ken and I have developed over the years four Core Workshops (explored in detail in our training manual), all presented in chronological order when we offer large theatre-based trainings. Our first training workshop is called "Zip to Script," and offers clear guidelines and helps participants develop targeted health focused objectives. We ask participants who will be creating scenarios to brainstorm what issues are important and culturally relevant in their regions. They also think about their Target Audience—whom they will be creating their scenes for (what age and stage of development the scene is to be developed for). With the issue and target audience in mind, specific educational objectives are created, and these become the guidelines for scene creation.

This method differs from plot or character driven methodology which was addressed in earlier weeks during the interesting discussions about creating health messages using popular television shows (ER and Gray's Anatomy, for example). With the educational theatre model in mind, we develop relevant scenes or a whole performance piece, first through deciding what messages we need/wish to impart. The objectives inform the creation of plot, characters and structure. They also provide the framework for creation of backstories for the characters, help refine the story that is emerging so that it will be engaging and relevant to the intended audience--and very importantly allows for audience interaction through facilitated interactive opportunities which engage the audience.

Earlier we mentioned our Core Workshops. The other three workshops in the series assist participants in learning how to create character backstories, develop material that is relevant for their audiences, and learn effective post-performance facilitation techniques.

Character development is essential to the model- as the objectives become clearer, the group develops a story line. Through this group devised method, based on the stated objectives, the background of each of the characters in the story is fleshed out. For

example, if the objective is to demonstrate how HIV/AIDS is transmitted, the scene developed can include someone who just found out that /his/her partner has become infected. She/he realizes that they weren't practicing safer sex but he/she doesn't know what that means. He/ she may turn to a friend for help- the friend may or may not have the correct information. Although frightened, they decide to go to a youth friendly clinic to get more info, advice and possibly be tested. This choice of "story line" may not be relevant in all cultural settings, but it demonstrates the method of objectives first, then the creation of the story, then the fleshing out of the characters, then making the story relevant for the intended culture and audience and finally using a facilitator to engage the audience and work with the characters in the scene to glean more information and help the characters in their journey toward a better understanding of HIV infection.

We are looking forward to more postings for Acting The Part, which we will review later. For tomorrow's response we will also address the theoretical framework or scientific basis, which is core to the educational theatre model.

Thanks again for you time and interest in the world of live peer theatre. We will be back tomorrow.