
INTEGRATION OF THEATRE GAME APPROACH IN VISUAL ART EDUCATION AT THE SECONDARY SCHOOL SETTING.

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ABSTRACT:

This study explores the potentiality of integrating theatre games at secondary school level in Visual Art Education. This interdisciplinary approach is an attempt to go beyond conventional learning and teaching approach. This is in line with recent theoretical developments in the learning and teaching of visual art education that celebrate joy in the learning process. This qualitative case study approach collected data using interviews and observation. Participants in this study were Visual Art Education teacher and lecturer. These theatre games employed four techniques, namely Improvisation, Atomic Exploding, Magic If, and Actor Toolbox. The teacher participant prepared Daily Lesson Plan based on selected topics. These selected topics embedded nine types of games. The study indicated that the majority of students were able to learn more effectively based on theatre games. The active participation of students during the learning and teaching process indicated that the theatre games attracted them. The study also showed that the integration of theatre games was able to increase students' creativity and enhance students' learning motivation. The teaching units were found as engaging and heighten students' visual spatial intelligence among secondary school students.

Keywords

Theatre games, Visual Art Education, Daily Lesson Plan, Visual Spatial Intelligence

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INTRODUCTION

The transformation of learning and teaching approach in visual art education has become a concern and focus on the global art education movement. Ibrahim and Syed Yusof (2009: 136) posited that, "good visual art teaching is related to responsiveness to ever-changing conditions and a continuous search to improve teaching and learning." This is in line with the 21st century demand that requires a new creative and innovative approach in learning and teaching of art education. Nonetheless, this demand is not easily achievable. Research in this area is scarce and necessitates solemn consideration. Ibrahim et al. (2020: 522), stated that, "Research on twenty-first century learning skills has become a serious agenda" but

lack of focus especially in the area of visual art education. Hence, introducing a new approach is inevitable to ensure advancement and dynamicity of this discipline.

Schonmann (2006) was adamant that education requires an innovative approach to learning and teaching. To do that, visual art teacher educators must work towards improving themselves. Their commitment to continuous learning and teaching improvement needs to be renewed. They also need to be able to withstand the rapid change in education. Kumar, Singh, and Ahuja (2017) concurred that teachers need to address student's learning appropriately.

More interestingly, Socol, Moran, and Ratliff (2018: 12) condemned the twentieth-century

educational approach by stating, “Neuroscience research is clear that engagement of the mind does not happen when forced to sit in rows, facing a dominant teaching wall...” They believed that “Schools of the twenty-first century must be designed so that all succeed.” However, this begs the question of “How is it possible for all students to succeed in their learning and teaching at the same time?”

Khairani and Seman (2019) in their study found integrated learning as one of the solutions to enhance students’ learning and this integrated learning involved theatre games and visual art. Integrated learning is a concept that uses the learning approach based on different subjects. Integrated teaching in this study incorporates skills especially in the field of performing arts into learning and teaching of Visual Art Education. This approach is acknowledged by Schonmann (2006) who believed in the importance of “dual territory of educational and theatrical settings” being integrated.

The focus on this approach is considerably creative, innovative, and appropriate to enhance students’ learning experiences. The subject of Visual Art Education requires the diversity of approaches. This is to ensure the effectiveness of learning and teaching of the subject.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The history of theatre is traceable from the ancient Greek. Theatre according to Landy and Montgomery (2012) is an aesthetic form of performance. In education, theatre “as a place for observing an action” (p. xvii) is seen as fulfilling the 21st century skills. The roles of theatre in education support many 21st century skills such as collaborative skills, inquiring skills, problem-solving skills, and communicative skills among

students (Landy & Montgomery, 2012; Lewis & Rainer, 2005; Mienczakowski, 1996; Rowe, 2003; Schonmann, 2006; Mugwenhi et al., 2019; Merve, 2019; Meyer & Keyser, 2019).

Theatre game is one of the methods in the learning and teaching of Visual Arts Education, considered as a tool to motivate students learning of art. The integration of theatre games creates a new approach that stimulates teachers and students’ interest. Such activity in 21st century learning and teaching will facilitate students learning involvements. Not only the activities become more varied but also it will exorcise monotony in their knowledge acquisition process.

Bany-Winters (2012) believed that, “theatre games help people of all ages focus and concentrate their energies and improve their writing and communication skills” (No page). We consider these skills as valuable tools in every part of life. Through theatre games, children are able to “expand their imaginations, free the way they think, talk, and move” (Ibid, no page). In addition, theatre skills improve children’s self-esteem, solve problems, heighten listening skills, encourage cooperation, make collaboration, and overcome public speaking dreads. Teachers can teach acting techniques through games, which can foster a variety of performance, storytelling, and character-development skills. Games at the beginning of a class or rehearsal strengthen work with a script by helping actors warm up, focus their energy, develop their characters, work with each other, and even memorise their lines.

Theatre games approach helps to create interest in learning visual art education. Realising that, this article recommends that role-play and simulation activities are applied in the learning and teaching of visual art education. Demirbolat (2012:

57) proposed that teachers “establish the relation between understanding and action, and the connection between learning in the classroom and outside environments, students should be involved in classroom based projects, in role playing and creative dramas so that they are enabled to reflect”. All the above justifications on the integration of theatre concur with Way (1998) who was interested in drama ‘to develop people, not drama’.

More interestingly, to make the approach more effective, Landy and Montgomery (2012: x) was adamant that, “It is always engagement in the dramatic encounter, whether as participant or spectator, that will be truly transformational.” This engagement highlighted “the insight, the delight, the enlargement of identity, the alternative perspectives that are offered and the developing sense of artistry that arises from that engagement” (p. x).

Landy and Montgomery (2012) believed that theatre in visual art education can convert reality into new worlds. Theatre, to Landy and Montgomery (2012: 18), “When applied to learning, social action, and therapy, performance becomes a means for changing understanding, power dynamics, consciousness, and behaviour”.

However, Schonmann (2006: 2) was puzzled that although theatre has the capacity that can benefit young people in their lives, theatre is almost underexplored. Theatre according to Schonmann (2006: 2), “is a powerful artistic channel to elicit feelings of fear and pity, laughter, anger, and happiness.” Hence, stimulating the “inner structures of the mechanism that arouses these profound emotions and what can be properly devised in theatre for young people...” (p. 2) using theatrical approach helps young people to understand learning better.

Çerkez, Altınay, Altınay, and Bashirova (2012) explored the importance of teaching practice in drama and role-playing using collaborative learning. Their study highlighted the experiences and skills of pre-service teacher working collaboratively in a small group by integrating drama and role-play during their teaching practicum. Çerkez et al. (2012: 109) research findings indicated, “pre-service teachers constructed both practical and pedagogical knowledge regarding group work and shed a light to their teaching practice”.

Not much study has been conducted on the integration of theatre games in the learning and teaching of Visual Art Education although Mäyrä (2000: 1) agrees that “Playing games can be interesting and fun, but also challenging in many ways”. Hence, this study is important to highlight the importance of theatre games in the learning of teaching of Visual Art Education.

METHODOLOGY

This study embraced a qualitative case study research approach. This approach affords the chance to understand better about the possibility of integrating theatre games in the learning and teaching of visual art education. Neuman (2014: 52) stated that, “qualitative researchers offer an in-depth depiction that is true to an informant’s worldview”. While Denzin and Lincoln (2018: 42) stressed, “The province of qualitative research, accordingly, is the world of lived experience, for this is where individual belief and action intersect with culture”.

Research Design

The main role of research design in research is to provide an overview of the framework, planning, or strategy that determines the research procedure. Qualitative case studies can create limitations from

the aspect of the scope of time, place, participants which enable research to be carried out in a thorough and in-depth manner. Merriam and Tisdell (2015) state that the case study also provides a variety of data that are appropriate to the cases.

Participants

This study comprised of students of Form 1 of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Sultan Azlan Shah and a Visual Art Education teacher who has a theatre game background. Participants also included an officer from the Ministry of Education Malaysia and three lecturers

Research Methods

This study adopted several data collection methods. The methods consisted of observation, interviews, and visual analysis. Following is a description of the data collection methods.

Interview

This qualitative research relies heavily on the interview, especially in an open-ended interview in collecting information. According to Creswell and Clark (2018), an interview is a two-way communication that involves the question of profound insight and proficiency. While Mann (2016) proposed that in an interview, reflection is an important element to ensure the quality of the interview is performed. The sensitivity of the participants to reflect on the knowledge and practices associated with the study conducted are important elements.

This study adopted a three-phase interview suggested by Seidman (1998). In the three-stage interviews, we conducted three interviews with the teacher participant. We also did member checking to ensure the information acquired in the interview was accurate. The third interview was a follow-up discussion to clarify uncertainties found during and

after the observation process. The intention was to let teacher participant “to reflect further on their beliefs, values and practices” (Ibrahim, 2008: 132). The researchers need to adhere to these three phases profoundly so that “each interview provides a foundation of detail that helps illuminate the next” (Seidman, 1998: 13).

Observation

Observation is an imperative method in the data collection process. The observation can also obtain information that can document the attitude and readiness of a teacher, how teachers perform learning and teaching, and the teachers’ knowledge and methods of teaching. Lavigne and Good (2015) posit that classroom observation systems more often than not tend to neglect individual dissimilarities in students. According to (Lavigne & Good, 2015: 12), teachers are given a score based upon the classroom mean, and the diversity of student performance on this measure (e.g., the student is highly engaged, students are asked higher-order questions) is rarely examined.

We avoided the inattention to individual students to improve student learning and individual students will be of central focus. We measured interactions of teachers with different types of students to check if students in the same classroom experience notably different classroom environments.

Document Analysis

Bowen (2009: 27) stated, “...document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material.” In this study, document analysis covers various types of documents. These included information obtained from the internet, libraries, Curriculum Development Division, Secondary School

Curriculum Standard, and the teacher's Daily Lesson Plan who participated in this study.

The researchers reviewed all the documents in the light of the research questions formulated for this study. The process of analysis includes finding information related to theatre games. We selected appropriate theatre games, appraised the usage of games, and synthesised all the data obtained from the documents. We then organised into themes and categories the data that we have coded.

Data Collection Process

The researchers the data collection process in a few phases based on the methods utilised in this study. The first phase was to identify types of theatre games relevant to the learning and teaching of visual art education. We interviewed a senior lecturer in Theatre Education. In this study, we adopted nine types of consisting of *Name Game*, *Splat Game*, *Zoom Game*, *Firing Line Game*, *Ice Breaking Game*, *Homes Game*, *Improvisation Game*, *Straw Castle Game*, and *Line from a Hat Game*. We divided all the theatre games into nine teaching units that we considered relevant to the topics in Visual Art Education. Our aim was to engage and motivate a wide range of secondary school learners based on the games we have identified.

The second phase was to conduct interviews among participants. The participants included visual art teachers, students, and a lecturer and an officer from the Ministry of Education. The researchers employed a one-off in-depth interview to get information about the integration of theatre games in the teaching practice. The interview investigated how the visual art teachers embedded the theatre games in the learning and teaching of Visual Art Education.

To ensure the acceptance of theatre games by the students, teachers involved in the workshop studied all the theatre games. They then choose the appropriate game especially for the content of the learning and teaching of visual art education.

The researchers also scrutinised the Lesson Plan of the Visual Art Teacher as a way to identify how learning and teaching were enacted in the third phase. This document analysis provides information on the approaches, strategies, methods, and techniques planned for the learning and teaching of Visual Art Education.

The fourth phase involved classroom non-participative observation. We used the observation to identify how learning takes place. It is imperative to understand that without doubt our knowledge and experiences influenced out observations. This “constructivist epistemology has been widely, although often implicitly, accepted by researchers” (Maxwell, 2018: 20). The researchers employed a participant observation. In this study, the emphasis was given on the learning and teaching process using theatre games. We were interested in what the children did spontaneously and tried to be ‘unobtrusive’ in gathering the data as suggested by Arnold (2015).

Data Analysis

Data analysis according to Jones (2020) is “at the heart of every data working endeavour. It is the means by which we draw conclusions and make decisions.” However, Jones (2020: 2) is concerned about data analysis pitfalls, “that we have a particular blindness to them” because “We often approach data with the wrong mind-set and assumptions, leading to errors all along the way...” (p. 4). The researchers were aware that there was always a gap between the data that we had collected data and the real teaching world. To avoid those

pitfalls, we conducted an in-depth study of all the theatre games that we plan to embed in the learning and teaching of visual art. In addition, in a pilot study we tested randomly selected theatre games among a few students by the teacher.

Qualitative data analysis is an iterative process (Huberman & Miles, 2002; Merriam & Tisdell, 2015; Miles & Huberman, 1994). It is not a linear process that allows the researchers to complete the analysis in one go. Once completed, the raw data that was analysed provides important information. Moussavi, Amannejad, Moshirpour, Marasco, and Behjat (2020: 92) believe that the “collection and analysis of teaching and learning

data allows higher education institutions to remain competitive and effective in the development of high quality, rapidly changing education.”

This study is no exception because the analysed data provided indication to support learning advances. These advances provide practical gains for students and teachers to develop authentic learning involvements. Hence, the researchers have designed a structured design process called The Nested Model. This model consists of four nested levels that describe the way from a specific problem to actual implementation of a solution. The illustration in Figure 1.0 below show the model’s levels.

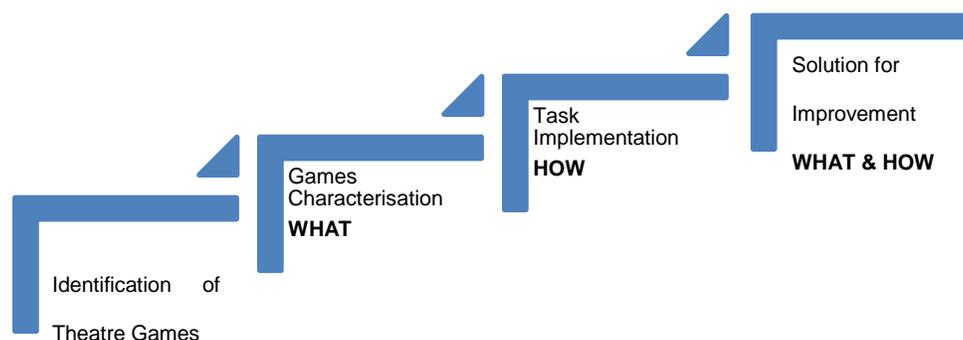


Figure 1.0: The Nested Model

Researchers collected data before the analysis process. All interview data, video recordings, and audio recordings were transcribed observations first. The field note was analysed by context to identify the category and theme. We put together, transformed, and made all the data understandable. This effort resulted in clean data. The researchers then stored all the gathered data in

a particular external drive specifically meant for this research.

The first step was that the researcher summarises the data has been extensively transcribed. This step included selecting and summarising the relevant documents. Subsequently, a detailed analysis process using the encoding technique. We analysed the data on a negative basis

and intended to encrypt the codes that were present during the data collection.

Maxwell (2018: 23) reminded us that in looking at qualitative data, the focus is not “simply as texts to be interpreted, or as the constructions of participants (although they may be these), but as evidence about the real phenomena (physical, behavioural, and mental) that the researcher wants to understand.” In this study, we interpreted the data by eliminating the non-related information, and making a relationship between the phenomena in order to identify what happened. Good data studies are an achievement in the qualitative analysis that is valid and quality. We conducted the process of encryption to identify themes for the process of analysing. We then produced related codes or themes and make headlines in separating research findings. We considered this procedure as temporary and changed it until we discovered strong data that supports the next level of data collection.

The data verification changed when we discovered a shred of new strong evidence. The

researchers proposed a data interpretation based on what we obtained during after the coding process. We examine all information in the study according to the category of information through the main theme and then lead to a data theme. Based on the theme, we interpreted the data and made a conclusion.

We have characterised our analysis tasks concerning objectives, questions, targets, and means, which indicated why the teacher pursued a task, what a task seeks, where a task operates in the data, and how the teacher carried out a task. Figure 1.0 shows the key terms that we dealt with. These key terms allowed us to formulate tasks like describing groups of data elements with low values by marking them interactively. We provide two more examples in Table 1.0 and we used such task descriptions to inform the redesigning of theatre games activity. Both characteristics of the tasks and the properties of the data were influencing factors. Together, they form the basis for data analysis. However, task and data were not the only factors we analysed.

Objectives	Questions	Targets	Methods
Describe	Theatre games activities	Characteristics	Document Analysis
Explore	Learning and teaching approach	Teacher	Interview
Identify	Effectiveness	Students	Observation

Table 1.0: Objectives, questions, targets, and methods characterise analysis tasks

We analysed data using the Low-Level Code and High-Level Code based on Reavis (2019). The Low-Level Code according to Reavis (2019: 87) is “closely aligned to the transcripts, interview protocols, and the explicit statements made by participants.” While we developed the High-Level Code from the participant’s words, but implicit.

After the high-level coding, the researchers provided a High-Level coding summary.

The analysis also includes Theatre Games Performance Analysis and Learning Behaviour Analysis as shown in Table 2.0. We based our analyses on various important questions that help aligned the theatre games activities and the research

questions. For example, in the performance analysis, we posed a few questions. Among the questions were, how did the students perform? How did the teacher evaluate the students’ performances? How did the students perform in each theatre game? How much time did the students spend for each theatre game? What are the differences and similarities between students’ performance in each theatre game?

While for the learning behaviour analysis, we included a few questions. Among the questions were, how did the students regard each theatre game? What is the effect of theatre games on students’ learning attitudes? Which theatre game/s is/are well accepted by the students? How did the students react to the teacher’s instruction? What percentage of the students have participated enthusiastically in the learning and teaching process?

Theatre Games Performance Analysis	Learning Behaviour Analysis
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the students perform? • How did the teachers select theatre games? • How did the students perform in each theatre game? • How did the teacher evaluate the students’ performances? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How did the students regard each theatre game? • What is the effect of theatre games on students’ learning attitudes? • Which theatre game/s is/are well accepted by the students? • How much time did the students spend for each theatre game? • How did the students react to the teacher’s instruction? • What percentage of the students have participated enthusiastically in the learning and teaching process?

Table 2.0: Analysis of Low-Level Code and High-Level Code

Trustworthiness of Data

Qualitative research uses “trustworthiness” in replacement of “validity” that is used in quantitative research (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 277). Trustworthiness according to Lincoln and Guba (1985) includes four categories. The four categories are credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Denzin and Lincoln (2018: 61) stated that these four categories of trustworthiness “replace the usual positivist criteria of internal and

external validity, reliability, and objectivity”. The trustworthiness of data is important to ensure research is worth accepting in qualitative research. In this regard, one of the ways in searching for the richness of data is through the strategy of triangulation.

Triangulation

Abdalla, Oliveira, Azevedo, and Gonzalez (2018: 31) demarcated triangulation as a way “to look at the same phenomenon, or research topic, through

more than one source of data". This indicated that the using of different sources of information could validate the data from the research findings. Denzin and Lincoln (2018: 765) divided triangulation into four types, i.e. data, theoretical, researcher, and methodological. The data triangulation according to Lincoln (2018: 765) refers to "the combination of different data sources that are examined at different times, places, and persons" to attain a more detailed and rich account of the phenomena. Theory triangulation denotes "approaching data with multiple perspectives and hypotheses in mind... Various theoretical points of view could be placed side by side to assess their utility and power" (Denzin, 1978: 297 cited in Denzin & Lincoln, 2018: 765). Theories when combined will provide a better picture; add range, and depth to a study. While researcher triangulation refers to the use of observers and interviewers aimed at controlling and correcting the subjective individual bias. Whereas methodological triangulation adopted different methods of data collection.

This study adopted data triangulation and methodological triangulation. We chose data triangulation to ensure the trustworthiness of data and increase confidence in the findings of the study. The researchers attempted to ensure "a confluence of evidence that breeds credibility" (Eisner, 1991: 110). While the methodological triangulation includes document analysis in combination with the interview and non-participant observation. We used the information collected through various methods to substantiate findings based on the data collected. We were fully aware of the biases that may exist in a study and we undertook this methodological triangulation to reduce the biases. Apart from document analysis, this study includes interviews and non-participant observation.

RESULTS

Suitability of Integrating Theatre Games in the 21st-Century Learning and Teaching of Visual Art Education.

This study adopted an integrated approach to the learning and teaching of VAE. The integrated approach consisted of two areas, i.e. visual art, and theatre. This study used four techniques to explore the suitability of adopting an integrated approach. We selected the four techniques based on previous studies on theatre games. All the four techniques were *Improvisation*, *Atomic Exploding*, *Magic If*, and *Actor Toolbox*. Based on the teacher's Daily Teaching Plan (RPH), each of these techniques was tested. The test showed that each type of theatre game corresponded well with the learning and teaching activity. All theatre games that have been determined by the researchers, namely *Name Game*, *Splat Game*, *Zoom Game*, *Firing Line Game*, *Ice Breaking Game*, *Homes Game*, *Improvisation Game*, *Straw Castle Game* and *Line from a Hat Game* provided joy learning to the student participants. The teacher participant embedded each game in the RPH during the learning and teaching workshop. Based on the game and the level of active student involvement throughout the learning process, majority of student participants showed deep learning outcomes and could learn using the fun-learning approach.

Integrated Learning Methods Based Theatre Games in the Learning and Teaching of Visual Art Education for Lower Secondary Students

Researchers have made observations on the students' involvement during the learning and teaching workshop on the integration of Theatre Games in the learning and teaching of Visual Art Education. The teacher participant conducted the

workshop at the Student Lounge College Zaba. We observed the learning and teaching based on the Daily Lesson Plan that we had produced from the beginning until the end of the lesson. All students then reflected on each of the Daily Teaching Plan (RPH). Researchers also scrutinised each item of the RPH to check on the achievement of the learning objectives, content standards, time used for each learning phase, strategic approach, art perception, art exploration, and student acceptance level.

The findings of this integrated learning workshop indicated the adoption of a role-play approach while the teacher participant implemented the theatre games. The theatre games have generally achieved their own goals and objectives set before learning and teaching. Besides the achievement of the objectives, the theatre games approach has created joy among the students.

In this study, a substantial number of students have participated enthusiastically in the learning and teaching process. The factors influencing this enthusiasm were the teacher participant, the theatre games, and the students themselves. All of these factors complement each other. Without one of the factors, the integration of theatre games in the learning and teaching of visual art education at the lower secondary school level is doubtful. Based on the teacher's factor, findings showed that the teacher's preparation, implementation, and reflection was seen as pertinent to set up the whole teaching process. Teacher's understandings of the theatre games approach, the content of each game, the implementation of each game, the writing of RPH are rudimentary to the success of integrating the theatre games.

The findings also showed that the integration of theatre games requires not only performing a task or activity but also a reflection on learning which involves 'learning to think'. This is in line with Dewey (1938: 40), who states, "There must be a reason for thinking that they will function in generating an experience that has educative quality with particular individuals at a particular time". The purpose of thought is to accomplish a state of equilibrium, which enables a student to solve problems and to prepare them for further inquiry. Dewey suggested that children is able to optimise their learning if they are involved in the class. This is opposite to the traditional thinking that purported children are passive learners.

The integration of theatre games approach also indicated elements of creativity where students' were able to express their creative ideas freely. Learning took place when the students enjoyed the experience of freedom and teachers hardly interfered. Although teachers were an important source that inspired and facilitated creative and innovative students, but the learning happened because of the students. In this sense, teachers should use a creative approach to attract students to carry out activities together with other friends. The learning shifts between collaborative learning, role-play, problem-solving skills, and the practice of drama skills. The shifts were to enrich students' learning experiences and to create positive attitudes and enhancing subject competence. The activities become the basis for 21st-century skills and lifelong learning skills.

CONCLUSION

This study highlighted how secondary school teachers can use theatre games approach in their

learning and teaching of Visual Art Education. The results showed that with proper planning, the implementation of this approach would be beneficial for students. We can conclude that in integrating the theatre games in the learning and teaching of Visual Art Education, teachers can use various approaches. These various approaches will enable students to be active, engaged, and collaborative. Students will be able to improve their skills and solve problems during their learning process.

This study has resulted in a more engaging approach to learning among the students. The teacher should take pride in her effort to keep students immersed, eager and motivated throughout the lessons to ensure the learning and teaching come alive. The learning and teaching of Visual Art Education by integrating the theatre games requires teachers to devise a specific task or activity. This task or activity involves interactivity and thinking skills.

The theatre game approach is elemental as a platform to enable students working together as a group, solving problems and gain experiential learning. However, this approach is not widely adopted due to limitations of art teachers themselves. Among the limitations were lack of knowledge and skills in theatre game approach. The integration of theatre games approach will broaden attempts to improve learning and teaching. Although we believe that theatre game approach as one of the most recent approaches, teachers and administrators will take a long time to practise this approach widely. However, the strengths of this approach should be utilised. This theatre games approach is about “practices of and for teaching” (Gore et al., 2017: 111) and concerns for student’s authentic learning development.

Based on this theatre game approach, we managed to develop inquiring skills in the quest for solving problems. We provided students the opportunity to work together with their team members to enjoy and gain from the theatre games. The success of this project was due to our interventions that happened before, during, and after the learning and teaching process. The results provided a basis for further studies as an effort to gain long-term impact. Teachers and students can see the influence at various levels. They can also see ongoing or longer-term participation of teachers and students. We took into consideration the limitations posed by this theatre games approach as the basis to enhance students’ learning outcomes. This theatre game approach has great potential and benefits to the students. Properly enacted, the implementation of this theatre game approach across school settings is unavoidable.

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