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# Theatre in Education: Catalyst for Change

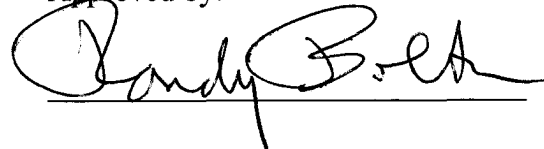
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Presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Arts  
The University of Montana  
July, 2002

Approved by:



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Chairperson



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Theatre in Education: Catalyst for change

Chairperson: Randy Bolton 

Over the last thirty years, Theatre in Education has significantly influenced pedagogy and today offers a new perspective in the fields of theatre and education. This paper describes the historical background, the functions and nature of Theatre in Education, as well as the following:

- 1) How Theatre in Education (TIE) has made its way as a new and active methodology in education. This paper will also describe the influence of Augusto Boal's techniques in TIE's work, especially two methodologies, Theatre and Forum Theatre.
- 2) The challenges TIE faces in its future as a viable art and education form in Taiwan and how to apply TIE as an educational tool to develop a catalytic art form specifically for teenagers in Taiwan.

## Acknowledgements

I would like to express my gratitude to the following people for their assistance in the preparation of this professional paper: Rachel Helvik and Carol Fickinger, for all of their patience and hard work as my editors, AB Peterson, Kundar Li, Desiree Twigg, the members of *Our Issues, Our Ideas, Our Input TIE performance troupe*, my family and students for their support and friendship, my advisor Randy Bolton who gives me total freedom to creative, and Jillian Campana as a great teacher and good friend who provided me with academic guidance and continuous encouragement.

Most especially, I would like to thank my mother for her unending love and support that has helped make my dream come true.

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## **THE IDEA OF THEATRE IN EDUCATION**

Theatre in Education (TIE) uses the imagination of theatre as a tool for educating.

The main goal of TIE is to offer creative learning opportunities through theatrical experiences. TIE practitioner, Tony Jackson, describes it as a “commitment to the exploration of theatre’s use as an educational medium, and to find ways of actively engaging the audience in the learning process” (“Introduction” 3). To achieve this goal, the TIE program uses organized teamwork, especially designed for children and young people, that involves schoolteachers curriculum, as well as actors.

A theatre form and methodology using a strong participatory element, TIE creates a direction for learning. Generally, the play presents identifiable situations about the leading character (protagonist), whose crisis needs to be resolved. The play evokes the students’ thought and discussion about the theme behind the protagonist’s dilemma and therefore, assists the students’ ability to recognize the issues involved. They also learn from assuming the character’s role and making problem-solving decisions that help the protagonist in the midst of a crisis. In TIE, students are responsible for their own learning, while actors and teachers assist in stimulating the students’ ideas by enhancing their ability with dealing with the change that was effected by the process; however, teachers do not try to influence students’ decisions.

When TIE was first introduced in England, in 1965, it focused on reforming the curriculum to gradually become more flexible in content and subject matter. In addition to dealing with academic subjects, TIE has also been concerned with personal, political and social issues, such as self-identity, health problems, racial awareness, alcoholism, drug addiction, and physical abuse. Although the subjects of TIE are wide-ranging, this

paper focuses on TIE's social concerns as it presents various issues in a theatrical form in search of an alternative learning experience.

One example of how TIE addresses social issues is the anti-bullying program, "*From Zero to Hero*," developed by *Our Issues, Our Ideas, Our Input* (a TIE performance troupe based at the University of Montana). This TIE company presents four open-ended scenes for elementary students to observe and then it asks for suggestions on how the actors might modify their actions. This interactive learning process enhances the students' awareness of bullying behavior and integrates the individual child's creative imagination in the performance.

TIE subject matter should be carefully chosen. According to TIE director David Pammenter, "it requires a rich imagination on the part of the deviser or writer to find a structure and form, a style of presentation and performance that will engage and involve the audience or participants"(61). Thus, the chosen content should have a theatrical, dramatic potential, along with an element of entertainment in order to stimulate interest, thought and learning. Further, it should challenge students, through the use of a dramatic experience, to make critical decisions through the play's characters, and encourage them to apply those decisions to their real life.

A typical TIE company consists of playwrights, directors, designers and actor-teachers who work in collaboration with both the schoolteacher and students. The actor-teacher is the core person, functioning not only as an actor presenting the play but also as a teacher leading the learning process. Brazilian social and theatrical reformer Augusto Boal claims that the actor-teacher "must be dialectical, must know how to give and take, how to hold back and lead on, how to be creative" (*Games for Actors and*

*Non-Actors* 237). The actor-teacher does not simply help the participants fill the role of the protagonist, but must also present questions and difficulties. In addition, the actor-teacher keeps the audience's attention by stimulating their ideas, and encouraging them to contemplate the dilemma and find original solutions.

The TIE company begins the process with an introduction of the program for schoolteachers whose classes will be involved in the project. This enables the schoolteacher to become acquainted with the topic, preparing her/him for the subsequent workshop. Jackson emphasizes that the purpose of this is "to explain fully the aim and method of the project and present an opportunity for discussion of the teacher's role" ("Introduction" 5). During this introduction, the company explains its goal and strategy, while offering its designed project package to the schoolteacher. The project package includes a pre-lesson plan and related materials, which offer research and advice. The pre-lesson plan gives a vision of and introduction to the educational objectives, promotes participants' interests in the subject, and provides step-by-step instructions for the schoolteacher.

After an exchange of ideas and suggestions between the teacher and the TIE company, the schoolteacher brings the project package to the classroom and implements the pre-lesson plan to the class. For example, the purpose of the pre-lesson plan in "*From Zero to Hero*," is to foster an understanding of bullying as well as to encourage the use of effective resolutions. Each TIE troupe is unique, however, in its use of the pre-lesson plan. *Our Issues, Our Ideas, Our Input* TIE troupe divides this pre-lesson plan into three parts of the activity: the "intro," "through" and "beyond." In the "intro" activity, the schoolteacher introduces and leads the students in a brainstorming

activity on the characteristics of the three terms: “The Bully,” “The Victim,” and “The Hero.” At the beginning of the “through” activity, the entire class watches a video filmed by the TIE company which shows four different situations that take place in the playground, cafeteria, bus, and home. The victims in the film, those who are constantly being bullied, will later visit the class and ask for possible solutions to the situation. Following the presentation, the students are asked to identify the bully, victim, and hero from each scenario. Next, the schoolteacher presents and helps the class memorize the four rules from the “Bully Buster Task Force Heroic Four” poster: “Be Cool (be calm),” “Look the Look (be assured),” “Stand Your Ground (be firm),” and “Leave (walk away).”

These rules provide simple principles to help victims become heroes by encouraging them to stand up for themselves. The “beyond” activity involves having the students break up into four groups (one for each situation in the video). Later, when the TIE group visits the class, these groups concentrate on and work with the TIE company during the workshop.

Following the pre-lesson plan, the TIE company visits the class and presents the interactive workshop, which serves as a vital activity in the TIE program. The workshop involves the participants in a theatrical and provocative exercise or play. In this part of the process, the theme is promoted in depth by having the participants use their new knowledge and information to assume the roles of the characters in order to argue with others, challenge the characters, and test the resolution on the stage.

Although there are many dramatic techniques currently used in interactive workshop, this paper will focus on only two of them: Image Theatre and Forum Theatre.

Image Theatre uses the participant’s body sculpture and tableaux to express feelings and

thoughts, whereas, Forum Theatre presents an unsolved problem in a fully-scripted play. The spectators are encouraged to take over characters' roles or give suggestions to change identifiable problems.

The TIE program is a long-term learning plan that does not end in the interactive workshop. Because the workshop strengthens the participants' motivations for learning, they are more apt to discuss more details and gain more knowledge of the subject. After the TIE company's visit, the students receive supplements from the schoolteacher through a subsequent curriculum. A final evaluation from both the schoolteacher and students is intended to reflect on the learning process. Collecting the feedback from the teacher and students helps the TIE team to design the next project or program.

The TIE learning experience is a creative activity because of its imaginative and flexible form. As Brian Roberts mentions in *Echoes of the Surging Tide: The Theory and Practice of TIE*, "Theatre in Education changed that teacherly element of mainstream theatre to an emphasis on positively creating learning opportunities through the medium of theatre"(9). In addition, theatrical and artistic demands make TIE watchable since, with its unique features, TIE is able to invite participants into a learning process where they experience various scenarios that later serves as a rehearsal for real life.

## **Two TIE Techniques: Image Theatre and Forum Theatre**

TIE offers a live and immediate communication between the performer and participants. Part of its success can be attributed to the development of many useful theatre games and techniques. Image Theatre and Forum Theatre are two productive theatrical techniques because they require audience participation, which conforms to the principles of TIE.

### **Image Theatre**

In Image Theatre, participants attempt to eradicate restricting stereotypes by utilizing inner and deeper reflections through a series of body movements. The participants express thoughts and feelings by freezing their bodies and creating imagery and using their bodies as “clay,” which “synthesizes the individual connotation and the collective denotation” (*Theater of the Oppressed* 138). The group or the person is asked to use her/his body to make a “sculpture,” or to “sculpt” another person’s body for the idea or event. “Sculpting” is directed physically, not verbally, and uses body and facial suggestions to “sculpt.” The student who directed the sculpting may demonstrate the gesture first for the actor to imitate. The personal or group sculptures deliver concrete evidence of the student director’s abstract thoughts without any interruption of verbal expression. The TIE company then helps the audience explore the meaning behind the tableau through discussion. During this discussion, the participants create three kinds of images: the “actual image,” “ideal image,” and “transitional image.” An “actual image” reflects each of the actor’s impressions from real life. After making an “actual image,” the others may become involved and collaborate on the “ideal image” which is

the best or “dream” image produced by the group. The “transitional image” evolves as a conversion from the “actual image” to an “ideal image” by a series of frozen gestures. Through the process of observing the progression from reality to idealization, participants are able to overcome the obstacle of the language idiom, in addition to discovering the core of the theme in depth.

The following is an example of Image Theatre by college students. At the University of Montana, in Missoula, Montana, the students in the Spring 2002 Acting for non-majors class were asked to show two images: one in the present and another ten years in the future. In the first image, these college students, most of them freshmen between the ages of nineteen and twenty-five, depicted absent-minded, dreaming, sensual and confused personalities. Some of them created individual sculptures, while others sculpted group images (inspired by what might take place in the classroom or at parties). Those in the group “sculpture” stood apart from the others. Party images were often of tipsy, out-of-control, or even unconscious students; whereas, images in the classroom showed inattentive and bored students, with the teacher exhibiting an indifferent, isolated attitude.

In this same project, the second images of ten years in the future depicted joy, peace and hope for the future. The “sculptures” also exhibited collective behavior, such as standing in concentric circles or holding hands. Image Theatre emerged as these young people, with great ability and tremendous potential, dream of a better future while still struggling with confusion about their present situations. They appeared somewhat mature, but because they were at the crossroads of adulthood, they were still looking for answers and help.

After making these two images, the students were asked to transform from their present images into future images. In order to do this, they have to find a way to connect these two images by using a series of frozen poses. Through the Image Theatre, the students could not only express and reveal each participant's feelings, ideas, attitudes, experiences and opinions, but also learn the transition from reality to ideal through their physical experience.

At the 2001 Lai-He Taiwanese Literature College Students Summer Camp, Taiwanese college students from nineteen to twenty-five years of age were asked to perform the same exercise. Generally, they pictured college life in a similar way as the students at the University of Montana. They also created future images that reflected the same emotions as the students in Montana, with aimlessness and confusion and dissatisfaction for school education being the main ideas in both "sculptures." The Taiwanese students, however, did express more interest in Internet activity rather than party behavior. They were also similar to the students from the University of Montana in their interest for making physical process between present and future.

Image Theatre offers a unique visual opportunity to explore various problems. Furthermore, it provides a hands-on way of challenging and changing the situation (*Games for Actors and Non-Actors* 2-3). The participants halt the action or position to stimulate deeper investigation, discussion and reflection. Aware of the sensation of transition from "actual" to "ideal," the audience is reminded that they have ability to challenge reality by physically changing it. Image Theatre can therefore be used as an overture in TIE program and is an excellent preparation for Forum Theatre.



## **Forum Theatre**

TIE often attempts to use the artistic medium of drama to imitate specific situations and problems of everyday life, and to gain knowledge by experimenting with various solutions to those problems. As one of the major TIE resources and techniques for achieving this goal, Forum Theatre allows a spectator to assume a role or to offer suggestions for either changing the dilemma or ending it. This theatrical form breaks down boundaries and establishes a relationship between the actors and the audience.

In order for participants to understand and focus on the subject or dilemma, Forum Theatre begins with a play that presents the real problem of a protagonist. After presenting the play, the “joker” appears as the key figure who leads the participants in a discussion about the protagonist’s situation and explores possible solutions. The joker functions as an intermediary between the actors and the audience by creating various possibilities within the forum. She/he encourages and invites participation by changing the action of real life difficulties presented in the production, and then the play starts over again. A participant shouts “freeze” at any moment and takes the protagonist’s role to change the action. When the spectators act out their solution, an invisible wall (the “fourth wall,” through which the audience looks at the other three walls of a room) then disappears. Consequently, this boundary between actors and audience, illusion and reality, no longer exists. A Forum Theatre deconstructs this fourth wall, it transforms an audience into “spect-actors”: an audience that participates as actors and even changes the action of the scene (*Theatre of The Oppressed* 154-155).

In Forum Theatre, any change in action is based on the decisions of “spect-actors.” The joker teaches the “spect-actors” rules and how to use them, but

avoids conducting and influencing the audience. The joker also presides over the process to aid the “spect-actors” in exploring and discovering the depth and width of their thoughts and potential solutions about the crisis. Because it crosses the boundary from simply watching into actually doing, Forum Theatre creates the opportunity for an intensive action to be a rehearsal for reality since “spect-actors” are able to experience a variety of scenarios before facing the same or similar situations later on in life.

“*J’s House*,” presented by *Our Issues, Our Ideas, Our Input*, is an example of Forum Theatre where an action is changed by the intervention of various young spect-actors in Willard Alternative High School in Missoula, Montana. These students have not experienced success in traditional high school settings, and for this reason, are in the habit of facing life negatively. This Forum Theatre lesson attempted to enhance these students’ interest in learning, improve their self-confidence, and encourage self-expression by giving them the power to change various actions on stage.

In *J’s House*, the scenario is based on a true story from one of the actor-teachers of the TIE group. J is a high school student whose relationship with his mother is rather strained. He wants to be treated like an adult, but still behaves like an immature student by refusing to tell his mother what he does. In the forum play, his mother is anxiously awaiting his arrival since he has not come home yet. She is so upset over his lack of respect for her that she finally decides to evict him from her house in order to teach him a lesson. With this scenario as background, the following scene is then acted out for the students.

Action One: The scene takes place in the house of J’s mother. J’s mother tells the

audience that this is not the first time J was late getting home without letting her know. She is so furious at his irresponsibility that she begins throwing all of J's belongings out of the house.

Action Two: J enters. He tells the audience that he is old enough to do anything he wants but his mother always treats him like a child. For this reason, he feels as if he can barely communicate with his mother. He comes home and looks for his keys but cannot find them, so he goes to the front door only to discover that his belongings are on the ground. Because the front door is locked, he screams at his mother to let him in, but there is no reply.

Action Three: J starts banging on the door and trying to break in, while still yelling at his mother. She finally screams back at him that he is not welcome in her house ever again.

Action Four: J picks up a few of his things only to throw them back on the ground. The scene ends when he leaves for his friend's house.

After this scene is played out, the Willard's spect-actors are encouraged to offer suggestions and act out their proposed solutions as a kind of rehearsal for reality. *J's House* garnered many responses from the audience. A lot of spect-actors applauded and clamored when J left home. They recognized and appreciated his action against the authoritative parent. The spect-actors started to think about solutions after J experienced regret. He shared that although he had slept on his friend's couch for one week, he was cold and hungry. At first, the spect-actors tried to solve this problem with aggressive responses including yelling, threatening, crying, kicking, and throwing things. After

these solutions failed, one of the spect-actors started to communicate by trying to comfort the angry and upset mother and explain the reason for her son's tardiness. He begged her to talk to him again. She then opened the door and started to talk with him. After the Forum Theatre presentation, one boy was pleased to tell us that he had left home and lived alone for six months. He admitted that he preferred living with his family now, because he and his mother had learned to give each other respect and space.

Here is another example in Forum Theatre. Instead of the play being created by a TIE company, the audience is asked to vote for the topic they wish to discuss. After deciding on the topic, they choose the most interesting scenario from one of the audience's true stories. The choice of scenario is based on all of the audience's concerns and must be thoroughly discussed. Either "actor-teachers" or the "spect-actors" help present the story. The narrator chooses to either play the role of a protagonist or an observer. The following is an example from Da-Gang Motherhood Storytelling Group in Summer 2001 in Tainan, Taiwan:

Da-Gang Motherhood Storytelling Group is a non-profit volunteer organization. The members are the mothers of students at Da-Gang Elementary School. Most of them have careers but wish to use their leisure time to assist teachers by contributing to weekly storytelling or by acting as school crossing guards. Their attempts, however, frequently result in stress on both family and career. They struggle with the traditional stereotype that married women should focus only on family, avoiding personal or social activities. For this reason, their personal desires and family pressures seldom gain a healthy balance. Unfortunately, they seldom find a way to discuss their difficulties. Through Forum Theatre, they have a channel to share their experiences and release the pressure or gain

some suggestions from others. “Lan’s Son” is a forum play based on a true story and presenting by Da-Gang Motherhood Storytelling Group.

In *Lan’s Son*, the scenario centers on Lan, who is a successful professional trying to maintain a balance between her family life and demanding career. Her efforts barely gain her husband’s appreciation and always result in complaints from her sons. The following forum scene is after acted out for the students:

Action One: The scene takes place in Lan’s house. Enter Lan. She tells the audience that upon returning home from a long day of work she is exhausted and wishes her husband would take care of their sons so that she can get some rest. Her oldest son is in sixth grade and asks her to help him complete study questions for a mid-term test. She tells him to answer the questions from a study companion first, and then she will help him correct the wrong answers. The son leaves unhappily.

Action Two: After two hours Lan discovers that her son has not studied for his test, so she asks why, only to receive no response. Because it is bedtime, she knows that his getting to bed late will make him more tired the next morning. Their argument makes her even more angry and impatient. Finally, she tries to be calm and agrees to watch him do the assignment.

Action Three: Lan’s son requests that she search for some more information on the Internet for him. At first, she refuses but then concedes. Although she knows the child is sleepy, he still insists on studying with her. After a while, he agrees to get up early and finish the reviews with his mother before leaving for school.

Action Four: Lan fails to wake the child up the next morning. The child starts crying

and complaining that he could not finish the review because of it. Lan's husband awakes to find them fighting but does not help to resolve the situation. His disregard for and dismissal of the situation intensifies Lan's anger and frustration. The scene ends with Lan complaining to her husband.

*Lan's Son* gained a huge response, with every spect-actor eager to be involved in the topic. They all chose to work on the relationship between the mother and the child, but were less interested in changing or challenging the husband's attitude. The real Lan voluntarily played the part of her son but did not find a satisfactory resolution no matter how strict the lecture or how patient the reaction from other experienced mothers. After the forum, Lan shared with other group members that by playing the role of her son, she recognized what her son's needs were and understood that he tries to gain more attention from her by behaving unreasonably. A better way to change the situation would be to work on this specific event rather than train the child to be more independent. She should help her son better understand the details of her job and know that she is always concerned about him.

Forum Theatre offers a flexible circumstance that deals with unsettled issues. Through Forum Theatre, real life situations are presented on the stage and participants use their creativity and imagination to solve the dilemma. The protagonist also observes various possibilities for her/his difficulty. As Boal said, "Let them create it first in the theatre, in fiction, to be better prepared to create it outside afterwards, for real" (*Theater of the Oppressed* 23). They may not immediately get suitable answers, but the learning experiences will offer various possibilities for them in the future.

## **TIE in the past**

The Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, England, in 1965, began the first TIE project, including a performance and drama workshop presented by a unit of four actor-teachers. Collaboration and funding were provided by the participating schools and the city. In the very early stage, TIE with its pedagogic concern used theatrical and educational resources for social change. It developed a stimulating, participatory and communicational forum to practice decision-making, and insisted on a small class size for good rapport. These features separated TIE from conventional children's theatre, which was simply a venue for entertainment, by combining theatre and education into a new success. It soon spread to other areas in Britain. At that time, there were two main sources of funding, the Art Council and local education authorities, which helped the pioneering companies establish the foundation of TIE ("Education or Theatre" 18-22; Pammenter 54-55). Up until 1970, TIE companies had been more concerned about social issues, with many of them perceiving their social responsibility as offering ideas for social change. During the 1970's, TIE expanded and many companies abandoned their attachment to a main theatre, choosing rather to be non-profit and often taking on charity status ("Education or Theatre" 22).

From 1980 to 1990, there was a crisis in TIE in Britain because of the change of pedagogic policy. A new National Curriculum, under the Education Reform Act of 1988, emphasized three core subjects (English, math and science) and ten foundation subjects, including art and music. Drama was considered to be neither part of the core or foundation subjects. This policy shifted the emphasis of education to vocational training rather than arts appreciation and development. Local Management of Schools deprived

TIE of financial resources and control. Because the decline of public funding threatened TIE companies, they began to suffer under external pressure. Moreover, internal pressure, such as dissatisfaction with the methods for licit audience participation created even more challenges. Fortunately, this kind of pressure promoted and stimulated companies to find different solutions by switching from a crisis mode to a turning point. The surviving TIE companies became more challenged to achieve excellent work by using less personnel, time and a lower budget.

Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre and Image Theatre were introduced just in time to make up for deficiencies in the methods of participation. In 1982, the British TIE company, Greenwich Young People's Theatre (GYPT), first applied and integrated Boal's techniques into its program. The methodology of vibrant interaction and an alternative forum inspired of TIE works, and then spread quickly throughout the rest of England. In the 1990s, in order to overcome difficult financial struggles, many TIE companies sought other resources outside of authority funding, and even outside the school systems. They collaborated with such groups as Health Education Council and National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty ("Education or Theatre" 30-31).

Until recently, TIE has influenced mostly English-speaking countries such as Australia, America and Canada. Today, TIE in Britain does not follow the same simple path as at the beginning, but is still expanding in new directions. Other TIE companies around the world have their roots in the British TIE movement but have created their appropriate adaptations. For example, the American professional educational theatre company, The Creative Arts Team, based in New York City, adopted its philosophy and methodologies from TIE in Britain, but translated them into an applicable form for the



U.S. educational system. Although some programs do not go by the TIE's name, TIE techniques have spread all over the world.

## **TIE IN TAIWAN**

### **The Beginning**

TIE was formally introduced in Taiwan in 1992 at a conference of Educational Theatre in Taipei presented by Lowell and Nancy Swortzell, professors in the Educational Theatre Department at New York University. Through five lectures, they introduced the development, history, techniques, and productions of TIE. These speakers led the members of the conference in creating and producing a play surrounding the issue of drug use in young people.

After this conference, three national teacher-training institutions, National Taipei Teacher College, National Changhua University of Education, and National Taiwan Normal University, started a few short-term classes about TIE. Outside of the academic system, there were only a few classes and workshops that focused on teaching techniques. These workshops were intermittently hosted by several private theatre troupes and were not organized as a part of a long-term program. In addition, these events were centered only in the capital city; thus, the influence in Taiwan was not wide spread. Although people gradually became interested in the general ideas of TIE, the definition and idea were still very vague. For instance, educational theatre and Theatre in Education, denote two different concepts in English, they actually have the same Mandarin translation (Cheng, 60).

In 1998, Greenwich and Lewisham's Young Peoples Theatre (GYPT) and Tainan Jen Theatre Troupe collaborated on the Green Tide project. Because this was the first time a professional foreign TIE theatre troupe hosted a workshop and presentation in Taiwan, it has an important historical significance. This inter-cultural exchange

retranslated and refined the definition of theatre-in-education, separating it from educational theatre. It launched an organized movement of TIE outside the capital of Taipei, and, compared to previous TIE activities, Green Tide gained great success because of its experience and professionalism. It also stimulated interest in theatre troupes and theatre workers. TIE became a common practice; several productions and workshops now use the idea, or at least the title.

Following is one of the examples of TIE's practice in Taiwan. On September 21, 1999, Taiwan suffered an unprecedented, catastrophic earthquake. Afterwards, many groups of people contributed to relief of the victims of the disaster. One particular group that responded, the Mission Theatre Troupe built a workshop, and recruited mothers from the Shi-Gang disaster community. This workshop used ideas of Forum Theatre and Image Theatre to help community members relieve some sadness and fear due to this tragedy. In addition to fostering relationships with the victims, the workshop helped transform this disaster into a positive personal and community reconstruction, and now these mothers have organized their own community theatre troupe, *Shi-Gang Motherhood Theatre Troupe*, to discuss and publicize common interests and events. Their short-term goals involved restoring an historical ancestral shrine and re-starting sales of pears, the main economic income in Shi-Gang before the earthquake. Because of their theatrical experience, they have developed a stronger self-awareness that has motivated them to rebuild their community and has invoked a new enthusiasm for life (Cheng, 148-156). This case shows the potential of applying TIE as a social, as well as educational, practice in Taiwan.

## **The Challenges TIE Faces Today**

Although TIE was first introduced in Taiwan ten years ago, it is still a relatively new concept for the educational system. In spreading TIE into the Taiwanese educational system and society, its champions several challenges. One is misunderstanding. Many people are in the habit of cataloging TIE with school theatre, drama in theatre, educational drama, or any theatre productions that present certain social issues for children or young people. This misunderstanding exists not only for the audience but also for the people who produce the TIE program and often causes theatre troupes to simplify their techniques or purpose.

Today, TIE is a progressive movement in both theatre and education. Education in Taiwan is very exam-oriented, the purpose of learning emphasizes the result and not the process. Due to this cultural influence, those so-called “TIE” programs often mix educational elements into a play, while still attempting to give the audience the “right” answer, displaying a patronizing attitude toward the audience that makes TIE’s appearance inflexible. Besides, some theatre troupes do not fully understand the features and spirit of TIE, because they perceive it as more of a children’s theatre or general educational theatre. Some theatre troupes merely use TIE as an easy option to establish or find funding. This ignorance misrepresents the purpose of TIE and reduces the extent of its possibilities.

Stable funding is essential for a TIE program’s success. Though the most productive use of TIE is to work with a small audience group, smaller groups are not very cost-effective. A common misinterpretation of TIE is that it is simple and rough in its form and thus not in need of money for its production. In fact to keep its effective

interaction, TIE needs to be delicately designed to attract and stimulate the sensations and thoughts of the audience. For these reasons, it is very difficult for TIE troupes to maintain a stable and external source of funding.

Unfortunately, underfunding restrains the development of TIE in Taiwan. Artistic funding from the Taiwanese authority is based on individual case-by-case project applications, but most theatre troupes barely survive on this type of funding. The audience's involvement and interaction is essential in the TIE program. To achieve maximum efficiency and gain good audience rapport, the ideal number of participants should be less than thirty; however, very little is gained through box office receipts from such a small group programs. Without any guarantee of long-term financial stability and support, TIE troupes find it very difficult to construct a healthy foundation and to do further planning. Regrettably, the Taiwanese authority seems reluctant to make any promises for a new emphasis on any type of educational art.

The scarcity of actor-teachers is another issue. In "Playwriting for TIE", Jim Mirrione advocates that TIE's play should "write about a pressing problem that will bring about a change of consciousness in an audience"(81). An actor-teacher is a key figure who suggests to the audience that they can change the action. The actor-teacher performs a hybrid craft between theatre and pedagogy. Cora Williams, in "The Theatre in Education Actor," refers to three criteria for employing TIE actors: craft skills, the company member factor, and special qualities of artistry. Craft skills refer to an actor's acting ability, whereas the company member factor reflects the individual's understanding of TIE and the ability to engage with it. Special qualities of artistry include awareness and practice of educational effects through theatre form (95).

As previously mentioned, specialty TIE courses are seldom found in higher education in Taiwan except in a few institutions. In education departments, training in acting is obviously scanty, and ignored in most curricula. Also, dramatic institutes are usually indifferent to and ignorant of teaching practices. As a result, theatre companies often find it difficult to locate an appropriate TIE actor, and they cannot afford and do not know how to train actor-teachers in TIE techniques. In addition, the financial budget of most companies cannot provide for a full-time position to attract professional actors. This is a vicious circle that renders the situation even more difficult and discouraging.

The development of TIE in Taiwan, unlike Britain, did not gain much attention or financial support from local authorities during its early period. Some theatre companies became gradually enthusiastic about this new theatre form, but its practice was doomed by the scarcity of budget and personnel. Even today, confusion about its definition and lack of a positive spirit weaken its potential. For this reason, spreading the idea and training personnel are two very important things to focus on. Support from the educational authority is also a necessary propulsive force for the promotion of TIE. If people were more concerned about this unique educational and theatrical movement, both innate and acquired social and educational deficiencies could be overcome and therefore, it is worthy of the effort.

## **The Future: TIE as a Practice for Teenagers**

Through my experiences, studies, and involvement in both theater and the field of education, I have become especially interested in the use of TIE techniques as a way of enhancing the education of teenagers in Taiwan. The Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget suggests that the development of knowledge is a process of adaptation between the structure of the mind and the exterior environment (Teng). For this reason, education should not only deliver information, but also create a suitable learning process through which students can piece together the ideas and gain the knowledge for themselves. Unfortunately, over the past forty years, education in Taiwan has been very exam-oriented, particularly for the teenager. Learning becomes an unenlivened experience because the students are under extreme competitive pressure due to joint entrance exams for high school and university. In order to help students pass the difficult exams, the teacher tends to encourage memorization techniques rather than encouraging an analytical approach. Education is molded to a frame of uniform specifications and mass production.

In an exam-oriented education, the students are pushed to pursue a “correct” way to answer the questions. Their creativity is suppressed and their thought process becomes narrower and more unitary. Thus the students gradually lose natural creative and imagination. I witnessed this trend with a student I taught in high school. This student, who was vivid and optimistic, told me he was afraid to write compositions anymore because he received an E (which is the low end of the spectrum in the Taiwanese grading system) for his Chinese composition entitled “The Bridge and the Wall.” This was surprising because he had always had been exceptionally bright in my theatre class.

The reason for his low grade was that his teacher was not satisfied with his ideas about the article. Narrow-mindedly, she suggested to her students that to obtain a higher grade, they define the title using her own point of view. To encourage my student, I used Image Theatre in my class.

At the beginning, the students were divided into a small group to devise a three-minute story about the same title as the composition. Due to the nature of Chinese characters, one word has many different meanings, so it is easy to misunderstand words unless they are written down. For this reason, the students presented many different stories. The interesting thing is that very few groups could guess the exact title. The student who had failed in this composition exhibited a magical imagination with many unusual ideas that were inspired by his classmates. Afterward, I guided the students to make the “actual image,” which is the real life impression and the “ideal image” of the title “The Bridge and the Wall,” showing the possible transition between the real and ideal images. Finally, I encouraged them to share their thoughts from their own life experiences relating to this title and then the entire class chose the most agreeable experience to act out. After the class, the young man told me that he really appreciated what I did for the class because he felt the lesson had salvaged his ideas and imagination as well as his self-esteem.

TIE is a useful methodology for working with teenagers because it offers an unpressured and free environment in which they can express themselves and explore the issues presented. The learning process as a play experience releases them from hesitation and embarrassment. Besides, TIE encourages students to express their own opinions through the art form of drama without judging an answer right or wrong. This



kind of study experience enhances the student's motivation for learning. After having been in my theatre class for one year, one of the students shared that trying to change an action in Forum Theatre is like practicing to shoot a basketball: it takes practice in order to succeed. He said that the greatest satisfaction comes from this hands-on process that combines self-challenge and learning and teaches peers to persevere until they hit the target. This case illustrates how TIE can break down the passive acceptance of information and teach the individual to rely on his/ her own intelligence. In short, TIE encourages each student to cultivate his or her personal potential to gain knowledge.

TIE gives teenagers an opportunity to place themselves in others' positions and use different concepts to observe the world. In my drama class, I designed a TIE program, which relates to the gap between teenagers and parents. At the beginning, they complained and competitively showed how difficult it was to communicate with their parents. Finally, they gained knowledge of different aspects and thoughts for their scene by taking other people's roles, especially their parents, and observing the forum. Most students showed interest in discussing this subject in theatrical form. They gained great responses by seeing the world through the eyes of others and learned to appreciate the different opinions presented.

Through the presentation of a play, TIE addresses subject matter from a holistic point of view, so it is able to explore complicated issues, such as health issues (HIV, AIDS), racial awareness, and family abuse in more depth and width than a simple lecture. Also, the teenager develops an attitude where she/he wants to confront the difficulty, while at the same time maintaining respect for others and appreciation for the various aspects of the TIE experience. This is significantly lacking in the Taiwanese educational

system.

Applying TIE as an educational tool for teenagers in Taiwan depends first of all, on stimulating educators' interest in this methodology. Besides academic institutes, it is necessary to host TIE conferences and workshops throughout in Taiwan. The TIE company and the educational authority must also pursue building strong and interactive links between education, theatre and society. A successful TIE program achieves its laudable and credible aim with follow-up collaboration between schools and communities.

It is also essential for a TIE program to have resources from teacher, school, and society in order to effectively develop a creative learning experience.

Step by step, TIE can help enhance and assist the curriculum while helping the teachers and students become more acquainted with its methodology. This creative pedagogy can enliven Taiwanese teenager education and give birth to increasingly flexible learning methods. Later, TIE can focus on specific subject matter, broadening the study area and deepening the learning effect. Then Taiwanese teenagers will be able to extend and apply their unique ideas later in life by exploring various social issues that have the potential for changing society for the better.

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