

# Active learning

Investigating the application of participatory theatre approaches as a model of effective practice

Rajni Kumrai, Jane Hoy and Vipin Chauhan



**Using participatory theatre approaches to develop learning resources.  
Helping learners resolve challenging situations.  
Does this approach increase transferability of learning to practice?**

## Our aim

We wanted to explore the potential of action learning for empowering learners to explore solutions to workplace challenges, particularly related to power and oppression, through creative dialogue, and to transfer their learning to work-based environments.

The project participants were part-time mature learners on youth and community professional qualifying courses studying at undergraduate level.

## Participatory theatre

Two experiential workshops using approaches derived from the work of Augusto Boal in Forum Theatre were delivered, reflecting issues which learners encountered in their workplace. The focus for scenarios was 'team work' and 'leadership'. Reflection in action was key. The workshops were followed by in-depth interviews to further develop critical reflection.

*“It was very participatory – it was very get up and go – there was no sitting about and being talked at.”*



*“It brought everything to life in terms of other people’s environments in terms of what they did and challenges they face.”*

The workshops involved:

**Sociometric games** – to stimulate interest in each others’ experiences, deepen communication skills, honour individual experience and develop connections between group participants.

**‘Gamesercises’** – structured movements to encourage a deeper understanding and awareness of how we use our bodies and the relationship between our bodies and others.

**Building scenarios** – based on participants’ individual workplace challenges, using Boal’s approach to share experiences and explore alternative actions and strategies.

**Reflection** – participants shared reflections on their experience and perceptions, assisting in the transfer of learning to practice.

## Emerging themes

Participatory theatre approaches enable learners to:

- develop as reflective practitioners
- enact solutions to work-based challenges
- develop skills to promote equalities in the workplace
- explore group dynamics and create spaces where power is shared
- engage in dynamic learning and sharing of practice
- extend professional development
- nurture positive relationships between the learning environment and the workplace.

Find out more about this project and the Practice-based Professional Learning CETL at our web site: [www.open.ac.uk/pbpl/](http://www.open.ac.uk/pbpl/)

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