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THEATRE, LIFE SKILLS AND PARTICIPATORY LEARNING

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Abstract

This article describes and evaluates the educational work being undertaken by Students Partnership Worldwide (SPW) which is an international organisation specialising in life skills education to school children in rural areas. The article examines theatre-related programmes in which the organisation makes use of theatre as an instrument to teach life skills. Special emphasis is focused on "Albatross", a play which was performed in 2003.

The arguments presented in this article are based on theories of learning which recognise the resources of the learner and that these should be fully utilised so that the learner is an active meaning-maker in the learning experience. Related theories which are explored in this paper include Paulo Freire's Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and Bertolt Brecht's Epic Theatre. The advantage of theatre is that it can stimulate both cognitive and aesthetic forms of learning which are both social and sociable. In view of this realisation, the authors acknowledge the educational benefits which were realised in the "Albatross" play. However, the article proffers recommendations on how the programme could be strengthened organisationally, artistically, methodologically and theoretically. These recommendations are based on the assumption that this programme could be used as one of the strategies to foster the growth and development of a critical pedagogy which seems to be lacking in the conventional curriculum. Perhaps the idea of using theatre as a tool for instruction, transmission of knowledge and above all as an instrument for stimulating creative and critical learning has not yet received the kind of attention that it deserves.

Introduction

This article describes and analyses the work undertaken by an organization called Students' Partnership worldwide (SPW) in conjunction with the Ministry

of Education, Sport and Culture in Zimbabwe. The programme seeks to equip adolescents with basic life skills which in this study is considered to be an important need in the education of young people. The study focuses mainly on one case study, the "Albatross" play which was performed at Saint Annes Goto in Hwedza on 23 August 2003. This project is evaluated within the context of the use of theatre as both a learning process and a methodology. The major argument presented by advocates of theatre as both a learning process and teaching methodology is that it engenders a holistic and participatory learning environment. This is the basis upon which the work of Students' Partnership Worldwide (SPW) is being evaluated using various theories and concepts in participatory learning.

The Work of SPW: Brief Background

Students' Partnership Worldwide is a non-governmental organisation which in Zimbabwe started in rural Mashonaland East Province in 1985. The organisation is also based in five other countries namely, India, Uganda, Nepal, Tanzania and South Africa. Currently in Zimbabwe the organisation is based in Mutare and it operates in Chimanimani, Buhera, Chivhu, Makoni, Gutu, Zaka and Matebeland South Districts.

In the early eighties British volunteers used to partner with local volunteers and go into rural primary and secondary schools where they would teach subjects in the conventional curriculum. However, when government had trained enough teachers, the organisation shifted from the conventional curriculum to a life skills programme. This new programme was based on volunteer peer education using non-conventional teaching methods and training pupils in the arts.

SPW peer educators are recruited on a voluntary basis with a bias towards those who are talented in the arts. After the selection, the next step is training which makes use of basic theatre skills and processes. They are trained in acting, and the use of drama in creating participatory and engaging lessons. After training the volunteers are deployed to various placements where they are expected to live and work for two school terms. Their lessons are scheduled according to the normal timetable and this means each lesson is about thirty five minutes long.

The Range of Life Skills in SPW

For the purposes of this paper, Life Skills refers to the abilities or expertise that is needed to enhance and enrich social, cultural and economic engagements and practices. Life skills can be defined in many ways, but they are found in two broad categories, namely, vocational skills and skills related to behaviour and interaction. Vocational skills are related to employment and they include physical and technical skills such as riding a bicycle, electrical work, sewing and carpentry. Skills related to behaviour and interactions are social in nature. These skills are based on what adolescents do with the knowledge they receive.

Social skills related to behaviour and interaction can further be divided into the following two categories:

- the development of one's interpersonal relationship with others, for example, communication development;
- the development of creative and critical thinking in order to make appropriate decisions and solve problems, for example, in gender issues, and child abuse.

The first category has to do with effective communication skills including interacting with people, knowing how to react appropriately, negotiating and the ability to assist others in negotiating. Child drama experts have argued that role-play and theatre trains pupils in good speech and the ability to listen. Thus, role-play or theatre, serves the dual aspect of developing self-expression and appreciating others (Coggin, 1989:278).

- The second category relates to making effective decisions. Critical thinking means that a student must have the skills to make effective decisions when confronted by multiple or contradictory messages, for instance, when a student has to make a decision between belonging to a famous group which makes decisions for him or to be infamous and independent. The student is forced to look at the merits and demerits of each option and come up with an informed decision. Theatre or drama has been considered as an ideal way to involve people in effective decision-making. The skills of critical thinking and problem solving are unconsciously developed through involvement/participation. The next section focuses on the theoretical and conceptual framework of this argument.

Conceptual and Theoretical Framework

This section examines the theoretical and conceptual framework of the work of SPW. The article situates the programme in participatory education and educational theatre. Theorists and practitioners whose works are examined include Paulo Freire (1972), Augusto Boal (1979), Jonathan Neelands (1989), McCaslin (1981), Bolton Gavin (1981) and David Hornbrook (1989).

Paulo Freire is a powerful influence among scholars and practitioners involved in alternative ways of learning and development in both formal and non formal contexts. His pedagogy emphasises learning, acting, reflecting and repeating the process again. *Praxis* is about an educational process where interaction, critical thinking and active involvement are paramount (Lackey, 1992:221). Some drama and development practitioners have been inspired by Freire's Pedagogy to argue that theatre is the best method to learn skills that enhance social interactions because it can deepen participation and perception. In a performance one can confront both emotions and intellect in a way which can enhance pro-social skills and knowledge, enriching self-esteem, self-actualisation and other humanistic concepts of learning and development.

Augusto Boal and Bertolt Brecht's theatre provide insights into the arguments described above. Brecht's epic theatre aimed not only at interpreting the world, but also at helping the audience seek solutions to change it. His alienation or defamiliarisation devices and techniques called for an active or participatory spectator who should think in order to understand and destroy oppressive social roles so that the spectator achieves true self-realisation (Berrenger, 1994:15). In Boal's forum theatre, participants are asked to intervene decisively in the dramatic action and change it. In this forum theatre, no idea is imposed; participants have the opportunity to try out all their ideas, to rehearse all possibilities and to verify them in practice, that is, in theatrical practice. Problem-solving is weighing up options, looking for and developing creative solutions to problems and seeking advice where possible. It can be seen, therefore, that the work of SPW is closely related to Boal's forum theatre as it seeks to empower the learner with critical tools on decision-making relating to social skills.

Afrocentric theorists such as Mloma (1989), Chinyowa (2000), Balme (1999) and Odhiambo (1998) posit that in the traditional African set up, education and the arts are closely related. Mloma (1989) argues that in Africa there was a close connection between role-play, and creative learning, and that theatre was

a principal instrument for instruction and transmission of knowledge, values and attitudes. It is at this point that Mlama wonders why "it is taking long for African education systems to introduce theatre and dance as an integral part of formal education" (Mlama, 189:68). The second argument, closely related to the above, is the contention that African ritual theatre is highly participatory and that it is based on the collective ethic of African societies. Participation in this ritual theatre can help in moulding an individual who can relate well with the community (Balme, 1999; Kavanagh, 1997; Odhiambo, 1998). The argument is developed further to suggest that this collective audience participation found in African theatre could also be transferred to modern learning processes such as Theatre in Education (TIE) and Drama in Education (DIE) (Chinyowa, 2000:3). Thus, in a way, the work of SPW already finds resonance in the above arguments.

Educationalists in the formal curriculum have also argued that learning and proficiency can come better from action, from doing, from experience than from reading and listening (Dewey John cited by Courtney, 1968:11). Theatre is perceived to have the power to foster experiential learning through exploration of curriculum themes and problems and that it can develop children's imagination, expressiveness and all intellectual faculties (Bolton, 1984:27). Thus, participation in theatre can help pupils to explore their individual uniqueness and to develop holistically (Dlula, 1995:15). In short, the work of SPW in Zimbabwe can easily be situated in the arguments advanced by the above education and theatre theorists.

While it is easy to delineate the theoretical framework of the practice in question, it is very difficult to label it conceptually. First, the organisation itself simply refers to its practice as "informal education" (Musvinu: interview 16/11/06). This article attempts to explore the relationship between this "informal education" and the practices in Theatre in Education (TIE) and Drama in Education (DIE).

TIE is professional theatre work with specific educational aims (Banham, 1999:650). It features cooperation between the professional theatre group and the school (teacher and students). It may involve performances of drama and songs. In the same manner, SPW facilitators use drama, songs and dance in order to promote students' participation during the learning process. TIE is considered to be an ongoing process whereby follow-ups are made after performances in order to make an assessment on the lesson. In the same vein,

SPW lessons are not a one-off event. The lessons continue for two school terms and one lesson builds on the last.

However, there are other important features that distinguish TIE from the work of SPW. SPW facilitators cannot be considered as professional theatre artists for they are not necessarily trained in the field. Ideally in TIE, the theatre troupe, the teacher and the students are supposed to plan the lesson together. This is different with SPW because they work with manuals which dictate lessons. Students, however, can still participate in performance and rehearsals. The other significant difference is that SPW lessons are based on life skills, while TIE, as practised in Zimbabwe, deals with the conventional curriculum in such areas as Geography, History and Literature.

The work of SPW also relates closely to Drama in Education (DIE). According to McSlin (1981), when used in the classroom situation by the teacher, drama features social interaction, dramatic content and different forms of expression. It is used with the intention of encouraging strong decision-making and communication with other children apart from specific pedagogical objectives. This is also part and parcel of SPW life skills programme. However, their work goes beyond drama as it incorporates other elements such as games, storytelling, mime and dance. Moreover, DIE deals mainly with the conventional curriculum. Thus, with DIE, the teachers and students' immediate concern is with the meaning that must be projected through drama to teach a curriculum topic.

In a way, the work of SPW combines aspects and techniques from conventional theatre, Drama in Education and Theatre in Education. It is not easy to give this work a precise conceptual label because the programme involves many other activities which are not necessarily dramatic or theatrical such as peer education, storytelling and games. This article focuses on those activities which are related to theatre performance and drama. Consequently, the next section focuses on the "Albatross" ritual play looking at its objectives, performance, context and elements, as well as evaluating its efficacy in stimulating creative and critical thinking.

"Albatross": The skills of knowing and living with others

This section examines the performance of a ritualistic theatre entitled "Albatross", which was performed at Saint Annes Goto in Hwedza in August

2003. Its objective was to assist students to learn to adapt to unfamiliar situations, using observational techniques and to make the students aware of the need to open up to new situations that they may find strange.

The performance generally starts when students are asked to leave the classroom, and later, one of the three facilitators returns in order to bring back the students. He randomly selects four boys and four girls whom he keeps outside whilst the rest of the class enters the classroom. After that, a male "court man" comes and stands at the door. His face is heavily masked with make-up which makes him look very dark. He stands at the door where eight students are lined up. The first is a girl. Looking at her, he produces the sound "Mmm", to which the girl responds with a confused look. However, she later deduces that she is being invited into the room and she is led to sit on a chair next to a lady who looks like a queen. Appendix 2 has details of the "Albatross" script.

Ritual and Learning

Ritual is a symbolic ceremony or social custom which is repeated in the same form (Neelands, 1984; Schechner, 1988; Cameroon and Gillispie, 1992). It has been observed that there is a strong connection between ritual and theatre (Cameroon and Gillispie, 1992; Wainscott and Fletcher, 2004; Crow, 1983). This section briefly examines the relationship that exists among ritual, theatre and learning. In this paper, ritual is defined as a repeated ceremony which is an expression of personal commitment – as in elections, initiation rites, allegiance ceremonies, oath-taking and farewell ceremonies (Neelands, 1989:67). The "Albatross" performance has ritualistic features such as choosing and crowning a king, the order of seating and particular ways of eating in the community.

Rituals come in different forms and they are an expression of both social life and ideology. They are an expression of commitment. In this case study, this particular ritual was something that the students had not been exposed to neither was it part of their regular lives, but it required from them understanding and trust as they went along and it also demanded commitment. The recurrent question was, "will they withdraw or will they faithfully appreciate and obey?" Ritual in this case was, therefore, used to enlighten the students on the different dynamics of culture, language and different cultural practices and mores. From a learning perspective, ritual is important because it is a collective experience, since it expresses cultural beliefs and ideology, and as already mentioned, it demands commitment from participants. This consequently deepens the

participatory learning experience (Neelands, *Ibid*:68). This, coupled with the fact that children have a natural enthusiasm and disposition towards theatre, makes a strong case for the use of drama as a learning methodology.

Space and communication

Theatre occurs in time and space. Space in drama works for both functional and creative purposes. For functional purposes, the queen sat in the centre, the girls sat in a linear formation to her left and the boys sat to her right. In this way, observers could see clearly. The space which the performers occupy immediately becomes "sacred" as it is separated from the space which the other students occupy. Not a single person dares to enter that space. It is essentially defined when the boys are asked to take off their shoes before entering. No special properties are used to define it but the action of taking off shoes creates a psychological shift and it creates a mood for the ritual since rituals are validated by the space in which they take place (Neelands, 1989:68). Space therefore is used as a way to communicate to the students, a new society, one which they have never experienced, just like the ritual they have never seen.

"Audience" Participation

About eight students were actively involved and the rest were "observers". The roles of the eight students were not scripted nor rehearsed but they experienced first hand emotions and reactions. Ritual need not have a script but it has fixed features such as song, dance, or sacrifice and these do not necessarily follow a rigid order (Cameron and Gillspie, 1992:16). Likewise, the performance did not follow a rigid order since each student came up with a different response to a given situation. The involvement of these students was, therefore, an ideal way of showing how different people react to the same situation instead of having actors who would have acted out these reactions in the place of first hand experience. The problem with this approach was that students tended to copy others. On the other hand, it could be argued that the students managed to learn by observing each other's mistakes.

While the rest of the students did not have clearly defined roles, it is difficult to categorise them as non-participants. The students who sat down observing the whole act became the "audience". However, their silence seemed to radiate fear as they later revealed in the post-performance discussion. Esslin observes

that drama and ritual are a collective experience, the author and "performers" are only half of the total experience; the other half is the audience and its reactions (Esslin, 1976:26). Both affect each other through radiation of emotions, for example, laughter, silence and fear. The fear of the audience was shown through their silence and stillness and this in turn affected the participants with clearly defined roles who reciprocated the same feelings. Thus, the "audience" played the important part of both "observing" and psychologically affecting the participants with clearly defined roles.

Post-Performance Discussion

The crowning of the king marked the end of the performance. The third facilitator introduced the discussion by asking, "what has been taking place?" After a moment of searching, one student broke the silence by saying, "it seemed like visitors were being welcomed into a community and they were given food". Others thought it was a ceremony.

The next question required the students to explain how they understood the action whereby the men took off their shoes and the women did not take off their shoes. Some students suggested that it was because women were either more important or more respected since they received first preference. After many observations, questions and discussions, the facilitators came to explain that the ritual play was situated in a mysterious world called "Albatross World". This was an entirely fictitious community which they created and then gave a unique code of conduct, language, values and taboos.

In Albatross society, women were considered to be "unclean", hence, they were not allowed to make any direct contact with the earth. They were not to make any direct contact with the earth because their food was produced from the earth. Women's contact with the earth, therefore, was perceived to cause pollution of the sacred earth. Consequently women wore shoes and sat on chairs so that they would not be in direct contact with the "sacred earth". They were also fed to avoid contact with community utensils and community food. The other student participant was crowned king because he had the largest foot. According to this community, the man with the largest foot size automatically became king when the need arose.

The whole ritual play aimed at demonstrating to the students the importance of learning to know and to live with others. Students were meant to learn that not

all communities behaved and related in the same way or in the way they were used to. The ritual play, therefore, exposed some conventions they had never experienced or ever contemplated. The aim here was to demonstrate that students had to learn to adapt to different set ups especially as they were moving towards adulthood.

Not only was there need to adapt to different community set ups, but there was also need to adapt to different codes of social interaction. This was the art and skill of cohabitation.

Critical Evaluation

Schechner comments that "Ritual is an event upon which its participants depend; theatre is an event which depends on its participants" (Schechner, 1980:126). The performance is discussed as a play with ritualistic features where some pupils play scripted roles while others undergo a "ritual". Both parties depend on each other. The student audience relied upon the "ritual" in order to reach a goal they were not aware of. The "Albatrosians" depended on the whole performance as a theatrical event in order to bring about a social goal. This dependence on each other did not make the theatrical event a "cheap" one where all roles were scripted in accordance with someone's dictation. Instead, it encouraged self discovery and a demonstration of skills needed for communication.

In order to teach the skills of knowing and living with others, the performance was successful because it brought out important ideas about co-habitation. First, the issue of learning to listen and respond correctly in communication was vividly explored. Secondly, the idea of respecting other peoples' cultures, ways of doing things and discovering how they operate was a noble goal. This was relevant to the students as they were growing from adolescence into adulthood. They were bound to meet different communities where they would eventually work or marry. However, this performance has its own limitations from the point of view of an ideal experiential learning in theatre.

First, the thirty five minutes for a performance and a post performance discussion was not enough to cover everything, for instance, the script requires that at least two of the student participants must have participated in this particular performance. Not a single student had prior knowledge of what was to happen. This was done in order to make the process natural. However, in a bid to make

it natural, there is danger that when students fail to understand or when they take long to deduce meanings, the time allocated to the programmes is not enough.

Another limitation in this performance is the lack of spectacle and suspense. This was necessary in order to create the right mood and atmosphere for the performance. The script requires that the performance should be done at night where lights or candles can be put on and off to create spectacular effects. However, in a rural set up this could not happen. In this case therefore, the daytime gave away everything since the audience could see the Albatrosians as soon as they entered the room. Thus, the element of suspense and spectacle was lost.

Thirdly, the level of student participation was limited because only eight students had clearly defined roles. Further, in such situations, it is recommended that the teacher(s) or facilitators should combine with the students in a collective "authorship" of the "script" (Bolton, 1984; (Needlands, 1989; McCaslin, 1980; Courtney, 1968). This could enhance a more "authentic" level of student participation. Even in the performance, facilitators could have crafted the narrative in such a way that no student could perceive themselves as observers. We endorse Augusto Boal's aesthetic where he argues,

If we are dealing with a collective creation, the audience will have to be involved in the performance as a creative power. (Boal quoted by Epskamp, 1989:59).

This is more crucial in a dramatic performance with pedagogical intentions. The whole argument about the use of theatre is that it engenders both cognitive and emotional involvement. If active participation is limited, the emotional involvement is compromised. The ideal is to have an experiential learning where all senses and mental processes are actively engaged.

Lastly, because of limited collective authorship, social lessons were more or less given than explored. While it was noble to emphasise tolerance and the appropriate approach to entering new communities, one gets the impression that the lessons were predetermined before the process began. This is hardly different from conventional learning where "meanings" are given rather than constructed or explored. Drama is a dialectic rather than a didactic form of learning (Hornbrooke, 1989:56). Perhaps after the lessons on cohabitation, this

fictional community could have been critiqued in comparison with the social mores of the students' own society. For example, the position of women in the Albatross community was a potential site for a discursive discourse on gender relations. Educational theatre is a critical pedagogy, which is concerned with transformative change or liberation education whose potential was perhaps not fully explored in this particular performance.

Conclusion and recommendations

The whole concept of giving students a forum for active participation and experimentation contributes to their psychological, intellectual and social development. Many psychologists have argued that one of the many factors influencing intelligence depend on the interaction of an individual with his or her own environment. Exposing students vicariously, in a "live" environment as the "Albatross" ritual play, might do through interactive play, provided them an opportunity to develop various skills. It is worth noting that there is also incidental learning which occurs during exploration and discovery, so the students could have learnt more than the communication skills that were intended for them to acquire. In addition, theatre enhances a holistic learning experience, since it promotes a sensuous and intellectual involvement. As a result, young people have a general passion and enthusiasm for theatre.

Thus, SPW seeks to provide a form of learning experience and methodology which is generally crucial but perhaps not getting enough attention in the schools. The use of theatre provides learning through disciplines that combine cognition with personal and affective responses (Courtney, 1984). This generally enhances proficiency in learning provided that the performances and lesson objectives and aims are properly conceived and structured.

However, the article has identified some weaknesses and limitations in the work of SPW which need attention. First, the issue of time is crucial. Due to limited time, some facilitators in the current case study chose to simply give out information instead of letting students learn through discovery and also some social lessons were being given instead of being explored and interrogated. Post-performance discussions were also cut short and this hampered the process of encouraging critical thinking. There is, therefore, need to give lessons more time. The other problem noted was the limited spectacle which is very crucial in arresting the attention of the students as well as deepen the learning experience. Perhaps this has to do with the limited training that the facilitators

have in the art of critical pedagogy and educational theatre. For instance, low spectacle in the sense of visual and aural elements needed in a play to offer a "... satisfying sensory experience ..." (Wainscott and Fletcher 2004:115), can be solved by combining available visual elements, song and dance. In this context, the above elements could be manipulated using Brecht's "alienation"/defamiliarisation devices to make the visual and aural elements comment on the socio-cultural ideas of the play. Using these devices the audience can remain detached emotionally in order to engage intellectually with the dramatic material (Neelands and Dobson, 2004:68; Wainscott and Fletcher, 2004:33). This could be complemented with Augusto Boal's ideas and techniques in *The Theatre Oppressed* which is characterised by a transitive relationship between the audience and the spectators. In this theatre, emotions, ideas, morality, actions, visual and aural elements are exchanged between the performers and the audience during the course of the performance (Boal, 1998:20). The above devices and techniques could have enriched the "Albatross" performance. It is therefore recommended that the organisation could consider employing experts in participatory theatre techniques especially those with a strong background in Theatre in Education or Drama in Education. It is hoped that this will enrich the work of the organisation which seems to have tremendous potential in learning processes and aspects which are apparently receiving very little attention, if any, in the conventional curriculum. Perhaps the Ministry of Sport, Education and Culture could also assist so that the programme is strengthened methodologically, artistically and in terms of organisational structures so that it is spread to all provinces and districts. The authors of this article contend that the need for a critical pedagogy in our schools can never be over emphasised.

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APPENDIX 1**INTERVIEWS WITH SPW STAFF AND EX-VOLUNTEERS**

Name of interviewee	Occupation	Date	Venue
Kainos Musvinu	SPW Acting Director	21/11/05	Newlands
Hazvenci pasvani	UZ Student, Ex-Volunteer	19/05/06	Carr Saunders
Rosebud Chingwara	UZ Student, Ex-Volunteer	22/05/06	Swinton
Artwell Chivhinge	SPW Field Co-ordinator	13/04/06	SPW Offices

APPENDIX 2**TRAINING MANUAL 2001**

Session	X cult 2	Name	Albatross
Duration	Evening session	Material	Silly outfits, biscuits, drink
Type	Core	Doc. name	Albatross
CULTURAL SESSION: 'ALBATROSS'			

Objectives:

- To show participants the dangers of making assumptions about situations and cultures that they know nothing about.
- To demonstrate that it is very difficult for most people to perceive a situation from anything but their own perspective.
- To show the ability to adapt to situations that are entirely unfamiliar – using observational techniques.
- To make everyone aware of the need to be open to new situations that they may find strange.
- For all participants to recognise that they are all capable of making cultural mistakes and assumptions.

Materials

- At least nine chairs
- Fancy dress for the Albatrossian hosts.
- Food (such as a plate of biscuits).
- Drink (cups or bottles of drink on a tray)

Introduction: 5 mins

Those people acting in the sketch must be well briefed in advance. Try to use people who have done this activity before, as this will make the whole process far easier.

The sketch must be done inside, with a clear entrance and exit.

This must be done at night.

The scene must be set prior to the volunteers' arrival in this 'new world', i.e. the chairs set up and the food and drinks ready.

All the volunteers will be outside. Ask for 8 participants – you need 4 male and 4 female. All the others will be observers.

Explain that they are about to enter a new world. The observers must enter the world prior to the participants (have a separate area assigned for the observers to sit in – perhaps at two ends of the room).

Give the observers time to settle (a minute or so) and then tell the participants that they may enter the world of 'Albatross'.

Interactive Sketch: 20 mins

You need two staff for this – one male and one female. They should be dressed up in strange attire (big bed sheet, scarf over head and thick make up etc).

The observers are in their places.

1. The two – Albatrossians (As) are ready. The female A is sitting on a chair directly facing the door, wearing shoes. There are 8 chairs (or more) around the room, facing each other. The male A kneels beside the female A, and is not wearing shoes. The door is locked. The only people outside are the eight participants. Everyone else is inside where the lights are off. Lights are switched on when everyone is settled. When there is a knock at the door, the male A opens it, but only allows in female visitors who are wearing shoes, and male ones who aren't. Those not in the correct state are hissed at and physically stopped from entering. Those who have got it right are greeted with a "Mmm" and allowed in. There are only three forms of communication used by Albatrossians during this whole activity. Hiss for disapproval, Mmm for approval and a clicking of the tongue, which is used basically to get attention.
2. Once the guests are inside, the As induce the male visitors off the chairs and onto the floor, and the females to do the reserve. As will not manhandle their guests, so this must be done just using the sounds of approval and disapproval.
3. Next, the visitors are greeted. The female A gets up and greets each female guest in turn around the room, by holding her by the shoulders and by rubbing the right knees together. After the greeting, the visitor sits down again in her chair. The male A then greets the male guests, by running his hands down the lower legs and feet of them in a ceremonial way. They then sit back down on the floor.
4. After the greetings there is a pause during which everyone just sits and waits. As always, they maintain a serene (but unsmiling) expression and do not register feelings in their facial expressions. So if, for instance, one of the visitors talks or giggles, they will hiss at them, but not angrily.

5. Next, the female A clicks her tongue three times, and pushes the kneeling male A's head towards the ground three times. He will then rise and offer food to each female in turn, beginning with the female A. With each, he will feed her by hand, and she will then hum in approval, and rub her stomach. Visitors who copy this correctly gain a hum of approval, or a hiss of disapproval if they do something wrong. If they don't run their stomachs, the male A will continue to feed them. After the females are fed, the male A then feeds the male visitors in turn. They can take the food themselves from the tray, but again, must rub their stomachs. The A male then returns to his place next to the female.
6. Next follows the serving of the drink, and the same behaviour is repeated: the female A clicks and lowers the male A's head three times, then the male A offers a cup to drink from, to the female A. The male A offers drink to the female guests, then the males. The actions with food are repeated. The male A finally sits down again.
7. After another pause, both A's get up and proceed around the circle of guests, communicating with each other only by clicking. Without making any clear indication to the guests, they select the male with the largest feet. (This can be done by the male A going up to each male guest and checking the size of his foot against his own). The chosen participant is then led over to the chair in the middle, and he kneels next to the female A's chair. All other guests are encouraged to leave by the Male A, in the usual humming/hissing manner.

Analysis: 20 mins

The trainer then leads a discussion with the following questions to the participants:

1. Where have you just been? What happened? How did you feel being in that culture?
2. What kind of activities did the Albatrossians do?
3. Why do male Albatrossians take off shoes? Why was one particular visitor accepted above all others into that culture?

The trainer reveals the real nature of Albatrossian culture (below), and then encourages discussion as to how we interpret new/different cultures (that is, by making assumptions about others' behaviour based on our own culture).

The trainer then asks what the rationale behind the exercise was.

Albatrossian Culture

- In the world of Albatross, the earth is highly sacred, as are things that come from it (such as food).
- Women are totally unclean and, hence, second class citizens in the most extreme ways: for a start, they must not be allowed to touch the sacred earth at all (so they must wear shoes, sit in chairs and cannot touch food themselves).
- Because they are second rate, women must always eat before the men – to ensure that the food is not poisoned.
- Men, who are valued highly, can come into contact with both the earth and food.
- Men with large feet are particularly important or special (because they obviously



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