

## SESSION 5

**ACTIVE LEARNING METHODS (II):  
IMAGE THEATRE**
 90 min - 2 ½ hr

Image theatre is a tool that gives children the freedom to express their opinions and understanding of matters in a quick and fun way. An added advantage is that the technique is simple to teach and to learn and does not require any stationary. As well as helping teachers work through the Aflatoun lesson plans, Image Theatre can be applied to any area of a country's national curriculum.

**Suggested schedule of activities**

1. The Statue Game.....	10 min
2. Discussion on children's freedom or otherwise to comment during class time.....	10 min
3. Model an image .....	10 min
4. Group images.....	45 min
5. Discussion on the role of the facilitator in Image Theatre.....	10 min
6. Apply the technique to more serious issues.....	45 min

**Exercise 1. The Statute Game**

**Objectives** To teach participants the principles of Image Theatre and its insistence on no movement and no sound

**Time** 10 min

**Materials** None

- Ask the group to move around the room. Then ask them to get quickly into groups of two, three, four or whatever number you shout out.
- Once they have practiced that a few times, tell them that as well as a number you will call out a picture. They have to get into the correct number and make an image that shows what you have called out.
- Explain to them that they must not move nor make any sound.

**Suggested list of images for the game:**

- 2 - a mother and child
- 2 - a father and child
- 3 - a man and two dogs
- 4 - a band
- 5 - a wedding
- 6 - a footballer scoring a goal
- 8 - a spider
- Everyone! A school bus full of children with a driver
- Everyone! Teacher and children in a traditional classroom
- Everyone! Teacher and children in a child-centered classroom

**Exercise 2. Discussion on children's freedom to express opinions**

**Objectives** To make participants more aware of the many reasons we fail to listen to children

**Time** 10 min

**Materials** None

- Ask the group to explain the reasons why we, as teachers often find it difficult to let children express opinions freely. Encourage them to be open and honest.
- Ask them what the advantages are of letting children express themselves.
- Explain that this session will be about using theatre to let children express their own ideas.

**Note!**

Children love games that require them to make frozen pictures or images. It gives them a fun and active way to express their opinions and ideas. Not all children feel equally confident talking or writing about an issue, but very few have a problem in using their bodies to communicate feelings and ideas once they understand that they are allowed to do so. Also, very often children will reveal more through these pictures than they would if you asked them to talk. Even at a very young age children learn to censor themselves and to 'watch what they say' in front of adults. Image Theatre can help get around that, revealing what children really think and feel. It is extremely important therefore that you refrain from 'correcting' or scolding them for an image they show. Even if you think the image is inaccurate or misguided, your role is restricted to asking the audience what they see and why.

**Exercise 3. Model an image**

**Objectives** To help participants understand what a group image is and how the facilitator interacts with the audience

**Time** 10 min

**Materials** None

- Begin by demonstrating what a frozen picture or group image is. Ask for four volunteers to come up and sit in a row. Tell them that you are going to 'sculpt' them i.e. put them into position and that you want them to hold that position. They should neither move nor speak. It might be a good idea to arrange them so that they look like four musicians, as the other participants who are watching should be able to understand what you are doing.
- Now ask the audience participants who are watching what they think the name of the picture is.
- Ask the audience a few simple questions such as 'What do you see?' 'Who are these people?' 'Where are they?' 'Why?'



**Exercise**     **4. Group Images****Objectives**     To give participants a chance to practice the technique**Time**     30 min**Materials**     None

- Now that everyone has got the idea, put participants into subgroups of four or five. Tell them to work alone for five minutes preparing three frozen pictures representing the following ideas;
  - Something that makes me sad
  - Something that makes me frightened
  - Something that makes me happy
- Stress that when they show their pictures the audience should understand why the people in the picture feel sad, frightened or happy. In other words, the picture must tell a story.
- When they are ready invite each group into a space where everyone can see them and ask them to show their three pictures in any order they please without telling the audience which is which.
- As the actors show each picture, ask them the questions suggested in the flipchart below.

**Tip!**

*Once participants have grasped the three basic rules they might benefit from some additional advice. Remind them that their image needs to be visible by all the audience and should therefore be 'open' like an open book. An actor with her back to the audience will often prevent this. Encourage them to make dynamic, interestingly composed pictures.*

**Exercise**     **5. Discussion on the role of the facilitator in Image Theatre****Objectives**     To help the audience understand the role of the facilitator in encouraging discussion**Time**     10 min**Materials**     None

- Ask the group if they noticed the questions you, the facilitator, were asking as they showed the pictures.
- Show them a flipchart of questions a facilitator might include (below)
- Explain that the role of the facilitator is to encourage discussion. The value of the exercise is in letting children say what they think they see in the picture. When children say what they think is happening in the picture, ask them 'Why do you think that?' and then, 'Who has a different idea?' The exercise is not about trying to find a right or wrong answer. There is no right or wrong answer. It is about giving children the freedom to express ideas and giving them practice in explaining and justifying their arguments.

**Questions an Image Theatre facilitator might ask:**

1. *What do you see?*
2. *Who are these people?*
3. *What is happening? Why do you say that?*
4. *Where are they? Why do you think that?*
5. *Is this a realistic situation? Is it an image you recognize from your own lives or communities?*
6. *Is the image clear?*

**Keep asking ‘Why do you think that?’ and ‘Who has a different idea?’**

**Exercise****Objectives****Time****Materials****6. Apply the technique to more serious issues**

To encourage participants to reflect on how they might apply the technique to more serious issues and in their everyday teaching

30 min

Five pieces of paper, each with one of the main educational themes written on it.

- Remind the participants that up till now we have just been practicing the technique of Image Theatre. Now we want to start applying those techniques.
- Explain that so far the images we have made have been for fun. Now we want to explore more serious issues.
- Put the participants back into small groups. Tell them they have ten minutes to make two images. The two images suggested here would help them reflect on injustice in their own lives, and on injustice in the lives of local children. Feel free of course to come up with your own image titles!
  - Something unfair that I see in my job.
  - An image of children in this town whose rights are denied.
- Again, take care to encourage a rich discussion using the facilitator’s questions.
- When you have looked at all the images, give them one last task. Put them into five groups. Tell them you are going to secretly ask each group to make an image that is related to Aflatoun. Hand out one piece of paper to each group and ask them to keep it a secret. On the pieces of paper write down a different ‘core element’ or main educational theme. Not only will this test their ability to apply the technique, it will act as a useful recap at this stage of the workshop.
- Give them five minutes to prepare.
- Look at all the images and ask the audience questions as usual.
- Finally, ask the participants how they might include Image Theatre in their normal classroom teaching for all key curriculum subjects. See some suggestions below to get you started:

**Image Theatre in Key Curriculum Subjects**

*Be imaginative! Image Theatre can be used in any subject to help children express their ideas. The technique can also help you assess their level of understanding. Here are some subjects, other than Social and Financial Education, where the technique can be applied. Can you think of others?*

**Literature: Ask children to show an image of:**

- an important scene from a text. ...
- what they see as the biggest problem facing the main character...
- How does the text end?
- Can you show us an alternative ending for the text that you would have preferred?
- Can you show us an image summing up a conflict between two characters?

**History: Ask children to show:**

- an image of three significant dates that have been studied...
- alternative images for how events might have occurred differently...

**Religion: Ask children to show:**

- a scene that teaches us a useful lesson on helping the poor
- an image of a scene that we still commemorate
- an image of a scene that has a strong personal significance for you

**One final tip!**

*With Image Theatre the teacher's job is to offer children a concept or a problem and give them the freedom to form an image of how they perceive it. The teacher's job is then to simply facilitate a discussion around that image. Teachers should not direct the images, telling children where to stand etc.*

**Exercise 7. Three more advanced techniques to experiment with:**

- **Touch and Tell**
- **Follow your heart**
- **Moving to the ideal**

**Objectives** To develop images further so as to generate deeper discussions with the audience

**Time** 30 min

**Materials** None

We have seen that in Image Theatre, children present an image of a problem or concept and the facilitator asks the audience questions so as to generate a discussion exploring that problem or concept. Sometimes you might want to help children develop their images further. This is done by allowing the characters in the image to say a few words or to make some simple movements. This can give the audience more information about who the

people in the image are, thereby helping to push the discussion further. Here are some simple techniques that you may want to apply. They will probably work better with children of 12yrs upwards.

### **Touch and Tell**

- Put participants back in subgroups and give them five minutes to remake a frozen picture from earlier e.g. 'Children in this area whose rights are denied.' As time is limited, you will probably only have time to apply the following techniques to one image.
- Explain that you are now going to use some simple techniques to bring the images to life in a way that helps participants explore them more and express their feelings and ideas more.
- With the actors still frozen in the image, touch each actor on the shoulder and ask them to say one word or sentence that demonstrates how their character is thinking or feeling in the image. They should not describe their character. Rather they should utter a phrase that their character might say or think. You can practice playing the image like a musical instrument, repeatedly touching the actors in a different order.
- If you wish you can go one step further and add a movement. Each character makes one movement at the same time as they utter their word or phrase.
- Now being a fresh round of questions, such as;
  - What new information have we learned about any of the characters?
  - How do you feel about each character now?
  - Who is causing the problem? Why?
  - Who is suffering in the picture?
  - How could we help this person?
  - Why are these people behaving in this way?

### **Follow your heart**

- Tell the actors that when you clap your hands you simply want them to move, in slow-motion, to wherever they feel their character would like to move. For example a character might want to be with someone else, or to get away from the action, to protect somebody, to hide from somebody, to confront somebody or whatever. Of course, the other characters will be moving and may have different ideas. Freeze after a few seconds, and feedback on the changes that have happened. Experiment with questions to the audience such as;
  - Where did this character move? Why do you think that was?
  - What did each character's movement tell us about what they want?

### **Moving to the ideal**

- If the initial image is one of an oppression or injustice of some kind, such as homelessness or violence, or a problem, ask the group to move in slow motion from their original picture to a new picture showing that the solution might look like. In other words, can they show the problem and then show a solution?
- Ask the audience what they see in the new image, and what the moves were that had to happen to achieve the ideal, with particular emphasis on the first moves that were made. Experiment with questions such as;
  - What did each character have to do first to begin changing the picture from a problem to a solution?
  - What was the most important change each character had to make?

- What steps would we have to take in real life to help each character in the picture make those changes?



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To watch a demonstration on YouTube follow this link:

**<http://youtu.be/miZerHpx3zQ>**