

Experimenting with Child Empowerment through Theatre for Development (TfD) in Uganda: My Experience with a Child Rights TfD Project in Gganda-Wakiso.

Source: Consciousness, Literature & the Arts . Apr2018, Vol. 19 Issue 1, p1-29. 29p.

Author(s): Bamuturaki, Keneth

Abstract:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child guarantees the child's freedom of expression, thought and association. It upholds child's freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kind, regardless of frontier, either orally, in writing or in print, in the form of art or through any media of the child's choice. These freedoms also uphold the child's right to express an opinion and be heard and relates closely to children working and sharing ideas in groups. In Uganda, there have been attempts by Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) such as Raising Voices, Acting for Africa and Restless Development to involve children in child rights issues but their model has largely focused on having children to participate in the NGOs' projects rather than empowering them to design and participate in their own projects. Furthermore, as Paul Moclair would put it, 'while Ugandan NGOs have convincing reasons for promoting children's participation, their goals of participation are primarily designed for the consumption of the donors whose perceptions of development remain dominated by products rather than processes'(Moclair 2009). The school environment in Uganda could offer opportunities to foster child empowerment since children spend most of their time at school. However, this is hampered by authoritarian power relations between the teachers and the learners and a learning model where children are treated as empty pinchers waiting to be filled with knowledge. In this article I analyse using my practical experience with a Child Rights TfD project in a school community in Gganda Wakiso, Central Uganda how TfD can be used to empower children in analysing issues affecting their lives. The article argues that if children are facilitated to participate in making theatre focusing about their needs, they are given opportunity to learn, reflect and express their voice on issues which affect their lives. In short, they engage in an empowering and transformative process.

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