

What is Forum Theatre

The Experience of Forum Theatre in Nurse Education: Is it Transformative?

Forum Theatre – An Overview

Forum theatre was developed by a Brazilian theatre director Augustus Boal during the 1970's as a way of exploring solutions to real-life dilemmas in a safe environment (Boal 1974). (Boal 2002) is credited as being the founding father of the 'theatre of the oppressed' which encapsulated a range of theatrical methods such as image theatre, newspaper theatre and rainbow of desire. Boal was an advocate of using theatrical techniques as a means of encouraging interaction with an audience so that they become involved with the stage characters. This offered an audience the opportunity to shape their own thinking, feelings, reflections and creative solutions to the challenges encountered from their narratives (Boal, 2002).

In a forum theatre session, a scenario relating to a specific clinical practice dilemma is enacted by the actors (often course lecturers, students or service users) using a pre-written script. The scenario often ends with a situation in an unresolved/unsatisfactory way. After some facilitated discussion in small groups about the issues that were raised by the audience, the scenario is re-enacted by the actors. Students are invited to ask for the action to 'stop' at any point and ask for a re-run of the interaction, using their own words and suggestions. Indeed, students can step into the role and demonstrate this if they wish. This can provoke some lively debate as there are usually several different ways to progress the scenario at the 'stop' points. Students are therefore, in the relative safety of the classroom, leading the scenario towards to a successful conclusion. (Wilson 2013)

Forum theatre dramatises poor practice scenarios, for example, by showing an impatient, bullying, patronising way of addressing a service user and explores the choices that are available to practitioners via actors assuming the roles of particular healthcare professionals, service users and carers. Issues that underlie the interactions between the characters can be explored in detail. The scene evokes feelings amongst the students that often resonate with their own clinical experiences. This identification with the unfolding drama ignites a group discussion that enables students to begin to think of better ways to 'steer' the scene towards a more successful conclusion. (Middlewick et al. 2012)

References:

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