

**Towards a More Inclusive Traditional Curriculum:
Workshops In The Performing Arts
as a Tool For Education**

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ABSTRACT

Towards a More Inclusive Traditional Curriculum: Workshops in the Performing Arts as a Tool for Education

Jaya Srivastava

In the traditional curriculum methods of instruction consist of textbook and lecture centered approaches to teaching and learning. This research studies the effects of workshops in the performing arts as an effective tool for a more inclusive traditional curriculum. Furthermore, it studies the possibility of using this method as a possible complement to the drug Ritalin for children suffering from attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADD/ADHD).

Specifically, data from two focus groups, one composed of Indian classical dance teachers and the other of volunteers working with children suffering from ADD/ADHD is analyzed. Also, a detailed outline of a workshop in Indian classical dance is provided for an increased understanding of the positive outcomes resulting from employing this method of instruction in the classroom.

The study concludes with a look at the potential of performing arts other than dance, as well as with a summary of possible topics for future research.

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Preface

My research interest stems from the close affiliation I have had with an Indian classical dance school called *Kala Bharati* which was founded in 1981 by president and artistic director, Dr. Mamata Niyogi-Nakra. As a student in the school for over twenty years and a teacher for over ten, I have been involved with a number of projects devoted to the promotion of *Bharata Natya*, an ancient tradition of Indian classical dance. One of these projects entitled "*Fenêtre Sur Le Monde*", or "*Window On The World*", has maintained as a primary goal to spread the art of Bharata Natya in foreign land. The venues for this project have primarily been educational institutions across Quebec, although some hospitals and senior residences have equally benefited from its exposure. An extension of this initiative has been Kala Bharati's participation in the international "*Dance and the Child*" or (daCi) conference in various countries where young dance students as well as instructors are exposed to a variety of dance styles through intense workshops and lectures by experts in the field of dance.

As one who has conducted several of the "*Fenêtre Sur Le Monde*" workshops and has had the benefit of participating in a daCi conference in the Netherlands I have been witness to the continuous success of both these programs. In fact a moving experience involving the response of an autistic child to a workshop conducted years ago served as another point of inspiration for this research.

Therefore due to the numerous benefits of these projects as well as the endless possibilities which bridging the worlds of dance and education can create, I have chosen to research how workshops in the performing arts may be used as a tool for a more

inclusive traditional curriculum. Furthermore, given my personal exposure to the field of dance, I trust that this too will add value to the study.

Chapter One

Introduction

The intent of this exploratory study is to first research how the traditional curriculum can be made more inclusive by incorporating workshops in the performing arts as an effective tool and added dimension to teaching and learning, and second to examine how it can serve as a possible complement to the widespread use of the drug *Ritalin* for children diagnosed with *Attention Deficit Disorder* or *Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder*, hereafter referred to as ADD/ADHD. Some examples of the positive impact this approach to education includes breaking the monotony of teaching and learning, creating student empowerment and increasing social or cultural awareness among students. With respect to students suffering from physical or learning disabilities, this method stimulates cognition, serves as a medium of communication and expression, and creates a channel of interaction between students. These as well as other benefits of the performing arts workshop approach are elaborated in chapters to come.

In order to further illustrate the potential of the workshop approach presented here, the study draws on the effects of one performing art style in particular, that of Bharata Natya a form of Indian classical dance. The study analyzes the effects of various projects associated with Bharata Natya as explored in a well established institution in Montreal called "*La Fondation Kala Bharati*", whose president and artistic director Dr. Mamata Niyogi-Nakra, has been involved in the exposure of this art form at an international level for a number of years.

While the study focuses on dance with specific reference to Bharata Natya, it also explores the potential of other performing arts such as music and drama in order to demonstrate the versatility of this field of study.

As for the methodology of the study, the experiences and opinions of two relevant focus groups are included. The first group consists of highly competent teachers of Bharata Natya in Montreal and centers around the impact that a high level training in this classical art can have on one's personal and academic development. The second focus group consists of young volunteers working with children suffering from ADD/ADHD and serves as a group of unbiased individuals, whose firsthand experiences with the children help to forecast the possible effects of performing arts workshops as a tool for education. In fact, among the several benefits mentioned in this study, the use of workshops in the performing arts as a possible complement to Ritalin is an area of focus for this research.

Some limitations of the study also exist which the reader should bear in mind. For instance, as in the case of any educational domain the performing arts require competent individuals with a certain degree of proficiency in the field to aptly transmit the knowledge of the art to learners. It is not always possible to find qualified artists who are able or willing to implement the workshop approach presented here, due to a lack of training or expertise in the field of education. Another limitation is gaining acceptance by educators and administrators who are not as open to non-traditional approaches to teaching. Finally, because this is an area of study for which data is scarce, one has to rely a great deal on personal experience, which although rather revealing, may be deemed inadequate from an academic perspective.

In spite of these difficulties, several possibilities for future research do stem from this study and reveal the vast potential of bridging the worlds of performing arts and education.

Understanding Key Terms

Before embarking on the research which supports the theory of using workshops in the performing arts as an educational tool, it is important to understand certain key terms which are used throughout the research. They are: inclusive, traditional curriculum, workshop, performing arts and Bharata Natya.

Inclusive Traditional Curriculum

For the purpose of this study, a traditional curriculum refers to the teaching methods and tools used in major public schools across Quebec where a textbook centered approach to teaching and learning is employed. Also, it refers to the standard lecture approach to knowledge transmission. The term inclusive here implies the use of additional methods of instruction such as those involving the arts in order to enhance the otherwise dominant textbook and lecture approaches to teaching and learning.

Workshop

A workshop here is defined as a session involving lecture-demonstration as well as classroom participation where an animator or expert in the performing art in question stands before a classroom of students and presents various aspects of an art form in an interactive and dynamic manner. The animator leading the session is well versed in the

performing art in question and through group discussions, demonstrations and student interaction, an understanding or appreciation of the art form is developed. The advantage of this approach to teaching is its flexibility to accommodate students of any age or level of education, for the required duration or frequency specified by the host of the workshop. Also, the content may be easily modified or adapted to suit the subject matter being transmitted. Finally, the workshop method provides a rather convenient way to introduce a dynamic and tangible learning experience while complying to the rules and goals of education.

Performing Arts

The performing arts are described here as forms of art or artistic expression, communicated to an audience in a dynamic manner. A few examples are music, drama, mime and dance.

Bharata Natya

Bharata Natya is an ancient tradition of Indian classical dance, which originated in the temples of Tamil Nadu, South India around 4000 B.C.E. This popular performing art was introduced by the *Devadasis* or female priestesses, who depicted stories from the vast Hindu mythology. Today females as well as males practice this form of art. The term “Bharata Natya” is derived from:

BHAva (expression) + **RA**ga (music) + **TA**la (rhythm) + **NATYA** (dance) = **BHARATA NATYA**

Bharata Natya is divided into three aspects, which are *Nritta*, *Nritya* and *Natya*. *Nritta* is the rhythmic element, *Nritya* is a combination of the rhythmic and expressive elements

and Natya is the dramatic or interpretive element. Each of these aspects can be further divided, but for the purpose of this study the explanations will be kept to a minimum.

Another important aspect of Bharata Natya is that of *abhinaya* which is an elaboration of the expressive element of this art form. There are nine main emotions or moods known as *navarasa*, which are *sringara* (love), *hasya* (mirth), *veera* (valour), *bhayanaka* (fear), *raudra* (anger), *bhibatsa* (disgust), *adbhuta* (surprise or wonder), *karuna* (compassion), and *shanta* (tranquility or peace), a *rasa* which some may exclude justifying it as an absence of emotion thereby only acknowledging eight emotions known as *ashtarasa*.

A traditional Bharata Natya repertoire is composed of a variety of dance items, usually in a specific sequence for a full recital. An example of a full repertoire is one which begins with an invocation item to the Hindu lord *Ganesha*, followed by an *Alarippu*, a *Jatiswara*, a *Shabda*, a *Varna*, a *Pada*, a *Tillana* and finally a *Mangalam*.

Here is a brief description of each:

Invocation to Lord Ganesha

This is an item in which the dancer invokes Lord Ganesha who is represented by an elephant head in Hindu philosophy and prays to him to remove all obstacles. The dancer also offers salutations to the gurus and the audience and seeks their blessings.

Alarippu

This is an item which signifies the blossoming or opening of a flower, in which the dancer moves to a set pattern of rhythmic syllables, starting with movements of the eyes, neck and head, followed by the arms and legs until the entire body dances in harmony to

the music. The complexity of the movements increases throughout the piece, resembling the gradual blooming of a bud into a flower.

Jatiswara

This item, also based on rhythmic patterns, is composed of a series of complex dance movements set to a *raga* or melody, different from the Alarippu, which has only syllables. In this piece, there is no story or meaning conveyed therefore the dancer can show his or her mastery over the nritta or pure dance element of this art.

Shabda

This is an item, which has both elements, that is pure dance and interpretive dance or the two aspects of nritta and abhinaya. The theme in this particular piece is traditionally a devotional one, conveying short episodes in praise of a particular god in the Hindu philosophy.

Varna

This item is the longest, most elaborate one in a Bharata Natya repertoire. It combines the nritta and abhinaya elements and tests the endurance, stamina and concentration of the dancer because of its length which generally ranges from about 25 to 40 minutes long. The theme of the varna will vary but the mood portrayed is generally one of love (sringara) or devotion (bhakti) and is elaborated by the dancer throughout the piece.

Tillana

This item is usually the last in a traditional Bharata Natya recital. It is known for its complex footwork and speed, with several sculpture-like postures. This high energy item expresses the joy and ecstasy of the dancer. It is essentially a nritta piece, however it

often includes a *charana* or particular lyric which the dancer will depict through abhinaya.

Mangalam

This prayer or short verse closes a traditional recital and is a final salutation to the gods, the gurus and the audience, allowing the dancer to offer thanks to all for making the performance a success.

It is important to note that this traditional repertoire may vary according to the preferences of the artist or based on the tradition the dancer follows. The repertoire may therefore include other items known as an *ashtapadi*, a *javali* and so on or may simply be varied by the number of items or choice of theme of the item being presented.

Given the complexity of this classical art form as well as its rich aesthetic value, Bharata Natya could be used as an effective tool to facilitate the transmission of knowledge which would have a greater impact on the minds of students than a textbook or lecture approach to teaching would. For example, the performing arts create a dynamism which would otherwise be lacking. Also the transfer of knowledge would be done in a much more animated fashion providing students with vibrant images to help with retention of information. The interactive aspect of the workshop approach would help to stimulate creative thought and students would be encouraged to share their experiences with peers while discovering their individual voices.

In view of the presentation aspect implied by the performing arts such as in the case of Bharata Natya, this channel of energy and expression is of significant aid to children suffering from disorders such as attention deficit or hyperactivity as it provides a

safer alternative to a drug dependency. These and other benefits of the study are explored in chapters to come.

The next chapter discusses the methods used for this research to study the effects of incorporating workshops in the performing arts into the traditional curriculum.

Chapter Two

Methodology

This study is based on qualitative research and is supported by the personal experiences of two focus groups. These groups consist of individuals possessing a certain expertise in their respective domains and are of great value to a study for which existing research is so scarce. The focus group discussions which will be presented and analyzed at length in chapter four, reveal many nuances which are crucial to the research. This chapter introduces the backgrounds of these groups to provide the reader with a clear idea of their relevance to the study.

Next, this chapter presents a general overview of a workshop and reveals its versatile nature which make it such an important tool for educators to consider. Then, a detailed outline of a workshop in Bharata Natya is provided so that the reader is exposed to the various aspects touched upon during this type of interactive session. The outline also reflects the scope of the workshop method and sensitizes the reader to the numerous ways in which knowledge can be transmitted in a more inclusive and dynamic manner.

Following this, quotations and photographs taken from the official website of *La Fondation Kala Bharati* are included. These vibrant images capture the essence of what the workshop method generates as reaction. In this section the positive responses of some participant Quebec schools in the “*Fenêtre Sur Le Monde*” project are disclosed. This provides the reader with yet another tangible feel for the potential success of the performing arts workshop approach.

Finally to conclude this chapter, a synopsis of these research methods is included to reinforce the import of the methodology employed in this qualitative study, which reinforces the value added of incorporating performing arts workshops into the traditional curriculum.

Focus Groups

Focus Group #1: Teachers at a School of Bharata Natya

Focus Group #2: Volunteers with ADD/ADHD children

The first focus group consists of five middle-class individuals, four of which are female and one male who have been associated with a school of Bharata Natya in Montreal. Their ages range between 21 and 31 years of age. Each of the teachers have trained in the art of Bharata Natya, three have completed a “ranga pravesh” or dance graduation signifying the attainment of a certain level of proficiency in the art, one will be completing the ranga pravesh this year and the other is at the initial stage of the intense training period. It is important to note that although all of the subjects are well-versed in this classical art, none of them are professional dancers. One is an engineer, two are pursuing doctorate degrees in the fields of psychology and microbiology, one is working in the field of neurobiology at a university and the other is pursuing studies in the field of health science. While each individual has consented to participate in this research, they were given the option of choosing a pseudo-name so that their identities may be protected. The objective of including this focus group is to provide the opinions of experts or individuals with experience in the field of Bharata Natya so that the relevant

educational theories presented in this study are substantiated by firsthand experience, given the scarcity of information specific to this field of study. In view of my personal involvement as a teacher of Bharata Natya for over fifteen years I draw on this experience to analyze and better understand the responses of the focus group.

The second focus group consists of four middle-class volunteers between the ages of 24 and 30, two of which are female and two male. Their professional backgrounds are biology student, marketing manager, artist with a business background, and electrical engineer. Each of these individuals has worked on a strictly volunteer basis with children suffering from ADD/ADHD. The group of children consists of males and females ranging from 6 to 12 years of age. Their socio-economic backgrounds are varied and due to a law protecting their identities, their names will not be mentioned. Also in order to maintain the anonymity of the volunteers, they have been given pseudo-names. The objective of including this group of individuals in this study is to provide concrete observations of the ADD/ADHD children's behaviour patterns and seek out the volunteers' expert opinions on the possibilities that workshops in the performing arts present, particularly as a possible complement to the drug Ritalin as proposed in this study. Once again, in view of my personal involvement as a volunteer with ADD/ADHD children, I will draw on this firsthand experience to better understand and analyze the focus group responses.

Workshops in Bharata Natya

The workshops on Indian classical dance, which have been conducted as part of the *Fenêtre Sur Le Monde* project conceived by Dr. Mamata Niyogi-Nakra of *La Fondation Kala Bharati* in Montreal, are structured to touch on many aspects of the Indian culture and tradition in addition to the art of Bharata Natya itself. These aspects include the customs, values, rituals, food, clothing, music, architecture, geography, religion, festivals, spiritual philosophies and so forth. The workshops also include demonstrations of the various aspects of this art, which encourage the participation of all students in order to enforce student interaction and eliminate the barriers that are often present in a culturally diverse classroom. Through a process of animation, students are introduced to various aspects of this rich art form and are encouraged to express themselves openly. Also certain games have been created to sustain the interest of the students and reinforce the interactive aspect, all while maintaining an atmosphere of disciplined learning. Furthermore, visual materials such as artifacts, photographs and handouts are distributed in order to supplement the themes explored throughout the workshop. Finally, the session ends with a question and answer period for students to bring up any concerns or queries pertaining to the traditions of Indian culture and dance.

Outline of A Bharata Natya Workshop

Here is a detailed outline of a workshop on Bharata Natya, which would be approximately an hour's duration, depending on the school's request. In this example, the workshop is geared towards primary school students. It is important to note that although the structure shows a formal question-answer period at the end of the workshop,

students are encouraged to ask questions or raise any pertinent points throughout the workshop. Also, there may be more than one animator depending on the number of students involved.

(Students are asked to remove shoes and sit in a group on the floor, to encourage participation in workshop activities)

Part one: Background and History

- Animator opens with a *pranam* (traditional salutation to the gods, the *gurus* or teachers, and to Mother Earth)
- Animator greets students with the traditional Indian *namaste* and explains the meaning of the *pranam* as well as the traditional greeting.
- Animator introduces him or herself as well as the school where the art of Bharata Natya is being taught
- Animator gives an explanation of Indian classical dance and then more specifically, Bharata Natya
- Animator situates Bharata Natya on the map and in doing so touches on the geography of India
- Animator touches on differences from state to state with respect to food, traditional dress, customs, languages, festivals etc.
- Animator shows a traditional Bharata Natya and explains its replication of a *saree* (traditional Indian dress).
- Animator shows traditional jewelry and flowers worn for recitals and explains its significance

- Animator chooses volunteers to wear a *saree* while explaining various ways in which it can be tied (according to geographical location)
- Animator explains the significance of the *bindi*, which is traditionally worn by Indian women and distributes some to students who wish to wear one
- Animator gives a historical background of Bharata Natya touching on its origins (its evolution from an ancient form of worship to a modern performing art)
- Animator explains Bharata Natya's roots in Hindu mythology then touches on some major beliefs in Hinduism (i.e. notion of many gods)
- Animator demonstrates Hindu gods and goddesses as represented in Bharata Natya and explains significance of each

Part two: Interpretive Dance

- Animator explains the difference between "interpretive" dance and "pure" dance (dance with meaning or story vs. dance with movement alone and no meaning)
- Animator introduces hand gestures or *mudras* and asks students to try them
- Animator distributes handouts of hand gestures
- Animator describes how hand gestures are used to narrate or convey stories and performs an invocatory item (to taped music) and explains gestures depicted
- Animator begins a discussion on animals and asks students to name animals found in India
- Animator presents some animals through hand and body movements and asks students to guess which animal is being portrayed

- Students are asked to stand up and show the animals but must begin with the *pranam* as a salutation then they are ready to follow the animator's animal movements
- Students are asked to have a seat and animator begins discussion on various emotions (i.e. joy, anger, sorrow, surprise etc.)
- Students are asked to name and demonstrate any emotion in their own way
- Animator then shows Bharata Natya rendition of emotion and asks students to follow technique
- Animator describes *navarasa* or nine emotions conveyed in Bharata Natya and demonstrates them through a story about a doll
- Students are asked to participate by enacting the doll story and they must guess the nine emotions
- Some emotions are demonstrated through a Hindu mythological story and the same emotions (*navarasa*) are conveyed with more maturity through item called *Shive*

Part three: Rhythm in Bharata Natya

- Animator describes notion of "pure dance" in more detail
- Animator describes importance of rhythm in dance and draws attention to the *ghoongaroos* or bells tied around the dancer's ankles to mark the beat
- Animator discusses the rhythmic syllables and patterns based on beats of 3, 4, 5, 7, and 9
- Animator claps to demonstrate tempo and sound of beats and students follow

- Animator explains how various instruments such as the percussion called *mridangam* and cymbals called *nattuvangam* play key role in maintaining the beat
- Students are given the verbal syllables and are asked to enunciate with animator (i.e. the beat of three is: “1, 2, 3” or “ta ki ta”)
- Students are asked to keep the beat while animator demonstrates using footwork
- Animator demonstrates complex footwork and accompanying body movements called *adavus* to show how they are based on the same patterns of beat
- Animator explains existence of three different speeds in most Indian classical dance styles and demonstrates *adavus* in the three speeds
- Animator does a pure dance item (to taped music) in order to conclude this part and demonstrate how elements of rhythmic syllables, *adavus* and speeds come together to form a pure dance item
- Workshop comes to a close and floor is open for questions and/or comments
- Animator ends workshop session with a collective *pranam* by all participants

Workshops Conducted in Quebec Schools

Since the mid 1980s, *La Fondation Kala Bharati* has conducted several workshops in schools across Quebec, as part of the “*Fenêtre Sur Le Monde*” project mentioned earlier. Other institutions such as hospitals and senior residences have equally been beneficiaries of this project indicating the versatile nature of the workshops. Here are a few examples of comments received from some Quebec schools after their participation in the project, as well as some telling photographs as they appear on the official Kala Bharati website: www.kalabharati.ca.



"On behalf of the students and staff of the McGill Summer School for Gifted and Talented Students, I must thank you for the presentation your dancers made to the classes here.

It was beautifully and sensitively done. Our students were deeply impressed by what they saw and gained an understanding and respect for a tradition largely unknown to them.

I hope we can enlighten another group of students next year."

Michael Thomas, Principal



"We truly enjoyed the wonderful dance performance your students presented and found the background information very informative.

We appreciate the time and careful researching of interesting facts for our students to learn about the Indian culture."

*Elizabeth Findlay Grade 5/6 teacher,
Keith School*

The methods of research presented in this chapter indicate the strength of the qualitative analysis of this study, as the experiences are all firsthand and tangible. While the responses of the focus groups allow for a practical analysis of the theories supporting the use of performing arts workshops as a tool for education, the detailed outline of a Bharata Natya workshop allows for a concrete example of this comprehensive approach to teaching and learning. With respect to children suffering from ADD/ADHD, both methods presented in this chapter allow for concrete analysis of the potential effects of using performing arts workshops as a possible complement to Ritalin. In other words, the practical applications of both these methods provide firsthand data which is then free of speculation.

In order to put into context the practical applications of these research methods, the following chapter discusses selected educational theories which complement the proposed implementation of workshops in the performing arts for a more inclusive traditional curriculum.

Chapter Three

Literature Review

Given the exclusive nature of this field of research, data supporting the effects of the performing arts on traditional curricula is rather scarce. However, sufficient research conveying the benefits of the performing arts in education exists, as do several educational hypotheses and theories which complement the ideas and concepts being presented here. For instance, the theories of discovery learning and critical thinking both amplify the importance of more inclusive teaching methods to ensure increased stimulation of students' mental faculties. Also research on memory and cognition equally play crucial roles in the understanding of students' abilities to learn. These and other educational concepts which support the implementation of workshops in the performing arts as a tool for a more inclusive educational experience, will be explored in this chapter.

Discovery Learning

The concept of *learning* by definition implies the gaining or mastery of knowledge through study. There are a number of ways in which this can be achieved though there is no substitute for an experience gained firsthand, hence the concept of discovery learning. Discovery learning, as the name suggests, is a method of knowledge acquisition which encourages individuals to uncover facts and make assertions of their own, based on findings. For students, this process implies the opportunity to think for themselves or as Robert M. Gagné (1966) defined it as, "something the student does,

beyond merely sitting in his [sic] seat and paying attention” (p. 135). In an article on discovery learning by Ray T. Wilcox (1987), there is a discussion on class demonstrations or experiments that are merely directed by teachers so that students themselves explore the main concepts, leaving validity to be endorsed by the teachers as they progress. Wilcox goes on to say that these are “opportunities for studentsp to experience insightful moments when they see for themselves what is right or wrong, how something works, or what the solution to a problem might be” (pp.53-56).

In her booked entitled “To Move, to Learn”, Kate Witkin (1977) shows the process of discovery learning through the example of a child. She says, “The joy of discovery generally shows up in a child at a relatively early age” (p.35). She brings to the reader’s attention how a baby who learns how to walk or move for the first time, reacts. In doing this, Witkin mentions that the baby is engaging in discovery learning where the joy of the discovery is actually felt. She adds, “Through knowledge of himself, the child can begin to understand and function in the world around him. If the child is secure in that understanding, his learning may be a great deal easier” (p.47). She remarks, “The child who is comfortable with himself is ready for the socialization of the classroom, ready to be a contributing member of his peer group, his family, and his small society” (p.49). Also, she explains that socialization skills are enhanced through group sessions involving the use of movement as this encourages interaction. Thus Witkin shows how discovery learning is a natural and essential process for an individual’s personal growth and development.

As such, the workshop method is highly complementary to the theory of discovery learning as its approach involves the participation of all students. For example,

the animal, emotions and rhythm guessing games allow the students to discover of a range of concepts in Bharata Natya. In the animal game for instance, the students watch the animator depict through movement, some animals found in India. They are then asked to guess them and come up with their own interpretations of other animals, thereby stimulating their creative faculties and allowing them to discover for themselves the many messages which their own hands and bodies can convey. In the emotions guessing game, they are asked to show a particular emotion and use their facial and bodily expressions to convey the feeling. A short story then follows in which the animator depicts nine emotions and asks all students to participate by following along, once again using their own creativity and encouraging them to discover their emotions. Finally, the segment on rhythm forces students to discover the patterns of various beats which they must follow by clapping and then produce themselves for the animator to follow. This part of the workshop allows students to discover how beats in Bharata Natya are created as well how concepts in math are used to form the intricate patterns. These games are only a few examples of how discovery learning as a theory in education can support the use of the workshop method introduced here for a more inclusive traditional curriculum.

Critical Thinking

The theory of critical thinking is yet another aspect which complements the workshop method presented. Critical thinking philosophy has been presented in a variety of ways, however its essence conveys the importance of thinking, which results in decisions or judgments. Therefore the student is encouraged to go beyond the ordinary

learning experience to the process of analytical thinking resulting in a belief which is based on reasoning.

A key figure in the philosophy of education, Israel Scheffler's (1995) perspective is that, "Teaching focuses on *reasons* and *rationality*: The teacher tries to get the student to believe *for good reasons*, and the teacher must do so in ways that respect the student's independent judgement" (p.144). In other words, Scheffler points to the importance of students creating an independent rationale.

As Lipman (1987) put it, "We want students to think for themselves and not merely to learn what other people have thought" (pp. 38-43). He goes on to state that critical thinking is also "sensitive to context" in that it requires the student to develop good judgment based on proficient reasoning skills which factor in to the context of a situation. An example that Lipman gives is an overgeneralization of a nation's voter preferences based on a small sample of individuals with homogeneous occupations and ethnic backgrounds, evidently a misrepresentation of the population as a whole. Therefore, if context is included as a part of the thinking process, the outcome must be more holistic and accurate. Another interesting aspect he illustrates with the help of a table is the comparison between ordinary and critical thinking. Here are a few of his examples:

| Ordinary Thinking | Critical Thinking/Reasoning |
|--------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Guessing | Estimating |
| Grouping | Classifying |
| Believing | Assuming |
| Supposing | Hypothesizing |

Paulo Freire (1982), an influential twentieth century writer on theory and practice of education said that the educational process should be an joint exchange between teacher and student in which both learn. He said, “This does not mean that the teacher should deny her or his role as the one who conducts the process of learning. But the process must be based on critical dialogue and mutual knowledge creation” (p.128). In order to fulfill this goal of education, a more inclusive method of instruction must be employed. That is, the traditional textbook and lecture centred approaches in which the teacher’s voice is dominant should not be enforced.

This brings us to the workshop approach, using the performing arts with specific reference to Bharata Natya. Although it follows a rigid structure, at the same time it also offers great scope for individual creativity and expression. The interpretive aspect of the dance allows for creative, spontaneously derived experiences to be projected as the story is being conveyed to the audience. The dancer is therefore encouraged to use a refined thinking or sound judgment to draw the spectators deeper into the world which is being created at the very time of performance. Also, another point of comparison between the theory of critical thinking and that of the performing arts workshop approach is that in the

interpretive items mentioned above, the dancer is seen depicting a story which is typically found in the ancient Hindu scriptures and context is of extreme importance as the audience is taken back into a period of history which can only be experienced through the dancer's interpretation. The essence of these items is therefore only understood if a spectator is able to exercise critical thinking based on contextual information provided by the dancer. That is, the roles are reversed so that the audience, while viewing the performance, is now made to think critically and understand or interpret the story in a sound and thought-through manner.

Cooperative Learning

Cooperative learning as the name suggests is a theory based on the concept of group interaction and teamwork where individuals get together and share their ideas or knowledge, relative to guidelines provided by the instructor. The individuals have a common focus and rely on each other's input to arrive at the final objective of their work. In an article by Millicent S. Simmons (1997), of the Academy for Academics and Arts in Huntsville Alabama, group activities are said to "encourage critical thinking and problem-solving" (p.352). Simmons explains that each individual has the responsibility to accomplish a set task which encourages students to learn to cooperate with their peers and teachers, in a fun and low stress manner.

In the words of Roger T. & David W. Johnson (1991), "Cooperative learning promotes creative thinking by increasing the number of ideas, quality of ideas, feelings of stimulation and enjoyment, and originality of expression in creative problem solving" (p.40). They go on to explain that students are "triggered by the ideas of others",

therefore through various perspectives that emerge from a group individual creativity is enhanced.

In dealing with students with disabilities, cooperative learning helps to build a sense of self-confidence as it minimizes the opportunity for competition. In the words of Alice Udvari-Solner (1992), "A student who supplies the correct answer, essentially eliminates the opportunity for other students to participate. The most gregarious, outgoing, and assertive students are those who benefit most from this arrangement" (p.60). She goes on to say that students with disabilities often have difficulty sitting for extended periods of time which makes it difficult for them to remain focused in the context of a larger group.

The results are therefore positive from many points of view. Taking this one step further, cooperative learning is a skill which facilitates the individual's future ability to work successfully, either within a company or independently as both involve interaction with other individuals. Therefore cooperative learning is a skill which should be honed at an early age and emphasized through complementary activities such as workshops in the performing arts. This approach to teaching and learning is a simple way to capitalize on the ability of students to work as a team. An example is a Bharata Natya workshop where students work together to come up with the answers to various games which are played or when the animator asks specific questions related to the students' individual experiences which are shared in this open group forum. The possibilities are endless as the activities can be modified to include participation of the class as a whole or of smaller groups of students, depending on the teacher's or animator's objective of the activity.

Therefore the use of workshops as a teaching tool provides yet another way of supporting group interaction and cooperative learning.

Theory of Multiple Intelligences

The theory of multiple intelligences was first publicly introduced in 1983 by Howard Gardner (1987) and has since been referred to by many scholars in various fields of education and psychology. The theory holds that intelligence cannot simply be based on the Stanford-Binet or Weschler tests, even though this type of intelligence evaluation is still used by some as a primary indication of one's IQ. Gardner referred to this assessment of individuals' minds as one-dimensional. He then introduced a more complete view known as the concept of seven intelligences, all equal in value. They are:

- 1) Linguistic
- 2) Logical-mathematical
- 3) Spatial
- 4) Musical
- 5) Bodily-kinesthetic
- 6) Interpersonal
- 7) Intrapersonal

Gardner (1987), held that IQ testing and SATs were successful for those strong in linguistic and logical-mathematical skills but stated that once the individual was accepted into a prestigious college, success would depend on the extent of use and possession of all other intelligences. Spatial intelligence according to Garner is the ability to form a

mental model of a spatial world and operate or maneuver using that model. Musical intelligence allows one to organize sounds into musical or rhythmic patterns. Bodily-kinesthetic intelligence according to Gardner is the ability to solve problems or fashion products using one's whole body or parts of the body. This intelligence is often seen as a talent or a gift one possesses. Interpersonal intelligence is the ability to understand others and work cooperatively with them and finally intrapersonal intelligence is the ability to reflect on one's inner self and use that model to operate effectively in life. Gardner stated that, "Providing students with opportunities to represent and explore a given topic in many ways, in part by engaging a range of intelligences, fosters understanding" (p.276). Gardner focused on the need for schools to develop these intelligences which could also be subdivided reinforcing that intelligence is much more comprehensive and inclusive a notion than educational institutions acknowledge it to be.

In the book entitled, "Teaching With the Brain and Mind", author Eric Jensen (1998), provides a concrete example of how certain countries namely, Japan, Hungary, and the Netherlands, remain in the top rankings for science and math scores. He says that all three countries, "...have intensive music and art training built into their elementary curriculums." He adds, "In Japan every child is required to play a music instrument or be involved in choir, sculpture, and design" (p.87).

In this context, the workshop approach to teaching and learning touches on all these aspects and can serve as a concrete tool to help hone these skills or intelligences. In fact the performing arts provide many avenues for the transmission of intelligences such as musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, logical, interpersonal and so forth with a wide scope for certain areas to be expanded upon according to the educational and curricular

goals set by the instructor. The workshop method therefore presents yet another way to fit a popular educational theory and make the outcome a success for both teachers and students.

Chapter Four

Benefits of a More Inclusive Curriculum: The Views of Two Focus Groups

Traditional teaching methods emphasize textbooks and/or lectures as a major source of knowledge and give little consideration to the interactive aspect of the student-teacher relationship. This monotonous manner of instruction is not conducive to the needs of a culturally diverse student population, nor does it provide students with a stimulating learning environment, where students are encouraged to have a voice. This study provides a concrete example of how workshops in the performing arts can facilitate the transmission of a given culture's traditions and values while providing educators with a creative and interactive approach to teaching. Indeed these workshops demonstrate how the traditional method of instruction, which uses the textbook as a main or unique teaching tool, can be supplemented or enhanced by incorporating the workshop approach introduced here.

Given the wealth of performing arts which exist today, educators are free to choose what best suits the learning environment they are in. In other words, there is a great deal of flexibility and diversity in the workshop approach, which makes it easy for both teachers and students to adapt. In fact, the benefits of introducing workshops in the performing arts as a complementary approach to the traditional method of instruction are numerous. Some benefits are:

- Breaks the monotony of teaching and learning
- Creates social and cultural awareness
- Helps to understand the "other"

- Creates student empowerment
- Reflects authenticity
- Encourages student interaction and group cooperation
- Easily accommodates students' diverse learning needs
- Introduces new mediums of communication and expression
- Introduces new methods of communication for the learning disabled
- Improves cognitive skills and encourages "neurobics"
- Introduces a possible complement to the drug "Ritalin"

Breaking the Monotony

One of the challenges that teachers are faced with is ensuring students are interested in the material being communicated to them. Capturing the attention of students and then sustaining it is only possible if they are motivated to learn. One of the drawbacks of textbook-centered teaching is the monotony it presents for both, students and teachers. This way of instruction is sometimes referred to as the "banking concept", where teachers "deposit" information into the minds of students, expecting them to reproduce the textual information without additions of their own (Freire, 1970). In such a scenario, students' individual thought processes are not stimulated, thereby stunting their creative capacities. By contrast, the performing arts not only break the monotony of teaching and learning by introducing an alternate method of instruction but also encourage students to think for themselves. This visual and interactive workshop approach presents a far more effective way of absorbing and retaining information. Also, workshops in the performing arts present a rather flexible teaching tool so that it may be

combined with textbook instruction to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the material being presented.

Creating Social and Cultural Awareness

Through exposure to a variety of cultural aspects that a workshop in the performing arts can present, students become more aware of the social and cultural biases or discriminations that may exist. Be it the stereotypes perpetuated by ignorance of cross-cultural customs or alienation, which different cultural groups may be subject to, workshops in the performing arts provide a medium through which students can familiarize themselves with the diversity that the society around them encompasses. This cross-cultural exchange reveals the unknown about various ethnic groups and sensitizes students to their existence. Also, through this experience of sharing, a greater social awareness is created within the students as well as the teachers.

Understanding the “Other”

As students engage in cross-cultural learning, some grow to understand and accept ‘difference’ among their peers and learn to respect diverse cultural groups. Therefore, through exposure to cultural difference, there is an understanding and acceptance of the *other* so that the emphasis is placed on the ‘similarities’ between groups. Furthermore, this understanding and acceptance replaces the need to “tolerate” the *other*. Students thereby learn to interact and communicate with students from various cultural backgrounds, exchanging experiences and appreciating them so that they may coexist and become inclusive, dissolving any notion of the *other*.

Creating Student Empowerment

When students are encouraged to share their personal experiences with peers in the context of a classroom there is often a sense of pride and empowerment attached to the exchange of ideas. They are recognized as individuals rather than as one in a group of many, which generates a feeling of increased self-worth as their identities are being reinforced. In introducing workshops in the performing arts to the classroom one can generate an element of excitement, creating positive vibrations within the learning environment. For instance, music or drama can easily be used to help students discover their voices and dance can be used to encourage the discovery of their inner voices while dance can help to express one's emotions. This process is not as easily achieved when dealing with teaching methods in which emphasis is placed on the instructor's or narrator's voice instead of that of the student. For instance, in a textbook or lecture centered approach to teaching, there is one voice in particular which dominates, that of the teacher, whereas the performing arts allow for individual expression to be shared. In fact, the participation of students is vital to their feeling empowered. It increases self-esteem and while encouraging a spirit of sharing.

Reflecting Authenticity

Many educators depend on written texts to teach students about cultural diversity. In doing so, many of the nuances are often lost. That is, a text is limited by the words it uses to describe aspects of a given culture and thus risks the possibility of misrepresenting the associated values, beliefs or customs. There is a lack of tangible

transmission of the culture's essence or authenticity which could be significantly increased through the more complete workshop approach. Workshops in the performing arts allow for a sensory experience – be it through the sound of a culture's music, the tasting of unfamiliar foods, exposure to different languages, witnessing a variety of foreign customs and so forth. In other words, there is an element of authenticity and dynamism, which escapes a text but which could be made easily accessible through animators representing the cultural tradition being explored.

Student Interaction and Group Cooperation

The performing arts generate a spirit of inclusivity and group collaboration. For instance in dance, group choreography and team work force individuals to interact harmoniously. Dance workshops where students are encouraged to share their experiences with their peers and engage in helping one another, a spirit of group cooperation is built. When considering drama, aside from a monologue, there is always more than one person involved in the process since even a monologue involves a responsive audience. Using the classroom as a forum in this context only emphasizes this aspect of student interaction. With respect to music, schools often engage group collaboration through choirs or through instrumental bands, reinforcing once again the spirit of teamwork.

Easily Accommodates Students' Diverse Learning Needs

In the case of the performing arts, the potential for varying the method of instruction is great, therefore the diverse learning needs of students are easily

accommodated. For instance, dance involves a sensory experience in which the tactile, visual, auditory and oral senses are stimulated thereby allowing the instructor to use a method of instruction most effective for the student. Or, another example may be a student who responds more easily to sound than to imagery the teacher may choose to use music rather than dance as a medium to convey the same message.

In other words, the performing arts allow for a degree of flexibility in terms of instruction and can therefore provide teachers with an effective method of knowledge transmission to accommodate the diverse needs of students.

Introducing New Media of Communication and Expression

The performing arts provide teachers and students with a new medium of communication to be implemented in the mainstream curriculum, which can serve as an alternative to simple dialogue. This opens up many more channels through which students are able to express themselves. Also, it enables students to be more comfortable in public domains. For instance, when making presentations in front of an audience as the performing arts imply, there is a level of confidence which is built therefore the ability to interact in society is facilitated. Furthermore, it serves to refine interpersonal skills, which may be an asset for students who are otherwise introverted.

New Venues for the Learning Disabled

In discussing the potential for countering learning disabilities such as ADD/ADHD through workshops in the performing arts, the question of this tool's effect on other learning disabilities arises. If one explores the multiple ways in which the

performing arts can contribute to learning (i.e. through mind-body coordination, rhythmic precision, dramatic expression etc.), this evidently represents a valuable tool and becomes an added medium through which students can learn to communicate. Furthermore, because of the various types of performing arts that exist today, this method of expression becomes widely accessible and can be modified to suit the individual needs of the students in question. For instance, one of the characteristics of autism is significant speech and language impairment. In this context, the medium of dance or of mime is extremely important to provide a different means of expression, through which the autistic student can communicate.

Another example where the performing arts present a bridge of communication for learning disabled students is that of music with respect to victims of *Williams Syndrome*. Those who suffer from this condition generally have greater difficulty with mathematical concepts and numbers, even for example at a basic level of telling time. However, those with *Williams Syndrome* are exceptional in responding to music. That is, they most often have an incredible talent for singing, reproducing difficult notes and for memorizing music, even without being able to read it. Therefore, one can use music to teach concepts of mathematics through structured melodies, variations of rhythmic syllables and so forth. Therefore in dealing with learning disabled students, the performing arts can serve as a vital tool in ways that no traditional method of instruction would compare.

Cognition and Neurobics

The brain, like any other muscle in the human body, requires exercise to function properly. Reactions depend on the stimulus received by the brain. Also, sensory abilities are sharpened (visual, auditory etc.) and certain cognitive abilities (spatial abilities, coordination etc.), which are otherwise ignored are stimulated. In fact Dr. Harbans Nakra of Montreal who co-founded *La Fondation Kala Bharati*, has written a paper entitled, "Place of Dance in Basic Education" on this very subject in which he explains that neurotrophins or substances created in the brain have a significant impact on its functioning. He points out that in this connection Katz and Rubin (1999) have come up with the concept of neurobics or "exercises for mental fitness and memory-loss prevention". He further explains that they define a neurobic exercise as, "one that increases the neurotrophins in the brain and which, they think, will occur if the exercise involves one or more senses in a novel context and/or engages the doer's attention, and/or breaks a routine activity in an unexpected, nontrivial way" (p. 4)

Several other theories on the brain and cognition exist which can also be presented in this connection. A familiar example is the popular right-brain/left-brain theory, which attempts to explain how the two hemispheres relate to one another and the impact this has on one's behaviour. If the theory of neurobics holds true, then one simply needs to regularly exercise the brain in order to increase its strength so that some of the functions otherwise associated with either hemisphere of the brain, may be controlled through stimulus. The performing arts complement these theories since they serve as a stimulus for cognition, providing concrete ways in which to exercise neurobics – and introducing an added dimension for researchers and educators to consider.

Possible Complement to Ritalin

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, one of the growing difficulties in childhood education has been the widespread dependency on the drug “Methylphenidate”, more commonly recognized under the brand name “Ritalin”, prescribed to children with *Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD)*, or *Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)*. This now common learning disability has encouraged teachers and parents to remain alert to any early signs of ADD/ADHD and resort to Ritalin as treatment. This drug acts by stimulating the individual’s central nervous system. This stimulus to the brain and nerves is believed to increase alertness in the student so that the attention span is prolonged and learning is enhanced. Initially a drug requiring medical prescriptions, Ritalin is now available over the counter.

Children who are diagnosed with ADHD are considered hyperactive and/or disruptive, have minimal attention spans and are generally easily agitated. The inability of these children to focus on material being taught in class breeds frustrated teachers and equally concerned parents. The very well marketed solution to this problem is Ritalin. Bearing in mind that acute conditions of this behaviour do exist, Ritalin has also become the obvious solution to early signs of ADD/ADHD, which can be extremely vague given the very nature of active, often excited children. In some cases, Ritalin has become so common that it is imposed on children who may simply be reacting to a static classroom environment, which is not at all conducive to their dynamic needs. That is, the energy that children possess requires an outlet but when provisions for this energy are not made it is not unusual for children to develop hyperactive tendencies causing some to develop

disruptive behaviours. As this suppression of the child's active nature persists, they grow more impatient and become disenchanted with the classroom experience, causing them to lose all focus on what is being taught. The child is thus diagnosed with a learning disability.

The severity of Ritalin, as a solution to disorders, which impair learning is not advertised alongside the effects of this drug. In fact there are several harsh side effects which include: allergic reactions, swelling of lips and tongue, development of hives, difficulty breathing, irregular heartbeat, chest pains, high blood pressure, impaired concentration, unusual behaviour, confusion, severe fatigue, unusual bleeding, bruising, possible liver damage and yellowing skin. The "milder", more common side effects of Ritalin use: insomnia, nervousness, drowsiness, dizziness, headache, blurred vision, tics (uncontrolled, repetitive motion), abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, decreased appetite, weight loss, slower weight gain as well as slower growth. Drug dependency is also possible (Breggin & Cohen, 1999).

Given the effects of a drug as severe as Ritalin, it is crucial to study the possibility of alternatives. In this connection, the introduction of a teaching tool, which can treat and combat disorders such as ADD/ADHD is of extreme value. That is, a positive educational alternative to Ritalin with great potential may in fact be workshops in the performing arts, which serve as a venue through which students can channel their energies constructively, to heighten their educational experience. As explored in the earlier sections entitled "breaking the monotony", "introducing new media of communication and expression" and "group interaction and student cooperation", it is evident that the use of workshops can be introduced as a flexible tool, subject to

modification by the teacher, to be used in accordance with the learning needs (cross-cultural or otherwise) of the students in question. It is important to emphasize that although extremes of ADD/ADHD may require some prescribed medications, it is extremely important that educators ensure all possible solutions have been explored before resorting to a drug as severe as Methylphenidate. Excessive use of this drug may be creating unnecessary drug-addictions in children who are merely victims of a deficient classroom environment.

Results of Focus Groups

Focus Group #1: Teachers at a School of Bharata Natya

As stated in the methodology chapter of this study, the five members of the first focus group were given the choice of using a pseudo-name to protect their identities. They are, Aysha, Ariel, Dimitri, Jyoti and Louise. The age range of students taught by the teachers is from 4 to adult. As far as teaching experience, Aysha has taught for 17 years, Dimitri for 12 years, Jyoti for 10 years, Louise for 7 and Ariel for 3.

When asked what effects dance has had on their daily lives, the comments were as follows: Louise mentioned an increase in her ability to focus, concentrate while at the same time helping to cultivate a respect for other cultures. Dimitri's response was that it "definitely increases creativity" and added, "In my area of research that really helps". He went on to say that dance helps to think of others before yourself. Aysha mentioned the physical aspect and said that along with energy, flexibility and strength, it helped her overall with stamina and general well-being. She also added that the ability to perform in front of others helped her with public speaking which is an asset in the workplace. Ariel

was in agreement and added that discipline played a major role. She also mentioned that dance helps with one's ability to communicate with others as well as promotes a spirit of sharing. Jyoti mentioned how dance helped her learn how to interact well with others while also instilling in her the ability to plan her daily life which she applied to her work life as well. Other positive effects also echoed by the teachers were the ability to connect with an audience in various forums, the enhanced aptitude of logical thought as well as the increase in one's self-confidence.

When asked what types of rules students are asked to abide by, the answers were the following: Jyoti spoke of a special dress code for dance which was enforced. Ariel exclaimed, "punctuality!" and Dimitri added practice so that there is a follow up on what is learnt. Louise mentioned respect for the teacher and the tradition being an important rule. She added that the rules enforced in the dance school are very similar to those found in the context of any classroom. For instance the need for a notebook as mentioned by Jyoti as well as projects and assignments having to be on time which was noted by Louise.

Next, the teachers were asked if they had ever had to deal with disruptive students and if so how they handled the situation. Aysha gave the example of a disruptive student, a young girl of 4 years who had a tendency to "take over" the class by constant talk. When Aysha tried to teach a story through movement to the students, the young girl would continuously chatter. Aysha capitalized on this tendency and decided to focus on this student by asking her to read the story. The girl immediately quieted down realizing the attention was all on her and then commenced the story involving animal movements which allowed her to channel her energy in a productive manner. Jyoti's response was

more general in that she spoke of involvement with younger students and said that she is often faced with children who are easily distracted. She added that they have so much energy that the level of concentration is generally low. Through dance she has found ways to have them expend this energy through high intensity activities but also by varying the content so that the students remain interested. For example she mentioned how she makes them dance, sit, play a game, explore their kinesthetic and emotional awareness so that before they know it, an hour passes with no disruptions.

The question that followed addressed the role of discipline within Bharata Natya. The response Dimitri gave was first that he felt a reason there aren't so many disruptive students is because of the discipline which "forces them to conform". Aysha and Ariel agreed with his statement. He also added that there is a need for an understanding of a "hierarchy" or "chain of command" in order for a proper respect and flow of information takes place. Louise noted that because of the high level concentration and focus required for Bharata Natya, discipline becomes a prerequisite for being able to advance in level. Jyoti added that teachers themselves must also be disciplined so that they can transmit the discipline they expect of their students.

The next two questions were based on the teachers' participation in workshops conducted in Quebec schools. All except Ariel had taken part in this activity. When asked how large a group as well as the general age ranges of the students, Louise mentioned having dealt with anywhere between 15 and 60 students, ages 10 and up. Dimitri's experiences were mainly with high school students from 50 to 100 at a time. Aysha had conducted workshops for students in grade 4 and 5 as well as a class of grade 7 students. Her groups were around 35 students. Jyoti recalled two experiences with

students in grade 6 and grade 9 respectively. When asked to describe the students' reactions to the workshops, the answers were as follows: Louise spoke about a school with a program called *Giant Steps* for which she had to conduct a workshop directed towards "developmentally and intellectually challenged kids". She described their reaction as "phenomenal" and drew special attention to what she called the "emotional aspect". She also mentioned that the teacher and chaperone in the class had never seen the kids so responsive before. She said, "After I did the doll story and had them do a little bit with me, they even wanted me to take the story and use it as part of their daily or weekly routine to bring the kids a little out of their shell. So it was an incredibly high level response." She added that she noticed a fascination with the use of gestures and felt the students always seemed interested in the storytelling aspect using a language of dance. In another context Louise added that she found it interesting to challenge students who did not seem as intrigued and found ways to relate it to their interests as for example with rap music and drawing parallels between the beats in rap with the beats in dance. As for Aysha's comment on the reactions, she made a more general observation and mentioned that the overall responses to the workshops had been positive. Jyoti remarked on the power of the salutation or *pranam* which in a class of 60 was enough for two people to draw their attention and make them quiet. She added that the students seemed interested from the onset and had no difficulty participating. She also said that they often had many questions to ask and were generally quite receptive to the workshops.

The next question asked the teachers if they thought the inclusion of workshops in the performing arts as a tool for education would be useful. The discussion which

followed was rather lengthy and intense as Dimitri had some concerns which he voiced.

Here is the discussion as it took place:

Aysha: I guess I can start. Yes I do. I think that it would be useful to bring it into the school curriculum. Anything classical oriented (dance), serves as a tool to train the mind. As an example I remember that there was a study conducted at McGill University for children who were having difficulty in the math area. They each received a piano to train with during the period of their math term. The study showed that they were able to perform better because of their learning a classical instrument. I see classical dance to be the same kind of tool. We see this when we teach the class, when a student comes in at the beginning of a their dance career or even their dance learning they may be at a certain level of concentration and then by the end of the session or even a few classes later, you can see that their way of being in the class changes and so I think it (dance) serves as a tool to develop the mind so that you're able to concentrate – even in education - studies basically.

Dimitri: I wonder how you would decide which performing arts to teach in the schools though. Indian dance gets a lot of attention when we do the workshops, but I don't know how many parents would be willing to send their kids to do it you know, along with math and science.

Aysha: Right, that's why I'm saying classical.

Dimitri: Yeah, I mean maybe it doesn't matter at all, maybe any classical dance has the same benefit.

Jyoti: But if the exposure to a classical form of art can have the benefit or provide the benefit of ameliorating a child's way to study or making them a little more intuitive or smarter you don't necessarily have to choose. Wouldn't it be wise to vary that from classical music to theatre to...

Dimitri: But I think dance, especially our dance is culture specific. I mean if you have a student who is Egyptian, they may not be willing to learn a dance which is so culture specific to India whereas math or science is not really specific to any culture at all.

Jyoti: Ok but what about creative dance, how culture specific is creative?

Dimitri: But then you're getting away from classical and stuff...

Louise: Yeah but Bharata Natya is not...you can't say that is absolutely...yes it originates from a specific culture but that doesn't keep people from understanding it or taking part in it or appreciating the lines, beauty the story...yes a specific culture might object to the religious aspect of the dance, that might come into play but you don't always have to introduce that aspect as a required element within dance. I mean

I've been lucky to be exposed to all the performing arts and you know it's like you've got this muscle that's been flexed, if it's not flexed you're not going to use it and you become open to so many more different things and a different level of awareness

Ariel: And it doesn't just have to be Bharata Natya. You can choose a whole range of cultures you touch on and you don't have to emphasize one of them, you can give an equal chance to everything so that it doesn't seem culture specific cause I'm sure that an Egyptian person would love if you did Egyptian dance one day and Indian dance the next day.

Jyoti: Just the exposure of a form of dance. There's a difference in exposing a child to music and a difference in exposing your child to theatre right, where you're using different skills.

Ariel: Cause right now they have gym and music, I mean I know in elementary school at least that they all go through this and it touches on everything, it touches on your spatial intelligence...

Jyoti: That's it!

Ariel: And your musical intelligence. Any dance, not just Bharata Natya.

Jyoti: When a child is developing, you want to develop their socio-motor skills, you want to develop their emotional behaviour and you also want to make them aware too of their social and interactive culture right? Why does one send their child to school? It is to learn the basic structure, but from that point beyond, if the child is well-skilled in the workplace when they go and graduate and get a job, they interact better, maybe, I mean from the earlier on questions, how has dance helped us, how have we developed, we answered those questions and we know what dance has given us, this can therefore be transmitted to a child and they can develop these skills from a young age as 4 or 5. We have to exercise those skills, it's very important. Rather than having a child come home and start playing video games, what about an hour's practice of dance or an hour's practice of a classical instrument or something?

Louise: If you look at it, in a classroom setting not everyone learns the same way so you've got kids who listen, they are oral oriented, they will listen and then think about, you have those who are visually oriented so they are going to look at things, you have those who are physically oriented therefore they like to move and we see this especially in dance, where some like to watch and so they'll say "do this so I can watch and then try" or "let me listen to you and hear what you're doing so that I can try it" kind of thing, so if you bring that into the classroom, if someone's having problems with math, 4+2, well you can bring in the beats, "ok 4+2", you clap it out so then you have the oral or you have the physical, "here are your fingers, let's bring that into play", or your body, so dance or any classical music can be brought in to help the person learn in the manner that is most effective for them.

Finally, when asked what impact, if any they thought this tool would have on students with learning disabilities, the following discussion took place:

Aysha: I think it would have a positive impact actually because when they have a learning disability they have to basically adapt to be able to learn. For workshops such as these types of workshops, you have the ability to maneuver the way in which the workshop is conducted to be able to adapt to their learning disability and to focus on the aspect of what their disability is. So I would think that it would have a positive impact and be a very different way of teaching. Mind you in schools where they have children with learning disabilities there are very creative ways to figure out how to help them learn so this to me is a just another creative way of making sure they grasp.

Dimitri: I would think it's positive but I'm just not sure that students with learning disabilities wouldn't also have disabilities learning performing arts.

Louise: I think also it can be very positive and for some who are at an acute stage or those having difficulty participating with others might help to bring them out of that shell or depending on their disability would bring them back into the interaction phase and once they start interacting more with others, then you can work on other aspects. So there are different ways that dance can sort of come into play helping those with disabilities whether physical or mental in any sense and it can make them more responsive to what you're trying to teach them. If it's just a question of ok let's do 15 minutes of dance or singing before we head into math well maybe that will make them more responsive to math.

Ariel: They would probably feel more confident too maybe if they're successful in doing something, anything, if you teach them something and they respond to it then they might feel more comfortable or confident to tackle other things in the future.

Jyoti: And my take on exposing children to workshops in dance is positive first of all, but I think it needs to be regular. If our 1 hour workshops twice a week were offered let's say then that would give the students enough exposure to the long run to apply to math for instance but it needs to be on a regular basis.

Focus Group #2: Volunteers with ADD/ADHD children

The four participants of the second focus group were also given the option of choosing a pseudo-name in order to conceal their identities. The participant volunteers

with ADD/ADHD children were: Bill, Chucky, Lois, and Jane. The first question asked why they each decided to volunteer with the ADD/ADHD children. Jane's response was that her interest was in working with children, not necessarily those with ADD/ADHD. Chucky said that he had known the children had some "problems" but did not know that meant ADD/ADHD. Lois' response was the same as Chucky's only she knew the kids would be in a foster home. Bill added that he knew the kids needed special attention.

When asked to describe their experiences in dealing with the children Chucky said, "I was a little more confident going in than when I first saw the kids because I didn't realize the extent to which they would be out of control". He added that simply getting the children together into the same room was quite the challenge. He also mentioned how discouraged he became and wondered how the situation could possibly be dealt with. Lois found that her biggest challenge was having some sort of control over the kids. Jane said she agreed with the responses and added that the children seemed to be seeking attention and would want to do things "just to stand out". Chucky then noted that another major challenge was keeping the children interested in the activities since their attention span was only a few minutes. Lois mentioned it was difficult for her to distinguish between them "just being kids" and their hyperactive behaviour surfacing. Jane added that the balance of "putting one's foot down" versus allowing the children to express their thoughts was difficult. Bill's feeling was that discipline was quite a challenge to face.

The next question asked the volunteers to describe the average attention span of the children and both Jane and Lois were quick to respond in saying "very short". Chucky's added that the most difficult part for the children was when they had to watch

others. For instance, he mentioned that the child he worked with was eager to participate in a given activity but in the planning phase of the activity, the child was very restless and was therefore reluctant to build on an idea. Chucky went on to say that the child just could not wait to go to the final phase of the activity.

The question that followed addressed the activities that were carried out with the kids. This was linked with a question inquiring about the activities that went well versus those that did not go so well. Jane mentioned the “flag game” in which the kids were asked to guess the name of the country when a random flag was raised by a facilitator at the front of the class. Jane mentioned that she felt this game went particularly well since the children’s interest was maintained and the fact that they were encouraged to voice their opinions was what she felt appealed to them most. She also added that these children love to perform and love to act since they are free to use their imaginations and get others’ attention at the same time. Lois mentioned that she felt the “memory game” involving their drawing of animals on cards stimulated quite a bit of interest as the children were then asked to place the cards face down and use their memories to recall where each animal had been placed. This she said gave them a reason to focus so that they could not disrupt the class as easily. Lois added that the game involving the creation of business cards was not as successful. She explained that the theme of ambition was well received but that when it came time to make their business cards there wasn’t as much interest generated in them. However, she added that when they were asked to enact the roles of the occupation they chose, the response was very positive and the enthusiasm had returned. Chucky’s opinion was that any activity involving enactment on the part of the children worked extremely well. He mentioned that he noticed a “strange

transformation in the child when they were actually performing because the focus was almost 100%". Another activity Chucky felt was successful was when the children were asked to enact a nonviolent superhero. He remarked on the fact that in spite of the many rules and restrictions placed on them, the kids were so enthusiastic that they were able to focus and come up with the desired results. In fact, he added how one child in particular stopped to ask if he could something in particular, almost as if he were confirming the rules which Chucky labeled "so out of character" for these ADD/ADHD children. He exclaimed, "It was as if they did not have ADD"!

When asked how the volunteers thought they could best capture the children's attention, Bill said the activities had to be well planned so that the younger ones could easily follow and the older ones could be stimulated enough through what he termed "curious thought". He added that the curious thought involved some sort of creativity. Further, Chucky added that the activity should be therapeutic so that the children actually calm down and aid their ability to focus. He also mentioned that art was a form of therapy and that intellectual activity such as playing chess was also a way to engage the mind. He pointed to a need for stress relief. Jane ended with the need for a group activity so that good behaviour is encouraged and so that the children feel rewarded by others giving them attention.

The next question asked how these children were different from other children, the responses were as follows: Lois and Jane felt that these kids were just like other highly active kids. Chucky on the other hand felt that the ADD/ADHD kids had a difficult time getting them to listen. Bill added that ADD is a function of environment

namely their surroundings at the home front or the food they eat. He felt these two factors contributed largely to hyperactivity in children.

The next question addresses the use of Ritalin and the opinions of the volunteers on this issue. The discussion which transpired as a result was rather elaborate. Here is what was exchanged:

Chucky: I don't think there is a need to give this drug. Actually I watched a documentary on it on TV for and against Ritalin. Parents saw a huge change in children's performance at school. They showed this kid's behaviour before and after and it was like completely a different person – as if it was not the same kid at all and it seemed like a very positive thing. I just don't believe that drugs have to be administered to anybody whether they are children or adults. I think that because as Bill says the environmental factors are what cause all these problems to begin with and has to be changed. It may be a longer, harder road and may not be a quick fix, but I think there are other therapeutic solutions. I don't believe in giving drugs to children.

Jane: I think it depends on the severity of the situation. There is a spectrum of symptoms and spectrum of cases from extreme to mild. So when you talk about therapy it depends on which part of the spectrum you are talking about. If there is a kid who has a serious chemical imbalance in their brain and depending on the age and environment – therapy depends on all these factors. I wouldn't say you should give Ritalin to any kid but I would say if the kid is really benefiting from it and is in a situation where the kid is very hard to handle, why not give him some. At the same time maybe you can do as Chucky says and work through the environment to help him out as well.

Lois: I think Ritalin or any other medication is only a short term solution it's not a long term one. It's sort of a band-aid on the problem but not actually solving it. If they are young (9-10), the worst thing is for them to become dependent on medication and when they grow older maybe they don't even need it. Maybe it'll calm them too much and they will go into depression.

Bill: I think Ritalin should be made available only through doctors and that there should be a program put in place where there is a whole environment check list so people know in depth the background of the family, the parents should be subject to a questionnaire. If anything is out of balance then those things are addressed and a plan is put in place. Only if the child poses a threat to others or themselves then medication should be involved only through a doctor's prescription.

Chucky: An alternative to Ritalin could be changing the environment or educating parents. If I had a child with ADD, I might be tempted to use Ritalin but I don't think

that's the right thing to do because I don't want the child to become dependent on it. I would go with other forms of therapy like art therapy – to get their mind engaged in some way.

Finally, the question to the volunteers was, "In your opinion, what impact if any, would the introduction of the performing arts have on the children?" Here are the responses:

Chucky: I think in some ways it is already being used – that's why in high schools you have gym or you have music or you have drama. It's not necessarily in a classroom but it's the same concept because you are not always focused on math, history etc. I think you have to have a way of sort of relaxing your mind in order to bring out the creative side. My sister-in-law's dance teacher once said that if you learn dance you will never have mental problems – and I really believe that. It's an extreme idea but I think there's a lot of truth to it because it is a form of therapy.

Jane: I think that it would definitely work. It would be an alternate form of expression, it would stimulate their imagination which is something they just love doing. And in the structure of a classroom where they have rules and stuff they would definitely learn more and in different ways than through lectures. They would learn more about themselves and about the way people perceive them. It would definitely be beneficial in that way.

Lois: I agree with what Jane has said – it's extremely important especially in courses like math or physics and chemistry because whether a child is ADD or not, these are important courses to learn and you want to keep their attention so they will keep focused.

Jane: I think it's good in classes where you have to memorize things like biology. There are different techniques you can use to know things, to memorize things – you can write a song on science and you could learn the song. Or even if you are doing, math, physics, or chemistry – presentations or something colourful – something they will like working on and get recognition for.

Chucky: I believe in creative teaching techniques because sometimes for example a person will tell you "this is the teacher that made me like economics", and the reason for that is that teacher wasn't just a teacher but a performer. They had this creative way of teaching – performing as a teacher in terms of being animated, sounding interesting, funny, making it more interactive – you are actually performing in front of your students whether you are a math teacher or a physics teacher you have to have that sort of spark where you capture the interest of the students. In some courses it might not be possible to incorporate performing arts per se, but I think there is an element of performance art that can be incorporated into your teacher style to make it more creative.

Bill: I think it's a challenge to touch on imagination and interest. Keeping the interest levels high by getting the point across while it touches the child's imagination. When it becomes a situation of memorization and regurgitation, then it's the lowest form of learning and unfortunately I think it's still pretty predominant, at least it was when I was learning. I think you need standardized tests to test the level of knowledge base, you need that, but over and above that you can get the knowledge transfer across but you can do it in creative ways. I think we should tap into as many ways as possible. If the professors take a so-called boring subject but show the value behind it by making it very relative to kids' imaginations, they'll learn it because they enjoy it. You can take a graph in economics and they will learn it because it represents something more than just an abstract concept – the more real, tangible, and fun it is, learning becomes a much more enjoyable experience.

Chucky: I think it could also be distracting – it all depends on the subject and the timing and the extent to which you use it. I think it's essential in small quantities – I guess you could call it doses.

Analysis of Results

The results of the two focus groups used in the study strongly support the many benefits listed at the beginning of this chapter. For instance, in the case of breaking the monotony of teaching and learning, focus group #1 mentioned how the concentration and ability of students to focus is facilitated by the diverse teaching methods when using the performing arts to transmit knowledge. Also, they noted that with this method, the interest of students is enhanced and easily maintained. Unlike the more traditional approaches to teaching where there is a lecture or textbook dominant curriculum, the performing arts allow for a more interactive session which encourages variety in the otherwise monotone environment. Also an element of dynamism is created which certainly helps to break the monotony for both the students and the teachers.

Another aspect which was echoed by the teachers in focus group #1 was the increase in social and cultural awareness among students. For instance, as they remarked with the Bharata Natya workshops, it is not just the dance that is exposed but rather the

source of the art itself which generates an array of questions resulting in an increased understanding of the social or cultural aspect of the tradition in question. This open dialogue helps to prevent prejudices towards cultural groups from forming as the spirit of cross-cultural exchange and sharing is encouraged. Taking this a step further, the notion of the “other” dissolves since the students have a chance to relate to each other by mutually exchanging their experiences in an open forum.

As for promoting student empowerment, the two focus groups mentioned how the students have a chance to voice their opinions while individual expression and creativity is encouraged. Also, it was mentioned that providing students with an opportunity to present in front of their peers helps increase the students’ level of confidence. This is a concrete way for students to have an identity and generate a feeling of self-worth since they are given a chance to contribute in a personal way which is not easily achieved when traditional teaching approaches are employed.

In terms of reflecting authenticity, focus group #1 referred to the workshops generating questions which are answered by the animator who has an in depth knowledge of the art in question, therefore an element of authenticity in response exists. Furthermore, with objects, costumes or other culture/tradition specific items are shown to students, the learning is sensory and thus tangible which exposes them to a more authentic learning experience.

With respect to student interaction and group cooperation, both focus groups touched on the fact that the students are encouraged to interact with one another and engage in a social activity where they are sharing an experience or helping one another, be it through the various games that are played or through the simple act of presenting a

movement in front of their peers. They also echoed the idea of having to learn to work in harmony with others as well as having to respect a peer's contribution thus group collaboration is easily reinforced.

As pointed out by a teacher in focus group #1, the performing arts allow for a variety of teaching methods to be employed so that the specific learning needs of students may be accommodated. One of the points made was that the experience is so complete that the material being communicated may be done in a physical, an auditory, visual or oral manner to help the student learn in a way most effective for them. Extending this to students with learning disabilities, both focus groups commented on the variety of skills which are enhanced, be it spatial intelligence, emotional intelligence, kinesthetic sense, motor skills or simply training and engaging the mind in activity to encourage concentration and discipline. In fact, in both focus groups there was a special mention of children with hyperactive tendencies and it is evident through the responses that the performance element helps to channel students' energies in a positive and productive manner. Also, from a language point of view, focus group #1 noted the fascination with gestures and creation of a new language with performing arts such as dance or theatre which can facilitate a student's ability to connect with others around them. This extends to enhanced cognition and the concept of neurobics as both groups touched on the exercise of the brain and strengthening of cognitive skills which any performing art that engages the mind can facilitate.

Finally, the use of Ritalin as addressed by the volunteers in focus group #2, was generally seen as unfavourable for a variety of reasons. For instance, the comments were that Ritalin is a short-term solution, if at all and that the possibility of drug dependency is

so high that the children risk becoming addicted. Another major point was that a child's environment may be a primary cause of ADD/ADHD in which case there should be an assessment of this where parents themselves are perhaps subject to a questionnaire so that the problem may be rectified before a drug is prescribed. Also, all of the volunteers expressed that hyperactivity can be diminished if not eliminated if the energies of the children are channeled through the use of performing arts in order to help them stay focused, engaged and interested all while help keeping them calm. In addition, the volunteers remarked that the need for attention is heightened in ADD/ADHD children so that if they are given a chance to perform in front of others and expend their energies at the same time, this would make for a much safer and long-term solution.

Thus as the expert opinions of the focus groups reveal there are several benefits of using the performing arts as an effective a tool for education. Also, the experiences analyzed in this section are firsthand and therefore have more weight than would a mere theoretical hypothesis of employing such an approach to teaching and learning.

Chapter Five

Exploring the Possibilities and Conclusions

The performing arts are multi-dimensional in that they involve the creativity of the artist, the expression of the performer, the reaction of the audience and the aesthetic value of the art form itself. This inherent dynamism has tremendous potential to engage all those involved so that regardless of the form, the chosen medium becomes a powerful tool to convey a greater message. In this connection the study now explores the possibilities that the performing arts other than dance, namely drama and music may present to education.

Drama

Verriour (1994), who has contributed much to the field of drama in education suggests that drama can be used as a symbol to convey a universal message. He maintains that in the context of a classroom, drama can allow students to increase their social awareness. For instance, role-playing allows for a greater, more intimate exposure to controversial issues, so that the moral dilemma being explored becomes somewhat personal. That is, the actor has a chance to recapture a moment and imbibe the associated feelings so that the experience becomes more tangible and perhaps more real. The dynamism of drama therefore encourages students to form opinions based on a more immediate experience, which is otherwise substituted by a static and impersonal text. A more concrete example of this phenomenon is provided here. Verriour uses an example

of a typical “Cowboy and Indian” story in which he forces students to become emotionally and intellectually involved. Through dramatic representation, the experience is relived more tangibly and the students are encouraged to form opinions based on their personal feelings as opposed to reading about the situation from someone else’s perspective. Also, it is a way to increase cross-cultural awareness as it forces students to see or feel from a character’s perspective rather than from a reader’s perspective which may be influenced by certain racial or cultural prejudices. While some may argue that using drama as a teaching tool is misleading exposing students to situations which are not real others argue that textual information may also reflect the bias of the writer. Furthermore, as a performing art, drama helps to recreate a period in history with all its nuances, which is otherwise rather limited through mere text. Finally, apart from a new medium through which language development is enhanced, drama can provide insight into the different lifestyles being depicted, all while continuously stimulating the various cognitive functions of the brain, as previously explained through the concept of neurobics.

Thus, a dramatic workshop can encourage the participation of each student as well as the freedom of individual expression while increasing cross-cultural understanding depending on the topic being enacted. This method of instruction may also create a more relaxed learning environment eliminating fear of censure, so that students feel less inhibited when expressing themselves.

Music

Music is a universal art which captures through sound and rhythm, the tradition or culture that it represents. However, in order to appreciate its place in education, one must first attempt to understand how music has shaped and influenced humankind throughout history. In the early 1900s music entered the media for entertainment purposes and eventually became one of the most crucial components of film, for its powerful influence on people. In 1927, sound was introduced in moving pictures, a powerful medium through which music would eventually disseminate. Before then it was the gramophone and radio, which had already permeated the homes of people and introduced them to a variety of musical programming. As the accessibility of music spread, the resulting categories of listeners which were formed allowed the entertainment world to begin using its power over the masses. The moods of a story could be enhanced through emotional tunes, creating an influential dynamism in a rapidly growing world of cinema (D'Oyley & Shapson, 1990). This evolution in music indicates the power that music as a performing art can have on students if used effectively as a teaching tool in the classroom. For one, it allows for a dynamic expression of one's voice in contrast to a more traditional curriculum which does not maximize the use of a student's voice. In terms of cross-cultural understanding, music conveys messages in a powerful manner due to its many components such as the words, the language and the feeling with which it is being expressed. A concrete example of how this can be used in the classroom is for instance in a History lesson. As in the case of drama where an actor can capture or relive a moment, music allows us to transcend time and capture through voice, words, or expression a moment in history. Thus due to the several components of music which

render a subject more tangible, the impact of song can be far greater than that of textbook or lecture-type knowledge transfer, which relies primarily on reading information.

Conclusion

The intent of this exploratory study was first to research the effects of workshops in the performing arts as a tool for a more inclusive traditional curriculum, and second to explore the use of the performing arts workshops as a possible complement to the drug Ritalin in the case of children suffering from ADD/ADHD. A personal experience with the classical art of Bharata Natya was used as a concrete point of reference to illustrate ways in which success of this approach to education can and has been achieved.

The structure of a workshop was outlined to demonstrate the flexibility of this approach to teaching and learning. Also, the experiences of two focus groups were analyzed in order to enhance the theories presented in this research with practical findings.

In view of the scope of this study and given the positive findings, a number of possibilities for future research exist. They are:

- Introducing the performing arts as a medium of communication for the learning disabled or students with autism
- Studying in greater depth the effects of Indian classical dance on cognitive development
- Exploring the performing or visual arts as a tool to facilitate multicultural education

- Studying in greater depth the effects of the performing or visual arts as a possible complement to the drug Ritalin on individuals with ADD/ADHD

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Appendices

Appendix A: Questionnaire for Focus Group #1: Teachers of Indian Classical Dance

- 1) What age group of students have you worked with in the context of the dance school?
- 2) How many years have you taught at the school?
- 3) How long have you studied Indian classical dance at the school?
- 4) What effects, if any, has your involvement with dance had on your daily life?
- 5) As a teacher, what effects if any, do you feel dance has had on your students?
- 6) Are there any rules the students must abide by? If so, what are they?
- 7) Have you ever had to deal with a disruptive student? If so, please explain how you handled the situation?
- 8) To what extent is discipline an integral part of this art form?
- 9) Have you ever conducted workshops in a Quebec school? If so, how many students were there and what were their ages?
- 10) If so, how would you describe the students' reactions?
- 11) Given your experience with dance would you feel it useful to include workshops in the performing arts as a tool for education?
- 12) What impact, if any do you feel this tool for education would have on students with learning disabilities?
- 13) Any further comments...

Appendix B: Questionnaire for Focus Group #2: Volunteers with ADD/ADHD children

- 1) What made you decide to volunteer with ADD/ADHD children?
- 2) Overall, how would describe your experience working with these children?
- 3) What are some of the challenges you have had to face working with these children?
- 4) How would you describe the attention span of the children?
- 5) What are some of the activities you have done with the children and how were they received?
- 6) In your opinion, which of the activities was most successful with the children and why?
- 7) In your opinion, how can one best capture the children's attention?
- 8) How do you find these children differ from other children?
- 9) What are your views on Ritalin?
- 10) In your opinion, what impact if any, would the introduction of the performing arts have on the children?
- 11) Any further comments...

Appendix C: Transcription of Focus Group Discussions

Focus Group #1: Teachers of Indian Classical Dance

- 1) What age group of students have you worked with in the context of the dance school?

Aysha: 4 to adult

Dimitri: 8 to adult

Ariel: 4 to 12

Louise: 7 to adult

Jyoti: 4 to adult

- 2) How many years have you taught at the school?

Louise: 7

Ariel: 3

Dimitri: 12

Aysha: 18

Jyoti: 10

- 3) How long have you studied Indian classical dance at the school?

Ariel: 11

Dimitri: 19

Aysha: 25

Jyoti: 17

Louise: 18

- 4) What effects, if any, has your involvement with dance had on your daily life?

Dimitri: As a teacher?

- 5) Jaya: Well first as a student and then as a teacher, what effects if any, do you feel dance has had on your students?

Louise: Helps to focus, concentrate and cultivate respect for other cultures.

Dimitri: Definitely increase creativity – in my area of research that really helps.

Aysha: It helps well-being and very good health (physical aspect). The Indian classical dance is very demanding in terms of movement, it requires a lot of stamina and energy along with flexibility and strength.

Ariel: Yeah I agree, the only other thing I can think of that's major, is discipline.

Jyoti: For myself I echo everything said. The social environment where I get to interact, helps with my own development.

Ariel: Makes you more open to other cultures, also with communicating with others.

Dimitri: It certainly helps to know how to think of others before yourself.

Jyoti: I have become more sensitive to you know, learn how to plan. It also helps with discipline this can be applied to my regular life at work.

Aysha: I think another aspect could be public speaking – it can also be brought into your career – team building, group building, being able to unite people and not having fear when doing presentations for example.

Ariel: Also regards for others – politeness, sharing.

Dimitri: As a teacher, I've been to so many presentations where they just aim for the smartest person and the rest of us are just trying to understand. If you can have the ability to gauge how much you are communication or connecting that helps the presentation that much more.

Aysha: It has also given me the ability to train other people – even in the technical world.

6) Are there any rules the students must abide by? If so, what are they?

Louise: Respect for the teacher and tradition. Basic manners.

Jyoti: There is a dress code (kurta pajama sash)

Ariel: Punctuality!

Louise: You see a lot of the same rules in a classroom.

Dimitri: There's an unsaid rule of practice also to follow up on what you've learnt.

Jyoti: Have a notebook.

Aysha: If they have missed a class, they have to contact somebody else in the class to catch up.

Louise: Projects have to be on time – the same things you'd see in a classroom.

7) Have you ever had to deal with a disruptive student? If so, please explain how you handled the situation?

Aysha: I have had to deal with a disruptive student. One I remember distinctively was a 4 year old child. She was very loud, aggressive, fidgety. She would take over the whole classroom. She would want to run around and would just talk in the middle of the class. Once when she wanted to start running, I actually turned that into a game because there was no way I was going to be able to bring her excitement level down from a high intensity... I tried to channel it and made it into an animal sequence actually. Then there was another time, with the same student. You would try teach a story, sitting down and she would just talk talk, yap yap to another child. So in that instance I asked her to tell the story or to make up a story so that the focus would go to her. And with a little guidance she was able to create her story.

Louise: I don't really think I have had to deal with a disruptive student but more with a student who had a hard time focusing. The kids might just nudge each other or stare off into space and you just try to bring them back

Jyoti: Could I just add a point. There have been times in the class that if I turn my back... within that moment, the children are now running all over and our studio is so huge that they start running all over and I completely agree with what Aysha has said

is that using that energy in dance. Children have so much energy, they have to expend it. So I find that varying that course or class helps a lot, making them dance, making them sit, play a game, making them get up, exploring their kinesthetic awareness, exploring their emotional awareness... and an hour passes by and I haven't had a disruptive student.

8) To what extent is discipline an integral part of this art form?

Dimitri: Well I think the reason why we don't have many disruptive students is because the discipline forces them to conform and not be so disruptive

Aysha: I agree

Ariel: Yeah, I agree

Louise: Well it depends if you're talking about discipline in terms of personal discipline... Bharata Natya requires an extreme level of concentration and focus and so you can't go to advanced levels unless you have that discipline.

Jyoti: And I think that the teachers have to be well disciplined themselves, so that they can emit / transmit the discipline they expect from their students.

Dimitri: Just to say that in our set up at least, the difference in age between teachers and students is very small. In some cases it's even negative – that the students are older than the teachers and so if you don't have that kind of discipline it could lead to a bad situation sometimes. The only way it works if there is an understanding of the hierarchy or chain of command. If there isn't that respect then the proper flow of information doesn't take place.

9) Have you ever participated in the project called "Window on the World"? If so, how many students were there and what were their ages?

Louise: Well, I participated and managed the projects so I've done a few. The students usually say 10 on up. How many? Anywhere from between 15, to I think I have had a group of 60 once.

Ariel: I haven't.

Dimitri: Well, I can remember they were last year high school students. Students wise I'd say about 50 to 100.

Aysha: Basically, the students were grade 4 and 5 and I believe grade 7. The classroom was about 35 students.

Jyoti: I have participated in the project. I have had a class where I was in a high school once where they merged two classes. I think they were grade 9 students, another time it was with grade 6 students.

10) If so, how would you describe the students' reactions?

Louise: I think it's border-line surprise. If you've done a few you see that you get pretty much "anything known to man". Some of them are wondering what's going on taking it all in. Some times you have the guys saying "I'm not doing that". I was fortunate enough to do one for a program in a school called "giant steps" – they deal with developmentally and intellectually challenged kids – their reactions were

phenomenal, especially the emotional aspect. The teacher and the chaperon that were there said that she had never seen them as responsive before. After I did the doll story and had them do a little bit with me, they even wanted me to take the story and use it as part of their daily or weekly routine to bring the kids a little out of their shell. So it was an incredibly high level response. I think there was a lot of curiosity – it's not just Indian dance we teach, but also Indian culture so there are a lot of questions that are asked like, what does the dot mean, why do you wear the costume. But I think everyone seems very fascinated with the gestures. They always seem very interested in how you would tell a story with dance language.

Aysha: I think overall there have been a lot of positive reactions.

Louise: I think that the format of the project is such that if you see a few (students) who are laid back, you are in a position where you can ask them, "ok, let's see you do it if you think it's so easy." You start to see their wheels turning – "wait a minute, this isn't so easy." Or for example, you can say if you like rap let's talk about the beats in rap.

Jyoti: The reactions from the recent ones that I recall I remember doing the pranam at the beginning. We were 2 and they were 60, and it was enough to make the class quiet. I found that interesting - they were interested from the get-go. Getting them to participate - they were are interested in participating. They were happy to hear the bells when we danced. Like Louise said, the rhythm. They were all interested, they had lots of questions and were quite receptive.

11) Given your experience with dance would you feel it useful to include workshops in the performing arts as a tool for education?

Aysha: I guess I can start. Yes I do. I think that it would be useful to bring it into the school curriculum. Anything classical oriented (dance), serves as a tool to train the mind. As an example I remember that there was a study conducted at McGill University for children who were having difficulty in the math area. They each received a piano to train with during the period of their math term. The study showed that they were able to perform better because of their learning a classical instrument. I see classical dance to be the same kind of tool. We see this when we teach the class, when a student comes in at the beginning of a their dance career or even their dance learning they may be at a certain level of concentration and then by the end of the session or even a few classes later, you can see their way of being in the class changes and so I think it (dance) serves as a tool to develop the mind so that you're able to concentrate – even in education - studies basically.

Dimitri: I wonder how you would decide which performing arts to teach in the schools though. Indian dance gets a lot of attention when we do the workshops, but I don't know how many parents would be willing to send their kids to do it you know, along with math and science.

Aysha: Right, that's why I'm saying classical.

Dimitri: Yeah, I mean maybe it doesn't matter at all, maybe any classical dance has the same benefit.

Jyoti: But if the exposure to a classical form of art can have the benefit or provide the benefit of ameliorating a child's way to study or making them a little more intuitive or smarter you don't necessarily have to choose. Wouldn't it be wise to vary that from classical music to theatre to...

Dimitri: But I think dance, especially our dance is culture specific. I mean if you have a student who is Egyptian, they may not be willing to learn a dance which is so culture specific to India whereas math or science is not really specific to any culture at all.

Jyoti: Ok but what about creative dance, how culture specific is creative?

Dimitri: But then you're getting away from classical and stuff...

Louise: Yeah but Bharata Natya is not...you can't say that is absolutely...yes it originates from a specific culture but that doesn't keep people from understanding it or taking part in it or appreciating the lines, beauty the story...yes a specific culture might object to the religious aspect of the dance, that might come into play but you don't always have to introduce that aspect as a required element within dance. I mean I've been lucky to be exposed to all the performing arts and you know it's like you've got this muscle that's been flexed, if it's not flexed you're not going to use it and you become open to so many more different things and a different level of awareness

Ariel: And it doesn't just have to be Bharata Natya. You can choose a whole range of cultures you touch on and you don't have emphasize on one of them, you can give an equal chance to everything so that it doesn't seem culture specific cause I'm sure that an Egyptian person would love if you did Egyptian dance one day and Indian dance the next day.

Jyoti: Just the exposure of a form of dance. There's a difference in exposing a child to music and a difference in exposing your child to theatre right, where you're using different skills

Ariel: Cause right now they have gym and music, I mean I know in elementary school at least that they all go through this and it touches on everything, it touches on your spatial intelligence...

Jyoti: That's it!

Ariel: And your musical intelligence. Any dance, not just Bharata Natya.

Jyoti: When a child is developing, you want to develop their socio-motor skills, you want to develop their emotional behaviour and you also want to make them aware too of their social and interactive culture right? Why does one send their child to school? It is to learn the basic structure, right but from that point beyond, if the child is well-skilled in the workplace when they go and graduate and get a job, they interact better, maybe, I mean from the earlier on questions, how has dance helped us, how have we developed, we answered those questions and we know what dance has given us, this can therefore be transmitted to a child and they can develop these skills from a young age as 4 or 5. We have to exercise those skills, it's very important. Rather than having a child come home and start playing video games, what about an hour's practice of dance or an hour's practice of a classical instrument or something.

Louise: If you look at it, in a classroom setting not everyone learns the same way so you've got kids who listen, they are oral oriented, they will listen and then think about, you have those who are visually oriented so they are going to look at things, you have those who are physically oriented therefore they like to move and we see

this especially in dance, where some like to watch and so they'll say "do this so I can watch and then try" or "let me listen to you and hear what you're doing so that I can try it" kind of thing, so if you bring that into the classroom, if someone's having problems with math, 4+2, well you can bring in the beats, "ok 4+2" you clap it out so then you have the oral or you have the physical, "here are your fingers, let's bring that into play", or your body, so dance or any classical music can be brought in to help the person learn in the manner that is most effective for them.

12) What impact, if any do you feel this tool for education would have on students with learning disabilities?

Aysha: I think it would have a positive impact actually because when they have a learning disability they have to basically adapt to be able to learn. For workshops such as these types of workshops, you have the ability to maneuver the way in which the workshop is conducted to be able to adapt to their learning disability and to focus on the aspect of what their disability is so I would think that it would have a positive impact and be a very different way of teaching. Mind you in schools where they have children with learning disabilities there are very creative ways to figure out how to help them learn so this to me is a just another creative way of making sure they grasp.

Dimitri: I would think it's positive but I'm just not sure that students with learning disabilities wouldn't also have disabilities learning performing arts

Louise: I think also it can be very positive and for some who are at an acute stage or those having difficulty participating with others might help to bring them out of that shell or depending on their disability would bring them back into the interaction phase and once they start interacting more with others, then you can work on other aspects. So there are different ways that dance can sort of come into play helping those with disabilities whether physical or mental in any sense and it can make them more responsive to what you're trying to teach them. If it's just a question of ok let's do 15 minutes of dance or singing before we head into math well maybe that will make them more responsive to math.

Ariel: They would probably feel more confident too maybe if they're successful in doing something, anything, if you teach them something and they respond to it then they might feel more comfortable or confident to tackle other things in the future.

Jyoti: And my take on exposing children to workshops in dance is positive first of all, but I think it needs to be regular. If our 1 hour workshops twice a week were offered let's say then that would give the students enough exposure to the long run to apply to math for instance but it needs to be on a regular basis.

13) Any further comments... "No" (Unanimous)

Jaya: Well thank you all very much...

All: thank you

Jyoti: let us know the outcome!

Focus Group #2: Volunteers with ADD/ADHD children

1) What made you decide to volunteer with ADD/ADHD children?

Jane: It wasn't really a question of volunteering with ADD children, I just wanted to work in a place where I could help children.

Chucky: I just knew that I would be working with children who had some problems but not necessarily ADD/ADHD.

Lois: The same as Chucky. I just knew it was working with kids in a foster home.

Bill: I agree with Chucky and Lois – I wasn't aware of the background of the children, I just knew that they needed special attention.

2) Overall, how would describe your experience working with these children?

Chucky: Actually I was a little more confident going in than when I first saw the kids because I didn't realize the extent to which they would be out of control. When I first saw them not wanting to even enter the room, standing off to the side – just getting them together into the same room was a huge challenge. At that point I was a little discouraged and much more nervous and things started going through my mind – how are we going to deal with the situation?

Lois: I found that the most difficult thing was having control over the kids because if you lose control over one child, then you lose control over everyone and it's hard to regain that control back – that's the challenge more than anything.

Jane: I agree with what Chucky said that the biggest problem was feeling like you were in control of the situation – you couldn't let the kids feel like you were intimidated by them. They are seeking attention and they want your attention, they want to do things just to stand out – I realized in each of the kids with these disorders they would each do their own thing to try and get everyone else's attention. So you end up with confusion – who is going to handle each child – you had to multitask.

We found it was much more constructive when we had something simple which they could focus on - one activity for the period.

Chucky: I was actually trying not to pay attention to unacceptable behaviour – ignoring it so that they don't get encouraged to continue not paying attention. I was trying to focus on the person facilitating the activities so that would get the children to also focus on the person.

Bill: We all had to learn as a group of adults to be very much in communication in dealing with the kids because if we don't have our story straight the kids pick up on it and exploit it. Then the activity is no longer productive as when you have an idea that grabs their attention.

3) What are some of the challenges you have had to face working with these children?

Chucky: For me the major challenge was in trying to keep them interested because at first they would be, but if we spent more than a few minutes on it their interest would sort of phase. I had to think of new things. Sometimes you run out of ideas and you have think of ways to keep their attention otherwise they lose focus and stop listening – the challenge for me was to keep them interested.

Lois: I would say it was making sure that you know the difference between when they are just being kids and when their hyper activeness is kicking in. Being able to differentiate between the two before things got out of hand.

Jane: The balance when you should put your foot down versus when you should let them express what they think. You don't want to put your foot down and keep them so under control – we had to find a balance with them and come to an understanding. But at the same time you have to be able to take charge.

Chucky: I didn't know when to stop talking because I figured if I stopped talking and giving them ideas, they would lose their interest and their attention would be diverted. I felt the pressure of trying to talk and give them ideas and I didn't know when to stop.

Bill: Learning how to discipline and not being scared to put your foot down as Jane was saying before. If you are not used to it then it's pretty hard to do.

4) How would you describe the attention span of the children?

Jane: Very short.

Chucky: Well I think it's hard for them to stay focused when other people – when I was there the activity was that each child gets to put on a performance while the others had to watch in the meantime. The hardest part was when they were actually watching – they would, the kid I was working with would easily lose focus. So it was very hard to keep them focused during the activities. Especially during the planning phase, he was very eager to start and didn't want to build on his idea very much. He had an idea and he just wanted to get it over with and do it. The challenge for me was to try and build on it to see how he could learn from it.

Lois: Much shorter than “regular” kids – in the initial phases they would easily lose focus and it was hard to bring them back. Now that they know who we are and we sort of earn their respect, even if they do lose focus, it's not as difficult to get them back on track.

5) What are some of the activities you have done with the children and how were they received?

Jane: Well there was the flag game which was like a game where they had to keep guessing and there was a facilitator at the front who would ask them to guess the country.

Lois: Also the memory game, a group activity where they were so focused on trying to find the right card that they weren't rowdy and they were focused on doing that task.

Chucky: As long as it's involving the children I don't think that it makes a difference because everyone in the audience watching the flags and trying to guess the country is

actually playing the game at that point and they're not just sitting there doing nothing, they're actually trying to guess so I think it should still work as long as they're involved.

6) In your opinion, which of the activities was most successful with the children and why?

Lois: I think the one that didn't work well was the business card maybe because at this point in time they can't really relate, at least the child that I was working with, because he's so young for him it wasn't such a big deal so he didn't want to put the effort into it. The theme I thought was really good because we were talking to them about ambition, that worked well because they all said that they wanted to be this or they wanted to be that, it got them thinking and made them realize well that's what I have to do now to get there but when it came to actually making the business card that was something that can't relate to so it didn't interest them? At least the child that I was working with. But then when we got to the part where you had to act it out, then the interest came back because that is something that they're interested in.

Chucky: What worked well when I was there, the part where they were actually performing, like the strange transformation in the child when they were actually performing because the focus was almost 100% when they were the ones performing not when they were watching others but when they were performing. It was as if they did not have ADD when they were doing the activity but watching was completely different because when they were doing they had a whole set of rules it was to enact a scene of a nonviolent superhero and so they had all these rules and restrictions but they were so focused and they were so enthusiastic about performing in front of others. Some were shy at first but once they got out of their shell they were so focused that the person who was in charge of the child, participating with them in the skit or the scene, if they didn't do something right the child would be sort of confused because they had a certain plan. It was out of character because when they didn't have anything to do or when they were watching other people they were so out of control but doing this activity, it was as if they had a certain plan and things had to go a certain way. Then the child that I was working with, he even stopped to ask if he could do a certain thing because he was trying to confirm the rules so the focus was there and it is so different from their usual personality when they have no structure, they're just sort of all over the place and just totally out of control. When they have a certain type of activity which involves a certain type of creativity that they enjoy using, they're very focused on the rules, the structure, so that really helps, to do something creative to do like the skit they were interested in with their own ideas so that it is not something they were told to do. And the idea of performing in front of other people, that was a lot of fun for them.

Bill: Some of the kids are really good artists so they would focus on that, on drawing just right and so that would be their focus. Then it becomes a question of what you were saying Chucky, the whole performance idea. They would enjoy performing or acting things out. They enjoy the attention it brings but they also get a kick out of it and they do focus so when they have something that they enjoy they do focus and that's the general rule for everybody and works with these guys.

Jane: I wasn't there for the memory game but I think the flag game worked well. They love performing and they love performing arts, they love acting thing out they love using their imagination and that's their best way of getting everyone's attention, if acting something out everyone's looking at them right and they have everyone's attention and they like that. They like talking that's why the flag game, I really felt it stimulated a lot of interest and imagination. like it worked well cause they had to use their minds to try to come up with the answers. And if they wanted attention drawn to them, they had to lift up their hand. They had to conform to some rules to get that kind of attention.

Lois: I think the memory game worked well because it was something so simple like in terms of drawing the animal it was simple enough for them to do and then like what Jane said, when it was their turn they knew that if they were quiet the rest of the time when it came to being their turn they would get the attention so they were conforming to the rules.

7) In your opinion, how can one best capture the children's attention?

Bill: It comes down to the individual child and what their interest in life is because you're trying to do a group activity so that they learn skills to interact with others-social skills but at the same time they have to have fun. So what's worked has been something easy enough for the youngest and complex enough to require intuition and curious thought to get everybody to like it enough to pay attention to the rules and explore that curious thought. That curious side usually involves something creative.

Chucky: I think if they are doing something that's sort of therapeutic that helps them calm down that'll help them focus in other ways as well. They have to be able to do something that they're so interested in or that they enjoy doing that they stop misbehaving. If they are not able to follow rules I think it's because they haven't had enough therapeutic activity that makes them feel good, that relaxes them. Art is known to be therapeutic, even acting is known to be therapeutic and even intellectual activities are also therapeutic for example playing chess because it stimulates the mind. It keeps your mind engaged and it can be intellectual too. I think that that helps the children to focus in the long run. That's the whole purpose of the activity we do with children with ADD is to give them something interesting to do so they feel they have engaged their minds and then that calms them down. When they are constantly doing nothing or doing something they are forced to do they need a break, and that break is not just lazing around but doing something creative to engage their minds so they feel calm and their stress is released.

Jane: In a group – if they contributed to the group activity, they would be rewarded as people would give them attention. They would continue with that good behaviour as Chucky noted.

8) How do you find these children differ from other children?

Lois: I personally don't feel that they are any different from other children. If you put any other 4 or 5 kids together and they are also active I'm sure it would be the same thing.

Chucky: I find that it's hard to get them to listen to you whereas with other children it's easier. With children I know who have not been diagnosed with ADD, I think that it's easier to tell them to do something. They listen to you whereas the children with ADD are not inclined to listen to you.

Jane: As Lois was saying, it gets a little overwhelming. There's not a very big difference between ADD kids and normal kids who are just active.

Bill: In my opinion ADD is more a function of environment and I think these children haven't been in an environment which is conducive to adhering to social norms and proper behaviour for children and it stems from in many cases difficult environments with respect to parents, families, also anything from the physical environment in which they live in to the food they eat on a daily basis. I think one thing is also if you look at the amount of sugar versus actual good food that the kids are exposed to – all these things wrapped together lend themselves to what I call hyper-activity. If the child is ADD, it is because they have excessive hyper-activity. From my opinion it's more environmental and that is the difference between so-called ADD kid and the "regular" kid.

Chucky: I find that normal kids have sort of natural sense of obligation to obey whereas kids that we worked with, with ADD, they feel no need to obey – if they don't feel like they should obey. It's very difficult because you constantly have to give them reasons about why they have to obey, whereas normal kids don't need as many reasons to obey.

9) What are your views on Ritalin?

Chucky: I don't think there is a need to give this drug actually I watched a documentary on it on TV for and against Ritalin. Parents saw a huge change in children's performance at school. They showed this kid's behaviour before and after and it was like completely a different person – as if it was not the same kid at all and it seemed like a very positive thing. I just don't believe that drugs have to be administered to anybody whether they are children or adults. I think that because as Bill says the environmental factors are what cause all these problems to begin with and has to be changed. It may be a longer, harder road and may not be a quick fix, but I think there are other therapeutic solutions. I don't believe in giving drugs to children.

Jane: I think it depends on the severity of the situation. There is a spectrum of symptoms and spectrum of cases from extreme to mild. So when you talk about therapy it depends on which part of the spectrum you are talking about. If there is a kid who has a serious chemical imbalance in their brain and depending on the age and environment – therapy depends on all these factors. I wouldn't say you should give Ritalin to any kid but I would say if the kid is really benefiting from it and is in a situation where the kid is very hard to handle, why not give him some. At the same time maybe you can do as Chucky says and work through the environment to help him out as well.

Lois: I think Ritalin or any other medication is only a short term solution it's not a long term one. It's sort of a bandaid on the problem but not actually solving it. If they are young (9-10), the worst thing is for them to become dependent on medication

and when they grow older maybe they don't even need it. Maybe it'll calm them too much and they will go into depression.

Bill: I think Ritalin should be made available only through doctors and that there should be a program put in place where there is a whole environment check list so people know in depth the background of the family, the parents should be subject to a questionnaire. If anything is out of balance then those things are addressed and a plan is put in place. Only if the child poses a threat to others or themselves then medication should be involved only through a doctor's prescription.

Chucky: An alternative to Ritalin could be changing the environment or educating parents. If I had a child with ADD, I might be tempted to use Ritalin but I don't think that's the right thing to do because I don't want the child to become dependent on it. I would go with other forms of therapy like art therapy – to get their mind engaged in some way.

10) In your opinion, what impact if any, would the introduction of the performing arts have on the children?

Chucky: I think in some ways it is already being used – that's why in high schools you have gym or you have music or you have drama. It's not necessarily in a class room but it's the same concept because you are not always focused on math, history etc. I think you have to have a way of sort of relaxing your mind in order to bring out the creative side. My sister-in-law's dance teacher once said that if you learn dance you will never have mental problems – and I really believe that. It's an extreme idea but I think there's a lot of truth to it because it is a form of therapy.

Jane: I think that it would definitely work. It would be an alternate form of expression, it would stimulate their imagination which is something they just love doing. And in the structure of a classroom where they have rules and stuff they would definitely learn more and in different ways than through lectures. They would learn more about themselves and about the way people perceive them. It would definitely be beneficial in that way.

Lois: I agree with what Jane has said – it's extremely important especially in courses like math or physics and chemistry because whether a child is ADD or not, these are important courses to learn and you want to keep their attention so they will keep focused.

Jane: I think it's good in classes where you have to memorize things like biology. There are different techniques you can use to know things, to memorize things – you can write a song on science and you could learn the song. Or even if you are doing, math, physics, or chemistry – presentations or something colourful – something they will like working on and get recognition for.

Chucky: I believe in creative teaching techniques because sometimes for example a person will tell you "this is the teacher that made me like economics", and the reason for that is that teacher wasn't just a teacher but a performer. They had this creative way of teaching – performing as a teacher in terms of being animated, sounding interesting, funny, making it more interactive – you are actually performing in front of your students whether you are a math teacher or a physics teacher you have to have that sort of spark where you capture the interest of the students. In some courses it

might not be possible to incorporate performing arts per say, but I think there is an element of performance art that can be incorporated into your teacher style to make it more creative.

Bill: I think it's a challenge to touch on imagination and interest. Keeping the interest levels high by getting the point across while it touché the child's imagination. When it becomes a situation of memorization and regurgitation, then it's the lowest form of learning and unfortunately I think it's still pretty predominant, at least it was when I was learning. I think you need standardized tests to test the level of knowledge base, you need that, but over and above that you can get the knowledge transfer across but you can do it in creative ways. I think we should tap into as many ways as possible. If the professors take a so-called boring subject but show the value behind it by making it very relative to kids' imaginations, they'll learn it because they enjoy it. You can take a graph in economics and they will learn it because it represents something more than just an abstract concept – the more real, tangible, and fun it is, learning becomes a much more enjoyable experience.

Chucky: I think it could also be distracting – it all depends on the subject and the timing and the extent to which you use it. I think it's essential in small quantities – I guess you could call it doses.

11) Any further comments...

Jaya: Thank you all very much