Brigitte Biehl-Missal

Ysgol Rheolaeth a Busnes | School of Management and Business

2010

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POSTGRADUATE CERTIFICATE IN TEACHING IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Cylch Dysgu 3 | Teaching Cycle 3

Improvisational Theatre in Management Education

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Teaching Cycle 3:

Improvisational Theatre in Management Education: Exploring arts-based approaches to enhance student learning

Abstract
For enabling a creative and interactive learning-experience, MBA students in the School of Management and Business, Aberystwyth University have been involved in a teaching project based on improvisational theatre. This is a response to calls for active student involvement in teaching situations in order to vary and enhance their learning experience. The use of arts-based approaches in particular has been adopted in management education because there are overlaps between artistic, theatrical skills and generic management skills which involve improvisation, spontaneous action, the creative use of available resources and the ability to listen to others. This paper describes how the improvisational theatre exercise contributes to these skills and evaluates how it helped students to better understand theoretical concepts by providing them with the opportunity to elaborate creatively on different aspects of theory. Details of the exercise are provided in the paper. Difficulties in preparing and conducting the action are outlined and general implications for professional practise are addressed.

INTRODUCTION AND LITERATURE REVIEW
We witness a growing interest in teaching strategies that encourage students to adopt a more active role in lecture situations (e.g. Brown and Race, 2002) and The Higher Education Academy (2009) emphasizes the need to develop teaching, curriculum and assessment that enhances student experience and facilitates effective learning outcomes. Learning situations are considered to have a particular impact on the student 'experience'. For example, Fazey and Marton (2002) argue that a variety of learning conditions is important to enable different ways of learning and understanding, and Black and Wiliam (1998, p. 54) emphasize that students who follow the analytical recommendations of a teacher without understanding its purpose will not learn. Variations in perspective can be crucial for learning and understanding, and this may involve breaking the 'natural attitude' and experiencing reality differently (Fazey and Marton, 2002, p. 239). This paper describes a teaching cycle, which
uses a so-called arts-based training method, adopting tools and concepts from the world of arts, and which was designed to enable a different and creative learning experience for students.

This article reports findings and experiences from a teaching cycle (part of the PCGTHE) which aimed at providing a variation of the typical learning reality and student learning experience. Improvisational theatre exercises were conducted to enable aesthetic experiences and to encourage creative and spontaneous interaction. Enter theatre!

This approach has been inspired by my research and professional background. Holding a PhD in theatre studies I have contributed to a number of performances myself over the years and during this project I drew from my research in theatre and organizations in the "organizational aesthetics" field (Taylor and Hansen, 2005) which brings both disciplines together. Before joining Aberystwyth University's School of Management and Business I worked with a PR consultancy and I was involved in management coaching and the assessment of managers' theatrical performances in official presentations (Biehl, 2007). Generally there is a strong belief in the cross-fertilization and the interplay of the arts and management and this field of research and practice has gained increasing importance over the past decade or so.

**Arts-based approaches for enhancing students' learning experience**

In management education teaching approaches which draw on artistic practices have become more popular, and involve such things as the use of poetry and the reading of Shakespeare's dramas (e.g. Adler, 2008; Moshavi, 2001; Finsterwalder and O'Steen, 2008). However, they are not yet standard, everyday practices. Improvisational theatre exercises, for example as demonstrated by Moshavi (2001), have been used as a tool for management instruction, enhancing participants' understanding and enabling a better application of theoretical concepts. Although, Finsterwalder and O'Steen (2008) recently have used improvisational theatre with marketing students at the University of Canterbury, New Zealand, only a limited number of scholars (Gibb, 2004; Huffaker and West, 2005) have experimented with improvisational theatre in higher educational contexts, or used improvisational theatre concepts as inspiration for other forms of teaching (Aylesworth, 2008). However, such forms of experiential learning are used for employee development (more sources of applications in the wider business context are listed at http://www.improvencyclopedia.org/).

Latest approaches to teaching emphasize the need, for maximizing a learning payoff, to help students to participate fully in small-group situations. Race and Brown (1998, p. 79-
88) introduce a range of group techniques including brainstorming, buzz groups and pair dialogues. With the teaching cycle described in this paper, I take the idea of small-group teaching further, developing important interactive and collaborative skills which are not used to the full extent in individual learning situations. Such skills include: listening to others' ideas; thinking creatively and originally; building on others' existing work; collaborating; and coping with difficulties of interaction (Race and Brown, 1998, p. 79). The suggestion here is that improvisation theatre can be used effectively for further developing these skills.

The teaching cycle adopts an exercise of improvisation theatre to replace standard group discussions (Moshavi, 2001). Improvisational theatre differs from traditional theatre as dialogues are not scripted, props and settings are not predetermined, and audience members are active, rather than staying in their seat. Students are asked to develop a performance, improvising text and action. Interaction, listening and creative adaptation are core elements in this process. The exercise also aims at enhancing other skills important to students' future work context such as increased contextual awareness towards 'theatre' in organizations and a better understanding of aesthetic practices.

As regards the notion of "experience", theatre situations provide an aesthetic experience different from other learning situations. Performance situations are perceived through atmospheric, bodily sensations which are influenced by the interplay of aesthetic elements, by the whole behavioural, temporal and spatial situation (Pavis, 2003). The theatre discipline strongly emphasizes that theatre is a product of the audience and those who serve it, and that the most important aspect is the performance and co-created experience. We have similar experiences in social, real-life interactions (Goffman, 1959) and lecturing situations in particular are like staged performances (Brown and Race, 2002), but of course, the distinct framing of "playing" and "doing theatre" adds a fictional dimension to the interaction and changes the frame of social self-presentation, i.e. makes it "theatre".

**The relation of theatre and management**

Scholarly literature in education recognises an overlap between the improvisational skills involved in theatre exercises and generic management skills. By using theatre exercises, the teaching cycle confonns with recent developments in organizational studies and helps to provide students with some state-of-the-art approaches. It is posited that "The MFA [Master of Fine Arts] is the New MBA" (see Adler, 2008) and organizational studies have highlighted the cross-fertilization of the arts and leadership, continuing to emphasize that theatre can serve as an important inspiration in this area (Adler, 2008). Theatre art and behaviour in organizations have strong performative components in common and there is a tradition of
comparing organizations to theatre (Mangham and Overington, 1987), inspired by Goffman (1959). Management has been considered as a performing art (Vaill, 1989) and studies have described the impression management skills needed by charismatic leaders in order to execute their 'role' and to give convincing 'performances' to an 'audience' of followers and organizational stakeholders (e.g. Gardner and Avolio, 1998; Harvey, 2001; House, 1977). Theories of acting underlying the dramatistic genre provide insights into behaviour in organizations (Schreyogg and Hopfl, 2004) and such approaches gain importance as aesthetic elements progressively have been adopted in the organizational field (Taylor and Hansen, 2005).

Improvisation involves spontaneous action and the creative use of available resources and is considered to be a valuable skill in organizational life (e.g. Weick, 1998). This is of particular importance to MBA students as they will in their work environments be exposed to constant impression management expectations, and to face-to-face situations requiring creativity and typically will be expected to "perform". This idea is further emphasized by a stream of research which considers marketing practice 'as theatre' (Fisk and Grove, 1996). So-called performative labour is fundamentally theatrical behaviour in service industries (Bryman, 2004, p. 103) and involves the presentation of emotions and the strategic definition of a situation. This indicates that marketers and future managers in particular benefit from theatre training. Given this background, theatrical knowledge and some theatre exercise can be seen as particularly useful for MBA and marketing students.

TEACHING PLAN AND INTENDED OUTCOMES

Based on the theoretical background outlined above, I shall summarize the intended outcomes. The improvisational theatre exercise should: provide a 'fun' learning experience for students; help students to better understand theoretical concepts by providing the opportunity to elaborate on different aspects of the theory; provide the opportunity for students to practice and enhance their performative and theatrical skills.

Further considerations help to create a good basis for the exercise. The MBM3010 group consists of 30 students and working with such a small student group can be more challenging because of the lack of anonymity and distanced control (Race and Brown, 1998, p. 80). I was aware that I had to deal with student individuality and possible hesitation as they face some psychological risks by being required to leave their personal 'comfort-zone' in an improvisational exercise (Moshavi, 2001, p. 444).
In order to lower possible barriers, I decided to place emphasis on latest research in organizational aesthetics (e.g. Taylor and Hansen, 2005) and performative labour (Bryman, 2004) and introduced these concepts in an earlier session prior to the theatre exercise. In week 2, the "Impression management! Arts-based approaches to management education" session covers theatrical behaviour in organizations and was used to give background information, raise students' awareness of the issue, and led on to a theatre exercise, again outlining beneficial outcomes. This then was embedded in a discussion of the relevance of arts-based approaches to management education (Adler, 2008), to give students the feeling that they benefit from an innovative perspective. Outlining theories about improvisational exercises, the overlap between improvisational skills and management skills was emphasized: better personal communications; problem solving; developing trust; enhancing creativity; reducing risk of failure; and better adaptability (Moshavi, 2001, p. 441, Weick, 1998). To complete this, a later section in the module devoted to "Internal Marketing" introduced 'organizational theatre' (Schreyogg and Hopfl, 2004) as another arts-based tool for change management. This provides students with an even broader picture and helps them to appreciate the diversity of arts-based solutions.

In a later session, we got into improvisational theatre. Moshavi's example (2001) was provided on Blackboard and students were asked to work through the text.

**PROGRESS NOTES ON TEACHING PRACTICE**

During the teaching cycle, several rounds of improvisational theatre were played on a range of topics which are part of MBM3010 Marketing Principles, in particular in the sessions on "CSR/marketing ethics" and "buzz marketing".

At the start of the first session the improvisational theatre genre "freeze tag" was explained, following Moshavi (2001, p. 442): "In 'freeze tag', two actors engage in a scene based on physical positions suggested by the audience (kneeling, hands on hips, etc.). As the actors begin to move about and create a dialogue, another actor can freeze the action. He or she then assumes the physical position of one of the actors on stage and then unfreezes the scene and redirects the action by creating a new scene." For the classroom, variations on "freeze tag" are suggested "for reinforcing and applying different theories relating to a specific organizational behavior concept such as leadership, motivation or power, and politics" (Moshavi, 2001, p. 442).
In a second step, acting rules were explained, including the following: "refrain from judging one's own and others' ideas, active listening, and thinking without criteria (e.g., being open to various interpretations of an idea, concept, or word). The rule that is at the heart of improvisation, however, is never deny information, also known as the 'yes and' rule (Moshavi, 2001, p. 439). "Yes and-ing" means to accept ideas developed by others and build on them, ensuring that the verbal interaction is on-going. Secondly I conducted a brief warm-up activity (Moshavi, 2001, p. 442) which involves bodily movements, partner observation and some verbal elements. I typically use different warm-up exercises by drawing on relevant literature (e.g. Beerman and Schubach, 2008). One was conducted as follows: students were split into two groups and stood in a circle to co-ordinate movements and sounds: one person said "zip" pointing to the left and all people in the circle continued this movement clockwise round the group. "Zap" (pointing to the right) would change the direction, and make the action go counter-clockwise. "Zop" (pointing to any person in the opposite side of the circle) would hand over this movement to a person opposite where it was continued either by "zip" or "zap". Similar exercises to raise concentration and to motivate bodily and verbal action can be found in relevant literature (e.g. Beerman and Schubach, 2008).

I shall describe in greater detail the first situation in which we attempted the improvisational theatre exercise. In the Marketing Ethics session students first considered a question: "You are the marketing manager for a small firm that makes kitchen appliances. While conducting field tests, you discover a design flaw in one of your best-selling ovens that could potentially cause harm to a small number of customers. However, a product recall is likely to bankrupt your company, leaving all of the employees (including you) jobless. What would you do?" In previous years, we had just a group discussion. This year three different types of scenes were enacted between: the "CEO" and the "PR/marketing manager"; the "CEO" and the "Production Manager"; the "CEO" and a (potentially affected) "customer". This helped to "experience" different perspectives and generated conversations involving ethical concepts in as moral, amoral, and immoral management; the golden rule, or the media test. To enable students to get some ideas and to reflect on the complexity of this issue, I gave them a couple of minutes beforehand to discuss this case with their neighbour.

The procedure, according to Moshavi (2001, p. 442-443), looks as follows: I told the class that we were exploring a specific ethical issue which involves different ethical theories. We then defined the place in the organization and the relationship of the two persons involved (CEO and marketing manager/production manager/customer). Two students would then start creating a scene, after 30 seconds or so being interrupted ("freeze!"") and physically replaced
by others. The action carries on. After around 15 "freezes", the action is briefly interrupted and I made a transition to the next 'character' (e.g. the "customer"). Students were encouraged to utter any opinions they think: the "CEO" and the other characters might have. We agreed that there is no right and wrong, and that we wanted to seize the opportunity to portray characters either in a "dark" (immoral) or "shining" (moral) light. It was made clear that sentences spoken by the characters did not at all need to correspond to students' personal opinions.

Being the lecturer, I started assuming the role of the CEO talking to another student as the "PR/marketing manager". She said things like "I was thinking, what shall we do if the Financial Times finds out and calls us?", I responded: "Well, we just deny it..." and the action gained speed. Students were able to benefit from their initial short discussion with their neighbours and brought in a variety of issues. I stepped in about five times to bring in a new dimension whenever I felt the action had become repetitive. However, students managed to develop so many different perspectives that they laughed and at several points the whole 'audience' booed or cheered when statements were particularly radical or very sophisticated. The exercise continued for about 20 minutes, going through all three scenarios. Only around five students did not assume a 'role', the other ones contributed at least once, with some entering the circle several times.

At the conclusion of the exercise, I debriefed the class, asking for their experience, asking how the theory was applied to the scenes and what were the implications. Moshavi (2001, p. 443) suggests that such discussions "can lead to greater understanding of the various contingencies that affect (marketing) theatre and practice". When continuing my presentation and explaining different ethical concepts, I continuously referred to and quoted scenes from our improvisational theatre play.

Given the fact that students voted in favour of the exercise (see below), it was repeated in a later session on "buzz marketing" where we staged scenes between a PR manager and a (potential) customer to develop insights into concepts and trends which changed communications enabled this form of marketing. In preparatory meetings with my mentor Tony McGuinness it was decided that these two occasions were sufficient as further regular exercises would require changes to the module outline. The trials were intended to develop an initial basis for discussion and potential development of such a module at a later stage.
EVALUATION OF THE STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCE

To assess what students thought of the exercise, it was decided to obtain anonymous feedback from students by distributing a short unstructured paper questionnaire which typically allows for feedback from a larger number of participants and gives the opportunity for anonymous feedback on individual experiences (University of Sheffield, 2009). It was decided to use open questions rather than quantitative questions because a theatre experience is difficult to measure, being an intricate aesthetic phenomenon (Pavis, 2003). I collected written feedback on a number of mostly open questions which relate to the three desired outcomes formulated initially: 1. What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise? (Aylesworth, 2008, p. 111); 2. Would you want to do this exercise again?; 3. Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?; 4. Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

20 students filled in the questionnaire. Student feedback yielded the following results: 17 students said they would want to repeat the exercise, 3 voted against (Q2). Students were strongly in favour of the exercise (Q1). Most answers on question one referred positively to issues such as "sharing knowledge", "joint experience", "fun", "participation", "interaction" and "team-work experience", and 15 of the 20 students confirmed that the exercise helped them to understand the theoretical concept (Q3). Many responses emphasized the importance of "seeing different perspectives" and "exchanging a variety of ideas", foregrounding the exercise's function as a creative replacement for a traditional group discussion. There was some positive mention of the practical/improvisational aspect, one said it helped to "think practically about ethical behaviour rather than theoretically". There were three suggestions for improvement such as having a more detailed de-briefing, giving more time to prepare for the exercise in advance, and making it "more organized". As regards the more general dimension (Q4: importance of theatrical skills for managers) 14 positive and 4 negative answers were registered (2 missing). Most of the positive answers appropriately mentioned issues such as impression management involving verbal and non-verbal communication, and the concept of the manager as an "actor", one student said that theatre can be used productively for educational purposes.

This evaluation was complemented by further informal chats as a method for getting student feedback (Brown and Race, 2002, p. 174). I approached five students and asked for their opinion, and their answers confirmed previous feedback.
In consequence I feel that the improvisational theatre exercise can help to reinforce theory by offering students an interesting and more appealing aesthetic context. I also expect that, with some regularity, the exercise can provide additional benefits which extend beyond intellectual issues to social competences. As mentioned initially, students must listen to each other, build on each other's ideas and, in a team effort, create spontaneous solutions. This may enhance empathy and other social core-competences, which after all, are partly responsible for professional success.

My observations indicated that an international teaching context, as in MBM3010 where native English speakers are a minority, has to be taken into account when considering this exercise. Improvisational theatre could be more challenging for international students. Not surprisingly, for non-native speakers (me included) it is more difficult to verbally improvise, to find spontaneous word-plays, or simply use language spontaneously to its full potential. However, MBA students typically have several years of previous working experience and the confidence that comes with it, so the exercise was not dominated by hesitations. They were more inhibited by other cultural issues such as politeness, e.g. some found it difficult to 'freeze' their comrades and interrupt their speech to take their place. Such hesitations should be lowered by clearly communicating the rules of the game which include 'freezing'.

**IMPLICATIONS**

Before considering implications for professional teaching practice and future development, I shall reflect upon the issue of preparation. I have to say that the effort which goes with improvisational theatre was immense, despite my extensive background in theoretical and practical performance studies. There was far more energy involved than in a standard lecture which involves less complex interaction. It is acknowledged in educational literature that the spontaneous side of improvisational theatre is overemphasized whereas the preparation that is required for good improvisation is underemphasized (Aylesworth, 2008, p. 113). Also for me as the instructor, the aforementioned psychological barriers are an issue as I have to both conduct the action and also provide a positive example by participating and performing roles to coax the best from the class. Furthermore I have to save my own face, as substandard performances of key people in social interaction are typically interpreted by participants as an indicator of lacking competence (Goffman, 1959) and can be detrimental to my general teaching role on the module. On my part, such exercises involve an extensive preparation
which includes the mental scripting of scenes and situations - and once performing I need to constantly monitor the situation.

Overall I am glad that the teaching cycle has provided an opportunity to test an arts-based approach to (management) education. I am very satisfied that the student feedback was positive and also the feedback of my mentor who observed the session was positive, so I feel encouraged to conduct similar exercises in the future. I will continue to develop my expertise in this area as I believe, in accordance with Adler (2008) and the respective literature, that these approaches will be very beneficial for management education and student learning - both within and beyond the business field. Creative and spontaneous action as well as verbal and non-verbal performance skills are increasingly required for 'actors' in the business world. We experience increasing theatricality and growing performance-pressures in professional environments (Biehl, 2007) and these developments need to be reflected by ever-changing learning and teaching methods in professional education. Evidence suggests that arts-based and theatre-based approaches will experience an increasing demand.

Curtain.

REFERENCES


You should discuss your planned teaching cycle with your Mentor, and consider how you plan to gather feedback and evaluate what happened.

Class/Module
The module description (intended learning outcomes, teaching and learning strategies and assessment methods may be attached).

<table>
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<th>Level</th>
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<tr>
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The intended development:

- Using improvisational theatre as a way of enhancing class discussions

Issue to be addressed
- How to work with students interactively and creatively

Sources of appropriate scholarship on issue


Intended outcome for students?

Students should be able to benefit from interactive discussions; different approach to learning. A variation of learning conditions should enable different ways of learning and understanding. Using improvisation theatre as a creative way of learning should prove that we offer new and trendy teaching methods ("arts-based training")
How will the teaching practice be implemented?

Lecturer will speak about latest developments in the professional marketing field and also go into "arts-based training" and will introduce the issue of improv theatre in an early session. In later session, students are expected to actually perform improv theatre.

What feedback on student learning will be produced?

I shall collect written feedback (distribution of questionnaire) and informal feedback.

What opportunities will there be for modification along the way (if any)?

This cycle is about to take place in two different session during the module. Changes will be made after experiencing the first session.

What criteria will be used to evaluate the success of the teaching cycle?

As improv theatre is all about experience, and as such performance situations are transitory and fugitive, we shall use criteria such as atmosphere and the actual mood in the situations as indicators about whether the intervention was successful. If the situations turn out to be creative and "fun", we can expect that this form of interaction has successfully complemented standard class discussions.

Please ask your Mentor to countersign this form. The top sheet should be kept in your Portfolio. A copy should be given to your Mentor.
Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (theoretical concept)? If yes – how/in which ways?

It helped to think practically about ethics behavior rather than theoretically.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes, it brought a fresh outlook on managerial beliefs.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I liked the following:
- generation of different visions and ideas
- the portrayal of different perspectives made it interesting
- the difficult decision that a manager have to undertake quickly

Would you want to do this exercise again?

On a different topic, absolutely yes.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - howlin which ways?

Yes. Different types of managers and situations were portrayed which helped me understand how visualize a kind of critical situation a manager can face when something goes wrong with the company's product.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise? *No, dislike*

Would you want to do this exercise again? *No*

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (theoretical concept)? If yes - howlin which ways? *IV ⊔

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

Like:
- Spontaneity
- Pool of ideas (brainstorming)
- Different views

Dislike:
- No records were made of the same
- No conclusions drawn from the activity

Would you want to do this exercise again?
Yes, but with definitive conclusions.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?
Yes: 1. All possible permutation and combination for a particular marketing principle.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?
Din't quit get this question. Was I supposed to learn the importance of theatrical skills?
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

Liked the exercise

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Yes, it made us think in a real market perspective.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Maybe.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

It was knowledge sharing session, know lot of suggestion / points ways like marketing Variety of people as thoughts.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

No

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - howlin which ways?

Yes, it was improved marketing ethics.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

It involved the whole class so was beneficial in knowing each other point of view.
Was quick enough so that the thought didn't find room to be manipulated before presenting them.
Could have allocated some more time to it. I believe it would have been worth it.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Yes.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes, there is a lot to focus on when verbal communication comes into picture. Body language.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

Liked the fun improvisational nature of the seminar - it would have been okay to have a group from the start. It could possibly do with a little more structure to make sure all aspects of the argument are covered may be with a set point of view for each person to argue?

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Yes - useful way to see wide range of opinions especially if someone is prepared to defend a controversial point of view.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes - perception of the manager is important as the reality. We need to think about how to present our message well the message itself.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

*You had to be more prepared to get more value from the exercise, may be some advance preparation would be useful.*

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

*Not exactly because marketing ethics depend on the personal values & beliefs* 

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

*got a better overall setting*
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

It was very useful and let us learn about views of other people in a group, however it didn't give the solution to the problem or state that there is simply no solution.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Yes. It highlighted different interests of different parties.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Absolutely. I wasn't confident enough to put myself forward and be a speaker, however I would like to believe that my exercises will give me that chance to do so.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I dislike it. It was not well-organized. It was quite confusing rather than adding value.

Would you want to do this exercise again? Not really.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Not really. I mean it is rather an easy concept to understand and tons of examples of it.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

It has changed because now I understand there are many things to consider regards ethical business decision-making. There are many grays in the spectrum not only blacks or whites.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I had a opportunity that I could hear the other students' opinion and contribute difference.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Sometimes

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

I'm not sure.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I liked the fact that it was very interactive & also that gave us a chance to express our thoughts. It also gave us a chance to look at marketing from a very different (out of the box) perspective.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Definitely

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - howlin which ways?

Yes, it did. It also helped me understand how other people think about it.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

It did. I never thought about it before that exercise.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I liked the practical scenarios and arguments that emanated from them. I would only suggest that it could have been done in a more streamlined manner.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Theory helps in understanding the basic concepts & ideas whereas practicality helps to open minds and gives us a better understanding of the application of these concepts in the real world.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I liked the exercise overall as it gave me the opportunity to broaden my understanding about an individual's perception & view in a given situation.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Yes, it helped me improve my understanding of marketing ethics. I learnt that at times ethical issues may not be that important for the person working in/for a company, but it could be of great importance for the company to help grow its business in the longer run.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes. It helps stimulate thought processes and creativity.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I liked the diversification of ideas gotten from other members of the class.
I didn't get any understanding or relevance to individual as well as organisational level.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Not really; I basically had to read my way through so as to understand the theory concept of Marketing Ethics.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes! Because I am able to see managers acting as different actors in all sorts of areas/fields.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

The concept of marketing and the different views of customers. We liked the exercise in respect of how marketing is done and why it is necessary.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

This exercise helps us in many ways like the marketing function, advertisement, likes & dislikes, customer orientation, etc. It can add value to customers.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes, because it gives real pictures of marketing, what things to be done and how it can be modified. The manager will be responsible for profit maximization doing more sells.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

- I liked the theatre exercise as I was able to really experience the reality of impression management.
- To add, I also could provide our ideas on a group and display it.
- It helped us to know various perspectives through other teams.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

- Yes, really for suitable topic so that we can understand and experience the concepts. Also we have to stick towards our topic in the module.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

- Yes, it helped to understand the marketing ethics.
- It helped to know the style.
- The procedures.
- The advantage and disadvantages.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

- I could take many points on it with different perspectives.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

I like the improvisation as that will help to simulate the real market scenario.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?

Yes, help to get practical & personal view about marketing ethics.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Yes, I haven't used the theatrical skills for educational purpose, so enjoyed and learnt from the session.
What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?

This most liking part of this is that I participated and given my effort in team work. This is platform of learning new concepts.

Would you want to do this exercise again?

Yes certainly because it was subject oriented and simulating to with this we can improve our team building activity or above we can share different views and thoughts quickly.

Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of “marketing ethics” (the theoretical concept)? If yes – how/in which ways?

I can say this is better way of understanding things like we all involved and given the to different in and different track. So I think practical session show we are always welcomed. I really understood the marketing ethics and the concepts.

Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

Previously my Idea of manangers is different like its in my working place and after this activity my concept how changed positive more clear.
Dr Brigitte Biehl-Missal  
School of Management and Business

Teaching Cycle

Improvisational Theatre in Management Education

Exploring arts-based approaches to enhance student learning

What is Improv Theatre

Two actors (students) engage in a scene based on physical positions suggested by the audience (kneeling, hands on hips, etc.). As the actors begin to move about and create a dialogue, another actor can freeze the action.

She or he then assumes the physical position of one of the actors on stage and then unfreezes the scene and redirects the action by creating a new scene.

For the classroom, variations are suggested "for reinforcing and applying different theories relating to a specific organizational behavior concept such as leadership, motivation or power, and politics" (Moshavi, 2001, p. 442).
Background

• growing interest in teaching strategies that encourage students to adopt a more active role in lecture situations (e.g. Brown and Race, 2002)
• a need to develop teaching that enhances student experience and facilitates effective learning outcomes (The Higher Education Academy, 2009)
• learning situations are considered to have a particular impact on the student 'experience' (e.g. Fazey and Marton, 2002)

Arts-based approaches to (management) education

• use of poetry and reading of Shakespeare's dramas (e.g. Adler, 2008; Finsterwalder and O'Steen, 2008).
• improvisational theatre exercises, for example as demonstrated by Moshavi (2001), have been used as a tool for management instruction, enhancing participants' understanding and enabling a better application of theoretical concepts.
• improvement of other skills:
• overlap between the improvisational skills involved in theatre exercises and generic management skills ("performing", "role playing", spontaneous action, creative use of available resources, listening to others)
Teaching process

- Introduce arts-based approaches and forms of "theatre in organizations"
- explain improv theatre rules
- define a situation ("marketing manager meets unsatisfied customer")
- warm-up exercise
- start action!
- end the exercise at some point
- session continues with theoretical discussion, drawing on/referring to instances in the interaction

Evaluation

- collect student feedback (questionnaire)
  1. What did you like/dislike about the improvisational theatre exercise?
  2. Would you want to do this exercise again?
  3. Did the theatrical exercise help you to improve your understanding of "marketing ethics" (the theoretical concept)? If yes - how/in which ways?
  4. Has your view on the importance of theatrical skills for managers changed?

- personal observations (typical method for assessing aesthetic interactions - Pavis, 2003)
Reflections on the presentation of the teaching cycle

Improvisational Theatre in Management Education: Exploring arts-based approaches to enhance student learning

When I presented this teaching cycle to an audience of a teaching fellow and members of the AD course team, I put particular emphasis on the 'interactive' teaching situation and the marrying together of different disciplines in a pedagogic teaching context: Theatre practice in this case infuses (management) education and has implications on the management field and the teaching field by enhancing core skills of students involved in the exercise and enabling a multi-dimensional learning experience.

For me, this teaching cycle is very important because I intend to develop my expertise in such interactive arts-based approaches for enhancing students’ learning experience. In line with the HE’s recommendations for interactivity and student engagement, I consider these approaches to be quite promising. So I was very much appreciating a feedback which is not only relevant for the PCGTHE, but for my professional future in general.

The audience reacted positively to the idea and questions mostly revolved around issues such as 1) evaluation of the teaching project; 2) methods of assessment related to the exercise.

It was recommended to "look at other methods of evaluation" to better understand findings indicated by the questionnaires. It was suggested to use focus groups to get a more detailed and personal feedback, extending to issues such as why people interacted or not, and covering the dynamics of role playing. It was further suggested to think about a "quick learning styles analysis after the role-playing" which might produce some data on why some students engage and some don’t. The link to individual learning styles is clearly worth pursuing when doing the exercise again because it might help to better account for differences in personalities and students’ individual approaches to learning. It could also help students to reflect on and better understand their approach in terms of personal development.

People liked that there is a link from the exercise to the exam, having explained that one question deals with parallels between 'theatre' and 'marketing' and which provides an opportunity for students to refer to the exercise and to mention concepts such as 'performing' like 'actors' on 'stages', the use of theatre for management education/arts-based approaches to
marketing, etc. Another exam question deals with marketing ethics (theoretical framework used in this improv theatre exercise). It was suggested to gather data on how many of the students chose the questions in the exam and how they scored. I have passed on this idea to my colleague Tony McGuiness who will be marketing the exams in my absence. A clear distribution (high/low) might tell us something about the effects of the exercise in terms of the "experience" of theoretical concepts.

The audience finally also felt that this exercise is a "breakout of conventional" thinking and might help MBA-students to see and experience a different and theatrical dimension of management.