

# **11 July, D-I-Y day self-organised by the year-group: Forum theatre & consensus building**

By Chris Wood

## **Forum Theatre**

We started the day by having a quick go around to introduce everyone to our one-day participant Penny. Then we moved straight into the first part of the DIY day, with Anna explaining the concept of forum theatre to the group and then setting up the first practice session of forum theatre: the dilemma of the curtains. The topic of debating which curtains to choose for a village hall was chosen so that we could explore forum theatre as a tool for challenging oppressive power relationships without any great emotional connection to the topic. Nonetheless, with an array of acting talent and a plethora of enthusiasm with us Turning the Tide'ers we managed to get some vigorous debate, and some passionate defence of a beautiful set of Ghanaian curtains! After discussing the exercise and exploring its use in real life situations, we then started working in two smaller groups to decide on a topic of social injustice to stage our own forum theatres. Both groups chose to explore the plight of asylum seekers, and began by expressing their scenario of oppression in the form of an image presented through bodily representations. Although both groups choose to explore the same broad topic, they focused on different issues of the plight of asylum seekers in the UK, and created some engaging forum theatre. In both performances it was the introduction of new characters offering constructive alternatives to the main narratives that changed the dynamic of the oppressive scenarios.

## **Consensus decision making**

After a break for lunch the came together for a session on consensus decision making facilitated by Caroline and Santi. The group were introduced to the consensus process, looking at the stages that go into making decisions consensually that had been explored previously in May's weekend residential. Then we practised consensus decision making, with Chris and Hilary facilitating a discussion chosen by the group on whether the year group should conduct a piece of direct action, and if so, what? Lively debate considering themes and types of action -with some consensus reached that the group would like to stage some kind of street theatre- was followed by feedback by Matthew who had arrived to observe the session. The main lessons were that consensus group should be flexible and dynamic with tools that can give momentum to discussions and ideas.

## **Facilitation practice**

A quick break for an important caffeine refuel preceded a session for practising facilitation skills led by Kiyo and Chris. Building on Augusto Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' techniques, the principle of 'invisible theatre' was briefly outlined to the group before Santi and Kiyo led a discussion on what area of social injustice the group would like to address if they were to stage a invisible theatre. Some important lessons on preparation for workshops were revealed; there was some confusion over what constituted invisible theatre, which could have been resolved by demonstrating a short example at the beginning. Nonetheless as the group got to grips with the task there was debate on the pros and cons of different scenarios, and some interesting discussions took place. The group then broke down into pairs to look at a minor personal dilemma using the GROW model of facilitation. Feedback from this session confirmed that analysing a problem through answering direct questions one-to-one was helpful for both the facilitator and participant.

## **Evaluating DIY**

The day was wrapped up nicely with Selina's evaluation session: the group answered questions such as 'What did we do well in the planning of today and what could we have done better?'. These questions helped to inform a group decision on whether we would recommend a DIY day to next year's participants. After a day where much was learnt from both the successes and the failures, and inspired with a spirit of self-organisation, the group agreed that a DIY day would be a good idea for future TTT courses .