



STORYTELLING AS A TOOL OF LEARNING AND TEACHING.

Storytelling is a fundamental act of humanity, it is an essential need of any human society, and it is the heart of all civilizations.

Narratives of belonging and shared meaning bond, build, and regenerate communities. They enable us to travel beyond imagination. It is also true that if individuals and societies can refocus, reframe, relate, and reframe what was before, they can retell stories that can rejuvenate and heal traumatised lives.

Storytelling enriches learning and teaching. A teacher who tells stories and enlivens the classroom makes learning more meaningful, as children are encouraged to tell stories based on their own lived experiences.

The Indian education system has in some instances suppressed the students' own voices. Curriculums are often created from top down and have little connection to the worlds people inhabit. In classrooms, children live in a bubble with their eyes shut to whatever is immediate, to whatever they can hear, feel, touch, or experience.

In such cases, the subliminal message is that nothing of value can be derived from the world in which they have grown up. The message is that this world which had been a source of their identity must be discarded in order for education to occur.

This is where storytelling can make a great difference. Through storytelling, children can imaginatively represent and interpret the realities they experience. Storytelling can thus connect learning to life, validating the real experiences and emotions of children. It can create self-knowledge and localise education. It can help children to express in their own voices, instead of speaking in borrowed voices that the system legitimises and enforces. Storytelling can give value to native forms of knowledge and valuation.

For the past 17 years, Kathalaya has strived to focus on Storytelling in Education. We have appealed to the Universities and Education Boards in the country to integrate storytelling as part of school curriculums. Although Universities abroad and International Storytelling Institutes have lent great support in offering their affiliations for the Academy courses, our own Government is just beginning to respond positively to the work Kathalaya has put in, striving to integrate storytelling into the curriculum of schools. We are happy that a storytelling approach is now a

part of the MA Education courses at the Azim Premji University, Bangalore, and has been made a permanent feature of their open courses. This approach has also been introduced into the CBSE curriculum from 2015 onwards.

How will Storytelling help in Learning and Education?

Through our intervention programs in schools, we hope children will grow into storytelling agents, empowered in the realm themselves, who will be able to make decisions about their futures and march forward into the world to make a difference in any field of learning with full awareness and consciousness of the places from which they come.

The classroom often functions in a manner that perpetuates unequal power relationships in the larger society. Storytelling can counter this tendency by helping participants to, 1) shed attitudes that govern their responses, and 2) overcome negative social conditioning that affects their behaviour towards each other.

Connecting classrooms: conclusion

Storytelling in education helps students to encounter realities. Storytelling in education helps all involved to incorporate and increase appreciation for a diversity of experiences and aspirations. Stories can create a stage for the voiceless and can present a model of an equitable society within the space of the classroom.

Kathalaya hopes and believes that Storytelling will soon become an inherent part of Educational policy, making a Positive Social change in society and in the world. The Universe is made up of stories not atoms.

Geeta Ramanujam



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