Transforming the Inner Self with Theatre for Learning

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Abstract

This research article presents the experience of using drama knowledge to transform the perspective on life and alter the behavior of male juveniles in the context of a Male Juvenile Observation and Protection Training Center. This is part of a doctoral dissertation on developing a theater program for inner self-learning aimed at enhancing the self-esteem of male juveniles in observation and protection training centers. The content of the article presents experiences in designing drama activities to develop the inner self, delivering methods for using drama activities under the following principles: Drama is an activity that fosters learning to change the internal dimensions of human beings, promoting knowledge, attitudes, understanding, and meaningful behavioral changes through the creation of appropriate learning conditions leads to inner self-change through drama activities. Lessons are presented on the application of drama principles in the learning process, including principles of acting, directing, scriptwriting and analysis, theatre-making, and the use of drama as a tool to understand changes within individuals. The author believes that learning through drama practice will foster a connection to one's own life through emotional experiences. Awareness arises from seeing oneself and others. Learning through drama is like a life journey that helps you define your life and identity through action. This is an examination of what happens to you in a moment, which affects both your conscious and subconscious mind.

Keywords: Inner Self, self-esteem, Theatre Programs

Purpose

This article presents the experience of utilizing drama knowledge to adjust the life perspectives and behaviors of male juveniles in Level 5 within the context of a Juvenile Observation and Protection Training Center. This forms part of a doctoral dissertation focused on developing a drama program for inner self-learning aimed at enhancing self-esteem.

The situation of male juveniles who are repeat offenders in juvenile training centers highlights their emotional and psychological vulnerability, often stemming from family and social experiences that hinder the development of their inner potential. Research by Phuritut Singhaprom (2017) indicates that this group of juveniles has a history of direct and indirect emotional abuse, significantly impacting their self-esteem and contributing to their delinquent behaviors. While training centers implement rehabilitation programs, on-site observations in February 2562 revealed that restrictions on freedom within these centers might lead to a lack of self-confidence and a fragile inner self, particularly among Level 5 male juveniles. This group, characterized by repeat offenses and influence over other juveniles, prompted the center to recognize an urgent need for behavioral modification and to seek effective, innovative program models and learning approaches (Focus Group Discussion, July 22, 2562).

Deep-level human potential development, especially the rehabilitation of the **"inner self"**, is a crucial and essential process. The inner self encompasses consciousness, feelings, thoughts, beliefs, and deep-seated desires that influence external behaviors. Achieving

sustainable change at this level necessitates learning processes that impact internal perspectives. **Transformative Learning** offers a framework where learners can explore and alter their **frame of reference** through critical reflection (Mezirow, 2003). This aligns with 21st-century educational goals that seek to foster the "inner self of learners" for holistic growth and stable existence. As Palmer (2557) proposes, learning should commence with the development of the inner self, connecting with the outer world through a "mind moving to the heart," consistent with a holistic learning approach where learners engage in practical application and internal reflection (Wicharn Panich, 2561).

Characteristics of Level 5 Male Juveniles in Khon Kaen Juvenile Training Center

Level 5 male juveniles in the Khon Kaen Juvenile Training Center (Focus Group Discussion, 2562, and Drama Program Activities) are aged 12-21 years. Most have a history of repeat offenses, including tattooing, fighting, attempted escapes, self-harm, and harming others. They often have limited education, with the majority not completing lower secondary school. These juveniles possess basic agricultural skills and come from vulnerable family backgrounds, such as divorced parents, being raised by grandparents due to parents working in large cities, or growing up in children's homes, reflecting a significant need for emotional support.

External characteristics of this group include communication limitations, particularly in reading and writing. They prefer physical activities and exhibit explicit emotional and behavioral expressions, both overt and reserved. They highly value independence and trust. Their external behaviors can be categorized into two groups: the **impetuous group**, who are risk-takers and highly loyal to their peers, and the **lenient group**, who are slow to make decisions and value relationships above all else.

Internally, these juveniles often hold negative self-perceptions, feeling worthless and experiencing sadness, anxiety, homesickness, and a strong desire for freedom. They are highly concerned about social stigma, changes in relationships, lack of economic opportunities, relapse into drug use, and family conflicts.

Key factors contributing to repeat offenses stem from a **survival mentality** within the center, including the need for group belonging, a distorted perception that criminal acts are "cool" or courageous, a sense of defiance against life, coercion from fellow juveniles, and the perception that being in Level 5 is more comfortable than other zones due to fewer required activities during confinement. Overall, this group of juveniles has limited life resources, including their mindset, opportunities, and complex family issues.

When questioned about their desire for self-change, juveniles expressed a need to adjust both their behavior and emotions, focusing on controlling and managing hot tempers to become calmer and happier. They also desired to coexist peacefully with peers and envision a better future, such as setting life goals after leaving the center, generating income, or completing their education. Juveniles also wished to be more assertive, improve their behavior, and be released and return home quickly. Regarding learning processes, juveniles preferred methods that were relaxed, enjoyable, involved in peer activities, and offered opportunities for rest.

Administrators, staff, and youth development workers suggested that any future youth development program should focus on building **inner mental stability**, **self-awareness**, **peaceful coexistence with others**, and **visualizing future pathways**. This includes fostering emotional well-being, self-control, appropriate expression, and self-management. They sought learning processes that were both enjoyable and profound, leading to lasting and sustainable behavioral changes rather than fleeting activities. Challenges identified included the diverse backgrounds and problems of juveniles, such as learning disabilities, abuse, or neglect, which

make it challenging to access genuine information. Staff sought to foster lasting psychological resilience in juveniles to prevent repeat offenses. Psychologists emphasize the importance of building trust and safety when working with juveniles, enabling them to reveal the truth and feel cared for and supported. Therefore, learning through activities and practical application is the most suitable approach.

Drama activities can serve as a tool to stimulate experiential Learning. The art of drama allows learners to explore their emotions, feelings, and perspectives through artistic and meaningful expression, an approach recognized for promoting mental well-being and behavior in vulnerable groups (Fernández-Aguayoa & Pino-Justeb, 2018). In developing the drama program for inner self-learning aimed at enhancing self-esteem in Level 5 male juveniles, the author integrated drama principles, drama activities, group activities, and art for change, as well as Transformative Learning concepts and **Nathaniel Branden's (2016) five dimensions of self-development** for fostering self-esteem: **Self-Exploration** (to be aware of emotions and thoughts), **Self-Acceptance** (to accept and trust in one's potential), **Self-Concept** (to understand one's values and life goals), **Self-Confidence** (to be aware of abilities and areas for development), and **Self-Management**.

This article focuses on the experience of designing drama activities to develop the inner self, applying drama principles to create learning activities that transform human inner dimensions. It details the methods for using the drama program for learning and reports on the study of inner self-change outcomes.

Theatre for Learning refers to a learning process that develops participants through theatrical and artistic activities. It emphasizes experiential Learning through hands-on practice, using drama-based activities to help participants connect with their surroundings.

Theatre Facilitator is someone who designs and manages the learning process. Their role is to facilitate the Learning, guide participants through activities, and observe the changes that occur in the individuals involved.

The Inner Self Theatre for Learning to Self-esteem program is a training program for male youth in Level 5 of the juvenile detention and training center. The program's activities are adapted from drama and art-based activities for self-transformation. It includes actor training, scriptwriting, storytelling, analysis and interpretation, participatory performance creation, drama games, art projects, and group activities. The goal is to build self-worth through practical, hands-on experience.

Approach

Research Methodology

This study is a research and development project employing an action research approach through the "Inner Self Theatre for Learning" program. It gathered both quantitative and qualitative data, with a primary focus on qualitative data.

The research was conducted in three phases:

Phase 1: Exploration and Study of an Appropriate Learning Process. This phase involved searching for and defining a suitable approach for developing the inner self of male youth. This was accomplished in collaboration with the detention center staff, through a review of relevant documents, and via interviews with key individuals. The participants included staff members, Level 5 male youth, and the research team.

Phase 2: Development of the Inner Self Theatre for Learning Program Prototype. Based on data from the first phase and academic literature, a prototype for the program was developed. This involved two development cycles with 20 Level 5 male youth, aged 15-24, as participants.

Phase 3 Study of Inner Self Transformation. The developed program was implemented with a new group of 20 male youth, aged 15-24, to study individual-level internal changes. The focus was on personal dimensions, including self-awareness, self-acceptance, and self-confidence.

Participant Selection

The study was conducted at the Juvenile Observation and Protection Training Center, Region 4, Khon Kaen Province, Thailand. Participants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria:

1. **Male Juvenile in Level 5**: The inclusion criteria required participants to be male youth in Level 5 with a history of repeat offenses, mentally sound, able to participate continuously for at least two months, and willing to participate in the activities. Exclusion criteria included individuals who were unwilling or unable to complete the activities. A total of 40 participants were selected for the program's development.
2. **Theatre Facilitators:** Five facilitators with expertise in "Theatre for Learning," internal transformation through art, and a strong understanding of positive psychology were selected. They were responsible for facilitating, supporting, and summarizing the activities.

Design and Quality Assurance of Research Tools

This research primarily used qualitative data collection, with additional quantitative data collected in Phase 3 to support the findings on youth transformation. The research instruments underwent content validity checks by five experts using the Index of Item-Objective Congruence (IOC).

Data collection methods and instruments were categorized by phase:

- **Phase 1** Data was collected through **focus group discussions** using a set of participatory brainstorming activities, discussion forum records, and initial interviews with youth.
- **Phase 2**: The primary tool was the **Inner Self Theatre for Learning program**. Data was collected using:
    1. **Semi-structured questionnaires** for focus group discussions (5 times per cycle, with 6-10 participants per cycle).
    2. **Learning logs**, where youth freely recorded information and answered open-ended questions. This was complemented by **participant observation**.
    3. A **Youth Behavior Observation Form** to record general behavior, gestures, opinions, self-reflection abilities, interpersonal relationships, and emotional awareness.
    4. A **Self-Esteem Scale**, adapted from a study by Sanyakit and Sanyakit (n.d.) on the psychometric properties of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965). The 8-item, 4-level scale is suitable for adolescents and young adults in detention centers and covers two dimensions: pride and lack of pride.
- **Phase 3**: This phase focused on studying the internal changes of youth. Both quantitative and qualitative data were collected. Quantitative data was gathered using the **Self-Esteem Scale**, while qualitative data was collected through an **Observation Form**, **Learning Logs**, and **in-depth interviews**. All data were then analyzed using a **phenomenological approach** to conclude the youth's internal transformation.

Data Analysis and Verification

Qualitative data from various sources (interviews, focus groups, learning logs, and behavioral observations) were analyzed using **content analysis**—this involved categorizing,

coding, and grouping similar statements to identify relationships and create a descriptive summary.

Quantitative data from the Self-Esteem Scale were analyzed using **descriptive statistics** and presented as percentages to summarize the level of self-worth. This data was used to support the qualitative analysis, enhancing the validity and reliability of the findings. The data analysis and verification process was conducted in two stages: analysis during data collection to maintain focus and content analysis after fieldwork, followed by verification with the key informants.

Results

The research findings are presented in three parts: 1) the design of the drama activities to develop inner self and self-esteem, 2) the application and outcomes of the drama activities, and 3) the inner self transformation of the youth after participating in the program.

1. The design of the drama activities to develop inner self and self-esteem

Inner Self Development Content The "Inner Self Theatre for Learning" program for Level 5 male youth focuses on rehabilitating repeat offending behaviors stemming from feelings of worthlessness and social stigma. The program aims to promote positive attitudes, self-awareness, life goals, and healthy relationships, as well as creative emotional management, to reduce violent and escape behaviors resulting from a lack of self-confidence and social acceptance.

Principles and Guidelines for Inner Self-Development: Developing a sense of **self-esteem** in youth requires a learning process, activities, and facilitator skills that prioritize the restoration of inner value and confidence. Youth should feel that they are valuable, have life goals, and can improve, all within an environment that supports participation and change. This includes creating new power dynamics and an openness to learning.

Activities were designed to be contextually relevant and aligned with the youth's skills and abilities. The program integrates various disciplines, including psychology, spiritual development, and experiential learning. The process encourages youth to be self-aware, to understand their emotions, thoughts, and behaviors in the present moment, leading to deeper reflection. The learning encompasses three forms of intelligence (**3-Base Wisdom**): cognitive, physical, and emotional. It also uses the body and imagination as key tools for perception and expanding learning horizons.

Group activities that allow youth to solve problems and exchange ideas, such as collaboratively addressing open-ended issues, are essential. Additionally, setting future goals, such as imagining their lives after the program, helps effectively build self-esteem and social skills. The facilitator's role is crucial in creating a relaxed and accepting atmosphere, and providing positive feedback, such as actively listening, offering encouragement, and using positive language to motivate sustainable self-development.

Drama Principles for Developing Self-Esteem: The drama principles employed in the program are based on the author's research and experience in the context of a juvenile training center, drawing on the drama principles outlined by Fortier (2016, pp. 194-198):

1) **Drama as Presentation and Performance Training:** This involves presenting thoughts, emotions, and feelings through actions and speech. It emphasizes training the body and mind, emotional awareness, script and character analysis, physical and vocal communication, and collaboration.

2) **Reaction and a Mirror to Life:** Performance is a realistic reaction of a character, with expressions that can be both direct and contradictory to inner feelings. Simultaneously, a dramatic work acts as a mirror reflecting the stories, feelings, and thoughts of the creator, leading to critical thinking, questioning, and a change in perspective for both the creator and the audience.
3) **Making Meaning from Within:** This principle applies cognitive and information processing theories to analyze the internal workings of actors and the audience. Drama activities engage three internal human dimensions:
    - **Drama as a Journey:** Drama opens awareness to confront the unfamiliar and discover the truth of life for oneself.
    - **Conceptual Blending:** Participating in drama activities fosters conceptual blending, a process that engages complex mental processes and promotes self-awareness.
    - **Mirror Neurons:** Drama activities stimulate **mirror neurons**, which are involved in imitation and learning. This helps learners understand the actions, intentions, and feelings of others as if they were experiencing them themselves. It plays a significant role in developing the ability to empathize, allowing participants to "reflect" the actions and experiences of others in their brains.
4) **Drama for Learning Techniques:** This involves using various drama techniques to explore and resolve participants' concerns, such as drama games, tableaux, role-playing, improvisation, and designing participatory performances.

The author integrated these principles—content for inner self-development, guidelines, and drama principles—into an **8-step, 8-activity program** for Level 5 male youth. The curriculum consists of **75 hours** over **five weeks**, with three five-hour sessions per week.

2. Methods and Outcomes of Drama Activities

The five-week program was conducted with the guiding principle that drama promotes learning for internal human transformation.

Week 1: Process and Learning Outcomes. Activities focused on building relationships, fostering trust, and introducing the "self-awareness" tool through the "Open to Change" and "Self-Awareness Begins with Us" activity sets.

- **Relationships and Trust:** Activities such as " Balance doll or Tumbling Doll " and "Lifting a Teammate" helped build trust and rapport, making the youth more willing to participate and share opinions with unfamiliar peers.
- **Awareness and Problem-Solving:** Group activities, such as "Duck on the Pond," encouraged youth to reflect on teamwork and compare it to real-life obstacles, including facing problems and starting over after making a mistake.
- **Expression and Self-Understanding:** Some groups began to communicate more directly. The use of art and storytelling through mask-making helped youth express their inner thoughts and feelings, leading to increased self-awareness and understanding of their peers.
- **Atmosphere and Safety:** The overall atmosphere was warm and relaxed. Youth began to see the activities as a safe space, feeling comfortable expressing their thoughts and needs openly.

Week 2: Process and Learning Outcomes Following the positive relationship-building in Week 1, Week 2 focused on deep self-exploration through activities that emphasized internal perception and experience.

- **Interdependence and Coexistence:** Group activities, such as "Poison River" and "Butterfly and Log," which utilized bodily movement, promoted cooperation and interdependence. The youth realized that mutual help leads to a happier society and that life requires reliance on others.
- **Self-Awareness and Understanding:** Activities like "Four Directions Animal" and "Monster Drawing," combined with role-playing, helped youth learn more about their personalities and personal needs. They communicated their thoughts and feelings more clearly and saw the importance of precise communication.
- **Open-mindedness and Relationship Building:** The week's outcomes demonstrated that the youth gradually gained a deeper understanding of themselves, lowered their defenses, and became more receptive to others. They were able to form new relationships, converse with new friends, and share more of their feelings. The overall learning atmosphere was relaxed and joyful.

Week 3: Process and Learning Outcomes Activities in Week 3 challenged youth to become aware of their thoughts and understand others' perspectives through drama, movement, and various art forms (e.g., clay modeling, storytelling, writing, poetry).

- **Exploring Concerns:** The "Pull and Hold" activity helped youth reflect on past, present, and future anxieties, such as conflicts, fear of punishment, or worries about the future.
- **Understanding Self and Others:** The "Primer Sentence" activity, where participants freely completed sentences, helped them understand their own and others' perspectives, revealing the diversity of identities, hopes, and anxieties.
- **Emotional Release and Group Empowerment:** Collaborative drawing and writing free-verse poetry allowed youth to release inner feelings and realize they could move forward and create new things, even after losing something important. The resulting poems created a sense of group empowerment, reflecting their ability to change their feelings and actions to define their life path.
- Overall, these activities stimulated inner learning and an initial awareness of their capacity for change, even if a clear future direction was not yet established.

Week 4: Process and Learning Outcomes Activities. In Week 4, activities focused on building self-confidence and designing one's life through the concepts of "Self, Thoughts, Feelings" and "Life's Milestones: Rooted and Resolute."

- **Positive and Hopeful Outlook:** Youth learned from the short story "The X-Bear" through a script analysis process. This instilled a feeling that they could find happiness despite past wounds and that they could release past mistakes to pursue a brighter future. Many began to gain self-confidence and recognize their potential to adapt to new situations.
- **Self-Development through Participatory Drama:** Starting with the poems from Week 3, a participatory performance was created that simulated life in the detention center. This allowed youth to work on their inner selves, practice communicating their true feelings, and collaborate. They learned to be patient and realized that some tasks require collaboration with others, even when they are difficult.
- **Designing Clear Life Goals:** An activity involving card selection, drawing, and group storytelling motivated youth to design their own lives. They created "future milestones"

through the "Just Do It" activity, helping them choose and plan their path toward concrete goals.

Week 5: Process and Learning Outcomes. Week 5 focused on communicating identity through a learning exhibition, aiming to help youth see their self-worth, feel capable, and take pride in their work for others.

- **Creative Self-Reflection through Song:** Youth collaboratively wrote a song based on their poems. The song's themes of moving forward, letting go of the past, and discovering self-worth demonstrated the tangible integration of their self, body, and mind.
- **Exhibition and Communicating Change:** The youth prepared an exhibition to showcase their work, featuring zones such as "Masks (Who Am I?)," "Timeline (My Future)," and "Self-Transformation ID Card." This allowed them to select stories and present their changes to a diverse audience, including new youth, friends, and professionals.
- **Expression and Pride:** The participatory performances, poetry readings, songs, and exhibition preparation provided the youth with an opportunity to fully express themselves and take pride in their work and abilities.

The use of drama and art activities revealed the complex dimensions of the youth's behavior and inner feelings:

- **Behavioral and Emotional Reflections in Art:** The drawings and stories showed behavioral expressions related to violence, conflict, and substance abuse. However, they also revealed vulnerability, such as loneliness, a desire for love, and a wish to return to a warm family environment.
- **Discourse of Coexistence and Interdependence:** The frequent use of phrases like "We must help each other, be united" symbolized their need for safety and harmonious coexistence, both inside and outside the facility.
- **Impact of Staff Training on Psyche and Communication:** Youth reflected on the physical fatigue from training, which affected their daily lives and participation in other development activities. This led to a limited communication style, where they would often only answer direct questions in a way they believed would please the listener, especially in closed-ended questions.

3. Inner Self Transformation After Program Participation

After participating in the program, youth showed significant inner self-transformation toward recognizing their self-worth. Group discussions and learning log reviews confirmed that the diverse activities over five weeks were crucial to this change.

A prominent result was increased self-confidence, self-awareness, and self-appreciation. For example, one youth said, "I admire myself for putting effort into the activities with my friends" (Youth 17), and another stated, "I am more confident, I speak better, I dare to make better decisions, and I am more determined" (Youth 1). Youth also developed better relationships and an ability to manage problems, as evidenced by statements such as, "I am a skilled person, I am patient and determined to make everything turn out well" (Youth 5).

These changes align with measurement results showing a significant increase in their life satisfaction, perceived competence, and confidence in creating their future despite past mistakes.

Before participating in the program, most juveniles (52.94%) had a moderate level of self-esteem, with only a small percentage (5.8%) at a low level. However, after participating in the program, the level of self-esteem significantly increased, with 70% of participants at a

high level and 30% at a moderate level. The positive self-assessment questions that showed the most increase were confidence in one's abilities, self-satisfaction, and the recognition that one still possesses good qualities.

The program successfully boosted self-esteem through a developmental process starting with self-exploration, leading to the discovery of potential and the acceptance of both strengths and limitations. Youth learned to overcome these limitations by exploring new thoughts, feelings, and perspectives, and by consciously understanding their self-concept to design their lives with purpose. This resulted in greater life confidence and a belief in their ability to improve.

Conclusion

The theatre program fosters effective Learning, promotes inner self-change, and enhances self-esteem in juveniles, utilizing drama activities that stimulate self-exploration, expression, and interaction with others. Examples include:

1. **Acting and Improvisation Activities:** These activities provided opportunities for juveniles to explore their thoughts, emotions, and feelings through action and speech in simulated situations. Drama served as a "mirror of life," enabling juveniles to see and understand their inner truths (Fortier, 2016, pp. 194-198). By assuming various roles, juveniles can experiment, test new behaviors, and learn to express themselves purposefully without concern for real-life consequences, which is especially crucial for juveniles with a history of repeat offenses and a lack of confidence in communication.
    - **Example:** Creating simulated living situations in the training center and devising dialogue for life in dorms and blocks allowed juveniles to work with their inner selves and practice communicating genuine feelings (Week 4).
2. **Theatre Making Activities:** The process of creating theatre, from plot development and scriptwriting to directing and joint performance, fostered teamwork, collaborative decision-making, and collective responsibility. By being "creators" of the activities themselves, juveniles developed a sense of ownership and pride in the resulting work. This is vital for juveniles who may have felt devalued and lacked social acceptance from outside the system.
    - **Example:** Adapting poetry from Week 3 into performance through a "participatory theatre-making process" and collaboratively organizing an exhibition demonstrated teamwork and the creation of work that juveniles could be proud of (Weeks 4 and 5).
3. **Art-Based Activities and Reflection:** Utilizing various art forms such as clay sculpting of human figures, storytelling, drawing, writing, poetry, or even composing songs served as tools to help juveniles explore and express inner thoughts and feelings that are difficult to communicate verbally. These activities stimulated **critical self-reflection**, which is at the core of transformative Learning (Mezirow, 2003).
    - **Example:** Clay sculpting, storytelling, drawing, and poetry in Week 3 enabled juveniles to reflect on inner blockages and life perspectives, including collaboratively composing a song from poetry, which demonstrated the integration of self, body, and mind and fostered the insight that "life needs a starting point; the beginning is more important, it takes a long time to get to the first sentence" (Weeks 3 and 5).

These drama activities helped juveniles explore, understand, and accept their inner selves, build positive relationships with others, and develop life management skills, all of which sustainably contributed to an increase in self-esteem.

Following participation in the drama program for learning, the youth demonstrated inner self-change, which led to an enhanced sense of self-esteem. The author used focus group

discussions and reviewed learning logs to evaluate the outcomes. The assessment revealed that the diverse activities throughout the five weeks were instrumental in creating this change. The youth showed increased self-confidence, a recognition of their potential, and self-appreciation, as reflected in statements from the youth, such as:

"I commend myself for earnestly doing activities with friends" (Y 17) and "I am brave, more articulate, more decisive in a better direction, more determined" (Y 1). Additionally, juveniles developed better relationships with others and recognized their ability to manage problems, for instance: "I am talented, patient, determined to do everything well" (Y 5). These changes align with measurement results showing a significant increase in life satisfaction scores, perceived competence, and confidence in shaping their future despite past mistakes.

This program fostered an increased level of self-esteem through a developmental process that began with self-exploration and self-discovery, leading to the recognition of potential and acceptance of both strengths and limitations. Juveniles learn to overcome limitations by exploring new thoughts, feelings, and life perspectives, including conscious self-concept awareness to design their lives purposefully. This outcome made juveniles more confident in life and convinced that they could improve, as reflected by their statements:

"I found a new perspective. I used to think I was stuck... I had lost my future; my life was over. However, now I think I can start over. I can control my emotions better and let things go more easily. I do not speak negatively to myself because that would take away my motivation. Now I have more friends and can get along with people more easily" (Y 13).

"From the poetry activity, I want to say that in life, there is good and bad. No one is born good forever or bad forever. Everyone has both good and bad aspects. Even if life before was not good, we can change it" (Y 2).

A significant change was juveniles' ability to overcome fear and the belief that they were worthless or incapable. The program was designed for juveniles to communicate their thoughts through an exhibition they designed and presented, which significantly boosted their self-confidence, as expressed by one juvenile:

"I feel like I learned more about self-expression. I feel like I have changed in many ways. I was so excited and shocked by what I did today. I felt like I could not do it, but once I finished, I knew I could do what others could too. I feel very proud, I never thought I would get here" (Y 8).

The author believes that learning through drama practice creates a connection to one's own life through feelings, fostering awareness by allowing one to see oneself and others. Learning through drama is comparable to a life journey that helps participants define their lives and identities through action, which involves examining what happens to oneself in a given moment, affecting both the conscious and subconscious minds.

Discussion

Drama-based activities that foster self-esteem must begin with an understanding of the youth, particularly the unique characteristics of Level 5 male youth. These individuals often struggle with feelings of worthlessness, a lack of acceptance, and distrust of others, in addition to emotional wounds from repeat offenses and negative self-perceptions, such as "feeling worthless or not worthy enough." This insight guided the program's design, which focused on restoring internal value, creating a safe and respectful environment, and using a multidisciplinary approach. This approach integrated principles of drama, participatory learning, and the practice of "presence–contemplative" to foster self-awareness. Drama's role as a "mirror to life" and its stimulation of "mirror neurons" allowed youth to perceive and understand their inner experiences more deeply (Fortier, 2016, pp. 194-198).

The program's drama activities were crucial in building self-esteem among Level 5 male youth, especially those with a history of repeat offenses who face social stigma. The

program's direct focus on these issues, by restoring inner value through a blend of drama and Transformative Learning principles, yielded precise results. The elements within the drama that enabled youth to see their self-worth can be synthesized into three main factors:

1. Creating a Safe Space for Self-Exploration and Expression.

Drama was used as a tool to create a relaxed, accepting environment where youth could freely explore their complex thoughts, feelings, and emotions. This was vital for youth who had previously been cautious and guarded in their real lives. Drama activities allowed them to "play" with their feelings and bodies through role-playing or improvisation, enabling them to express their "inner truth" without fear of judgment. These activities also encouraged youth to be more "daring in expressing" and "daring in thinking," which led to increased self-confidence, as one youth noted:

> "I feel like I have learned to be more daring in expressing myself. I feel like I have changed in so many ways. I was so excited and shocked by what I did today. I felt like I could not do it, but once it was finished, I realized I could do the same things others could. I am very proud. I never thought this day would come." (Y 8)

This aligns with Chaiwat Wong-asa (2019), who states that activities that lead to self-worth must prioritize a relaxed, accepting environment with positive reinforcement and a space for free reflection of thoughts and feelings.

2. A Process of Self-Reflection and Creating New Meaning for Life

Drama activities stimulated "critical self-reflection" and "critical discourse," which Mezirow (2003) identifies as key tools for transformative learning. Because drama acts as a "mirror to life" (Fortier, 2016, pp. 194-198), youth could see themselves and situations similar to their own lives. Activities such as writing poetry, composing songs, or organizing an exhibition were processes that required young people to reflect on their past, present, and future. This led to a deeper perception and understanding of their inner selves, which helped them shift their negative self-perceptions, as another youth reflected:

"I found a new perspective. I used to think I was locked up, that my future was gone. However, now I think I can start over. I can control my emotions better and let things go more easily. I do not speak negatively to myself because that kills my motivation. Now I have more friends and can get along with people more easily." (Y 13)

This is consistent with the concept of transformative learning, which emphasizes changing internal characteristics, perspectives, and meanings of the world and life. This is achieved through a process that helps dismantle old perspectives and meanings via activities that stimulate thoughts, feelings, discussions, and internal reflection (Chollada Thongthawee et al., 2008, p. 36).

3. Collaborative Creation and Experiencing Success

The program's focus on "participatory learning" and "participatory drama creation" allowed youth to be part of a creative process from start to finish. Seeing tangible results, such as a co-written song or a co-organized exhibition, created a sense of pride and accomplishment. These activities also encouraged them to work with others, build positive relationships, and learn to take responsibility for their roles, which is essential for social integration. The praise and encouragement they received from peers and facilitators, along with the opportunity to share their stories with others, served as positive reinforcement that strengthened their belief in their potential, as one youth expressed:

"I admire myself for being so dedicated to the activities with my friends." (Y 17)

And another:

"I am a good person, patient, and determined to make everything I do turn out well." (Y 5)

The program, designed to develop inner self toward self-worth, emphasizes the level of participation, direct experiential learning, and positive reinforcement. In summary, the drama activities in this program fostered self-worth in Level 5 male youth by creating a safe space for self-exploration, stimulating reflection and new meanings for life, and promoting self-pride through collaborative creation and successful experiences.

Youth Transformation After Program Participation

Youth demonstrated clear changes in both their external personality and inner self. When their inner selves changed, they began to feel self-love, recognized their abilities, felt proud of themselves, and lived more happily with their peers. During the program, they began making decisions independently, became clearer about their needs, realistically assessed their abilities, and felt prepared to face problems without relying on others.

The results from the self-esteem scale showed that they had more self-love, were less self-critical, felt more capable, were more daring in their thinking and actions, could set their own life goals, and were better prepared to face hardship, pressure, and even defeat.
External characteristics also emerged, such as improved communication skills, full participation in activities, and a friendly, easygoing demeanor when living with others.

"At first, he was not very talkative, but I saw him start to speak more, be more daring to speak and think. He became more lively, spoke concisely, and to the point. He started to be more confident in his ideas." (F 1)

"The youth became more daring to express themselves, more reasoned. I saw their smiles return. I saw them talk more, and I saw a determination that bordered on impatience. I saw goals and self-confidence." (G 1)

The youth's attitudes toward their future goals changed, starting with self-confidence and the courage to communicate. They shifted from being afraid to speak to being able to assert their ideas, which led them to feel they could develop and create their future.

The internal transformation of the youth began with feeling comfortable participating in activities and having a positive self-image. This was the first factor for self-change, requiring the courage to accept one's character and past. Often, youth could express "thoughts and concepts about how life should be," but the researcher observed that this was often memorized from past training. When it was merely memorized, it did not lead to behavioral change. The challenging process was making the youth willing to change—changing their feelings (heart), their thoughts (mind), and their body (ready to act)—into a genuine desire to adapt.

What became clear was that new relationships were formed among the youth through group activities. They developed positive feelings about themselves as they reflected on their perspectives and gained new life perspectives through a process that led them to discover their feelings and thoughts. This aligns with the transformative learning approach, which posits that change requires a process of "conscious awareness"—being mindful of one's thoughts and feelings. Therefore, the program emphasized practicing self-awareness, building inner stability, and continuously developing the ability to see oneself.

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