

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

Session: Drama/Theatre Education as a Democratic Process of Learning

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Introduction

Teaching Theatre/Drama in Education includes both the teaching of Theatre as a subject and as an art form, as well as the way of teaching other subjects of the Curriculum through drama processes. Theatre Pedagogy and Didactics are based on the amalgam of Theatre, Drama and democratic ways of teaching and learning, by redefining pedagogical and cultural theories and practices, during the concurrent teaching and learning modes of cross-curricular and alternative processes (Patterson, McKenna-Crook, Swick, 1996: 95-103, Ellis& Stuen: 1998, Edwards& Kelly 1998).

In this session, we will focus on the basic elements of applied theatre in education which include democratic values and aim to build democratic citizenship.

Theatre/Drama Education

-Personal and Social Development&Interaction

Arts and especially theatre/drama in education are called to be alternative ways which engage students in learning (Ross:1978, Robinson:1982, Best:1990, Gardner:2005). Noel Witts (2006) cites¹ that when writing a reference about a dancer who wanted to be an air force pilot, many of the skills required for the pilot had already been cultivated to the dancer: communication, development, judgment, confidence, planning and organization, relations with audiences etc. Through art in schools the teacher can cultivate minds and hearts and by the same time give birth either to one of the next great artists, lawyers, farmers or bank managers. No matter what the student will become in his/her future, s/he has a chance to experience theatre as a process of personal and social development, as a challenge of gaining emotional, aesthetic, democratic intelligence, by being able to participate in drama processes as an individual and as a member of a whole team. Theatre/Drama enhances students «multiple intelligences», according to Gardner's Theory of Multiple Intelligences (Gardner, 2005), as it is a multisensory process which uses a plurality of methods, techniques and possibilities. In and though Drama, students can redefine, reinvent and

¹ «The role of performing arts in fostering creativity», speech held at the 6th Meeting of Theatre in Education , Heraclion- Crete, Association of teachers of Secondary Education, 2006.



cultivate their personal skills and in the same time can interact with new skills and values shaped from team building.

Drama and theatre codes coming from improvisation, dramaturgy or performance, provoke interaction in the learning process between the educator, the student and the 'theme' of discourse. The use of role-play, dramatized dialogue, dramatization, questioning in role, dramatic playing and so on gives both students and teachers the form and the freedom to work on a 'Socratic-promenade' process of digging into knowledge. They can search the different aspects of the theme (for instance, of racism, war, violence) by working on a preparation stage of discovery, enquiry and recording, passing to a stage of presenting this material through different theatre/drama forms and then evaluating it again through inquiry, self-criticism, evaluation and reflection.

In all kinds of theatre/drama forms used in education all over the world there is an official or unofficial application of these phases of making-creating-preparing, presenting-doing-performing, responding-evaluating-self-evaluating.

-Teacher in Role

During these theatre processes the role of the teacher is the major one who is responsible not only to make theatre/drama techniques to function but to incorporate the mentality of 'being present in the class' in his/her methodology. The teacher is getting in and out of role -teacher in role- (Fleming, 2003:91-92, Wagner, 1999: 127-148) but in the same time when s/he stands in class in the role of the teacher again, by playing with different limits of role. When the teacher gets in role in order to make the drama unfold, to give information, to provoke the need for research etc. (depending on the team and the goals of the lesson), s/he should make clear the distinction of being in and out of role and be persuasive when getting in role. As M. Fleming points out when talking about teacher in role; "(...) pupils are quick to detect uncertainty and will not believe in the role if the teacher lacks confidence" (Fleming, 2003:91).

In the same time the drama/theatre teacher interacts with the elements of role when s/he is out of it. S/he uses questioning as one of the basic tools and in the same time plays the role of the one who does not know what follows, though s/he may well have planned the sequence of the process. S/he strongly plays with Socratic states of ignorance and ways of elicit the innate knowledge. When B.J.Wagner talks about Dorothy Heathcote's different teaching registers or stances that the drama teacher could employ in class (Wagner, 1999: 30-34) , among them she refers to;

- the One-Who knows Register or Stance
- the Would-You-Like-to-Know?



- The I-Have-no-Idea Register
- The It's-No-Use-Asking-Me Register,
- The Suggester-of-Implications Register
- The Interested-Listener Register,
- The Devil's-Advocate Register etc.

Wagner B.J. points out the *I-Have-No-Idea Register* as a favorite of Heathcote's for evoking responses from students; Heathcote's I-Have-no-Idea register has left the pupil room to wonder with the teacher (Wagner, 1999:31). It is this wonder that recycles through the drama process and makes students engage to knowledge as they are always dealing with their inner selves and they build communication with the other classmates. Confronting this 'wonder' they develop their cognitive, social, aesthetical and emotional worlds.

-Questioning in and out of Role

Applying theatre in education (in all levels of education) permits both the teacher and the student to question themselves and each other about various aspects of the taught material; the taught material is only the starting point for their interaction, communication and cooperation on learning. Questioning (Wagner, 1998: 55-62, Wooland, 1999: 143-149, Neelands, 2004: 51-53) is one of the major elements which characterize the methodology of theatre/drama in education as an inquiry one.

Theatre/drama in education as a separate subject, as a teaching methodology for other subjects or as a creative tool which give space for dialogue (through its drama codes) and release social, mental and health problems, is rooted on the dialectics. Each of its forms in education- community theatre, based on the ideas and techniques of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre (Freire: 1972, Boal: 2002, Somers, 1994:158-163), educational drama, based on the idea of applying theatre/drama on other subjects, something that many contemporary theoreticians and practitioners share (Fleming: 2003, Neelands: 2004, O'Neill:1995, Taylor:2000, Kempe&Ashwell:2000), performance, based on students inquiries (Somers, 1994: 93-102) and research, or other of its forms- deals with the pedagogy of questioning. Educators, art or drama educators involved in doing theatre/drama in education are working on an ongoing inquiry methodology. As Peter Abbs cites;

«The Socratic impulse to question and explore the nature of experience must remain at the heart of the educational enterprise, but questioning and exploring do not have to take place through concepts; they can also be developed to even greater effect,



through the organized sounds of music, through the gestures of the body, through the metaphoric language of the poet, as well as through the tonal values and vibrant textures of paint. Rembrandt and Cezanne, Martha Graham and Isadora Duncan are as much philosophers as Socrates and Plato, only their symbolic means are different» (Abbs, 1994: 9).

Though drama/theatre in education is built on the comfortable and cooperative relations between educators and pupils, which are based on the dominance of dialogue in the class and not on the teacher's monologue, simultaneously the educator has its own tools of controlling this learning process, without separating his role as the dominant one. When something is misunderstood or the teacher wants to evolve a statement or lead the team to a new statement (something that can be drawn by speech or nonverbal drama etc.), again s/he uses interrogation. Through different types of questioning either in or out of role the teacher makes the students evaluate the whole personal, interpersonal and cooperative process. S/he could lead the student to rethink on a theme or act, to re-evaluate or reflect on his/her self, without disturbing the team work. In drama/theatre in education the Socratic 'elenchus' is taking place through the same means of drama/ theatre codes which are used in the whole teaching process; questioning, restatement, action, reaction, antithetical actions, debates, internal/external thoughts etc. And the teacher as facilitator in the process plays his/her role of leading the team as a "democratic-leader".

Questioning as a key element of learning through theatre/drama education, gives teacher opportunities of dramatizing and improvising with students not only by using monologue techniques and resources. Questioning in or out of role enhances creativity, decision making as well as the cultivation of argumentation.

Collective Character“ I and We”-Students in Role

Collective role or character is an effective drama technique which can activate the whole classroom, as through collective role, every child or teenager can participate in the activity as if s/he was the role; *What would you say in this situation if you were the Little Princess*. According to Neelands, through Collective Character Technique "A character is improvised by a group of pupils; any of them can speak as the character. In this way the whole class can be involved in a dialogue, for instance, by half the class taking on one of the characters involved. There doesn't need to be conformity in the responses they make; different attitudes can be given expression so that there is a dialogue between members of the collective character (Neelands, 2004:100).



Collective role or character gives students and teachers the opportunities to;

- analyze and create characters
- shape a story
- interrogate different aspects and points of view
- help every student to express him/her self via the story
- enhance arguing
- create a performance based on more than "one protagonist"etc.

Opening up a story and deepen in characters via collective participation offers drama uniqueness and authentic group participation.

-Stories and Perspectives

From My Story to The Classroom's Story

'Storying as Gordon Wells describes it is crucial to students' active engagement with curriculum, and how drama praxis helps students commit to the curriculum (Taylor, 2005: 61). Theatre and drama praxis gives students the opportunity to express their own unique stories as well to recreate their own narratives via group's story, by exploring experience in ways which cannot happen in real life. At the same time drama stories are based on both stories from real life as well as storied based on the myth, fantasy, literature, curriculum etc. Simultaneously, drama practices help students to redefine stories and to embody significant meaning. Philip Taylor cites;

*'We all have our own stories'*Barton and Booth (1990, p.14) tell us, *'our own ways of storying, our own ways of representing what is, what was, and what might be.'* In my own teaching I have deliberately drawn on the power of story in helping students develop ownership of the work. Common sense dictates that those who tell or enact stories gave formulated their own way of organizing human experience. When Meryl wonders to herself how she would read the attitude of the suspicious person, she is beginning to story about and categorise human action. How does storying help in this categorization?, and how can teachers' drama praxis permit students control of their own learning? (Taylor, 2005:63).

Stories in drama are applied as pretext, basic activity or reflection and at the same time as a process of unfolding drama through different methodologies. Storying is both a form and a process of drama and theatre education. One of the key elements of stories in drama is the different points of view and the transformative and changing point of view as the story is re-shaped. Stories in drama education gives participants the chances and possibilities to understand others thoughts and feelings, by imagining how things look from their perspective and to express sympathy for the bad or peculiar



things s/he has seen happen to other people, friends, family or citizens. This transformative point of view in drama processes help students to take other people's feelings and thoughts into account when making decisions and to recognize intra-personal, emotional, social, political and other reasons and dimensions of a character's decisions.

By creatively incorporating *storying* and *different and collective point of view*, drama education is open to to cultural otherness and any other *otherness*.

Theatre Games and Dramatic Playing

Drama techniques and different drama processes include theatre games or forms of dramatic playing. Theatre games in classroom break the language barriers and make the lesson open to every single child. Theatre games activate group agreement and break the ice and fear of participation. They function either as warm-ups or wrap-ups, or as a main process of unfolding the workshop/lesson and can be indicatively categorized in games for/with: sounds, shapes, space, narrative ideas, objects, rhythm (metric, organic, breath), movement, the body in space, spatial imagination etc.

Re-Acting

The Stanislavski "method" of teaching acting, which has been so influential in the United States and the Soviet Union, is also applied in theatre education techniques and help students to build the story and the character. At the same time Brecht's philosophy and method of acting and directing is influential in all forms and processes of teaching through theatre. Practitioners associated with different styles of acting teaching and with different realist or non realist styles of theatre offer content and form in theatre teaching.

By identifying the 'given circumstances' of a scene, according to Stanislavski's method, the focus is given on:

- Who is present?
- When is it happening?
- Where is it happening?
- What is it happening?
- What has happened?
- What might happen?



Stanislavsky's "Magic If" is based on the human ability to imagine what would be like to walk in someone else's shoes. Brecht cultivates "defamiliarization", socially critical spectatorship and dialectics.

Brecht's performers/players directly address the audience, they present themselves and their story. Augusto Boal's "Forum Theatre" applies Brecht's dialectics on a vivid theatre which is close to the community's needs and is based on the active participation of the audience. Boal wants the spectator to be spect-actor and gives permission to the audience to become active and transform the reality in which they are living. Boal's forum theatre is applied in Theatre/Drama Education as a form and a technique;

"A situation (chosen by the group to illuminate a topic or experience relevant to the drama) is enacted by a small group whilst the others observe. Both the actors and the observers have the right to stop the action whenever they feel it is losing direction, or if they need help, or if the drama loses authenticity. Observers may step in and take over roles or add to them. Cultural connections; Giving/receiving advice. Learning opportunities; Selecting appropriate situations, helping and advising each other, close attention to what is being performed, discussing and negotiating the way it would be, different attitudes to the event worked through in action)." (Neelands&Goode, 2000:59).

In Theatre/Drama Education, different theatre forms and methods are applied under the scope of participatory teaching and learning.

Texts, Pretexts and Plays

Every text and pretext which is suitable for the targeted ages can be the starting point for unfolding drama. Thus, drama is based on: diaries, pictures, digital material, sound stimulus, taste stimulus, documents, maps, images, narratives, multimedia and multisensory sources. At the same time a text or a play can be the stimulus for drama lessons or performances or for the intended result and product. Theatre/drama lessons can either focus on the process of drama and drama processes or on the process of making performance or can focus on both process and product's aims. Plays -from ancient Greek drama to contemporary drama and theatre- constitute a creative area of playing with drama conventions or/and an attractive goal.

Progression and Responding

Responding to drama is not only a procedure which follows the reflection on activities at the end of the lesson, but also is an ongoing process which characterizes the philosophy of theatre education itself. To create, analyze, criticize, recreate, in and out of role, in and out of the dramatized story, is embodied in theatre pedagogy as culture



and methodology. At the same time evaluation and progression in drama education is based on the aims of the different theatre/drama curricula around the world, as well as the national curriculum which permits or limits the presence of arts in education. Progression in drama is roughly based on skills, knowledge and values which interact with: form and content (for both drama techniques and performance making), participation and experience, different styles of making drama and theatre.

Last but not Least; You, Your self and Your Team

Making drama is called to be one of the most attractive lessons and activities in schools. The facilitator, the drama teacher and the teacher who uses drama in class needs to be inspiring and to re-invent ideas, stories and ways of making drama unique and refreshing. Teaching theatre/drama in schools requires you to be ready to teach drama! Thus the biggest stimulus for this readiness is to capture life, themes and feelings which are close to your group's age. Drama/theatre practices include themes and areas from art or curricula but at the same time include themes which are strongly related with the needs, age, culture, identity of participants. Digging deep inside your self and your group always offers you keys of enjoying theatre in education.



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