

EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

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

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Introduction

The two main axes of theatre/drama in secondary education concern theatre as an autonomous subject, activity, art form or object in secondary education and theatre as a teaching methodology for other subjects. The main purpose of applied theatre in secondary education is to familiarize students with the scope and dynamics of theatre education for teenagers, to become familiar with the teaching methodology of theatre and drama in education, in order to be guided in the appropriate design of lessons, meetings and experiences of theatre education.

The teaching of theatre in education is both an art and a science, an object of learning and teaching, a method of teaching and a social attitude. The theatre/drama teacher in schools has to be acquainted with the subject of theatre in theory and practice as well as to be able to apply it through the multiple skills and qualities that applied theatre in education gives him/her. The subject and content of the courses taught by the theatre teacher as part of his or her studies are also the sources, material and stimuli that will lead the theatre teacher to formulate varied and integrated lesson plans. In this context, teaching Democratic Citizenship in Secondary Education can be seen simultaneously as content and as form and teaching process through Theatre Education.

Theatre/Drama in Secondary Education

- Theatre education as a taught subject
- Theatre as a teaching methodology (in the context of curriculum courses and educational programs in health education, environmental education, cultural issues, etc.).
- Theatre performance
- Theatre as a tool for social change and transformation
- Theatre, me and the other



Theatre Education & Adolescence

Some of the basic characteristics of adolescence, as described by Cole & Cole (Cole M. and Cole S., 2002), which influence theatre teaching and at the same time constitute themes and areas of theatre/drama work are the following:

- Friendships, cliques, peer pressure
- Peer group organisation
- Adolescent development and sexual development
- Self-completion
- Parent-child conflict
- Identity formation
- The concept of gender and its definition in identity formation
- Cross-cultural differences of adolescents
- Adolescent *disorders* (feeding, emotional 'feeding', identity crisis, etc.)

Drama and theatre in adolescence can be seen under the form of Theatre/Drama for adolescents (plays for adolescence, selection from the world repertoire, etc.), Theatre/Drama specially adapted for adolescents or by adolescents (original plays or adaptations), as intertextual composition, dramatization of texts, writing for performance (mixed techniques), Theatre Writing and Drama for Young People (individual and group processes), Contemporary Theatre in Education and Drama for Young People, Social Theatre targeted to Adolescents, Creative Adaptations (theatre, literature, cinema, music etc.), based on the democratic participation of teenagers as individuals and as a collective group.

Theatre is introduced into school as follows: as a stand-alone subject, as a teaching methodology for other subjects, through school performances and festivals, theatre events outside the school, art based-educational programs: environmental education, health education, cultural oriented programs, community based programs linked with the municipality, community based art festivals. Teaching democratic citizenship through theatre education helps the school to be more open and linked to the community.



Collective creation which characterizes devised theatre is an aim for secondary theatre education. Teenagers learn, design, create, respond to theatre through collective procedures and making processes. Performance scores can also originate from collaborative, improvisatory work by a youth performing ensemble as well by a youth directing ensemble. Improvisation helps both drama teachers and teenagers to explore their theatre skills but also to deep into themes and values of democratic citizenship as devised theatre forms guide students to explore social, political, democratic issues and ethics.

In secondary education, theatre is usually combined with music and film aesthetics as teenagers love to express themselves through music, movies and creative videos. Thus, improvisations are based on soundscapes, music games, games with lyrics and known or improvised melodies, music composition, film based exercises etc. Dramatization of a piece from a play or literary work or a taught subject or a song (from sciences/humanities/arts curriculum) is based on the following elements:

- Improvisation based on the objects chosen by the group and resulting from the reading of the text
- Free improvisation based on the items given to the group
- Group action, with the drama teacher/facilitator in the role of narrator and participants performing in groups or in pairs
- Drama making in groups or in pairs
- Solo-performance
- Improvisation based on the development of the story
- Evolution and progression of the dramatized story through the different types of questions asked by the moderator (teacher or student)
- From group improvisation to actions in pairs: interviews, questions, "questioning" Hamlet and Ophelia or all the characters in the play.
- Exploration of characters through dramatization and theatre conventions
- Presentations of pre-planned actions based on a scene or an act in the play.
- Group closure and creative response to all of the above "stage" action.



Cross Curricular Themes and Subjects taught through Theatre

Although all humanities and science curriculum can be applied through theatre education, there are some courses, material and themes which offer landscapes of great interest for applied arts. Here are few examples;

- Poetry and theatre for adolescents.
- Theatre and dance in secondary education. The use of physical expression and dance techniques. Kinesiology, movement and dances through theatre making.
- Teaching language in high school through theatre education.
- Playwrights & theatre education
- Approaching the history lesson through theatre/drama in education (history, theatre history, arts history)
- Vocational Guidance & Career Counseling Through Theatre Education Training (for 15-18 years old)
- Theatre & Performing Arts Education
- Theatre & Arts Education
- Rhetoric, Theatre and Dramatized Debates; Piece Education and Democratic Citizenship
- (here, you can add your favorite themes for secondary education teaching through theatre).

Theatre & Film Making Processes. Creative Digital Videos within Theatre Education

Theatre in secondary education also asks for students to familiarize with the design and development of creative short films and documentaries, knowing the basic elements of the disciplines and the arts of the seventh art, while enjoying the joy of creating scripts and films.

Although Digital Technologies provide easy access for students to film, by using their digital camera, mobile phone or smart mobile devices such as tablets etc., and this experiential use of the camera is sometimes required, the essential acquaintance with Cinema provides them with important moments of film literacy and experience.

All the stages of the creation of a film can be dramatized and the students can take on the role of scriptwriter, director, actors, director of photography, set designer, sound designer, editor, etc., improvising on the basis of the specialty they have undertaken.

Alongside with the dramatic exercises, basic elements of audiovisual and digital education include the following:

- research and study of the basic codes and conventions for the design
- development and writing of scripts for short films,
- developing a central idea and theme and writing a draft of the script
- basic skills, knowledge and responsibilities of all professionals working at the pre-production, production or post-production stage of the film
- rehearsals with the actors and technical rehearsals
- make-up, hairstyling and special effects
- finding locations, actors and sources of funding
- basic principles of directing, photography and sound recording, scenography and costume design, editing ,film production work
- post-production work on the film
- promotion and distribution of the film
- criticism and reception of the film, etc.

The creation of films, whether short videos, video clips, fiction, documentaries or other types of films, can either be applied as: creative digital material produced by the group and shown during a digital performance, event or presentation, or as the final creation/product of an audiovisual journey during the drama lesson or project. The introduction and contact of students and teachers with the art of film can empower the digitally indigenuous new generation with basic elements of film literacy and writing, so that they can transform their own improvised filmmaking into a more complete short film form and simultaneously that they enhance their theatre improvisations and performances into digital theatre work.

Interactivity & Audience Participation; building democratic audiences

«After the Second World War, people became aware that drama or theatre techniques might be useful as a way of fostering effective learning in schools. This is known as Theatre in education or 'TIE' for short. Brian Way, who founded the Theatre Centre in 1953, was an early practitioner, and influenced the team, including Gordon Vallins, who established TIE at the Belgrade Theatre, Coventry in 1965. Their work was so influential that it spread nationwide. The idea of a high impact performance for a specifically targeted school audience became hugely popular. Because the audiences are small, they can be encouraged to participate through work in role and through debate. Projects can be supported with resource materials and training or support for the students/teachers. Originally, a Theatre in education project would probably be centrally funded. These days, companies have to seek their funding from individual schools so they have to provide the product the schools want».¹

T.i.E is used to describe interactive forms of community based theatre, which is shaped by a group of theatre/drama teachers or teachers, trained in both theatre and teaching techniques, who also perform as actors. The action is completed through the interaction with the audience of children and/or teenagers. T.i.E for youth is focused on mixed techniques of performance making and interactive theatre, combined with drama activities before and after the performance part.

Theatre/Drama Teachers who are trained on education for Democratic Citizenship can also apply T.i.E. as a theatre process which will give them the opportunity to explore controversial aspects of social issues and to offer students an important experience of dealing with debates and principles. Issues which can give the pretext, in order to form scenarios and case studies, for a Theatre in Education programs for secondary education are all the CDC's content, as well as the reference framework of competences and the key descriptors. For example, a T.i.E. can deal with potential challenges in the curriculum, barriers and opportunities for refugee teenagers, peace building driven from teenagers, legislative power and public policies, respect to teenagers regardless of their cultural background, feelings and thoughts about people in other countries etc.

Theatre & Digital Technologies in Secondary Education; movies and documentaries

In the context of digital drama and theatre in education, creating and working with films and documentaries is a very creative and multidimensional stimulus for the

¹ See <https://www.bbc.co.uk/bitesize/guides/zsbjn39/revision/1>

beginning of a lesson or activity, but also the purpose of a unit or the end result of a course.

Short and feature films, documentaries, educational or television/online series can be applied creatively in drama education. Films and documentaries serve as a starting point for the lesson or are used during a course with specific content or in the evaluation and feedback stage of the activities (Fanouraki, 2016, 81). The theme, format and genre of a film can be the content of improvisations before or after watching the movie. Theatrical techniques and improvisations can be implemented at all stages of watching the film (before/after) and if appropriate (for specific activities) and during the screening which can be interrupted in order for students to guess, predict the end of the story or, alternatively, narrate their own version of the ending and then watch the rest of the film.

The film or documentary is material for the creation of performances, theatre and educational activities and can be adapted by the participants into an event, performance, short film, creative or theatrical writing, etc. In parallel, the film becomes an occasion for study and research on the techniques and structural elements of the script, acting for cinema, directing, photography, editing and each individual art of cinema.

The documentary can be creatively integrated into the students' research on a topic and can be used as a material for students to use in the role of experts on that topic using Digital Technologies. In the context of dramatized history, the documentary is presented by the teacher or student in a role as one of the elements that promotes their research and at the same time gives a new twist to the dramatization. Alternatively, the documentary can be a starting point for the drama and can be creatively adapted by the students through free improvisation or more guided activities.

Also, the creation of short films and documentaries by students can be the final outcome of the digital drama or can be integrated within a theatre education program or a digital performance. The participation of students in the processes of designing and producing short films and documentaries enhances collaborative teamwork methods and helps to foster a team atmosphere and aesthetic perception of the seventh art. Modern digital media allow experimentation and video creation also through smart mobile devices, with easy access to image capture, sound and editing, but at the same time they require a cinematic literacy and an acquaintance with the set of co-creators who put the individual (or group) vision of the director into practice.

Documentary Theatre

«Broadly conceived, documentary theatre is fact-based performance composed using archival materials such as trial transcripts, official or government documents, iconic visual images or video footage, newspaper reporting, historical writing and recorded interviews. Documentary performances often emerge in response to social or political crises; documentary playwrights offer their audiences a theatrical presentation of real events to inspire critical questions about history, memory and justice as well as provoke social action to change the world outside the theater walls» (Jules Odendahl-James, 2011).

Applied Documentary Theatre in Education offers students live and media narratives which can be driven by personal experiences, autobiographical elements, historical archives, diaries, private and public documents etc. Documentary Theatre is based on collaborative work and team work in progress of the text (play) and the theatre performance among students in “roles” of playwrights, researchers, set designers, directors, musicians, composers etc.

The documentary play *Towards Youth*, written by the award-winning Andrew Kushnir, was built from a decade of ethnographic research on hope, care and young people in drama classroom in Toronto, Coventry, Athens, Tainan and Lucknow: « Research-based theatre brings new audiences to scholarly work while restoring theatre to its origins as a forum for public debate and deliberation. Theatre has the potential to activate social commentary on human life that is increasingly virtual, fractured and uncertain, through an appeal to our human impulse to feel a problem and imagine its solutions. The character Urvashi tells us in the play that the word “adjust” is popular in India and is used when one is urgently communicating a need. “Adjust” is the clarion call of *Towards Youth*» (Gallagher, 2019).

Devised forms of theatre for young people incorporate mixed techniques and processes of interactive theatre, devised theatre, documentary theatre, forum theatre and they all give space to teens voice by applying learning processes which cultivate collaboration, critical thinking, the social and experiential, interactive nature of learning. Students write and make theatre, film, and digital media scripts and products in a variety of theatre and art forms which include characters, stories, animation, narration, dramatic elements. Theatre standards for the different grades of adolescence is depending upon the introduction of theatre in formal education



and the role of the theatre/drama in each national and arts curriculum. In both formal and non formal secondary education teenagers are dealing with different theatre forms of process and product, in between theatre as an art and theatre as a medium for other subjects and areas.

Teenagers construct social meanings from informal and formal productions and from dramatic performances from a variety of cultures and historical periods and relate to current personal, national and international issues (Patterson, McKenna-Crook, Swick, 2006, p. 10) and identify cultural experiences, cultural values, ethics and international issues that theatre can reveal. Theatre for and with teenagers is connected with feelings, reflections, action strategies for deepening comprehension and other emotional impulses.

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Links

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<https://www.projecthumanity.ca/>

<https://www.utoronto.ca/news/documentary-play-looks-how-youth-find-hope-future-u-t-expert>

