EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC CITIZENSHIP: THEORY AND TEACHING PRACTICE

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

Author: Clio Fanouraki, Assistant Professor, Department Theatre Studies, NKUA.

Introduction

In this paper it will be discussed how theatre and drama can be creatively used for building Democratic Culture in preschool and primary education. Theatre is a collective art which help students to communicate, to hug the otherness, to feel multiculturness, to communicate through symbols and "non verbal walls" even if they do not speak the same languages or they do not share the same cultures and values. Theatre and Drama Education offer a powerful experience for toddlers and children in order to familiarize with democracy, equity, social justice, harmony, peace but also with the "other", the natural environment and the world and community they live in.

Theatre/Drama & Preschool Education & Life

Theatre for infants and babies from months old to toddlers is a new trend in theatre education led by adults –or/and theatre/drama teachers-performing for babies from months old to toddlers (approximately one year to three years old) accompanied by a parent or other adult. Performance themes are based on infants and babies daily life and routines, babies' non verbal and "sound rituals", rituals of every day life. Usually this kind of performance is short (25-35 minutes), accompanied with activities for babies and toddlers. Theatre for babies opens up possibilities of doing multicultural drama and theatre with babies and toddlers in non formal and formal education and provides theatre/drama teachers unique elements of communication, performing,

significant features of pre-verbal communication and representational ways of responding to these ages.

Theatre in preschool education (2,5-3,5 & 4-6) helps children to develop oral skills and explore different ways of communication; « Use role play and drama to explore other ways of communicating without speech. Range as widely as possible, from animal communication to flags, from sheepdog whistles to human singing and touch systems (Braille), as well as exploring some cultural symbols and signals (Mendhi patterns). Collect examples of signs and logos to bring in classroom/setting (use photographs where appropriate and include different languages and dialect forms). Take the children on sign-and-print hunting walks. Follow up with displays and plenty of talk and language play and experiments (such as creating their own names, signs, logos, notices and banners). Share published nonsense verse with the children and help them create and record their own versions (on tape, written down, bound into books). Let everyone (adults and children) become familiar with the 'almost meaningful' nonsense language structures of verses such as "Twas brillig, and the slithy toves/Dig gyre and gimble in the wabe, or terms like 'Reeling and Writhing' (Carroll, 1872). How does this work?» (Whitehead, 2004, p. 19).

The interaction of language and dramatic play offer teachers combined activities for enhancing language acquaintance in early years, in different cultural environments. Dramatized activities give students the framework to act "in and out of role" and to participate in the story's development. Story's development can be enacted via different symbols, verbal and non verbal communication. Stories can be driven from daily life and children's experiences and routines or from fairy tales, myths, literature, theatre, cinema, paintings, and generally pretexts from arts.

Simultaneously, theatre/drama based work can be added horizontally and vertically in and through the curriculum of preschool activities, as a way of learning and teaching.

Dramatized fairy tales and stories, though narration and dramatization, can creatively interact with democratic culture values and competences for preschool friends.

Improvisation in story-telling, digital story-telling and dramatization helps both teachers and learners to renovate ways of telling traditional stories and/or fairy tales, but as well to create new ones. Democracy can be personified and the drama teacher can play with the personification of CDC; the attribution of human characteristics to an abstract quality or a concept provides different ways of deepening into the concept, analyzing frames and cultivating emotional and ecological intelligence. Democracy, freedom, peace, values, attitudes, empathy et al, can be seen as a *Role* and children can interact with the *Role* by using questioning, drama based work, theatre techniques, mixed arts education techniques etc. Teacher and students in roles of Democracy, Empathy, Responsibility, Respect, can co-create improvisations which can also be transformed in performance texts or digital creative drama and videos (See e-lesson I).

Theatre/Drama & Primary School

Cultivating Democratic Citizenship through theatre/drama in Primary School may also include, selected material for Improvisation based on *Democratic Citizenship*. Texts and pretexts, art work, literature, plays, fairy tales, images, photographs, animation, film, digital technologies through theatre education can focus on Democratic Citizenship either as content, key course elements, process and product. Under this scope, democratic culture transforms to a learning process as well as a learning product and outcome. "Vygotsky identified play as the most natural form of learning. (Think of the small children!) He said, "In play, the child is always a head taller than himself." In other words, in play, one always pushes into one's ZPD" (Wilhelm J., 2002, p. 29). Wilhelm comments that some teachers actually have this reservation towards enactments "But this is too much fun to be school" and he comments "In fact, Csikszentmihalyi's research (1990) shows that when students engage in challenging activities, their three major reasons for doing so include: It is fun, I enjoy it, and I enjoy using what I have learned (Wilhelm J., 2002, p. 29).

Thetre/drama education focuses on personal growth, cultural heritage and analysis, cross curricular subjects and integrated learning. "Drama has the ability to pull together disparate facets of learning, acting as an effective catalyst for the integration

of this often compartmentalized knowledge. Its very eclecticism allows it to embrace the concerns of many other areas of students' educational experience" (Somers, 1994, p. 13).

Theatre/Drama Education in Primary School can be seen via different forms of verbal and non verbal theatrical and pedagogical procedures, methods and techniques. What all these different approaches have in common is the goal of team-based learning, interactive teaching and learning and progression through personal and intra personal and social growth. Contemporary approaches to drama teaching focus on engaging in drama to learn about how meanings are constructed and on how each child redefines life through drama.

Theatre/drama education is based on a timeline of possible teaching methods between "Process" and "Product". Lesson planning can be based on teaching approaches which focus on process and how children enjoy, analyze, reflect on the process of dramatic playing, stories, improvisations etc. Simultaneously, lesson planning can be based on teaching approaches which focus on the product; performance, performance with digital technologies, digital drama products such as creative videos, short films, animations, documentaries etc. Lesson planning can also aim for both process and product approaches. Performance-based teaching and learning methods also focus on experiential learning, team work and creative making processes.

Narration & Dramatization

Theatre uses more than words to tell its stories, as "stories" are presented using the dramatic elements of: time, space, lights, objects, sounds, physicality, scenography, costume elements, expressive means, verbal and non verbal communication.

"Exploiting the social dimension of narrative to forge bonds of interest and communality among learners is something teachers often do quite intuitively. The goal is both constant and cumulative: constant because a positive classroom dynamic is not produced by any one specific act but requires constant nourishment and exercise; and

cumulative in that shared experiences, including shared stories, gradually construct a 'storied' class. Students contribute to this in the main by what they bring of their biography to the classroom and by what they collectively forge through their shared learning experiences" (Wajnryb, 2003, p. 17).

Narration and dramatization are performed by the teacher and the students either in or out of role. Narration in interaction with dramatization uses theatre language but also digital technologies (if needed). Storytelling with the use of theatre techniques is based on improvisation. Participation in improvisation, dramatic playing and theatre games offer both teachers and students great experiences of narration through symbols, verbal, non verbal language and physical theatre.

Theatre & Cross Curricular Activities

Physical Theatre-Dance and Physical Activities

Physical activities and physical theatre can be seen as separate elements within theatre's didactics, but also as forms of theatre making such as physical theatre, dance theatre, pantomime theatre etc. Dance theory and praxis can be functionally embedded in theatre/drama education and performance making. Teaching different types of dance-s according to the needs of a performance or theatre project, offers possibilities of interdisciplinary teaching; for example, theatre and dance teachers collaborate for the final project.

Simultaneously, dance theory and kinesiology can be creatively applied in theatre teaching. Dororthy Heathcote (the "grandmother" of drama education) who died in 2011 leaving the theatre education society not only with a great amount of knowledge but also with a complete methodology of theatre and drama didactics, acknowledges the influence of Rudolf Laban[1] from her early works on drama as a learning medium.

---

[1] Rudolf Laban (1879-1958) was born in Austro-Hungary. Laban was a dancer, a choreographer and a dance / movement theoretician. One of the founders of European Modern Dance, his work was extended through his most celebrated collaborators, Mary Wigman, Kurt Jooss and Sigurd Leeder. Through his work, Laban raised the status of dance as an art form, and his explorations into the theory

Heathcote recognizes how Laban's different kinds of efforts, thus quality of movements, cultivate a multicultural climate of teaching and learning, as Wagner comments by analyzing her work:

"Laban wondered whether different cultures caused people to have different movements in response to common or similar experiences. He finally concluded that they didn't, that the elements of movement are the same in all cultures, that each movement is made up of one or more of eight different kinds of effort: 1. float, 2. glide, 3. slash, 4. wring, 5.dab, 6. thrust, 7. flick, 8. press. Each of these kinds of effort has a characteristic tempo, direction, and degree of weight. Any movement can be sudden or sustained, direct or flexible, and heavy or light (Wagner, 1999, p. 167-168). By applying Laban's theory on her teaching methodology, Heathcote reckons the importance of being aware of each individual movement style, made up of a combination of kinds of effort as well as the following:

"Certain kind of movement typify certain cultures. If you want to get the essence of the Egyptian, all your movements should be direct to reflect the style of life and architecture that we associate with the culture. [...]. If, on the other hand you want to capture the essence of Greek, use the right arm with the left leg, a much less aggressive movement. Movement can be a way to get the learning diabled to respond in a new way. If you are working with children who have Down's Syndrome, you will try to find a way to break through their characteristic movement, which is heavy and slow. Heathcote once put a little man under a table to get the group to stop making so much heavy noise with their feet. The little man was frightened and would not come out until they rose on tiptoe. Theater, dance, and movement training all help you move into non verbal mode of drama. They help you know where you are in space and how you can move in order to create a new dimension in the drama (Wagner, 1999, p. 168-169).

---

and practice of dance and movement transformed the nature of dance scholarship. [See https://www.trinitylaban.ac.uk/about-us/history/rudolf-laban/]

Theatre/Drama Education involves dance and movement education as subject but also as a teaching process of drama and performance making. Creative choreographies made by and for children enhance student's narration though the body, physical expression and expression of thoughts and sentiments. Theatre games and improvisation help students and teacher to design theatre lessons with a focus on physical theatre and physical/movement education.

Theatre/Drama & Humanitarian Studies and Subjects

Language teaching, philosophy, theology, literature, languages, ethics, performing arts and other areas of Humanitarian Studies have been taught though theatre/drama in both primary and secondary education. Depending on the national curriculum and the way theatre/drama has been introduced in formal education of each country, the drama teacher (drama specialist, according to John Somers) can collaborate with the other specializations to a greater or lesser degree.

Teaching sciences or arts, separately, through theatre education but also the interaction of theatre education with each separate cognitive subject, presupposes the sequence of structures defined by each curriculum, both for the arts and for each separate taught course.

Language, literature teaching and learning through drama have formed a historical context in teaching though drama from early –mid 20'century. Research shows "the importance of drama for language development has been asserted by a number of authors and is fairly obvious because drama provides a variety of different contexts for language use. Thus if we ask pupils to take the roles of politicians, kings, teachers or priests the language demands will change accordingly. Language is often elevated in drama to suit the particular fictitious context" (Fleming, 2003, p. 40).

Theatre & Science

Theatre and arts education has shown great examples of applied activities in science teaching. Students work in groups dealing with different aspects of physics, chemistry,

math, geography, genetics, genetic engineering, ethics & science etc. Simultaneously, themes driven from science are chosen as main themes of drama lessons, such as a debate about nuclear power stations, environmental issues. STEAM new trends has made theatre/drama education applied in science more popular.

STEAM trends and goals in education involve "A" for Arts and inside "A" Theatre is embodied. STEAM programs enhance STEM programs (science, technology, engineering, math) via the "A"and Arts Education. «Students in STEM programs may have more experiential learning opportunities, but they are limited to only science, technology, engineering and math. Our economy requires so much more than an understanding of these areas – it requires application, creation and ingenuity. STEM alone does not foster these essential nutrients. STEAM is a way to take the benefits of STEM and complete the package by integrating these principles in and through the arts. STEAM takes STEM to the next level: it allows students to connect their learning in these critical areas together with arts practices, elements, design principles, and standards to provide the whole pallet of learning at their disposal. STEAM removes limitations and replaces them with wonder, critique, inquiry, and innovation». (https://artsintegration.com/what-is-steam-education-in-k-12-schools/).

Theorists and practiotioners of theatre/drama education focus on the cross-curricular possibilities of drama and mathematics, drama and geography, drama and science, drama and geography etc. (Somers, 1994, Heathcote 1999). Simultaneously, eco-theatre has been applied in primary education and many school festivals focus on the production of plays and performances based on environmental issues and ethics of science.

Theatre & ICT

The general term digital drama and theatre in education includes all forms, genres and techniques of drama and theatre using Digital Technologies. Digital drama and theatre in education is both an art form and a creative, multi-purpose teaching methodology for drama and theatre itself or for other subjects in a curriculum, at all levels of education. The application of digital technologies in theatre/drama as an art form and

learning tool, also includes specific forms or subcategories of the subject in which the confluence of digital technologies, drama and theatre leads to more or less technologically advanced actions and requires different types of digital equipment (e.g. use of digital camera, smart mobile devices, digital games digital editing programs, digital scenography, digital painting etc.).

The integration of Digital Technologies in drama and theatre enriches, enhances and redefines the forms of theatre in education as it enables teachers and students to apply them, by creatively using digital technologies (dramatization, theatre games, forum theatre, theatre in education programs, performance making, lesson dramatization using digital technologies, digital performance, online performance, etc.). By applying the above forms and genres of drama and theatre, digital photography, filming, the use of the computer and the Internet (Web 2.0), the use of the projector and other projection devices, smart mobile devices and other digital technologies are put into practice.

The cross curricular activities performed by the drama teacher in collaboration with the ICT teacher can inspire digital performance, digital creative theatre projects based on ICT& Theatre teaching and learning processes.

Animation & Animated Stories

Digital painting and illustration are multifunctionally integrated within digital performances and also within courses that do not necessarily aim at performance. More specifically, students in primary education can be led to the group production of an illustrated story or to the illustration of the dramatized story they created during the lesson. Theatre/drama teachers can guide students to use interactive digital painting applications and programs during drama processes, in which students can paint on the laptop or smart mobile devices and the result is projected on the projection screen (via the projector), forming part of the set. Students can also create collages of their own drawings and paintings which they incorporate into digital painting, compose collages of mixed techniques of digital painting and photography, using their own photographs from rehearsals or their own experiences, etc.

The creative introduction of heroes and animation techniques in digital drama and theatre in education cultivates imagination, aesthetics and specific technical knowledge of the genre for both students and teachers, while opening up infinite paths for creation and experimentation with painting, illustration and animation.

Creating or using animated videos and stories can be applied during all teaching phases, in the beginning of the lesson, as pretext, during the progression of the main theme, at the end, during reflection processes. Simultaneously, the incorporation of animated videos in theatre education offers teachers moments of redefining their role through avatars, by using creatively online applications of avatar-making.

Performing & Digital Arts Integration

By teaching theatre education in formal education teachers and students meet "the chance" of communicating, interacting and expressing themselves and their ideas about Science, Arts and Humanities Curriculum through Values of Democratic Citizenship and through Arts Integration. Theatre, Music, Crafts, Dance, Film, Visual Arts, Digital Art Education "play together" within theatre/drama teaching and learning processes and products. Theatre/Drama Teachers have a multicultural "color chart" of methodologies, techniques and choices of theatre theory, history and praxis which can guide them to democratic lesson planning, accordingly to the specific arts, humanities and science curriculum they have to follow or to evolve or "overturn".

Children in arts education for Democratic Citizenship redefine their relationship with themselves, their classroom, and community-ies they share.

Bibliography

Fanouraki Clio, 2016. *Theatre/Drama Education through the use of Digital Technologies. Elements of Teaching Methodology*, Athens: Papazisis.

Fleming Mike & Stevens David, 2004. *English Teaching in the Secondary School. Linking Theory and Practice*, London: David Fulton Publishers.

Fleming Mike, 2003. *Starting Drama Teaching*. Second edition. London: David Fulton Publishers.

Somers John, 1994. *Drama in the Curriculum.* London & New York: Cassell

Ruth Wajnryb, 2003. *Stories.   Narrative activities in the language classroom. Cambridge Handbooks for Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Betty Jane Wagner, 1998. *Dorothy Heathcote. Drama as a Learning Medium*, Portsmouth & New Hampshire: Heinemann.

Marian R. Whitehead, 2004. *Language & Literacy in the Early Years*. Third edition. London, California & New Delhi: Sage Publications.

Jeffrey Wilhelm, 2002. *Action Strategies for Deepening Comprehension.* USA: Scholastic.