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Our daily news are increasingly filled with stories of violence and discord. It prompts us to think about what we really need in our education system and processes. We need ways of enabling our children and young people to think critically about what they hear and see and be able to consider differing positionalities without feeling the need to give blind allegiance to any of them. We need to equip them with strategies for talking about their differences without fighting over them. We need to allow them to discover ways of collaborating and reconciling conflicts. We also need to support them in developing their own identity at the same time as they grow in awareness of and respect for the identity of others. While these needs are not automatically fulfilled by ‘doing drama’, it has repeatedly been argued that the strategies of working through strategically selected drama processes potentially provide space for these kinds of learning. At a time when our education policy increasingly focuses on and funds the development of literacy and numeracy, we also need to ensure we keep offering interactive and complex learning fields like drama and that we make those fields rich in enabling students to explore what it means to be human and to live with others in a complex and very divided world.

The eight articles in this volume explore some of the potential richnesses of teaching with and through drama. They are written by practitioners from New Zealand and overseas. Once again it is the privilege of our journal to host the work of experienced and thoughtful artists and teachers from around the world: this time from Canada, Israel, Greece and the Czech Republic respectively. Their work in this journal allows us to find parallels and challenges in their practice and it affirms that while we live in island spaces we are not alone in our search to better understand and continuously develop our purpose and practice. At the same time it is a joy to have received explorations of practice from our own New Zealand practitioners. Collectively their individual voices become a sort of polylogue: a stream of discussion about what drama means and what we can do with it.

Molly Mullen and Rod Wills report a performing arts project which examined and re-storied disability. Their account is provocative and narratively absorbing as well as scholarly in its presentation of the events of the project and of the unresolved issues embedded in our ways of understanding and engaging with disability. Their reflective account will be of interest not only to drama practitioners but to teachers and community activists who work with disabled people.

Larry O’Farrell shares a keynote presentation he gave in Bogotá in 2015. Beginning with a speculation that arts education may be as old as education itself, he reviews the range of arts education practices to be found around the world. He examines trends, approaches and perspectives and troubles the apparent opposition between arts as tools that may be used for learning purposes and arts as self-standing cultural artefacts. His discussion offers us a framework in which we can each place our own approach to practice within a panorama of other perspectives and priorities.

Jane Luton captures key moments from her doctoral research project in which she engaged six international drama educators to embody their stories. Hers was a doctorate in which she performed her research, and this article transforms moments of performance into words on the page. In the role of Archivist’s...
Assistant she crystallises obstacles and tensions in her experts’ experiential stories. And in doing so, she offers a challenging and alluring alternative to traditional research investigation and writing.

Asterios Tsiaras examines classroom practice in a Greek primary school in which performing arts processes are used to teach poetry. A quantitative analysis of teachers’ and students’ reactions to such use of drama found that teachers believed their students gained deeper aesthetic appreciation of both poetry and drama and that students gained confidence in approaching poetry, understood it better and enjoyed the experience. The article provokes comparison to New Zealand experiences.

Shifra Schonmann challenges us to examine the purpose of performing theatre with young people in our schools. She examines a number of metaphor constructs of the culture of schools and uses them to examine the power relations that operate within education. What then is the role of school performances, she asks? How does the school play relate to young people’s development of agency? And how does participation contribute to students’ overall school acceptance and achievement? She challenges us to think beyond the ‘frill’ of the school play and consider it in terms of its artistic-aesthetic, pedagogical-educational, and sociological-cultural aspects.

Veronika Rodová report on a series of history lessons in a Czech Republic classroom in which students studied ancient Egypt and in which the teacher utilised the making of still pictures, or freeze frames, to allow students to physically and imaginatively enter the alien world of the antique and perhaps initially irrelevant past. As well as reporting the process of the work, she offers a comprehensive scholarly examination of the relationship between drama visual images and learning that invites reflection on New Zealand practice.

Tracey-Lynne Cody draws associations between the pedagogical practices of several expert New Zealand drama teachers and the expectations of New Zealand policy and curriculum, especially those that call for culturally responsive pedagogy. She explores how the establishment of effective ensemble cultures resembles that development of whanaungatanga in the classroom. She identifies five key practices utilised by these drama teachers in developing strong operational classroom ensembles and relates these to the values of the core curriculum and to current research about cultural responsiveness.

Janinka Greenwood shares an exploratory theoretical paper she presented at the 2105 IDIERI conference. She explores some of the possibilities of arts-based research and reports on a workshop in Prague which involved a serendipitous encounter between Czech and Bangladeshi teachers. She uses the events in the workshop and photographs from the journey to the workshop to play with latencies, texts, sub-texts and silences and to suggest ways that drama, and other arts, may allow us to explore ideas, tensions, discoveries and spaces that lie beyond the limitations of our words.

Our journal is a relatively small one on the global stage. We manage just one issue a year, and we do so on a shoestring, and with lots of good will. As editor I acknowledge that sometimes the task seems overwhelming, but I also know, as do my colleagues, how important it is for us to have a national journal in our field. It allows us to share our voices, and provides a platform for our collaborative professional development. It provokes us to articulate why we do what we do and what we hope to achieve. It allows us to participate in international dialogues about performing arts and education and to bring international ideas back to our own local ground of practice. As you read the voices in this issue, therefore, please think about what you might like to share in our coming issues from your practice, research and reflection.
Re-Storying Disability through the Arts: Providing a Counterpoint to Mainstream Narratives

MOLLY MULLEN - UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND
ROD WILLS - UNIVERSITY OF AUCKLAND

Abstract

The arts can counter powerful cultural narratives that regulate the lives and bodies of disabled people. But, the performing arts practices that disabled people typically participate in are themselves enmeshed within such problematic narratives. As a result they can play a role in reproducing stigmatised identities and inequitable social relations. In some international contexts, conflicting narratives of disability have meant that the relationship between different areas of arts practice has been either non-existent or fraught with tensions. In this paper, we suggest that the performing arts can contribute significantly to the vision and aspirations articulated in New Zealand’s Disability Strategy if different areas of practice find common ground on which to engage in dialogue and work in coalition. This paper is a reflective report on Re-storying Disability Through the Arts, an event that aimed to provide a space for productive conversation between students, researchers, artists, educators and practitioners with different involvements or interests in disability arts (broadly conceived). It begins with a story that introduces some of the tensions this event evoked. This is followed by a critical commentary that unpacks these tensions, examining the three examples of community-based arts practice that were presented. In each instance we identify the ways in which these different forms of performance engage in a strategy of re-storying disability. The paper concludes by identifying some of the key issues that arose in the discussion that ended Re-storying Disability and from our reflection on the event. These include pressing structural issues and questions for consideration by those involved in disability arts in Aotearoa New Zealand.

Biography

MOLLY MULLEN is a lecturer in applied theatre at the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Education and Social Work. To this role she brings over ten years of experience producing theatre education, youth theatre, community arts and children’s theatre projects in the UK and New Zealand. She has ongoing research interests in funding, organisational practice and management in applied theatre. Other current research projects focus on applied performance and ecology, and drama and performance in early childhood education settings.

ROD WILLS is a senior lecturer in Education Studies (Disability) at the School of Critical Studies in Education, Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland. His research interests are in areas of education and health policy; advocacy and inclusive education, and the use of disability arts as a vehicle for adult education. He is affiliated with the Menzies Health Research Institute of Griffith University and is completing a doctoral study that examines areas of cognitive dependency, parental caregiving and medical education. She has held leadership roles in the disability sector for over 25 years. For the last six years he has been the chairman of the Interacting Disability Theatre Trust and takes an active role in the delivery of disability theatre, and disability arts in the Auckland region. He is the parent of a woman with Down syndrome. Meow the cat likes to get in close for warmth.
A story of an afternoon encounter, seen two ways

Thirty or so in the circle – sitting and then talk began in turns, going around. Their names first, and the eyes all follow. Who and where, what and how – the usual polite, half-engaged, expected ritual. The introductory performance passes around the group, toward the end of the circle—the couple seated, she with her red dyed hair and he with the look of someone worn down, like his shoes. Looking for their guesses to be confirmed—her speech not as clear, look again, at her—ah yes, it’s in the eyes. And just look at him too—the shoes and his clothes, worn, well worn, too worn really. The clothing says what he has not, no real income and a label. Well it is all about labels really and the stories that go with them. No one really notices the infant as she sleeps. Her mother knows, so do a few others in the room. She sleeps—through and on into the afternoon.

In days gone by, the asylum down across the river at the Whau,1 would be their home. He with the worn out shoes, and her with the red dyed hair, and the infant too. The moron, the idiot, the imbecile … those ‘others’ in the room.

The thirty or so in the circle listen to three who speak. The first, by way of Canada: Hank, the community film maker; with his soft slow drawl. He works capturing ideas, actions and episodes. Edits, assembles and plays back – lives retold as fictions, half-truths. Posting onto YouTube for an unknown audience to view. He sets his devices into action, laptop and projector, the circle reshapes itself—all eyes forward to the screen as the retelling emerges. Two short films with people like her with the red dyed hair and him with the worn down shoes, all ‘others’—re-storying disability in a way that echoes lives, as ‘more like ours than not’. The infant wakes and is taken out by her mother.

The story making, facilitated by Hank, is with young adults and teenagers, all labelled as disabled and separated for schooling. All captured in the shadow of meaning around words so easily spoken—special education, special school, special people. No vision, no future, no contribution, a burden on others. Two short films play back the re-worked narratives of the participants so as to deflect and overturn many of these assumptions about ‘their disability’.

A second member of the circle speaks. From the North of England but now Auckland is her home. Paula works with story making and theatre with adults who once had been called mentally handicapped, then intellectually disabled, now with learning disabilities. With time and care, performance work is developed. With strengthened voice, posture, greater certainty and presence, individuals deliver their stories. A group of seven has developed an ensemble narrative that reveals the sometimes humorous and often painful dimensions of their lives—not known but hidden behind the walls and doors of places not so unlike the asylum down at the Whau River. The stories and play scripts challenge perceptions of audiences and bring their lives into focus.

Every year, for many years, Keith comes a very long way for a holiday. Visiting family ‘over the ditch’, and friends here in Aotearoa. He is known, here and there, for telling stories that include, integrate and, in their way, interrupt whatever it is that holds people in place day-in-day-out. Still easing out of holiday mode he begins and the room comes to life. Keith can’t help but draw all eyes to where he stands. In return, he looks to check that the people making up this circle are ready as he begins to call, and … yes, they respond. Name spoken, repeated, recognised, greeted, cut up, dissected, and differently inflected. Voices raise, bodies move, faces relax into smiles or laughter. We encounter verse and prose through voice, hands, and feet, the resonating floor. For the Red Shoes-relocated-we dance across Auckland; for Othello we chant in Arabic,

1 The Whau Lunatic Asylum was built on the Oakley Farm Estate in the area near Waterview and Point Chevalier, Auckland. The building is now occupied by Unitec Institute of Technology and the Mason Clinic.
English and Makaton; the Nativity mixes Cockney rhyming slang with our kiwi accents; and always, always, we are given a generous portion of panto. Irresistibly, irreverent, we cannot not look, checking in, are we all giving it our all? The room buzzes.

Where, previously art or ‘the arts’ had been a diversion, a therapy or treatment. Perhaps smoothed on like some balm or salve, to soothe and ease the pain or irritation. The thirty or so in the circle come here to discuss ideas of voice, recognition and acknowledgement, not so routinely extended to ‘the disabled’.

**Characters in order of appearance:**
- The mother with her child – doctoral student and director
- The young women with dyed red hair – education support worker and actor
- Young man with worn shoes – assistant groundsman, trust board member and actor
- Hank Snell – videographer and community film maker
- Paula Crimmens – artistic director, Interacting Disability Theatre
- Keith Park – story teller and educator.

**Introduction**

New Zealand aspires to remove all barriers, physical and attitudinal, that limit the lives of disabled people (Ministry of Health, 2001). This article invites and encourages lively, wide-reaching conversation about the role that the performing arts can play in achieving the vision of New Zealand as “A society that highly values” the lives of disabled people and “continually enhances … full participation” (Ministry of Health, 2001, p.1). The focus is on the ways in which performance can counter powerful cultural narratives that
regulate the lives and bodies of disabled people. All areas of the performing arts can contribute significantly to the vision and aspirations articulated by The New Zealand Disability Strategy by presenting narratives that are affirmative of difference.

The theories and arguments outlined above emerge from our critical reflections on an event we organised in August 2014: Re-storying Disability Through the Arts. This was a half-day symposium at the University of Auckland’s Faculty of Education and Social Work, hosted by the School of Critical Studies in Education and Critical Research Unit in Applied Theatre (CRUAT). The event included presentations and workshops by Keith Park, Paula Crimmens and Hank Snell. These three artists predominantly work with people defined as having intellectual impairments and so this area of practice was foregrounded at the event. In response to the presentations, attendees were invited to discuss the ways in which the arts can provide a counterpoint to mainstream narratives about disability and what this might mean in their own professional contexts and/or practices. The event aimed to provide a space for productive discussion between people with different perspectives on and experiences of disability and the arts. The 32 attendees included under- and postgraduate students, disabled people, academics from tertiary institutions, drama therapists, teachers and community-arts practitioners.

Participation in the arts in New Zealand: An emerging picture

The New Zealand Disability Strategy (Ministry of Health, 2001) presents 15 objectives, each with a series of action statements. Three action areas are identified in the area of the arts and disability. The most direct is 9.2: “Provide opportunities for disabled people to create, perform and develop their own arts, and to access arts activities” (p. 23). The two subsequent action statements focus on the education of arts administrators and organisations about disability, and supporting the development of arts projects by and for disabled people. In 2016, government and sector representatives are reviewing and updating the strategy, and so these actions around the arts can be expected to change.

Discrimination against individuals in New Zealand on the basis of disability is illegal. The Human Rights Amendment Act 1993 prohibits discrimination on the grounds of disability. However, unlike the legislative and regulatory environments of the United States or Great Britain there are no statements that are prescriptive in the inclusion of disabled people in arts and cultural activities. And while the Building Code establishes guidelines for access to some locations where activities are offered to the public, the arrangements for access may still be less than optimal with respect to an individual’s needs.

The last action from the government agency responsible for implementing The Disability Strategy, the Office of Disability Issues, was reported in its Disability Action Plan 2014–2018. This stated that the Office was investigating the introduction of “a companion card programme to reduce the cost barrier for disabled people who require a companion to attend paid-entry activities” (Office for Disability Issues, 2014). Aside from this, there is no other action reported by the government that relates to progress in providing opportunities for accessing or producing performing arts.

Likewise, there is little information currently in the public domain that gives a full picture of disabled people’s participation in the arts in New Zealand, or insight into the histories and traditions of different areas of arts practice. This paucity has been similarly noted at an international level by the American researchers, Braddock and Parish (2001), who pinpointed the lack of scholarship drawing from the literary and artistic archives. They proposed that the providers of services offer much of the history of disability. Reflecting this, many of the accounts in the public domain in New Zealand originate.
as commissioned histories, such as that of *Touch Compass: Celebrating Integrated Dance* (Powles, 2007).

The national umbrella organisation Arts Access Aotearoa advocates for people who experience barriers to participation in the arts. Their *Creative Spaces Directory* lists 49 community organisations across New Zealand that provide resources, facilities and support for people to participate in the arts (Arts Access Aotearoa, n.d.). Of the organisations listed, 14 are arts organisations. The other 35 are health and disability service providers with an arts element in their range of services. The majority of these (20) cater for people with disabilities, and seven identify individuals with mental illness as their focus. From the information available, a total of three organisations offer dance or theatre as a mode of arts practice at a public performance level. There are other instances of performance practices, past and current, from across Aotearoa New Zealand, involving disabled people that have gained national and international recognition. But still, the partial picture offered by the database indicates the significant under representation of opportunities for people with disabilities to participate in the performing arts. It could be argued that the ‘hands off’ nature of government policy in this area is linked to this under representation.

**Looking abroad to understand Aotearoa**

Disability studies scholars from the United Kingdom, Goodley and Moore (2002), identify four “performing arts forums with which disabled people are connected in different ways” (p. 13). Each ‘forum’ is shaped by different narratives of disability and within each there are barriers to full participation. The “*mainstream arts*”, for example, are defined as arts for disabled people by nondisabled people that reproduce the disabling conditions, unequal social relations and problematic representations of disabled people that prevail in society at large (p. 13). “*Community arts*” are participatory, encompassing art-making by and with different groups that have social as well as artistic purposes. Community, or applied arts, are often led by non-disabled facilitators, artists and managers so issues of control, ownership and representation are prominent (p. 14). “*Disability arts*” describes any art created by disabled artists that “articulate[s] something about the condition of disability” (p. 15). In the UK, disability arts (or disability-led arts) are highly politicised and strongly connected with the disabled peoples’ movement (Conroy, 2009; Masefield, 2006). Goodley and Moore place disability arts under critical scrutiny for devaluing and in some cases excluding the art of people with learning disabilities/intellectual impairments although this issue has been addressed to some extent since their book was published (see, for example, Mackey & Terret, 2015). Finally, “*Service-sponsored arts*” includes art making that takes place as part of wider service provision for disabled people, including special schools, and might include workshop programmes or arts-therapy sessions but also, and this is where these categories start to blur, where mainstream and community arts organisations take contracts to deliver services for or partnership with service providers (Goodley & Moore, 2002, p. 17). Much service provision is informed by a medicalised narrative of disability that legitimates corrective interventions by experts into the lives, and bodies, of disabled people.

What is apparent is that there are tensions within these areas of practice and there are also tensions between them. Also discussing the UK context, Conroy (2009) identifies the lack of discursive “meeting place” between applied or community-based arts and disability arts (p. 12). There is a perception that community and service-sponsored arts reproduce the narratives of charitable, medical and social care systems that the disabled peoples’ movement has challenged (Conroy, 2009, pp. 11–12). The three examples of practice presented at *Re-storying Disability* most comfortably sit within Goodley and Moore’s category of community arts. However, it may well be that the four forums identified by Goodley and Moore do not map onto the Aotearoa New Zealand context. Underlying the *Re-storying Disabilities* event
was the argument promoted by Goodley and Moore (2002) that progress can be made in all areas of the performing arts practice towards removing barriers to participation and challenging cultural narratives that cast disabled people into socially devalued roles. Given the small scale of New Zealand’s arts sector and the level of competition for scarce resources, these aims might be best achieved through debate, exchange and coalition, rather than attempting to establish which area of practice is “the best”.

**Critical Commentary**

We open with a combined critical reflection on the *Re-storying Disability* event. It started as a narrative response written by Rod Wills shortly after the symposium took place, written as he reflected on his experience and the photographs he took throughout the afternoon. We began to discuss our different interpretations of what took place and to identify key tensions. We contextualised and theorised these using the literature of our respective academic territories: applied theatre (Molly) and disability studies (Rod). What follows is a critical commentary in which we unpack these tensions and look at how they play out in art practice.

**Storying disability: Language, narrative and identity**

In the opening story, various terms are used to describe people that were present in the room. Many of the terms carry negative connotations. This is most apparent in terms like ‘imbecile’ or ‘idiot’ that once were accepted terminology. Much of the language around disability has its roots in the medical and professional practice of a particular context. As time passes, the aggregated impact of oral and written communication remains and “new definitions of difference absolve older ones that have become ‘polluted’ by accumulated negative connotations. Again and again, the defined differences become outmoded by changing times and new definitions” (Devlieger, 2003, p. 173). The language used to talk about disability, and the word disability itself, is not neutral. Debates about how to define disability are ongoing. Disability activists, scholars and performers have reacted against the way in which language and terminology has dehumanised, devalued and oppressed.

The people-first movement advocates for putting the person before the disability, hence: “people with disabilities” (People First, 2016). For some disability theorists and activists, however, this is problematic as it still suggests the ‘disability’ belongs to the individual (Cameron, 2007). The social model of disability argues that people are not disabled by their impairment, but by the physical and attitudinal barriers present in the environment (Cameron, 2007). These barriers exist when societies are built and run in a way that assumes a particular body type and way of perceiving and thinking is the norm – this is identified as ableism. In the social model, disability defines something that is done to the individual. The social model informs *The New Zealand’s Disability Strategy* and we use this language in this article. What we want to highlight primarily, however, is that the language of disability is part of what feminist disability scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thompson (2005a) calls the “disability system” (p. 1565), meaning “a system of exclusions that stigmatizes human difference” (p. 1557). Or, as Rod says in the story, “it was all about labels really, and the stories that went with them”.

The stories we collectively know shape the material world, inform human relations, and mold our senses of who we are. Because prevailing narratives constrict disabilities complexities, they not only restrict the lives and govern the bodies of the people we think of as disabled, but they limit the imaginings of those who think of themselves as nondisabled. Stereotypical, often unexamined narratives ultimately undegird exclusionary environments, employment discrimination, and social marginalisation. (Garland-Thompson, 2005a, p. 1567)
Garland-Thompson (2002, 2005a, 2005b) and some disability performance scholars including Kuppers (2001), have drawn on Judith Butler’s theory of gender, to argue that cultural narratives play an important role in producing bodies, identities, meanings, relations and institutions. Cultural narratives are the place in which a society imagines itself; they are stories that establish and sustain meanings, values and norms. It is through these narratives and within particular environments that people experience and understand their bodies and selfhood (Garland-Thompson, 2002, p. 20). Cultural narratives are powerful because they assign people to particular identity categories, positioning them within the social order that does not serve everyone equally. As both Garland-Thompson and Kuppers explain, the dominant narrative of disability “others” a whole group of people by casting them in social roles that are different from an idealised norm. These are typically identity positions with negative associations and the lives of disabled people are perceived to be less valuable and desirable. The result being that people’s identities and lives become defined in a negative way by their impairment:

the phenomenon of ‘identity spread’ means that the person’s individuality - both their personality, but also other aspects of their identity . . . can be ignored, as their impairment label becomes the most prominent and relevant feature of their lives, dominating interactions. (Shakespeare, 2014, p. 95)

By re-storying disability, the arts have the potential to counter what Shakespeare identifies here as ‘identity spread’.

Re-storying disability through the arts

The idea that the arts, and performance in particular, can challenge powerful cultural narratives and imaginings of disability is now well established (Cameron, 2011a, 2011b; Garland-Thompson, 2005b; Hickey-Moody, 2009; Kuppers, 2001; Roulstone, 2010; Sandahl & Auslander, 2005). In the 2005 introduction to Bodies in Commotion: Disability and Performance, Sandahl and Auslander (2005) suggest that in performance, both conventional performances and performances in everyday life, disabled people challenge norms and expectations by appropriating and subverting common narratives and stereotypes. They also identify performance work where disabled performers have engaged in a version of what Garland-Thomson (2005) calls “narrative retrievals” (p. 1560), creating performances “based on their own experiences, challenging both tired narrative conventions and aesthetic practices” (Sandahl & Auslander, 2005, p. 4). Reviewing the 2009 themed edition of RiDE: On Disability: Creative Tensions in Applied Theatre, disability scholar Roulstone (2010) identifies “Re-presenting disability and impairment in new ways, ways that challenge given orthodoxies” as one of the key themes of the edition (p. 431). Many of the participatory practices presented in this edition engage in some form of re-storying, confronting and revising dominant narratives.

The disruption of cultural narratives through performance, however, is neither straightforward nor the ultimate solution to social injustices related to disability. Kuppers (2001), for example, shows how dominant narratives persist even when challenged. Performances by disabled people are interpreted as being ‘about disability’, whether or not that is what the performer intended. Dominant meanings, then, are hard to overcome and the binaries that underpin them [disabled/non-disabled] persistently reassert themselves (Kuppers, 2001).

In the early 2000s, Swain and French (2000) suggested that “a new model of disability was emerging within the literature by disabled people and within disability culture, expressed most clearly by the Disability Arts Movement” (p. 569). The ‘affirmation
model’ challenges the view of disability as a personal tragedy and disabled people as victims. Building on the work of Swain and French (2000), Cameron (2011a) posits the argument that the oppression created by ‘normalcy’ can be addressed, in part, by changing the language that is used to express the understanding of disability as difference rather than an inferior identity. He offers the following definitions to reset the language used in the talk about difference:

Impairment: physical, sensory, emotional and cognitive difference to be expected and respected on its own terms in a diverse society. Disability: a personal and social role which simultaneously invalidates the subject position of people with impairments and validates the subject position of those identified as normal. (Cameron, 2011b, p. 20)

In particular, Cameron (2011b) sees the change in language as a tool to make sense of everyday interactions which place people with impairments in the role of deficiency. He suggests an audience’s exposure to disability arts can bring about a better understanding of “the meaning of disability and the meaning of the lived experience as people with impairments in a disabling society” (Cameron, 2011b, p. 2).

In her introduction to a themed edition of RiDE, Conroy (2009) acknowledges the political significance of disabled people representing themselves and their experiences through performance, particularly given that the production of representations of disabled people is often beyond their control (p. 10). But she also points to the limits of identity politics, where representation is posited as the primary cause of and solution to injustices experienced by disabled people. She questions the extent to which “representation in art and media and representation in democracy are read together” (p. 10). While re-storying problematic narratives and producing affirmative identities may not be the entire solution, we would argue that it is still an important strategy available to those involved in all areas of the performing arts.

As we proceed with the critical commentary, we will first examine the dominant narratives of disability that inform the areas of practice in which Paula, Hank and Keith work. We then theorise briefly how each of their practices re-stories disability, subverting social expectations of disabled people and creating affirmative identities.

Hank Snell: Participatory filmmaking

Hank’s work is best understood as participatory video. A facilitation approach is used to aid a group or community in producing their own film. Short projects are completed by making the use of the video camera and sound recording easy and accessible and supporting people to come together to share their interests and stories. Two ‘classes’ are offered each week in different locations in Auckland; both of the settings provide a range of buildings and grounds that are frequently used in the film projects. One is a disused winery complex and the other an early homestead and grounds, Corban Estate and Nathan Homestead. Both are operated by the Auckland Council as community arts centres. Participants usually join the class for a 10-week period during which time the group takes a collective approach to building and telling a story that may reflect a direct issue or concern they hold or respond to an interest arising from other projects they have completed. The structuring of projects is relatively fluid, with tasks and related skills being developed across the group membership over a number of films. Aside from the individuals joining the class, a number of other people identified as disabled are routinely involved. The voice-over commentary, sound and film editing functions across most of the projects are undertaken by a core group of young adults. Many of the films include original music by The Mutes from Mars, a group of disabled musicians. The skill
of Hank as a facilitator in combining the input of the different participants is crucial to the success of the work.

Hank typically works under the auspices of Interacting Disability Theatre. His film projects and other work by Interacting appear on the YouTube channel InteractingVideo, where there are 31 films completed over four years. Two films were selected for the Re-storying Disability event. The first, The Tiger Sleeps, was finished in three days during the annual InterACT Disability Arts Festival in 2013. Complementing this was Blind Alley, which was made in the last school term of 2014. While the narratives of many of Snell's film projects reflect the everyday encounters of disabled people, other themes emerge from the use of stylisation or genre. For example, film noir is evident in a number of detective themed films made with students from Homai College, where all have a vision impairment. Subtle humour and interplay often casts them into sighted roles—as detectives for example. Another theme explored is the apocalypse, forecasting the end of the world as we know it. This emerges in various spy/espionage narratives as well as several films set in royal households, with characters costumed in Elizabethan style. Another popular genre is spaghetti western, and the character ‘cowboy’ now appears in other films. In many films special effects are achieved with green screen work.

Analyses of contemporary visual culture suggest that most mainstream film makers have “come to rely on an audience’s knowledge of [visual] codes in order to make damage to the body [or mind] of the character a statement about the character” (Evans, 2009, p. 276). Snell is interested in unsettling such filmic codes (Evans, 2009) and letting his participants reset meanings of disability. In Snell’s films, the guy does get his girl, and the unexpected will occur rather than the obvious. Snell’s facilitation goes far beyond breaking the code with some of his work, the most blatant overturning being where the topic of charity giving is tackled head on to further provoke the audience in Blind Alley:

There is a structurally necessary relationship between the portrayal of disability as a disaster or a tragic loss, and the function of raising money. This means that any critique of representation must also link that critique to the institutional practices and ideologies of charity. (Evans, 2009, p. 278)

Enabling the students from Homai College to reverse the charity roles that they are routinely subjected to creates a superb counternarrative to that of blind individuals being the subject of charity and pity.

![Figure 2: The Tiger Sleeps (2013) and Blind Alley (2014).](image)

Important for the participants in community film projects is the collaborative and cooperative approach taken. Where individuals have a range of skills and a mix of needs arising from their impairment the move away from an overt focus on high competence in self-expression opens up a broader range of participatory opportunities. One of the
techniques used by Hank is to have another participant ‘voice’ for one less competent in speech. Both individual identity and group interaction are affirmed by the generative processes involved and the reframing of identity in the community film.

**Paula Crimmens: Interacting Disability Theatre**

Interacting was first established as a charitable trust in 2007 and now provides disability theatre classes and performance works, and organises an annual disability arts festival. In addition, a number of tutors are employed to provide term-long classes in music, community film, wearable arts and hip-hop. At *Re-storying Disability*, Paula spoke particularly of the theatre work and the ensemble group production *Into the Naughty Corner* (2009–2010). During this phase of the trust’s work, most of the outputs were being developed with the residents and some staff from a disability service provider in West Auckland. The ensemble group worked independently of the larger class that was offered once a week. The larger group was supported by two people making costumes, props and, later, projections and production effects. Both the ensemble production and the work of the large group were performed on a number of occasions, in festival contexts and for short seasons. *Into the Naughty Corner* was the subject of television news and current affairs programmes three times over the two years it was being presented. The relationship with the disability service changed as the activities programme was re-focused. The high demand and high output level work that interacting had been delivering shifted and a range of open community classes were developed. These were offered across many locations and were to reach a far wider group.

The social and individual gains by participants from community arts practice are reported as providing multiple benefits including: personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment and self-determination, local image and identity, imagination and vision, health and wellbeing (Goodley & Moore, 2002). In Auckland, however, the nature of what is essentially a purchaser model of service provision strongly favours the funder or commissioning agency. Under these conditions tensions can emerge. The value experienced by individuals participating in the arts can be displaced as a result of a focus on economic value, or in some cases gain, from such activity. In this narrative, the disabled are cast as consumers of services that compete with each other. Bluntly put, the divided thinking of ‘value for money’ that dominates the public sector in New Zealand leaves involvement in this type of funded arts service in a precarious position.

![Figure 3: Into the Naughty Corner (2009).](image)
The power and importance of the ensemble work, *Into the Naughty Corner* was achieved through the development and use of storytelling and narrative. When presented with the authenticity that this work carried, the power of the stories was inescapable. Linked to drama therapy approaches where storytelling and storymaking lead to increased self-esteem and self-mastery, the outcomes in the domains of social and communication skills are evidenced by gains in participants’ capability.

The importance of the work that Hank and Paula develop and present can be reflected upon when considering the role and function that narrative holds in societal groups. This is proposed by Bruner (2002): “We are a species whose main purpose is to tell each other about the expected and the surprises that upset the expected, and we do that through the stories we tell” (p. 4). Re-storying the disability narrative creates a feedback loop that enables the resetting of the popular understandings of difference.

**Keith Park: Interactive storytelling**

Interactive storytelling involves the adaptation of cultural texts into call and response form to make them accessible for diverse groups. This based on a commitment to enabling increased participation in literature, culture and cultural spaces (Grove & Park, 1996, p. 1). Keith adapts classic, folk, traditional and contemporary texts into interactive scripts. These are often texts that would typically be considered ‘too difficult’ for the groups he works with. In Keith’s highly engaging workshops, these texts become interactive, multisensory collective performances, which combine spoken word, Makaton signs, resonance (created through clapping, stamping or drumming), movement, drama, visual images, props and costume. As they become familiar with the form, groups begin to adapt Keith’s stories, changing the words and actions, adding new elements, and shifting genre or style. Participants also take the lead, individually and collaboratively, in generating new call and response stories. Keith works predominantly in special schools, but also brings groups together to share and perform in public spaces, including theatres, museums, galleries and cathedrals.

Keith’s stories use language in its richest diversity. Keith and his early collaborator, Nicola Grove, refute the idea that “verbal comprehension [is necessary] to the understanding of poetry and literature” (Grove & Park, 1996, p. 2). Instead they argue that “meaning” can be “grasped through a kind of atmosphere created through sound and vision” and that great enjoyment can be found in this embodied experience of poetry and story (Grove & Park, p. 2). Keith’s adaptations of Shakespeare, for example, use the original text, often combined with other languages – *Othello* in Arabic for example – and Makaton, adding, rather than removing, layers of complexity. This is an enabling approach to making performance (Roulstone, 2010). The use of multiple modes of communication and engagement of multiple senses enables the participation and creativity of people with a range of cognitive, physical and sensory impairments.

Typically an interactive storytelling session takes place in the closed environment of a special school classroom. One dominant narrative operating in this setting casts disabled students as “defective individual pathologies in need of special provision to support their own specific educational needs” (Slee, 1997, p. 408). Keith’s work may certainly be intended by some schools to function as a remedial intervention directed at students’ particular needs, and this is reflected in some of his earlier books that emphasise the development of communication skills (Grove & Park, 1996). But, interactive storying also contributes to re-storying elements of this problematic narrative. The mode of call and response, in which fluid or shared leadership is encouraged, generates a strong sense of collaborative creativity within a group. This collaborative mode of participation,
and the playful, hilarious, irreverent ‘atmosphere’ of an interactive storytelling session, subvert hierarchical, remedial, individualising ways of relating and educating, at least for the duration of the session. Traditional classroom etiquette is suspended, calling and acting out is celebrated, unpredictability is invited; colloquial speech, multiple forms of language and communication are encouraged, and anyone can take the lead. Everyone and everything becomes a potential source of creativity and humour. Keith’s work suspends the norms of the institutional settings he works in, enabling participants, and sometimes those institutions, to inhabit other narratives and, perhaps, imagine themselves towards becoming otherwise.

**Focusing forward: The beginning of a conversation**

To counter powerful cultural narratives that regulate the lives and bodies of disabled people the performing arts need to contribute significantly to the vision and aspirations articulated by New Zealand’s *Disability Strategy* by presenting narratives that are affirmative of difference. The practices discussed in this article offer some ways in which this might happen in different sectors. But this is, we hope, just the start of a wider conversation.

The discussion that ended *Re-storying Disability* highlighted a number of barriers to full participation in the arts across most of the sectors represented. Some of these were located in the curriculum of tertiary institutions, and this poses a series of questions about access to training that cannot go unaddressed. Alongside this was the indication that in some instances the predominant delivery of arts activities by the disability sector had displaced momentum for the mainstream to become more inclusive or for disability-led arts to flourish. So, while re-storying is an important strategy, which we argue all arts practices can engage in, other factors should not be overlooked. In his review of the 2009 edition of RIDE, for example, Roulstone (2010) points out that what we are calling re-storying, is not the only, nor the most important, outcome of disability performance/art. He also discussed the importance of developing enabling aesthetics, creating spaces for relationships between disabled people and nondisabled people to be supported, addressing issues of exclusion and access in training and professional performance, and challenging divisions between elite and ‘special’ arts.

One emerging threat to disability arts flourishing and the goal of a society that “highly values our lives and continually enhances our full participation” (Ministry of Health, 2001, p. 3) is the move to a consumer model of service provision. This is a situation where “welfare and social well-being are viewed as products of individual choice. . . within a free market economy” (Peters, 2001, p. 124). In these circumstances “young people with learning disabilities have their identities constructed by what they are not, by what they do not do, and by what they cannot afford” (Gladstone, 2014, p. 230). Given this context, there is an urgent need to address questions such as: What does equal access and representation within democratic capitalism bring? (Garland-Thompson, 2002). There is a risk that Aotearoa New Zealand’s current policy context will undermine the potential for multiple valued identities to emerge, as the only identity that seems to be valued in this cultural narrative is that of the consumer.
References


Reviewing Arts Education Practice:
Some International Trends, Approaches and Perspectives

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Abstract

This paper reviews a broad and diverse range of arts education practices to be found around the world with a view to clarifying trends, approaches and perspectives in both the educational sector and the cultural and recreation sector. It examines the dichotomy between arts as a self-standing cultural right and arts for instrumental purposes, presenting numerous international examples. The paper discusses the arts in formal school curricula and in extracurricular activities. It also describes programs offered by community groups and professional arts organizations such as theatres, dance companies, orchestras, and museums, along with examples of partnerships between the sectors involving governmental and non-governmental organizers and sponsors.

Biography

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Arts education may be as old as education itself

Of course, we can only speculate on the origins of both art and education. But we can ask questions. Were the magnificent animals painted on the walls of a cave near Lascaux, France 17,300 years ago, intended as icons in a religious ritual? Or might they have been used to teach young hunters how to improve their skills. Or both? Were students in ancient Egypt both artists and scholars when they wrote their school assignments in the form of hieroglyphic images? We do know that Plato’s ideal education was based on play and included a study of singing, dancing and literature. (Courtney, 1968) In Medieval Europe, liturgical drama was used to teach religious concepts, and, in the Renascence, students performed plays to improve their public speaking skills and their fluency in Latin. In many cultures, though the ages, young people of privilege have been taught musical and artistic skills to build their cultural capacity, skills that they would call upon as adults in a variety of social situations.

Many of our modern ideas about the educational value of the arts derive from the Progressive Education movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. At a time when compulsory education was in its infancy and civil society was trying to serve the social needs of diverse populations including immigrants and disadvantaged children, philosophers like John Dewey (1938) and innovators like Maria Montessori (Montessori, trans. 1994) imagined approaches to teaching that would be relevant to the lives of learners and that would engage children in active experiences as opposed to rote learning. In this fertile environment, teachers in and out of schools, experimented with all of the art forms – dance, music, theatre and visual art. Their goal was to facilitate the child’s development as a whole person and to helping children learn the content of their school’s curriculum in a richer, more enduring way.

When we look around the world for examples of arts education, today, we see a vast array of practices. We see the arts being taught in schools – sometimes in primary schools, sometimes in secondary schools. We see community organizations running programs in which children, youth and life-long learners have an opportunity to explore a variety of art forms. We see conservatories and professional training schools preparing young adults as professional artists. We see theatres, dance companies, orchestras, museums, libraries and other professional arts organizations offering programs designed to engage young people in an appreciation of the art form and to build new audiences for the future. The range and scope of arts education programming can be overwhelming.

Confusing as this picture may seem, we can find some clarity when we keep in mind that there are a small number of general categories into which most of these practices will fit. As I attempt to describe some of the current trends, approaches and perspectives to be found in the field today, I will concentrate on four of these general categories. I will look at the sectors in which arts education has flourished.

• In schools (educational sector) and
• Out of schools (culture and recreation).

I will also discuss the possibility of building partnerships between these two sectors.

In addition, there are two general approaches to consider from the point of view of the purpose of arts education.

• Arts as a cultural right (i.e. with no purpose other than as cultural expression and appreciation)
• Arts for instrumental purposes (i.e., arts as a medium to facilitate learning in another subject area or to meet personal development goals).

Included in this discussion will be the question of whether these two approaches have elements in common. Are they mutually exclusive?

Arts in Schools

Opportunities within the general curriculum

The arts are often found within the formal curriculum of the school system. The arts are typically presented as an obligatory component of primary education, while a selection of courses in the arts is available on an optional basis in secondary education. This is the case in the Province of Ontario, where I live in Canada. Teachers of children from Kindergarten to Grade Eight (age 13) are required to teach dance, drama, music and visual art in the context of general education. There is a detailed curriculum guideline available to direct their teaching of the arts (although, unfortunately, most teachers do not have sufficient training in the arts to carry out the entire curriculum). The situation is very different in our secondary schools, where courses in these same four subjects plus media arts are available on an optional basis (although students are required to complete at least one course in the arts prior to graduation). Again, there is a detailed curriculum guideline to control quality and, in this case, teachers are required to complete specialized training before they are considered qualified to teach courses in the arts. I should add that, in my Province, arts courses are accepted as valid credits toward secondary school graduation.

This picture of curricular arts is fairly representative of arts in school curricula in other jurisdictions around the world although there is considerable variation within the model. For example, in some countries, only two or three arts forms are represented in the curriculum. Another variation can be found in the grade or age levels at which the subjects are available.

When the arts are included in the secondary curriculum with the professional guidance of a qualified teacher, a number of elements are usually included in the program. Although there are different ways of articulating these elements, I have found that, generally, students are engaged in doing art work themselves; they are expected to be able to look at their own work and that of others with a discerning or analytical eye: they study the technical aspects of working in a specific medium; and, at the same time, they learn something about the history and theory behind the art form.

Finally, it has to be recognized that, in some parts of the world, the arts are not included in the formal, school curriculum, in any way.

Schools of the arts

Some school systems give students who display a special interest or talent in the arts more extensive and intensive artistic learning opportunities than are generally available in the normal school setting. A model that is frequently followed is that of the school of the arts. Schools of the arts are normally required to cover the entire academic curriculum while, at the same time, offering a full range of programming in the arts. Some of these schools concentrate on primary education, some concentrate on secondary education and some include students at both levels. Some of them require students to compete for admission through auditions or by submitting a portfolio. Others allow any student who
has a particular interest in the arts to register.

I have visited schools of the arts in a number of countries, some of them housed in state-of-the-art facilities and all of them staffed by well-qualified and dedicated artists and teachers. As an example of how such a school might operate, I will describe the program of the FACE school in Montreal, Canada. This school covers the entire public school cycle of the Province of Quebec, beginning in Kindergarten and concluding at the end of Grade 11. Because so many of the students arrive at the FACE school at a very young age, this is clearly not a school that bases admission on demonstrated talent. Any student from the district (this is an English-language school) is invited to register.

As in other schools of the arts, FACE students follow the full, public school curriculum while also receiving a substantial amount of instruction in the arts. Every student, in every year, is required to follow courses in Music, Theatre and Visual Arts. Eventually, each student chooses one of these art forms as a specialization while continuing to take classes in the other two forms. One factor contributing to high student motivation is the fact that most of the teachers of the arts in this school maintain their own artistic practice in addition to fulfilling their teaching duties. One time when visiting this school, I had an opportunity to hear the student orchestra rehearsing for a concert. The rehearsal was held in the principle concert venue of the city of Montreal. The student orchestra, which had won numerous competitions in previous years, had been "hired" by an adult choral group to accompany them in a major recital. I can still remember my amazement at the high level of musical achievement of these students, some of whom I knew from earlier meetings to be only 14 or 15 years of age. They played very difficult music with great skill, sensitivity and coordination.

**Extracurricular Opportunities**

When I was a high school student, I had the option of choosing either music or visual art courses within the school curriculum. My choice was visual arts and I am happy to report that I was able to follow a series of excellent art courses taught by a dedicated and well qualified teacher. However, as I developed an interest in the theatre, I had to deal with the fact that no courses in theatre were available to me at that time. Fortunately, some teachers of other subjects were willing to devote their time, after class, to direct me and my fellow students in the production of plays in the school auditorium. This experience of extra-curricular artistic activity continues to be familiar to students in many parts of the world. The term co-curricular is often used, today, to make it clear that these activities are seen as supportive of the learning goals of the official curriculum even though they are not, normally, allocated academic credit. The possibility of teachers engaging with students on extra-curricular arts projects varies from one jurisdiction to another. In Canada, there is an expectation that teachers will provide leadership in one or more co-curricular activities in fulfilment of their professional contract, but this expectation is not universal. In places where teaching is more strictly limited to the classroom, students must rely on out-of-school programs or on school-based programs that are led by adults who are not members of the academic teaching staff.

One example of a special, extra-curricular arrangement in my own field of theatre education, can be found in several states in the USA where secondary schools have a history of employing non-academic staff members to run their sports programs. Following this staffing model, schools also employ professional theatre directors to produce plays and musicals, after class, with students, often achieving near-professional results.

Another example of school-based, extracurricular arts programming using non-
academic teaching staff can be found in Finland where a national, government funded, system of arts schools provides extensive training in the arts to secondary students after regular classroom hours. These programs are provided with separate school buildings and are staffed by professional artist-educators. The Finnish model goes so far as to include official curricular guidelines approved by the government. These schools differ from the schools for the arts described above in that they have no responsibility for covering the academic curriculum. Attendance is optional and the focus is entirely on the arts (Sorin Sirkus Website, Retrieved August, 18, 2015, from http://www.sorinsirkus.fi/english.html). When visiting Bogotá Colombia, recently, I observed a similar system of arts education programming, located in what were called CLAN centres around the city.

Arts out of School

A very important outlet for learning in the arts can be found in the world beyond the classroom – in the culture and recreation sector. In countries where the arts have no place in the schools, out-of-school arts education is essential if children and youth are to receive any kind of introduction to cultural expression. Even in those places were the public schools do provide excellent learning opportunities in the arts, out-of-school programs can play a vital role in expanding a student’s artistic education. I am thinking about outreach programs that are offered by various kinds of community groups as well as professional arts organizations such as theatres, dance companies, orchestras, libraries and museums. There are so many types of programs, supported by national, regional or municipal governments, sponsored by private foundations, or relying entirely on tuition fees, that I will not attempt to categorize them further. I will simply offer a number of examples that, I hope, will give a sense of the scope of this kind of programming without attempting to be exhaustive.

A program for pre-school aged children

There is wide agreement that learning in the arts should begin when a child is very young – certainly well before school-starting age. Young children naturally learn through play and playing with artistic media is accessible to them in ways that playing in other disciplines is not. The arts were central to the pedagogy of Friedrich Froebel (Froeble, 1912) the father of kindergarten, who believed that children should participate in making art and enjoying the art of others as a means of promoting personal development. Today, we find that most early childhood arts are conducted in day-care centres and in schools as part of kindergarten and junior kindergarten programs. Parents of children who are not yet registered in one of these organized programs are encouraged to introduce artistic activities within the child’s play at home.

A notable program for very young children can be found in the city of Bogotá. I was able to visit centres operating under the title El Nido (the nest) where infants accompanied by their mothers were able to explore richly prepared aesthetic environments that were designed and facilitated by professional artist-educators.

A professional arts outreach program

It is now normal practice for a professional arts organization such as a theatre, dance company or orchestra to operate some kind of educational outreach program for children and youth. Using an orchestra as an example, it may go no further than presenting a concert of its usual repertoire for an audience composed exclusively of young people. It might extend to touring a small group of musicians to schools, at the same time
expanding the repertoire to introduce popular pieces that may be more accessible to untutored listeners. Ultimately, it could be extended to include training for teachers and workshops for students. An example of a well-developed orchestra program is that run by the educational department of the London Philharmonic which includes in-school performances and workshops, out of school performance opportunities for young musicians, and the nurturing of a new generation of professional artists (London Philharmonic Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://www.lpo.org.uk/).

In this context, I should mention the community based approach to music education known as El Sistema. Pioneered in Venezuela over decades by conductor, educator and activist Jose Antonio Abreu and adopted by orchestras and music education programs in many other countries, El Sistema aims to provide developmental opportunities to impoverished children and youth through free classical music education.

A museum-arts program

As an example of an arts education program offered by a museum, we can consider the School Programs offered by the National Gallery of Canada. Understandably, this programming is built around visits of school children to view the gallery’s excellent collection. When led through an exhibit by museum staff, young people are encouraged to become engaged in a personal interpretation of the works they see. Staffs also run practical workshops with visiting groups of children. The gallery makes it possible for students from across the country to access and learn from artworks in its permanent collection via the Internet (National Gallery of Canada Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://www.gallery.ca/en/learn/school-programs.php).

A university outreach program

Universities and other institutions of higher learning often establish educational arts activities in the community to complement their academic programs in either the arts or education. The Department of Cultural and Creative Arts at the Hong Kong Institute of Education collaborates each year with two of the companies that provide bus transportation throughout the city to convert 20 buses into moving galleries of student art. This project, titled, Artbus: On the Move, invites students to compete for the right to display their original art on the exterior of the busses. Throughout the year, at least one of the busses is pressed into extra duty, carrying groups of student artists to schools and other venues where young people are engaged in artistic displays and workshops. This year, in collaboration with the Hong Kong Museum of Education organizers decorated the compartment of one Arts Bus as a time tunnel, taking visitors back to the 1960’s and 70’s through historical photographs. On the same bus, a well-known Hong Kong actor working with students from the Hong Kong Institute of Education presented an original, interactive play featuring collective memories of life on the bus (Hong Kong Institute of Education Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://www.ied.edu.hk/web/news.php?id=20140503).

Arts training for talented youth

Another important, community-based form of artistic education is the training of talented young people in preparation for their debut as professional artists. My example of this type of programming, the National Ballet School of Canada, could have fit as well under the category of in-school arts education because, like the schools for the arts that described above, this school is responsible for covering all subjects in the full
educational curriculum in addition to providing intensive training in ballet. I chose to introduce it in the out-of-school category because of its historical connection with the National Ballet of Canada and because of its clear mission to provide our country with professional dance artists. Children audition for the school at a very young age and, if their families do not live in Toronto, the children are obliged to leave home to take up their studies in that city (National Ballet School of Canada Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://www.nbs-enb.ca/Home).

**Arts for marginalized youth**

It is important that we not further disadvantage our marginalized young people by depriving them of an experience of the arts. I have already mentioned the El Sistema method of music education for impoverished young people. Another example, located in Toronto and operating with partners across Canada, is a community-arts-development organization called SKETCH. This initiative aims to engage young people (aged 16 to 29) who are homeless and on the margins of society. It has broad social and economic goals for the young people who enter its doors including increasing their health, education, self-sufficiency and community participation. Indeed, the main workshop space is built around a kitchen area so that no one leaves the place hungry. At the same time, the focus of activity is clearly on the arts. The facility is able to accommodate work in a number of art forms including music which is supported by a professional quality recording studio. (Sketch Website)

**A youth led initiative**

While most community-based arts education programs are led by professional artist educators, it is important to recognize the potential of young people to set up and run their own arts education activities. The Arts Network for Children and Youth (ANCY) has had considerable success encouraging this kind of youth-led arts projects across Canada through its National Youth Arts Week held annually at the beginning of May. Featuring youth-driven projects and events in communities across the country, the week “provides a space for young people to express and exchange ideas, showcase talents, get excited about the arts and celebrate their positive contributions to their communities.” (ANCY [Arts Network for Children and Youth] Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://www.artsnetwork.ca/?q=nyaw).

**Arts opportunities for life-long learners**

Most of the time, when we talk about arts education, we focus our attention on young learners. However, much excellent work is also being done among other populations, notably among older members of the community. In the small city where I live, we are fortunate to have a very active Seniors’ Centre where members aged 50 to over 90 are able to follow courses in many subjects including the arts. The Kingston Seniors’ Centre is located in a former primary school and operated by a large and dedicated group of volunteers. Throughout the year, courses in drama, music, visual art and dance are offered for very affordable registration fees (Kingston Seniors’ Centre Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://www.seniorskingston.ca/).

**Partnerships between the sectors**

From a governmental perspective, arts education belongs partly to the culture sector and partly to the education sector. In some cases, including arts in schools, government
departments of education take responsibility for organizing and supporting learning in the arts. In other cases, especially in community-based programming, arts education falls within the mandate of departments of culture, recreation or even tourism. As we have seen, however, there are occasions when the work of professionals located in one sector overlaps with the work of professionals in another sector. Artist educators, working independently or as representatives of theatres, dance companies, orchestras, museums and the like offer presentations and workshops for teachers and students — either in schools or in their own specialized arts facilities. In some cases, these offerings extend to full courses, some of which carry academic credit for students or professional qualifications for teachers. Sometimes, artist-educators work with students while teachers watch and learn. Sometimes, artists and teachers collaborate on the planning and teaching of the arts.

An example of a highly developed organization that fosters partnerships between the sectors is a program run by the Royal Conservatory in Toronto Canada called Learning Through the Arts® (LTTA). Founded in 1994, LTTA has become "the largest full school intervention program in the world, reaching more than 377,000 students in the last ten years" across Canada, the United States, and other parts of the world. LTTA is an excellent example of the instrumental approach to arts education that I will say more about later. Artist educators, who have been specially trained by LTTA, collaborate with classroom teachers to teach the core curriculum through arts-based activities. For example, they might teach arithmetic through dance, literacy through media arts, or science through music. An important component of each LTTA program is a research project designed to document the process and to provide evidence of the impact that it has had on students, teachers, schools and communities. Currently, the organization has completed more than 45 of these studies. (Learning Through the Arts® Website, Retrieved August, 14, 2015, from http://learning.rcmusic.ca/learning-through-arts).

Arts as a cultural right

I have been discussing the range of structures and venues in which arts education takes place within both the education sector and the culture, recreation and sport sector. I hope that I have been able to throw some light on the important role that each of these sectors can play in providing substantial arts education experiences for children, youth and life-long learners. At this point, I would like to turn my attention to the critical question of why we want to teach the arts.

For some artists and educators, the question of why teach the arts (in other words, what learning may be gained) is somewhat irrelevant. They consider the arts to be a fundamental, cultural right that all children should be given access to regardless of any peripheral learning that may take place. Their motto is often "art for art's sake". Indeed, there is much to be said for this position. Article 31 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989) recognizes "the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts."

Educators who maintain this position decry the wide-spread tendency to attribute general learning outcomes to artistic education, asserting that the arts are disciplines in their own right and should not be regarded merely as the servants of other subject areas. A recent publication by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) was skeptical of much research that attempted to attribute academic success to experience in the arts. The authors (Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013) concluded that "...the impact of arts education on other non-arts skills and on innovation..."
in the labour market should not be the primary justification for arts education in today’s curricula.” (p.20).

As a life-long lover of the arts, I have considerable sympathy for this position. Of course, I want access to the arts to be celebrated as a cultural right. At the same time, I cannot help but recognize that education systems everywhere have adopted a utilitarian approach to the organization of their programs. Before policy-makers agree to spend precious resources on a subject or a pedagogical approach, they insist on knowing what good is will do for students. They see this as their responsibility to both the students and the taxpayer. If we want the arts to find a secure place in public education, it is not enough to simply assert that it is a right. We will need to be able to articulate the value of these subjects. Indeed, I see this as our responsibility as arts educators.

Instrumental approaches to the arts

A discussion of instrumental approaches to the arts in education returns us to the developmental goals of the Progressive Education movement. As an example of how the arts were expected to aid in personal development, I would like to refer to an important publication in the field of drama/theatre education. In 1968, Brian Way, a British actor and director who had already developed an approach to presenting plays to children in a way that would engage them directly in the action, published his seminal book, Development Through Drama. (Way 1968) Way’s premise was that participation in dramatic play was the key to developing a number of personal skills and character traits including self-confidence, expressive movement, articulate speech and cooperation with others. To help teachers achieve these goals, Way provided detailed descriptions of specific dramatic exercises. The activities recommended by Way, were very similar to dramatic activities used by educators in a number of other countries. For example, I recall a conversation with Ms. Rita Crist whom I was privileged to meet in 1980. She described improvisational drama activities that she led in Chicago area schools in the 1920s in a program led by American dramatic arts pioneer Winifred Ward (Crist, R., 1980, Personal Communication at Arizona State University).

More recently, the instrumental approach has become increasingly prominent as teachers of the arts find themselves being pressed to justify the presence of their subjects in school systems that are governed by a strictly utilitarian mandate. These teachers have been looking to research for evidence that an experience in the arts is able to facilitate learning in the general curriculum. In spite of the reluctance of some scholars to accept the credibility of correlations between arts education and academic achievement, considerable effort has gone into exploring the capacity of the arts to produce learning that can be transferred into another domain. For example, a recent publication by the International Network for Research in Arts Education (INRAE) entitled Wisdom of the Many (Schonmann, 2015) contains 91 entries written by arts education specialists around the world. Most of these essays describe instrumental benefits of arts education. They presented arguments to the effect that:

- The arts in education can be used to construct knowledge in other domains of learning;
- The arts can promote embodied learning;
- The arts can effect significant transformation in a young person’s life;
- Arts education can positively impact personal wellbeing;
- The arts are a powerful venue in which young people can construct and maintain identity;
• Arts education has potential to facilitate social cohesion and community building;
• Arts education can contribute to the goals of multiculturalism. (Tang 2015)

Several contributors were especially sanguine about the potential of arts education to facilitate improved Social Cohesion. They cited examples of how the arts promoted social inclusion and community building and how they provided the kind of socialization spaces that enable social cohesion. Related to social cohesion is the theme of Social Justice. Entries described how arts education could contribute to peace building, environmental sustainability, and building awareness of other social justice issues. Democracy is another related theme, one in which arts education, and particularly drama education are shown to be effective ways of teaching democratic skills. Because the arts and creativity are within the capacity of everyone, arts education is seen as a democratizing factor.

Entries related to several of the above themes are optimistic about the potential impact that arts education can have on the lives of young people. Like them, the theme of Multiculturalism includes reference to beneficial results – bridging cultural gaps.

Policy makers internationally have accepted the instrumental value of the arts in education. For example, UNESCO has made it clear that it sees the arts as a means to improve teaching and learning in pursuit of its own social and cultural goals. I refer, particularly, to the Seoul Agenda: Goals for the development of arts education (UNESCO, 2010). This document, an action plan for arts education around the world, was a major outcome of the Second UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education, held in Seoul, Republic of Korea, in 2010. The Seoul Agenda was unanimously endorsed in 2011 by the General Conference of UNESCO, giving clear, international assent to the utilitarian value of arts education. This plan is built around three goals. The first is to ensure access to arts education – for the purpose of improving education. The second is to ensure the highest quality in arts education, including a commitment to consolidating evidence of the impact of arts education (a clear reference to the instrumental uses of the arts to promote learning). The third goal of the Seoul Agenda is the one most clearly utilitarian in intent. It advocates applying arts education to help resolve “the social and cultural challenges facing today’s world.” (UNESCO, 2010, Goal-3) A key focus of strategies in support of this goal, is the belief that an exposure to the arts will be effective in promoting creative capacity among the students.

Even the OECD report (Winner, Goldstein, & Vincent-Lancrin, 2013) that was so critical of much arts education research methodology was prepared to recognize the merits of some research. For example, it strongly credits drama/theatre education with effectiveness in improving verbal achievement (a claim made at an earlier time by Brian Way, among others).

Conclusion

I hope that I have managed to give an impression of the range of arts education programs and activities in schools and in the wider community, including partnerships between the education and culture sectors. I have also attempted to convey the essential differences between the instrumental approach to arts education and the position held by some that the arts are a cultural right that needs no further justification. Perhaps I might conclude by trying to suggest that a bridge can be constructed between these divergent outlooks.

At the beginning of my presentation, I fancifully suggested that the origin of arts
education may have occurred simultaneously with the origin of art itself. Certainly, the history of the arts is replete with commentary on the learning that inevitably accompanies an artistic experience. To begin with the field of drama/theatre, I recall that Aristotle explained the effect of a tragedy on an audience as the purging of negative emotions, which we could interpret today as contributing to personal development. Medieval church leaders produced plays to teach the events of the bible and to provide moral guidance to the population. Nineteenth century dramatists like Swinberg, Ibsen and Shaw used their plays to awaken their audiences to the social and economic injustices of their time. Twentieth century political dramatists like Brecht deliberately aimed their plays at teaching ideological dogma. Art for art sake is a concept that is not easily compatible with the history of theatre art.

The other art forms are also associated with learning in various ways. Film and dance are capable of dealing with the same themes that I mentioned above under theatre art, as is visual art which can have a strongly narrative character. Young people are known to rely heavily on popular music in the construction of their personal and collective identity. Even when artists are most concerned with creative expression and completely uninterested in conveying any kind of message, they cannot entirely escape the role of teacher. Innovative visual artists from the impressionists to the fauvists to the cubists have taught us to see the world in entirely different ways than were possible before. Composers are continuously re-inventing musical form in ways that teach us to listen differently and even to feel with a different set of sensibilities. Abstract dance pieces that reject their traditional narrative form teach us to live in the moment and to see our relationships in existential terms. We cannot help learning from the art works we encounter any more than artists can evade their inherently educational function.

Because the arts have always been associated with learning and because arts education is entirely dependent on artistic quality for its effectiveness, the gap between instrumental and rights-based approaches to arts education may ultimately prove to be illusory.
References


In the Realms of Fantasy: Finding New Ways to Tell our Stories

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Abstract

This article describes some key moments from my doctoral research project which invited six international drama educators to embody their stories of the battles and barricades inherent in drama education using imagination and role play. Instead of a traditional qualitative interview I devised a framing device – the Museum of Educational Drama and Applied Theatre – and took on role of an Archivist’s Assistant to facilitate the generation of stories. Inspired by arts-based research and performative inquiry this method offers an alternative to traditional qualitative interviews by suggesting that drama can be used to embody stories in a dyadic situation. This research resulted in the development of a play which re-imagined and re-enacted some of those stories.

Biography

JANE LUTON is an arts-based researcher and has been a head of drama in secondary schools in England and New Zealand. She has recently achieved a PhD in education with a creative practice component, the first of its kind undertaken at the Faculty of Education and Social Work, University of Auckland. Her research explores how drama educators deal with the battles and barricades inherent in teaching drama and how she re-found a passion for her pedagogy when it was lost to melancholia. She has co-authored four drama study guides published by ESA (NZ) for year 12 and 13 New Zealand students and teachers and had articles and chapters published in peer-reviewed journals and books.
Introduction

In 2014, I undertook doctoral research with six international drama educators. These practitioners represent drama pedagogy in England, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. My research explored the battles and barricades that drama educators can experience in this often marginalised pedagogy and what can sustain us. I will share some key stories in this article that I feel were enlivened using a new research tool ‘embodied reflections’. In order to do so I will use extracts from the transcriptions of the researcher-participant interactions and brief scenes from a play I subsequently devised. Embodied reflections aim to engage participants and researchers through the imagination and through engagement with drama.

Initially I was inspired by the work of arts based researchers whose work I experienced at the Applied Theatre symposiums held at the University of Auckland in New Zealand. Demonstrations and discussions of their work showed that as drama educators we can use our own art form to generate stories for as Victor Turner (1988) suggests we come to know ourselves through performance as both observers and actors. Joe Norris advocates ‘Playbuilding’ (Norris, 2009) to generate data and so I experimented with ways to use drama strategies to interview my participants. I was determined to capture the unspoken language of the body even though I could not bring my participants together in one place to carry out a collaborative drama workshop. This meant that I needed to ensure my interviews offered opportunities for enactment for as Kvale suggests a sedentary interview may not offer this possibility (Kvale, 1996). Drama is by nature a group activity rather than a solitary pursuit. Peter Brook declares that all that is required for theatre to take place is for one person to walk across an empty space while another observes (Brook, 1968). This significant concept supported my development of embodied reflections and helped me transform a dyadic interview into a framed dramatic encounter as I invited my participants to share their stories individually with me, the sole observer, as they performed in the empty space. I acted as facilitator and audience and each session was recorded by one static video camera on a tripod.

I invited my participants, who agreed to relinquish their anonymity, to experiment with embodied reflections. Professor Andy Kempe, Professor John O’Toole, Mr Ron Price, Associate Professor Peter O’Connor, Professor Jonathan Neelands and Associate Professor Lynn Fels, agreed to share their stories of drama education practice with me, each taking part in two ninety minute sessions.

I crafted the method as a drama teacher using drama conventions and theatrical techniques ‘to unfold its meanings or themes in time and space’ (Neelands, 2010, p. 49) so that it did not become a collection of disjointed and random drama activities. In doing so I drew on my experience of creating a drama lesson. My participants were not asked to portray in depth roles but rather to demonstrate their stories as a ‘street scene’ (Willett, 1964) as Brecht advocates in his description of Epic theatre. The construction of an illusion is not required, rather, it is a re-imaging of events that have happened. The element of tension, central to all forms of drama, is introduced in the metaphors of ‘battles and barricades’ stimulating the participants to critically consider and confront what they perceived to be some of the difficulties faced by drama educators in their practice. These warlike metaphors reflected some of the dramatic and at times vociferous language used in the academic debates (Hornbrook, 1989) that surrounded drama education as I entered this world as a drama teacher in 1989.
New Zealand tensions

In New Zealand while drama is a subject within the curriculum there are still tensions to be faced particularly in the juggling of ideals that surround the purpose and goals of drama education. Peter O’Connor advocates that drama’s power lies in its ability to explore themes of social justice and to create a democratic relationship between student and teacher in the classroom (O’Connor, 2010). He suggests that drama is less effective at the centre of the curriculum (O’Connor, 2009). Zoe Brooks has written about the problems of drama assessment because it’s “emphasis on public perceptions rather than the living process of the classroom can stifle the very energy that gives drama life” (Brooks, 2010, p. 8). Tracey Lynn Cody’s research shares stories of those who feel being a drama teacher “means a far greater workload involving many more hours than other subject areas seem to require” (Cody, 2012, p. 172). Some teachers describe their role as a “bloody foot soldier” (Cody, 2012, p. 172) but Cody believes that the “artistry of teachers may well flourish – provided their passion is not crushed through cumbersome workload pressures” (Cody, 2012, p. 185). This research acknowledges these tensions and enables drama educators to reflect on their journeys using their own art form.

Imagining the Museum

Each dyadic encounter began with an invitation to my participants to imagine that a Museum of Educational Drama and Applied Theatre (MEDAT) was to be opened and as representatives of inspiring practice, they were being asked to contribute stories and artefacts. Money was to be no object so my participants could imagine the creation of multimedia displays and holograms, to which Andy Kempe replies with laughter:

so we really are in the realms of complete fantasy (Andy Kempe, embodied reflection, England, May 2013).

And John O’Toole confirms:

that’s a relief because it’s going to be very expensive. (John O’Toole, embodied reflection, Australia, January 2013)

My particular framed scenario was inspired by the many happy hours I spent with students at the Theatre Museum, Covent Garden in London. Sadly, unable to survive financially, it was closed in 2007 and its contents removed to other locations. My museum would be a place to explore, critique and celebrate drama education.

During my research I see a performance of Kushner’s Angels in America (1992, p. 21) and am struck by Harper Pitt’s suggestion that the mind:

shouldn’t be able to make up anything that wasn’t there to start with, that didn’t enter it from experience, from the real world. Imagination can’t create anything new can it? It only recycles bits and pieces from the world and reassembles them into visions.

The imaginative process, Eisner suggests, is essential to research (Eisner 1991, p. 186) and as a central tenet in drama and theatre my participants readily embraced the idea of working in an imagined space.

In the Faculty of Education at The University of Reading, Professor Andy Kempe drew the curtains around the space and illuminated the studio with stage lighting. He sat to listen to my introduction to the Museum then rose, hands in pockets, and walked slowly around the newly constructed drama studio:
Well … So there’s a question then what do we fill it with? Do we fill it with artefacts and books and stuff --- do we divide it into I don’t know different things that might be covered in drama in education so for example, plays, physical theatre, mime, Masks, puppets, film, multimedia …. I’d much rather drama in education was about the thing itself rather than individuals who just happened to have made a living out of it … Particularly if you want it to be an interactive space because that’s what I’d want it to be. (Andy Kempe)

For Andy MEDAT must exhibit the heart of drama education and for him as he will demonstrate it is a playful space yet one in which serious subjects can be explored. In this moment my participant and I as the researcher engaged in a shared act of imagination and entered the fantasy world.

Each of these educators reflected on their stories through the creation of maps and metaphors, movement and monologue, symbols and images bringing their stories alive for me the researcher and subsequently for an audience. I provided several resources and pre-texts to stimulate reflection and a box of props which changed and altered according to requests my participants made. These props included two white masks, small foam people shapes, paper, pens and several balls of coloured wool. The props grew in number during the research as participants challenged me about why certain items had not been included. In a drama studio in Brisbane John O’Toole inquired:

I’m just looking in your little yellow box you don’t have a scarf, how could, how could any drama teacher not come with the scarf either some kind of hairbands or scarf to drape over yourself to play the old woman? Don’t you ever play old women in your dramas? You’ve got to have a scarf especially if you’re a bloke if you can play an old woman. How can I be a mother of the IRA boy who’s been killed unless I’m wearing a scarf? (John O’Toole)

This questioning of the items in the prop box sheds light on John’s approach to drama education through process drama and his interest in the use of simple items to signify role and deepen the drama.

In order to facilitate the process I assumed the role of the Museum’s ‘Archivist’s assistant’ to encourage storytelling rather than intrude into the stories. In this role I can defer to an imagined Archivist inviting my participants to speak to her on a prop telephone to discuss their artefact choices. As a result they often answered questions of their own making. Peter engaged his belief in the imaginary situation and focused completely on the unseen character:

Peter: Uh right [Holds phone in left hand to ear] Ah right. Hello lovely to talk, yes, wonderful [Crosses his legs, his right arm leans on table, relaxed] well look I’ve got three things here that I think you’d be interested in [Picks up video in cardboard case, smiles, nods as if responding to the Archivist]

After explaining the importance of the items he decided when to finish the call:

So those are the three things that I’ve got for the museum. Anything else you need to know just let us know. [Cheerily] Thanks, Bye! [Smiles, puts down phone, picks up coffee cup] (Peter O’Connor, embodied reflection, December 2012)
Margins and circles: the importance of space

John O’Toole considered how to create a symbol of what drama education means to him. He debated the ‘the real lovely dramatic dilemma’ of demonstrating drama that is ‘live and visceral’ and ‘moving and evanescent’ in a possibly static display (John O’Toole, embodied reflection, Australia, January 2013). This struggle became an embodied one as he moved chairs from a stack and began to re-create the space of the drama classroom and explained the relationship between teachers, students and space. He then opened the door of the studio and, with his back and hands against the wall, entered hesitantly:

there’s no comfortable setup of chairs so they sidle around the edge or talk to each other and pretend that they’re not there … so the empty space is a challenging and intimidating space. (John O’Toole)

He re-enacts the children as they enter the studio, an event he has overseen on numerous occasions. He also demonstrates his empathy – his ability to understand how a child might feel on entering the space for the first time. I can imagine the children timid, nervous as they hang back preferring the edges, not wanting to step into the open space.

As Andy Kempe enters his dedicated drama studio he has to clear the space of desks and chairs before the embodied reflection can begin – he is not alone in this being the first act of a drama lesson. Lynn Fels, visiting Auckland from Canada, does not have the luxury of a drama studio to carry out her embodied reflection and instead is faced with a small seminar room whose central feature is a large boardroom table. This reminds her of the difficulties she faces preparing the space for drama:

the first barricade I always confront is this very situation here where we don’t have an empty space we have a space of tables and chairs (Lynn Fels, embodied reflection, Auckland, March 2013)

As John O’Toole re-enacts the preparation of his drama space he suggests that:

one of the characteristics of drama education is you have to spend an awful lot of time moving furniture (John O’Toole)

The re-enactment of this shared activity reveals a ritual which instead of being a barricade to beginning a drama class can be a ritual to be embraced. The ritual is significant in its signal that a special space is being prepared in which drama can occur.

In a studio on the Westwood campus at Warwick University, Jonothan Neelands acknowledged that the drama space is often at the edges of the school and is:

sometimes referred to by the rest of this University as Siberia and it’s a safe place. (Jonothan leans on the back of one of the chairs) and drama studios dedicated drama studios like this, are often on the margins of institutions of schools and other places. In our schools they are often in mobiles out on the edge of the playground. You know people worry about that and they worry about the lack of respect and status but I actually embrace it it’s important for me to be on the margins it’s important there’s a safe space here where people can come to where things are different. (Jonothan Neelands, embodied reflection, England, May 2013)

I observe as Jonothan creates a circle of chairs within the studio carefully and methodically describing it as:
the quintessential shape, the symbol that holds it all. (Jonothan Neelands)

This circle of chairs:

symbolises that although I am the teacher and I have responsibility for what goes on I want to try and find a different way of being with you as learners.

He unwinds a ball of red wool slowly creating an inner circle while a song he has specifically chosen plays on the studio sound system. He then steps outside the circles and, using his voice and gesture for emphasis, begins to share the significance of this space within his practice. This circle of chairs with its inner circle of red wool is a symbol of the democratic process he places as central to his classroom. He reflects on the importance of engaging young people in critical thinking, empathy and making decisions for the common good (Embodied reflection, Jonothan Neelands, May 2013). His students learn they can choose to cross the line between reality and fiction. They can choose to assume a role and by so doing help shape the drama occurring in the space. His students experience:

the illusion at least of equality of power.

It is a place where there is an insistence:

on equality of participation and freedom of voice but also restraint in speech and action.

For John O’Toole the circle counteracts the potentially intimidating nature of the empty space as students and teachers sit on the floor together making eye contact in ‘a genuinely dialogical and democratic space’. The circle is created by several participants and these embodied explorations enable me to understand it in a new way as both a symbol of drama education and a practical application of space. At the denouement of the embodied reflection I inform my participants that there is to be a final exhibit for people to visit before leaving the museum. It is to be called dreams of the future for drama in education and I invite them to contribute to this exhibit. Andy Kempe lays out the little foam people on the floor – a little clichéd he suggests but a symbol ‘that probably speaks for itself’:

![Figure 1. The future of drama education.](image)

**Personal Artefacts**

My participants all bring artefacts along to MEDAT and these heighten the storytelling process. Peter O’Connor offers as one of his artefacts a small painted yellow rock
decorated with a smiley face given to him by a boy with special needs. He then re-enacts the moment he receives the rock while in role as ‘Roger the Monster’ in a process drama. Peter drags two chairs to the centre of his playing space and creates a small area to represent the place where this imaginary character lives. He is:

an animal which lives in a cave in the drama room. This animal was completely devoid of social skills as he was afraid to mix with other people because fun was made of him’ (O’Connor, 1989, p. 6).

Peter places the yellow rock downstage on the floor, returns and leans on the chairs putting one foot behind the other. He thinks for a moment, then slowly crouches on the floor and sits huddled between the chairs. His head is bowed, his shoulders bent forward, his legs pulled up; he looks down at the carpet. He appears to be making himself small and insignificant to embody this low status character.

Roger listens to the voices of the imagined children but keeps his eyes downcast, his legs tightly crossed in a defensive attitude. His right hand clasps his left hand. In role as Roger, Peter talks almost to himself; his statements reflect uncertainty and are asked with a rising inflection.

Peter: it’s nice of you to say goodbye… I can’t believe …that I have to leave… What? You’ve got gifts? …Gifts to say that we’ll always be friends? Gifts to say goodbye? You’ve painted this rock? Is it for me? For me to keep forever? Oh I’ll keep it forever. (Peter gets up from the floor) … there you go. (Peter O’Connor, embodied reflection, New Zealand, December 2012)

As soon as the last line is delivered Peter breaks out of role, stands up and quickly walks forwards to pick up the rock saying:

there you go – that’s the moment.

He crosses to the table, picks up his mug of coffee and sips.

This has been a precisely controlled performance beginning with an intake of breath before he performs – the taking in of life. Peter communicates Roger’s fear, his lack of social skills and as he does so he moves from the real to the performed, from Peter to Roger. As the researcher I am drawn into the scenario –this is more emotional for me than a story re-told through words alone. Freed from writing, as the entire process is video recorded, I can engage as an audience member, observe small performative details, and feel some inner sense of what they may be telling me. This re-enactment

Figure 2. Peter playing Roger the Monster
brings me closer to the original moment as I imagine being in the classroom with the students as they encounter Roger. I not only hear the words, I see them re-enacted as a sense of the context is conveyed. I hear the whispered voice, see the downcast face. I interpret what they mean to me and allow them to resonate with special moments I have experienced in the classroom.

Meeting Heathcote and Bolton through role playing

At the outset of the embodied reflection I invite my participants to create their family tree of drama education in order to contextualise their practice and understand what influences and inspires their work. These are presented in different ways – Jonothan draws a large map of the world in green pen on a white board, Lynn drapes coloured wool around the space and Peter draws a forest of trees. John O'Toole decides that having written about his first encounter with Dorothy Heathcote it would be quite nice to show in some ways a little brief episode. (John O'Toole)

He begins by moving towards the upstage door in the drama studio. He opens it and then slams it shut behind him as he sweeps back into the space. He plays the role of Dorothy Heathcote and his story lifts off the page and onto the stage – energetic, and alive capturing the excitement of John as a young man encountering Heathcote for the first time. My transcription of this scene includes the non-verbal language in a series of stage directions:

(John has walked up to the blue door on the back wall and is about to open it) the big double door … it burst open and in swept this big brown dress (John opens the door then it slam shut behind him he increases his body size to demonstrate) waving a ship’s rope above its head which it threw at the nearest group of people. It landed on me and one of the girls from the other course and she shouted ‘pull you buggers pull!’ (John has demonstrated this in a northern English accent) So talk about her – teacher in role, we all lifted and pulled like mad – and that was my first ever live glimpse of Dorothy Heathcote and she wasn’t always as spectacular as that she could use the quiet registers too. In later life, I thought what a clever intervention that was. (John sits). (John O'Toole, embodied reflection, January 2013)

John uses his voice, body, movement and space to share with me the excitement of the original event. Having never met Heathcote I am engaged in this re-enacted event as I might be in a theatre. I feel the "tingle" or "goose-bump moment" (Probyn, 2004, p. 29) in my body. I experience the emotion of the moment as if I had been there. Then suddenly in his continuing embodied story I catch my first ever glimpse of Gavin Bolton. John starts to lower his voice; he pulls a chair up close to the camera, sits down and becomes a headshot in the viewfinder. He begins to give an embodied demonstration of Gavin in action. As he recounts his story, he moves between the role of narrator and the role of Gavin, speaking to a group of imagined children gathered around him on the floor:

Gavin was very quiet, was very contained, in his teaching he’s even quieter (John starts to lower his voice hunch over gets a chair and sits on it and gives an embodied demonstration of Gavin in action, he pulls the chair up close to the camera so we just see a headshot) ‘Now what are we going to make a play about? Now it’s no use saying stupid things’ (John gets up and stops to use his own tone of voice) so he’s very quiet, but sharp as a tack,
... but wonderfully supportive he’s an amazing teacher, astonishing teacher, of which unfortunately there’s very little record left I think of physical, visual records of his work. (John O’Toole)

This re-enactment is in direct contrast to the energy of his role as Dorothy for Gavin is portrayed as quieter, commanding the space through stillness and eye contact. This is the first time I have encountered Bolton as a living figure outside of his books. Later I will have the chance to re-enact this scene in the drama I devise and in that moment I am [my name], playing John, playing Gavin. I transcend time and space and connect to this practitioner as seen through the eyes of John O’Toole.

Rallying drama educators over the barricades

**The Archivist**

*(Trying to hush the group, SFX dies away)*

*Excuse me, excuse me Ladies and gentlemen, the Museum would like to invite you to create a battle speech, for the opening of this museum; a rallying cry, based on Henry the Fifth. (Aside to audience)Now John had described drama as being a naughty and transgressive medium. Andy suggests we be playful... be a bit devilish, chucking in the hand grenade. (Back to participants) Oh by the way the Minister of Education will be present...* *(Battles and Barricades: A drama about Drama)*

I invite my participants to create a speech to welcome visitors to our imaginary Museum on its opening night and offer them as a dramatic lure a copy of the speech from Shakespeare’s Henry V which begins ‘once more unto the breach, dear friends, once more’. I explain that the Minister for Education is among the visitors. I choose this character to act as a focus for the rallying cries but as a result it offers a tension in the creation of the drama. John comments after listening to my request:

*so what you’re, the archivist is pointing out is that we have multiple audiences and conflicting audiences with conflicting expectations.* *(John O’Toole, embodied reflection, January 2013)*

The presence of a possibly critical observer, forces the participants to consider the content of their rallying cry. The speeches that ensue express the concerns, desires, hopes and dreams of my participants. They petition the imaginary Minister to consider the value and importance of the role that drama education can play in the lives of children. The speeches are poetic and emotional and delivered as if they matter, as if they are real. As the researcher I enjoy the moment I throw in the ‘hand grenade’, relishing the way that drama allows and in fact demands that we construct a tension for actors and audience to wrestle with. For Peter this is an opportunity to ‘stir the blood’ *(Peter O’Connor, embodied reflection, December 2012)* and connect to teachers. For Lynn Fels it is a chance to advocate quietly for drama education. She asks rhetorically:

*So the minister right? I’m talking to those who would take all this away.* *(Lynn Fels)*

She steps on a chair and onto the large boardroom table in the centre of the space where she stands towering over me as I remain on the floor. She holds a scroll in her hands on which she has written her speech – there is a palpable emotion in the room which I feel. She is about to address the person who threatens the existence of drama education passionately and playfully:
Listen to the child within you, listen to the child you’ve left behind
Can you hear her call, do you feel his presence there with you?
Once you were a child at play, once you were a child
This thing that we call drama this too is a child at play, forgive yourself, come
into play, what we call drama plays us, plays us into being, breathe (Breathes,
steps back, drops paper to the ground). (Lynn Fels, embodied reflection,
March 2013)

The decision to include the Minster ‘of’ or ‘for’ Education amongst the audience incites
passionate stories of drama education in England. Jonothan Neelands, Ron Price and
Andy Kempe suggest it is a difficult and dark time for drama education threatened as it
is by the government represented in the persona (at that time) of the Secretary of State
for Education Michael Gove.

Andy: Is this to everybody or just to the minister?

Researcher: This is for everybody who is going to be there, but he will also be there.

Andy: …but he will also be there… Okay alright.

(Keeps writing)

(13 minutes)

Andy: Bit rough (laughs) okay so these crowds of people wanting to come into
our Museum of drama education and amongst them (Said through clenched
teeth) our esteemed Minister of State for Education (Andy Kempe)

Ron Price explains:

we just reel from being constantly being ‘done with’ by ministers trying to show
how clever they are so they can move up the ladder. (Ron Price, embodied
reflection, England May 2013)

Gove becomes the antagonist of the drama; the personification of the ‘knowledge
based curriculum’ as Andy explains:

when he is talking about knowledge what’s he talking about? He’s talking about
rote learning and knowledge of facts and figures but with no understanding.
(Andy Kempe)

The last lines of his rallying cry demand:

Are
any of you so mean and base as to
destroy what here has been made?

I feel the emotions that are being expressed and I almost believe that Michael Gove is
there, watching and listening. Andy looks directly into the camera and indicates one of
the displays he has created in the drama studio. A table is balanced on top of another– its white surface facing outwards onto which Andy has stuck green cardboard stars
to represent the difficulties inherent in assessing drama. As he creates this exhibit he
reflects on the difficulties of assessing students in drama using levels, suggesting that
teachers may want to ‘show the parents that the children are progressing but it’s a load
of nonsense really’. On the chair beside this exhibit hang the two white masks staring blankly out at the audience. He finishes his display by tying two labels to the legs of the chairs to demonstrate his dissatisfaction with ‘labelling for labelling sake’.

**Embodied reflections: A Street corner demonstration?**

The research provided an opportunity for drama practitioners to use their skills and knowledge of drama pedagogy to tell their own stories. As I engage with the embodied stories I begin to reflect on my own teaching pedagogy. This reflection is heightened, more emotional and subjective because I connect on an emotional level with my participants, breathing the air they breathe, sharing the space they are in, hearing the sounds they hear and being in their re-imagined world. This research tool embraces theatricality enabling stories to be embodied, incorporating critical reflection and as Andy plays with some of the props he explains:

> I think – what I mean by the aesthetic knowledge when I can see and feel things in three-dimensions then I can start making links between them (Andy Kempe, embodied reflection, May 2013)

This ability and need for arts-based researchers to ‘feel’ research is vital for it:

> recognizes that we know the world through all our senses, through our bodies, and that we can sometimes better represent that knowledge through our bodies rather than through what comes from our mind alone. (O’Connor & Anderson, 2015, p 26)

Through drama and theatre the actor and audience, participant and researcher can investigate, communicate and share their world in a ‘narrative made visible’ (Esslin, 1987).

I see my participants as the witnesses standing on the street corner (Willett, 1964) of drama education praxis. Like the actors in Brecht’s epic theatre they demonstrate the battles and barricades they have experienced first-hand but also use the ‘magic if’ (Stanislavski, 2013) to re-enact events and heighten them as significant in their education journeys. They use their imaginations to see the possibilities for the future of drama education. As re-enactors of their own stories they choose how to interpret my research questions and the Archivist’s assistant reminds them there are no wrong answers in drama only opportunities to explore.

In the act of embodiment using their tacit and deep understanding of drama strategies and theatre forms these educators communicate the unique history of drama education. They demonstrate their ability to manipulate these forms to affect me the researcher/Archivist’ assistant/ audience as I stand throughout each embodied reflection engaged, fascinated, surprised, shocked, laughing, and even crying. My research may never allow me to fully comprehend drama education, even after years of practice, for as Andy suggests:

> its greatest strength is that you won’t ever make sense of it …and that keeps us going because it’s like if we ever found the answer well it would be a bit pointless carrying on wouldn’t it? (Andy Kempe)

It is a thought echoed by Jonathan Neelands as he offers his first edition copy of *Making Sense of Drama* (Neelands, 1984) to the Museum. As he does so he writes in black pen on an orange label:
While exploring Nadine Holdsworth’s research on theatre practitioner Joan Littlewood I realise that my participants are the embodied archives of drama education. Holdsworth met with the Archivist Murray Melvin at Stratford East in London. Melvin had personally worked with Littlewood and Holdsworth felt he was ‘an embodied archive, activated through memory, imagination and storytelling’ (Holdsworth, 2011, p.31) which brought a uniquely human aspect to her research. One of the human faces of this research is shown as John re-enacts that first lively encounter with Heathcote. I in turn feel some of the excitement and aliveness of this original event through his re-enactment. It appears from my research that an embodied and dramatically framed method can add life to qualitative interviews. Just as Joe Norris uses playbuilding to generate data so the embodied reflection can offer researchers a way to draw on the creativity and imagination that lies at the heart of drama and theatre to carry out a dyadic interview. It offers a possibility to lift the interview from a sedentary practice to one which draws on voice, body, movement and space to deepen the story telling process. Embodied reflections require an empty space, a framed scenario to give purpose to the story telling and an agreement to engage in an act of imagination using drama conventions. It is vital that drama teachers share the battles and barricades as well as the hero discourses and using our own art form we can re-cycle stories of the real world, re-assemble them into visions (Kushner, 1992) and find new stories with which we can connect.

**Acknowledgements**

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References


Teaching Poetry through Dramatic Play in Greek Primary School: Surveying Teachers’ and Pupils’ Views

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Abstract

This essay explores teachers’ and pupils’ views about the importance of teaching poetry through dramatic play in Greek Primary School. A qualitative research study was conducted in 15 classrooms of some public primary schools in Greece. The research included interview and questionnaire data obtained over a one year period (2013-2014) from 15 primary teachers and 320 primary pupils in Grade 6 at the age of 11 (150 boys, 170 girls). Statistical analysis of data revealed that: (1) The majority of teachers asserted their role to the development of aesthetic appreciation among their pupils using dramatic play and educational drama (2) Most of the pupils asserted themselves with greater confidence about their understanding of poetry through the use of dramatic play. Thus, more attention should be paid to a dramatic play-based curriculum if pupils are to be helped to appreciate poetry as an artistic, aesthetic medium.

Biography

ASTERIOS TSIARAS is Associate Professor in the department of Theatrical Studies at University of Peloponnesse. He has written about many different aspects of drama education and dramatic play. His publications include the Contribution of Dramatic Play to Classroom Psychosociology in Primary Education, Dramatic Play in Primary School, Drama and Theatre in Education, Dramatic Play as a Means of Self-concept Improvement in Primary School Age Children, Theatrical Education in Primary School: A Psycho-sociological Approach and the Developmental Dimension of Teaching Drama-in-education. Current research projects are focusing on the teaching of poetry through drama and the contribution drama may make in increasing the emotional intelligence of young people.
Introduction

In recent years, the Greek educational system continues to focus on a cognitive rather than an interpersonal and aesthetic dimension. Contemporary teachers have a diverse range of demands placed on them, and generally they are expected to require a whole range of skills (Boe & Gilford, 1992; Townsend & Bates, 2007). In particular, numerous questions arise with regards to expanded teacher workloads as they encompass a much wider range of responsibilities, including counselling, welfare, social work, reporting, and community liaison (Ball & Tyson, 2011; Hargreaves, 1995). As a result, teachers must negotiate tensions arising between the pressures of managerialism, instrumentalism, technical rationalism and a bureaucratic impetus within contemporary schooling structures (Hopkins, 2007; Wang, Lin, Spalding, Odell, & Klecka, 2011). As Smyth and Shacklock (1998) put it,

The role and function of education are undergoing dramatic changes in response to these economic imperatives. The notion of a liberal education is struggling for its very survival in a context of instrumentalism and technocratic rationality where the catchwords are vocationalism, skills formation, privatization, commodification, and managerialism’ (p. 19).

Many scholars point out that instrumentalism is charged with the marginalisation of aesthetic education in official school curriculum. It is also clear that aesthetic subjects are mainly emphasised at the primary education level and their relative importance decreases in higher grades (Chapman, 2011; Heard, 1999). Consequently, secondary concern is given to the holistic development of individuals within the value system of educational philosophy for economic expansion (Hennessy, Hinchion, & McNamara, 2010; Tadjbakhsh & Chenoy, 2006). Currently, assessment, target setting and testing remain a priority of educational policy, whereas these simple processes play a crucial role in pupils’ learning (Byrne & Brodie, 2012; Miller & Yúdice, 2002). As a result, within this educational framework there are no necessary conditions for intuitive insight and subjects such as poetry become even more difficult to withstand the patterns of standardisation, evident across the elementary school curriculum (Higgins, 2009; Zajonc, 2006).

A curriculum that recognizes the central importance of emotion, body, and spirit as well as the mind is of vital importance. For this reason, many scholars recognize the transformative power of poetry as a means of cultural elevation, emphasising that schools have the responsibility to lead children to an appreciation of those works of literature that have been widely regarded as amongst the finest in the language (Goodwyn, 1992; Powell, 1999). These scholars argue for an aesthetic approach to the teaching of aesthetic subjects such as poetry where the personal development supersedes the mere transmission of knowledge (Pike, 2004; Powell, 1999). Poetry is the form of writing that can help to bridge a body-mind dualism and undoubtedly mould child’s life soul and the character. It tends to beget a love of beauty and of truth in alliance; it indirectly suggests high and noble principles of action, and it encourages people to regard emotion as a functional whole so helpful in making principles operative (Benton, 1984).

Over the past decades, there has been an increasing interest by educators in understanding the positive impact of dramatic play on children’s overall development. Many scholars regard dramatic play as a playful activity and as a means of inspiring children to develop symbolic, artistic and innovative behaviours (Jennings & Gerhardt, 2011; Moyles, 2010). The importance of incorporating both the subjective and objective, the cognitive and affective and the emotional and intellectual simultaneously within the
framework of teaching poetry through dramatic play becomes evident (Horsman, 2000). The term dramatic play is generally used to describe all kinds of pretend play, that is, symbolic play, role-play, imaginative play, fantasy play, make-believe play, and socio-dramatic play (Miller, 2010; Torgerson, 2001). This kind of play appears in the form of artistic behaviour between symbolic play and dramatic art (Casey, 2010; Koster, 2014). Dramatic play is a child-oriented activity and includes the following elements: imitative role play, make-believe with regard to objects, make-believe in regard to actions and situations, interpersonal interaction, verbal and non-verbal communication and narratives (Ciussi & Gebers Freitas, 2012; McCullough, 2000).

Children’s participation in dramatic play signifies symbolic transformation and personal imagination in real or imaginary situations (Crouch, 2009; Lobman & O’Neill, 2011). The children use their internal symbolic abilities giving shape to their shared experience through the transformation process serving the general function of maintaining social contact (Minks, 2013; Nwokah, 2010). Participants in dramatic play maintain two types of shape in their improvisations. On the one hand, they represent their vision in the form of symbols and images which are directly related to their personal experiences of cultural identities, roles, social events, language varieties and different ways of representing an action (Mayesky, 2012; McGuinn, 2014). On the other hand, children uncover what they have internalized in relation to dramatic play (Luongo-Orlando, 2010; Woodard & Milch, 2012).

Dramatic play provides excellent opportunities for fine-tuning the roles which children play. It helps them to acknowledge and demonstrate their competence and provides a safe setting for exploring and practicing new and more satisfying ways for them to play their current roles (Koster, 2014; Sternberg & Garcia, 2000). Aside from being lots of fun, taking on fantasy roles helps children to spark their spontaneity and creativity (Newman & Newman, 2011; Saracho, 2012). Dramatic play gives them a time out from their daily concerns and a chance to deal with them in a figurative way. It also provides a culture medium for children to learn how to be group members and to learn how to express their individuality (Grainger, 2003).

The majority of research studies which have focused on benefits of dramatic play for disabled children and preschool-age children were conducted in the 1970s and 1980s, when enthusiasm for play as a research topic was at its peak (Power, 2000). Some of the above studies deal with the significance of the participants’ personality in the form of acting out behaviours in dramatic play and some focus on the importance of dramatic play in supporting children’s cognitive, social and affective development (Fein, 1989; Lieberman, 1977; McCullough, 2000). Some other studies focus on the effect of dramatic play on the participants’ literacy and narrative abilities and others investigate the evolutionary stages of symbolic play in relation to the child’s age (Blake, 2007; McCune-Nicolish, 1981; Piaget, 1962). Moreover, some studies evaluate the content of the dramatic activities and the impact that these exert on the development of children’s social skills (Lindon, 2001; Yassa, 1997). Finally, some surveys have sought to shed light on the psychotherapeutic effect of dramatic play on primary children (Curry, 1974; Fineman, 1962; Marks-Tarlow, 2012).

Most of the above studies have been derived from relatively small-scale, cross-sectional studies. Therefore, the challenge to researchers is to mount more extensive and practice-oriented studies to investigate the various uses of dramatic play in diverse primary school settings. The limited research evidence suggests that educators should resist policies that reduce time for dramatic play experiences in primary school and try to increase funding for research on relationships between dramatic play and holistic child development (Baldwin, 2008; Wilson, 2012).
Methodology

The goal of this research is to investigate primary school teachers’ views of teaching poetry through dramatic play and to evaluate pupils’ responses in such an approach to teaching poetry. This research uses the combined theoretical framework of positivist and interpretative educational research paradigms (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). In doing so, this study takes a ‘pragmatic research approach’. As it explores interpretations, it is also very similar to the phenomenological way of thinking aiming to identify and describe the subjective experience of respondents (Schwandt, 2001). The study comprised two main phases. Phase one was quantitative in nature and consisted of the completion of a self-administered questionnaire by students and teachers. The questions focused on the teachers’ and pupils’ perceptions towards teaching poetry through dramatic play.

The teacher questionnaire included the following questions:
1. What is your purpose in the teaching of poetry in the primary school?
2. You could ask pupils to illustrate poems through an alternative way of creative art expression: A. Always; B. Sometimes; C. Never
3. You could encourage pupils to write their own poems by using dramatic techniques: A. Always; B. Sometimes; C. Never

The pupil questionnaire consisted of the following questions:
1. Could you list the most frequently occurring pedagogical activities in the teaching of poetry in your class?
2. Do you feel confident about your understanding of poetry?
3. Which are the most effective class resources for enhancing your understanding of poetry? A. Dramatic play; B. The teacher’s notes; C. Poetry textbook

The questionnaire was disseminated in 15 primary school classrooms, of grade six, by the researcher. Since any research needs to adhere to the relevant ethical principles, students and teachers were asked to provide pseudonyms so as to protect their identities and maintain privacy (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

Statistical analysis was performed by the use of a concrete methodology, reading each response to open-ended questions and organizing data into categories based on emerging themes. Each category was codified and simple descriptive analysis was used to analyses the data and to provide an account of the practices and embraced views of the teachers, and pupils, involved. The main purpose at this stage of the research process was to present preliminary findings on a number of central research questions. This data served to highlight the principal areas of interest and relevance for phase two.

Information of a more qualitative nature, gathered through phase two, included detailed interviews that were of a semi-structured nature in order to enable data gathering related to specific beliefs and issues of particular significance to teachers. The purpose of this phase was to conduct an in-depth inquiry into the issues emergent from phase one. Phase two data were transcribed, analysed and interpreted, via thematic content analysis, for emergent themes reflective of participants’ visions of poetry teaching in primary education (Kvale, 2009; Seidman, 2006).

Research findings

320 pupils and 15 teachers from 15 primary schools took part in phase one of the research. Table 1 illustrates the gender distribution of the research cohort.
The involved educators in the reflective development through action research were not limited to a singular point of view or role. Figure 1 displays teachers’ responses to three survey questions regarding various issues for the teaching of poetry. Eighty percent of primary-school teachers asserted their role to the development of aesthetic appreciation among their pupils, by stressing that their purpose was to help pupils appreciate poetry as an artistic, aesthetic medium to which they can relate perfectly. They also affirmed that their prime aim was to sensitize pupils to the pleasure of appreciating a high literary genre, by helping them better understand themes, structure and imagery. Teachers said that what they wanted for themselves was to foster a passionate form of engagement with poetry and to cultivate a lifelong love of poetry to their pupils. In addition, twenty percent of primary teachers felt their purpose was to explain poems to their class and to help prepare pupils by supplying various notes and questions on selected poems. However, these teachers reported that this technical focus had a subversive effect on the fulfilment of their primary target in the aesthetic appreciation of poetry.

**Q1:** What is your purpose in the teaching of poetry in the primary school?

**Q2:** You could ask pupils to illustrate poems through an alternative way of creative art expression: A. Always; B. Sometimes; C. Never

**Q3:** You could encourage pupils to write their own poems by using dramatic techniques: A. Always; B. Sometimes; C. Never

Teachers were more likely to ask pupils to illustrate poems through an alternative way of creative art with a high percentage of answering ‘always’ (92%), and a much lower ‘sometimes’ (5%) or never (3%) using these instructional strategies. Eighty-five per cent of the teachers interviewed answered that they ‘always’ use dramatic play and
educational drama for the teaching of poetry, ten percent ‘sometimes’ and five percent ‘never’. It is common sense that a drama-based instructional method provides a highly accessible medium through which children will be able to grow emotionally (Wright, 2006). All the teachers, through semi-structured interviews, made positive comments about the value of dramatic play as a means of teaching poetry in primary education. The composition of a poem is also noted as a vital necessity for pupils. Within the class, composition provides rich terrain for pupils’ affective development who may write poems through dramatic conventions as a daily diary or various forms of writing in role (Madden, 2009; Vodickova, 2009). Seventy-seven percent of teachers surveyed answered ‘always’, fifteen percent ‘sometimes’ and eight percent ‘never’ encouraging their pupils to write their own poems with the use of dramatic techniques.

Exploring poetry gives pupils the chance to develop higher levels of self-awareness on their own responses, emotional, imaginative, and intellectual to aesthetic texts on the ultimate goal of fostering an aesthetic pedagogy in the classroom (Cockett & Fox, 1999). In order to realize this ambition of teaching poetry teachers need to focus on the pupil’s personal response to a poem. To this end, pupils were asked to list the most frequently occurring pedagogical activities in their class. Figure 2 displays pupils’ responses to three survey questions regarding various issues for the teaching of poetry. Most of them (70%) wrote about poetry positive experiences with drama, music and painting in school. Some of the pupils (30%), however, mentioned negative experiences in memorizing and reciting poetry in front of the class, as well as trying to figure out the teacher’s interpretation.

Q1: Could you list the most frequently occurring pedagogical activities in the teaching of poetry in your class?
Q2: Do you feel confident about your understanding of poetry?
Q3: Which are the most effective class resources for enhancing your understanding of poetry? A. Dramatic play; B. The teacher’s notes; C. Poetry textbook

Pupils stressed that they felt frustrated towards what they realized as the equivocal nature of poetry, with 60% of them assuring the difficulties of the correct way to understand the multiple meanings of a poem. It was evident, too, a modest sense of dependency on the part of both teacher and pupil for pre-scripted responses to...
questions about interpreting the poetry, with time constraint being cited as the primary reason in this tendency. Approximately 40% of the pupils asserted themselves with greater confidence about their understanding of poetry and cited teacher’s notes as the primordial cause for this sense of self-confidence. Support for the use of dramatic play was also evident in the responses, with pupils citing this student-centered teaching strategy (70%), the teacher’s notes (20%) and poetry textbook (10%) as the most effective class resources for enhancing their understanding.

Discussion

In qualitative research reliability refers to the extent to which findings from a study can be replicated. As Merriam (2002) put it, ‘Reliability is problematic in the social sciences simply because human behavior is never static, nor is what many experience necessarily more reliable than what one person experiences’ (p. 221). As the current study is qualitative in nature, the findings are inevitably specific to the particular time and place and they cannot be applied to a wider population or to different contexts (Yin, 2003). Moreover, despite being impossible to produce generalizable results, this qualitative study achieved to obtain in-depth knowledge about teachers’ experience of teaching poetry through dramatic play. Consequently, we hope and expect that readers can learn from these cases and perhaps transfer some of the knowledge gained to their own situations, their own practice.

The aim of the research was to investigate six grade teachers’ views and perceptions of their role in developing an aesthetic appreciation of poetry by encouraging engagement, interest, enjoyment and inspiring a love of poetry into their pupils with the use of dramatic play. There were some teachers who appeared more concerned about the standardised approach to poetry analysis in which the lowest level of aesthetic development appears to be well situated rather than a sincere reflection on the poem’s overall aesthetic unity. In this case, pupils deal with the literal meaning of the verse and the technical analysis of form, rhyme-scheme, mood, tone, etc. However, there were a lot of teachers who attempted to develop pupils’ emotional and subjective sensibilities. Thus, they have succeeded, through dramatic play, in providing space for a more aesthetic approach to the teaching of poetry.

The use of dramatic play, as reported above by pupils, evidences its significance as a teaching strategy in expedient access to the meaning of the poem. Moreover, some pupils reported a need for teacher’s notes and poetry textbook in which meaning is transparent and clearly defined. It is widely recognised that enthusiastic teaching based on a wide range of teaching and learning strategies is the key to keeping students engaged in poetry lessons (Paulsen & Feldman, 1999). If students only read poetry, their approach to it is often superficial and they might not adequately notice important aspects that are hidden between the lines (Vodickova, 2009). Pupils need to experiment with non-verbal communicative aspects of language (body language, gestures, and facial expressions), as well as verbal aspects (intonation, rhythm, stress, slang, and idiomatic expressions), when analysing and interpreting poetry. Dramatic play holds the potential to enhance pupils’ subjective understanding and leads to an active exploration of the emotional and imaginative aspects of the poem (Neelands, 1999; Taylor, 1994). Dramatic play is essentially improvised in nature. Drawing on the elements of drama, it enables students to create and inhabit a fictional world for the experiences, insights, emotions and understandings (Machado, 2010; Wilson, 2012). Besides, it encourages pupils to bring their interests and personalities, their ‘cultural capital’, to the learning process so that they can become actively involved and personalise their knowledge (Luongo-Orlando, 2010; Nwokah, 2010).
Conclusions

The present research stresses the need to support teachers in their attempts to foster enhanced potential for the affective development of pupils through dramatic play. This study also acknowledges the notable challenges and obstacles that primary school teachers encounter in the teaching of poetry. Moreover, it underlines the existence of an aesthetic consciousness for poetry pedagogy amongst Greek primary teachers which encourages dignified levels of pupils’ intellectual and emotional engagement.

It should be noted that there are concrete dangers to teaching the arts, especially in disciplines such as poetry which seek to cultivate aesthetic experience (Cockett & Fox, 1999; Pike, 2004). The importance of encouraging honest subjective engagement in multiple meanings, therefore, remains a central concern in teaching poetry through dramatic play (Espinosa & Moore, 2000). Many authors acknowledge the necessity for the coordination of subjectivity and objectivity both of which should be treated as mutually beneficial rather than mutually exclusive (Berthoff, 1990; Stevens, 2007). Effective engagement with a poem in the classroom should recognize that both constant emotional characteristics and analytical features have a significant impact on a pupil’s response to poetry (Vodickova, 2009; Whelan, 2008). Different authors have focused on matters of socially constructed knowledge and, therefore, the benefits of sustained uncertainty and reflective inquiry in the present process of teaching poetry need to be acknowledged (Britzman, 2003; Zajonc, 2006).

A large part of self-understanding is the search for appropriate personal metaphors that make sense of people’s lives. Poetry is a form of writing that relies deeply on metaphor to convey meaning accurately and it has the transformational power to feed the heart and senses (Rummel, 1995; Steinbergh, 1999). Providing positive experiences with poetry for the pupils can be a means for them to realize a conceptual metaphor experientially by making personal connections to a poem’s meaning and aesthetically through fresh expressions of imaginative rationality. When pupils read and hear poetic metaphors, they have models to discover and create their own personally meaningful metaphors since poetic imagery not only invites sensual responses, but also evokes emotions and connections to personal experiences (Graves, 1992; Heard, 1999). In this way, pupils can easily draw upon this knowledge as they develop individual subjectivity, personality and consciousness (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Nodelman & Reimer, 2003). One of the advantages of dramatising a poem is that the entire class can take part in the activity, a fact which offers primary school children an effective way to imagine the world through personal insight, to organize and interpret their life experience, and to establish meaningful connections to other areas of knowledge (Cronmiller, 2007).

It is a common belief that when a teacher values poetry, pupils sense that and may be motivated to develop a life-long interest in reading poetry and possibly in writing their own poems (McClure, Harrison & Reed, 1990). A teacher who does not fully enjoy poetic imagery will not be able to convey this pleasure to his or her pupils. Poetry’s figurative language can help pupils experience ideas, images and feelings in a concentrated form, encouraging abstract thought and heightened powers of observation (Hopkins, 2007; Rich, 1993). What is essential, in this regard, is that primary school teachers need to get out of the traditional word-by-word focus on meaning, verbal inflection and figure of speech. Their role is not to impose authoritative interpretations but to develop individual responses, to be non-prescriptive, non-didactic. They should alternatively view the continuity of the poem as a whole, as though it were an oil painting. Primary school teachers themselves, in general, need to help pupils enjoy poetry’s metaphors, sounds and images through dramatic play (Dymoke, Lambirth & Wilson, 2013).

In conclusion, teachers need to put forth the necessary effort required to promote
pupils’ affective and aesthetic sensitivity while they try to find ways to streamline their work in a context of standardisation and uniformity (Hanratty, 2008). It is also the responsibility of education faculties preparing future teachers to provide them with methods that will enrich and enliven their teaching. Teachers often steer clear of poetry fearing negative reactions because they are not confident about their ability to stimulate and encourage pupils on the pleasures of dramatizing, reading and writing poetry. The process of introducing poetry into the classroom can be fun, if this is done through movement, dramatic play and art. Enactment, enthusiasm and engagement with pupils, so as to enhance their self-concepts, allow teachers and pupils to overcome seemingly insuperable difficulties. Part of what poetry gives children is human connection and fresh ways of interpreting and translating images and signs (Berthoff, 1990; Rummel, 1995). But even if poems don’t have the strength to change the world, what they do is that they change pupils’ understanding of what’s going on in their world and can inspire them to be better human beings (Heaney, 1991; Heard, 1993).

References


School Performances: A Quest for the Poetics of an Internal Cultural Life at School

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Abstract

A school’s cultural life is shaped through a delicate balance between the demands of school theatre as an art form and the educational needs of students as young people. This article examines school plays not from the perspective of “how to”. Rather, it focuses on the conceptual level: exploring the role of the play in the school environment where culture is created. The issues of the culture of the school and the problem of change are central to this study. They are analyzed through a metaphoric view and personal experiences. This approach enables us to critically explore the theatrical work at schools in order to enhance its quality and find ways towards transforming the school play to a form of school art.

Biography

SHIFRA SCHONMANN is Professor Emerita, holder of Bar-Netzer Chair of Education, Society and Theatre for Young People at the University of Haifa, Israel. The continuing areas of her research are: aesthetics, theatre-drama education, theatre for young people, curriculum, and teacher education. She has published numerous articles as well as books, among them: Theatre as a medium for children and young people: Images and observations (Springer). She has been a visiting professor at a number of universities, acts as a member of editorial board of several leading journals. She is also a member of INRAE’s steering committee.
Opening

In his foreword to Courtney's book, *The School Play* (1966), Wilson Knight claimed that with the revival of the theatre in the late nineteenth century the tradition of the school play was reborn and has continued to the present day. Although the phrase "the present day" referred to the 1960s, we can claim without any doubt that the phenomenon of the school play has grown, comprised a large scope of different performances and continued to remain relevant. Walking the fine line between the demands of the theatre as an art form in school and the educational needs of the pupils as young people is the main issue according to which the cultural life at school is examined in this article.

Setting the Stage

Significant research and influential discussions took place in the twentieth century and the issue of the cultural life of schools and the possibilities for change are still on the public agenda of any progressive educational system.

In this work, based on my previous one (Schonmann, 2006), I deal with the cultural life at schools in order to explain the foundation upon which the concept of the school play was developed. Furthermore it is tidily connected with main themes, such as conventions and catharsis, criticism, pleasure that emerges from being involved in art and theatre for young people as a school event.

My intention is to point out and elaborate upon the principles that connect education with theatre. The hope is that the young people's experience in drama class and on the school stage may well lead to a deep and lasting source of enjoyment and to ensure that this experience will not endanger the wellbeing of the pupils and their teachers. The cultivation of the emotions, the demand for more self-control, the ability to give and to accept criticism, the ability to develop norms of behaviors as conventions all are only some of the key elements that tie theatre to education and they are all eminent factors in working on school's performances.

I chose this subject because, I believe that the manner in which teachers work with their pupils on a school play has a crucial influence on their pupils' appreciation of professional plays and affects their expectations and behavior as an audience. This article examines school plays not from the perspective of "how to". Rather it focuses on the conceptual level and the significance of the play in the school environment where culture is created.

The Culture of School and the Problem of Change

Culture has been a subject of debate for many years. There is debate concerning negotiation of meaning and significant of symbols (Turner, 1974; 1983). There are plentiful definitions cited in the literature. I chose to mention here Geertz understanding who is still considered as one of the most influential cultural anthropologist. According to Geertz (1973), culture is, in essence, patterns of meaning passed on from generation to generation. The manner of expressing these patterns of meaning may be explicit (by use of symbols), or implicit (by use of beliefs that are accepted without question). Thus culture, if we understand his point, is a collection of suppositions and shared behavior within a particular group. There is a general understanding that culture is expressed through rituals, ceremonies, symbols, and imagery, all of which serve to reinforce and maintain each other.
The culture of schools is also conceptualized in various ways; climate, ethos, or/ and oral tradition are some examples of these. Since the 1960s, we can find many works that succeed in explaining the cultural dimension of life in schools (such as: Eisner, 1998; Jackson, 1968; Lieberman & Miller, 1984; McLaren, 1984; Perkins, 1992; Sarason, 1971). Deal and Peterson (1990) presented school culture as comprising a deep sense of principles, faith and tradition, formed throughout the school’s history. Heckman (1993) claimed that the origins of such a culture stem from the shared beliefs of teachers, students, and principals. Taking the perspective of culture as collective life, Terrence (1995) claimed that schools operate more successfully when myths, faith and basic assumptions can freely express themselves in the form of ceremonies and artifacts. Later on, towards the 2000's up to the present day it is still hot debated subject and very elusive one (Finnan, 2000; Fullan, 1997; Sarason, 1996). We can identify clear inclination towards definitions that are taking in account the big changes in society, the culture of screens and the new innovations of all kinds that have been constantly pressed on schools (Schonmann, 2011; 2015).

The new interpretations reflect the urge to establish a more creative learning environment and focus on "core principles" required in order to accomplish 'achievements' with young people.

However, along with Sarason (1971) and many others, I would like to claim that the more schools change the more they stay the same. Life in school is organized according to an established pattern, or units of time, on a daily as well as a yearly basis. The school system is defined by means of specific tasks implemented on a general level of organization, on the level of organizing the classrooms, and organizing groups of learners. Hierarchical relationships between teachers and pupils along with a discipline and learning structure help characterize the school culture.

Let us imagine that researchers from Mars sent a delegation to survey various phenomena on Earth. They land next to a school building and report seeing hundreds of small cloned creatures scurrying everywhere. They also note the presence of a fewer number of larger creatures. At times signals and sounds are heard. In response to these the creatures enter into cubicles, duplicate identical structures, until once again a signal is heard and there is an eruption from the smaller cubicles into larger open areas. The continuous crowding, inside, outside, is ongoing, an unexplained ritual. This is a paraphrase of the description in Sarason's (1971) book, *The Culture of School and the Problem of Change*, in which he claims that the "stranger" observing the school perceives an extremely unflattering picture. Many other educational researchers and scholars who study twentieth century schools endorse Sarason's view. Jackson (1968) argued in his classic book, *Life in Classrooms* that in most schools crowd, power, and assessment are the dominant feature of life in classrooms. He was right then as unfortunately his observation is accurate for our contemporary days. If we build on this understanding, adding the dimension of permanence, we will have an experience that can be described as follows: A massive number of children enter permanently assigned classrooms with permanent teachers, permanent friends, and permanent curricula operated by these permanent teachers. Although numerous attempts have been made to search for innovations and changes within the educational systems, the culture of schools remained almost the same.

Why is it so? Why is it as Sarason claimed that the more schools change the more they stay the same? This fundamental question is echoed throughout the educational literature without any good reply so far.

To sum up this glimpse into an enormously complex discussion about school culture and the problem of change, I would like to quote from Sergiovanni (1995):
School culture includes values, symbols, beliefs, and shared meanings of parents, students, teachers, and others conceived as a group or community. Culture governs what is of worth for this group and how members should think, feel, and behave. The "stuff" of culture includes a school's customs and tradition; historical accounts, stated and unstated understandings, habits, norms, and expectations; common meanings; and shared assumptions. The more understood, accepted, and cohesive the culture of a school, the better able it is to move in concert toward ideals it holds and objectives it wishes to pursue (p. 89).

This is a broad characterization that includes a vast range of ideas relating to what school culture comprises. It is possible to trace the culture of school via cultural indicators (as in stories or heroic characters). At times stories change, but the organized events (such as conventions, assemblies, the opening and closing of the school year, award ceremonies) are unchanging symbols. These traditional events are given more consideration in elementary school than in high school. Traditions such as these provide stability for the pupil.

The internal rhythm of school life is partly determined by the tension created between the school year and school holidays. Events are usually celebrated in school prior to the start of the holiday. A part of the holiday experience relates to preparation for these related events. Ceremonies, school-plays and various events in school are the artistic and historical realization of the potential for a school's cultural life.

My point is that school performances are a quest for the poetics of an internal cultural life and can serve as a catalyst for meaning in pupils' lives. Along with Courtney I argue that under the right conditions the school play is a powerful device to empower school's culture, but under the wrong conditions it can cause friction more quickly and more powerfully than almost any other activity (Courtney, 1966, p.5). The relationship between the cultures of schools and the school performances pertains to the quality of life at schools and it is a complex and multifaceted relationship as will be examined below.

A Metaphoric View

It seems to me that it would help us to appreciate modern day school reality and the formation of culture if we considered it as a metaphor. Metaphors are created consciously or sub-consciously, and thus present new aspects of life. Our conceptual world is largely metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and the use of metaphor is one way to reduce the complex to a more comprehensible state. The essence of metaphor, according to Lakoff and Johnson, is understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another (1980, p. 5). Furthermore, they claim that metaphors partially structure our everyday concepts and that this structure is reflected in our literal language (ibid., p. 46).

Research done by Foshay in the 1980s took the approach that structural metaphors are grounded in systematic correlations within our experience. I choose to respond, herewith, to three of Foshay’s metaphors, those who seem inconceivable at first glance and yet after a second thought they help to clear the understanding of the internal cultural life at school.

Foshay (1980) claims that those who perceive a child as a "tabula rasa", as a blank page upon which the teacher may write what he wishes, are those who position the child as slave. It seems abrasive, violent and inappropriate metaphor. However, odd as it may sound, ponder for a moment the array of reinforcements a teacher gives a child.
For example: "Wonderful, Dana, your writing is lovely", "Very nice, Oliver, good answer", "No, Valerie, you cannot continue", and other positive or negative reactions such as these in effect create a pupil who is dependent on the teacher. A pupil needs to receive legitimacy for everything s/he does, thinks, or says: a pupil is conditioned via praise, or lack of praise as delegated by the teacher. From this perspective, a pupil metaphorically can be considered as a "slave". Children tolerate this type of violence as part of "the education game" and, because they do acquiesce, they are thus "enslaved".

The second metaphor that deserves attention is the child as enemy. According to this metaphor the child is perceived as an enemy to be controlled. At first glance, this notion may seem far-fetched. Nowadays with the abundance of new and innovative methods of cooperation and teamwork, the needs of the children are at the center of the stage.

The response could be that it is not far-fetched by any means. The most common expressions uttered by teachers in the teachers’ lounge include, "Today I controlled the class" or "Today I could not control them" or "I conquered their spirit/mood", or "That is the goal", "That is the purpose", "The strategy of lesson planning", "My tactics in the lesson." In many teaching seminars "innovative teaching strategies" and "tactics" are taught. With this particular conceptual vocabulary (control, conquer, tactics, and strategies) it seems as if there is almost no other reading but to understand the subliminal message: ‘we are in war’. Thus, a culture of struggle is developing in which the way we speak affects our deeds as we have learnt from Lakoff and Johnson.

The child as chameleon is the third metaphor I would like to mention in this context, in which Foshay explains that like a chameleon that receives its color from its immediate environment, a child also has the ability to adapt himself and accept the controlling circumstances. In the 1980s, when I first read Foshay’s article, I thought to myself that this must be a highly unrealistic and imaginative metaphor. After a second thought I believe that it is an accurate one. Consider a pupil who every forty five minutes needs to replace his/her "tape", and shift from mathematics to language, or from geography to Bible and also to replace "the teacher’s tape." A pupil is forced to get into the habit of switching quickly and repeatedly from math, to physics, to literature, to recess, until he reaches a state of utter exhaustion. The point to be grasped is that the child is sensitive to the many fluctuations within the learning environment and because s/he is unable to cope with the pressure and speed of these endless fluctuations s/he simply learns to protect him/herself and develops camouflage-type methods, like the chameleon does in its struggle to survive.

Reliance on metaphor takes into account the limits of metaphor. The way it focuses the attention on specific elements while ignoring important others may distort the topic or the situation under discussion and as a result the general picture received is one of extreme exaggeration. However, a metaphor is perceived as characteristic of human thought and behavior. The picture does not reflect reality in a simple manner but rather aids in constructing judgmental attitudes in relation to the complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is being described, the internal cultural life at school.

My argument here is that the relationship between the culture of schools and the school performances when examined via the lenses of metaphors can reflect the complex and multifaceted relationship between them as will be examined below, in the Standing Tall school performance example.

Schools as a textual site

Like Hight, as early as 1951, as well as Eisner (2002) and Greene (2001), I believe that education has elements of art. A definition of education, according to Hight (1951),
follows:

Teaching is not like including a chemical reaction; it is much more like painting a picture or composing a piece of music, or on a lower level, like planting a garden or writing a friendly letter. You must throw your heart into it - you must realize that it cannot all be done by formulas, or you spoil your work, and your pupils, and yourself. (p. viii).

I suggest to view schools as a textual site when creating a new internal syntactic entity. Transforming one’s emotional and conceptual viewpoint toward schools is the basis for all change. Perceiving school as a textual site, the learner can be exposed to various forms of knowledge, such as: moral, aesthetic, scientific, narrative, contemplation and phenomenological knowledge (Gordon, 1988; Smith, 1991). A person requires all types of knowledge in order to react with critical thinking to express his/her emotions. By means of various types of knowledge the learner develops greater conceptual awareness of his/her thoughts, emotions, and actions. Furthermore, s/he is in possession of the ability to experience events more fully and to enjoy them. Enjoyment, a long disregarded concept in education, must be restored to the center of educational thought and function.

Education should be perceived as a process of exposing the student to knowledge in order to create knowledge-ability, thus achieving the enjoyment of knowing, creating wisdom.

My argument here is that school performances can serve as one of the main roads to obtain such perception of education.

Based on the metaphoric view and the question of the desired education that I have presented, I will now examine one instance of school performance in an attempt to understand the suitability of the described above, making an effort to connect theatre to education.

Standing Tall: School performance and the question of its healing powers

There are many types of school plays. The following example is taken from the John Meltzer Charrette School in New York City where I was invited to see a performance on May 24, 2002. The name of the play was Standing Tall. It was created and written by Robert Landy, directed by Damaris Webb, and based on the stories and the work of Rachel Croyle’s fourth and fifth grade class. The playbill tells about Rachel: “She had been a classroom teacher for three days when she walked through the red doors of Public School (PS3) on the morning of September 11.” The Standing Tall Project was created to provide meaningful arts programs for schools identified as being the most directly affected by the events and the aftermath of September 11, 2001.

It is now September 11, 2015 when I am writing this study, and based on my detailed account in Schonmann (2006, pp. 169-193) I can still recall that experience by which I want to expose a principle understanding as follows:

Thirty-one fourth and fifth graders, from the school witnessed the terrifying attack on the World Trade Center outside their classroom window on their fourth day of school. The project, Standing Tall, was intended as a response to this. The goal of the project was to help restore a sense of balance to the children’s life and to discover a way to transform their fear into hope via the healing power of storytelling and drama. The developmental stage included guided storytelling and composition work through games and role playing; activities that provided the material from which Robert Landy wrote the script. Landy, a professor of Educational Theatre and Drama Therapy at New York
University, is best known for the books, articles and plays in the fields of educational drama, theatre, drama therapy, and various related topics.

The adults in the program confronted the question: In what way would drama aid in dealing with the fear and the anger the children had experienced? The play was designed in episodes. The first presented Osama Bin Laden; the idea was to demystify the man. Then came a piece about heroes. They were the simple people in the streets, the firemen, and the policemen. The scenes were very life like and true to the way the children originally told their stories.

Thirty-one children were on the stage for approximately forty minutes, relating, singing, and presenting their experiences. An adult teacher was on the stage with them, acting along in his role as narrator. I thought it was wonderful that an adult took part on stage, as the play dealt with frightening reality and was full of recent hard memories. An adult on stage was a kind of support.

After the play ended, Robert Landy thanked the teacher and the children. He named every single child by name, which I thought was a warm tribute. Each child received a rose from the teacher and there was a spirit of goodness, a friendly atmosphere in the air. Landy explained that the performance was not the important thing - the significance lay in the process the children underwent.

Up to this point I was fascinated, I was drawn emotionally into the performance as all in the audience. All went so well, so professional artistically presented. However a thread of undefined clamor disturbed me, I deed not feel comfortable.

It was only after the play, it was only later when Landy began to talk to the children and in that conversation, after the play, I suddenly understood something that I had felt while observing the performance but could not express earlier. In the discussion the children were lively and natural. They were emotional and appealing. They spoke from their hearts; whereas in the play they had merely uttered the words that were written for them in the script. On stage they were like "miniature adults", like "slaves" who had to justify the adults' expectations for a good performance, they were acting like "machines" they were "controlled and behaved". However, during the discussion they were lucid, speaking clearly and coherently. To the question: "How you could learn such a long monologue by heart?" came the simple and honest answer: "I had to: it was homework". To the question: "How did you agree to play Osama Bin Laden?" the answer was: "I did not want to, but I was convinced by the teacher who promised me another good part as well." Slowly, through the course of the discussion, I realized that the event of a school play failed to achieve the joyfulness expected in being involved in a creative process. It is one thing to work with children with the help of art, in this case with theatre for therapeutic purposes, and it is something else to work on a performance as a school play intended to be performed before audiences from outside the school. The children did not "play" their roles; they merely recited the words that were modified for them. Like "chameleons", to use once more one of Foshay's metaphors (1980), they were able to change roles, attitudes, and mood as they were trained to do. The fact that the play was recorded by a TV crew gave the performance predominance over the process, and it is perhaps only one more attribute of the adults' will, to show publicly the result of the hard work.

When a school play is made for therapeutic purposes it should remain in the private yard of the children rather than be placed in the public eye, "enslaving" children to activate "machine" like behavior or "chameleon" maneuvers. At the same talk, I have to point out that through the process the young pupils could gain a basic understanding how theatre operates. Desirable aims were addressed by the very fact that they could play with the conventions of "as if," being Osama Bin Laden, the fact that they could
play the terrorists and not only the victims, and that a thorough catharsis could be achieved under the guidance of an expert psycho-dramatist such as Landy.

The *Standing Tall* story, encapsulates what not many colleagues think and feel about school performance, but it discloses my concern of what we might endanger.

The problematic position of school performances

We should ask ourselves in what ways school performances can cultivate the love for theatre and the development of mutual relation between theatre and education?

The laboratory for research in drama& theatre education of Haifa University conducted an analysis of 52 questionnaires completed by teachers from eight schools (elementary, junior and senior high schools) in various cities in Israel. It was in 2006 (a detailed account can be found in Schonmann, 2006, pp. 169-193), since then a constant interviews with teachers and pre-service teachers are being conducted by the laboratory’s students which give us the following picture of school performances and their position in schools in Israel.

The analysis indicates that most of the teachers participated in one stage or another of the preparation of a school play. A large majority of them declared that there was no need for authorization from the principal regarding the contents of the performances. This implies that the teachers who organize are usually free to carry out their plans as they desire. The criteria guiding the teachers include: personal taste, common sense, previous personal experience, intuition, ideas from experienced teachers, and school tradition. Apparently, the majority of teachers received no training to prepare a school play. Furthermore, some may have harbored hostile feelings in regard to the project, which was not in their field of expertise. These teachers claimed they did not enjoy working on performances, but since these were a requirement of the school they accepted the responsibility against their wishes.

Teachers regard the issue of sharing equally with other teachers in the burden of carrying out the production of a school play as more important than achieving artistic and aesthetic quality in the performance. Typically there is no financial or other reward for a teacher responsible for the school play. The Ministry of Education and the school management consider preparing such performances to be an expected part of a teacher’s responsibility. Teachers are aware that they can find a reservoir of plans for ceremonies and scripts for school plays done in the past. However, most teachers choose to create a plan of their own rather than rely on one produced earlier, suggesting that in spite of the difficulties they perceive their task as a challenge.

Many of the teachers stated that the pupils who would participate in an event are chosen according to strict criteria: acting skills, dancing ability, and singing talent, self-assurance and the ability to feel comfortable performing in front of an audience, the ability to express oneself well and use good diction, good vocal ability, and demonstrate a serious attitude toward the role received. Only a small number of teachers made it clear that the choice of pupils who would participate depended on the desire for weaker pupils to take part as well, they were not concerned about the possible damage to the artistic-aesthetic component by offering roles to weaker pupils in order to help them attain a more positive status in the culture of the school.

School plays receive special status and the pupils acting in them are paid more attention, similar to those participating in the school’s sports team.

The role of the school performance in school life is highly appreciated, whereas the status of the arts in schools’ curricula is marginal. Theatre as an art discipline is still
peripheral to the core academic curriculum, yet, as Bresler, Wasser and Hertzog (1997) claim:

the major moments at which the entire school comes together as a whole (including such instances as holiday programmes, presentations of ‘other culture’, sport or for recognition of academic honours, and assemblies on drug awareness), often feature performances of the arts (p.88).

School performance as a meaningful aspect of "the actual" of school life should be explored not only via the lenses of cultural life at schools but also via the personal experiences of students. The survey research mentioned that I have conducted through the years since the 2006's found contrasts between the teachers and their pupils in terms of perceptions of and interests in the school play. Whereas the teachers and the alumni view the school play as being the cornerstone of the cultural fabric of the school, today’s pupils, especially the younger ones, tend to emphasize only the personal experience of being involved in the school play and how it impacts their social image. The rehearsals are time-consuming and are held during regular school hours. This arrangement causes pupils to "miss" lessons. Teachers who are not included in the preparations are annoyed by the fact that their lessons are "ruined" because the pupils are taken out of class for rehearsals and lessons are subsequently cancelled. The process of preparing for a school play occurs amidst continual struggle and pressure, and often more severe incidents occur between the teachers and pupils and others involved. Video film taken during this research testifies to the fact that there are numerous incidents of considerable anger and reprimands of the pupil’s behavior resulting in punishment.

In addition, the lack of financial support from school management exacerbates the many existing problems. It is extremely difficult to acquire various accessories, props, proper lighting, and audio equipment due to the lack of a reasonable budget. Technical and logistical constraints are an added problem. Most schools do not have an auditorium and as a result the gymnasium or schoolyard becomes the location for the play; such places are usually unsuitable. Problems regarding professional amplification systems, proper stage arrangements, and suitable seating are additional difficulties that require the kind of sizeable budget that typically is not available. Teachers claim that the tradition of an annual celebration results in recurring problems. The teacher is forced into "a war of demands" to obtain success for the play. Out of frustration the teacher eventually declares never to take part in a play in the future, even though s/he recognizes its worth.

It became clear that on the overt statement level the attitude toward ceremonies, school plays and other performances is guided by the significance of cultural principles, preserving traditional values, and expressions of patriotism and unity. Everyone is convinced that celebrations are necessary. In practice, however, the main emphasis is on organization, budget constraints, and solving problems of pupils’ behavior.

**School play as a form of school art**

There is no unique nature to a school play and they may vary greatly according to the approach of a particular school, the context in which the children live, whether or not theatre is included in the school curriculum and, basically, whether there is among the teachers a colleague who is "obsessed with theatre". A great deal of tact and respect is necessary for the pupil who is performing, for the pupil who contributes to the overall success of the play, as well as those pupils who are observers only (Schonmann, 1996). Tact and respect are elements that are always necessary when working with pupils;
however, in school plays this is even more so as there is always the fear of losing the spontaneity and pleasure in performing due to feeling threatened by appearing on stage.

It is in this context that a clear point has to be made: drama studied in classrooms is different from drama intended for a school play. It is not only the process versus product that is at stake, but as Barnfield noted (1968):

No child should be forced to appear in a school production...the school play production, which should be looked upon as theatre, must come from the genuine, free interest of teacher and student alike. It should be a natural development of enthusiasm (p. 198).

We can clearly see the warning signs in the experiences described in this chapter. However, there is a general understanding that in being involved in a school play production the child would be able to learn the interplay between form and content, the child would be attuned to theatrical conventions and their essence, and the child would appreciate what makes a "good" audience and what makes a "good" theatre, the value of applause, and other sorts of appreciation. Furthermore, advantages claimed for the school play include the following: "Interdisciplinary co-operation", "Contact with parents and other children" (Seely, 1976, p. 103); or: "Demonstrating the creative life of the school"; "The school play can intrigue every part of the school life as no one other activity can" (Courtney, 1966, p. 1 and 5); or: "Heightens the group's sense of responsibility and all that entails, both individually and collectively" (p.5.).

All these and similar assertions are essential in creating the foundation for the theatrical experience of the school play. Yet it is not enough to stress the social and the pedagogical dimensions. In order for the school play to be a crucial component in the cultural life of the school and in exposing children to the theatre as an art form, it should find ways to create what Bresler (2002) calls "child art" within "school art." Bresler examined arts in schools and came to define school art as a hybrid genre. She asserts that school art differs significantly from art found in what she calls Non-school locations that provide different circumstances and conditions for the production and appreciation of art. Thus, school art is a blend of educational and artistic expectations, where the agenda of schools and their expectations seems to be dominant (2002, p. 182).

What I found most interesting in her work is the theoretical differentiation between four art types in school culture: child craft, child art, fine art and art for children. Bresler concludes,

All types ended up emphasizing socialization into following directions and routinized processes and products, rather than leading towards moments of insight and intensification. With a few exceptions, none of the school art types exemplified creativity, ownership and caring (p. 182).

Although Bresler meant only in the context of visual art, her perception can help in making logical implications to a school play. The main idea developed in this chapter goes hand in hand with her findings. We can conclude that in order to develop the artistic phenomenon of the school play as having a central role in the culture of the schools and in enhancing the children's ability to enjoy theatre performances out of school, it is necessary to empower the school arts with intellectual and creative ways of working while increasing the students ownership of their work and supplying them with adequate time to develop real processes. In this respect, drama/theatre education can
play a central role by constantly developing the three main interrelated orientations in the field: the artistic-aesthetic, the pedagogical-educational, and the sociological-cultural.

Epilogue: Where does that leave us?

This chapter provides a basis for considering where we are with respect to the role performances play in school culture. School performances have often been praised and rarely criticized as problematic. At the heart of my stance lies a quest for the poetics of an internal cultural life at school, understanding that school culture is a dynamic entity; it is constantly being constructed. The approach of this study enables us to critically explore the theatrical work at schools in order to enhance its quality and find ways towards transforming the school play to a form of school art. The school play, when it rises above "frill" and mere "showing off" and gets to the essence of artistic experience, could bring pleasure to children's life and enable them to participate in building the culture of their schools. Elaborating on this encouraging understanding is a concern of a further examination.

References


Still Pictures as a Form of Learning

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Abstract

This article describes a history lesson in which pupils working with still pictures studied the history of ancient Egypt. The aim of the article is to present the educational potential of a specific didactic method applying the psychosomatic unity of body and mind in order to inspire creativity in pupils. A necessary condition for creating still pictures is team cooperation.

Biography

MGR. VERONIKA RODOVÁ, PH.D. lives in the Czech Republic. Her work focuses on examining the possibilities of applying Theatre when teaching History. She has a degree in History and Archiving, and a degree with specialisation in Drama Education. She worked formerly as a teacher, and during the period between 2008-2012 she held a teaching position at the Studio of Drama and Education at the Theatre Faculty of Janáček’s Academy of Music and Performing Arts (Brno, Czech Republic). Currently, she works for the Faculty of Education at Masaryk’s University (Brno, Czech Republic). She is the editor in chief of the Komenský magazine and a member of the Tvořivá Dramatika (Creative Drama) magazine editorial team. She is also a co-author of the publication Drama Education in the Curriculum of a Modern School (2008), and an author of Drama Education in Service of History Education (2014).
The starting point of this study was an empirical analysis of situations recorded during history lessons (Rodriguezová 2012). Pupils worked on still pictures, which is a specific technique using psychosomatic capacities of the body. At the cognitive level this technique works with pupils’ pre-concepts and with facts and concepts in the form of narrative and iconic texts. At the social level it is based on group work and communication. The result is psychosomatic expression of ideas in time and space that is extended to creative acts, thus opening space for cognitively demanding work (Švaříček 2011: 42–43).

I was first introduced to the possibility of applying still pictures at the London Redbridge Drama Centre. Following their model I have created and implemented several teaching programmes during which pupils learn themes of history by methods of drama education, particularly still pictures. The teacher assigns a topic and brings pupils to our Centre, where we work together all morning. The teaching programme is designed as an integrated unit consisting of two blocks and linked by the theme, the principle of conversation and the choice of teaching techniques. This article describes two subsequent stages of the programme Ancient Despotic Rules: Egypt.

The programme begins with a methodological sequence of psychosomatic activities, starting with a freeze, in which pupils use their bodies to depict assigned themes, and leading to the creation of thematic still pictures. It is followed by a structured discussion on the meaning of the iconic text, resulting in the description of the reliefs on the palette of King Narmer. It is concluded with a creative-cognitive task to depict as precisely as possible a selected part of the palette by means of a still picture.

The second block opens with a discussion on concepts and explanation and deciphering of a hieroglyphic text. Pupils use this information to make their own iconic text. In the form of an acoustic still picture they create a relief celebrating the Pharaoh whose name has been deciphered. A necessary condition is the inclusion of facts they have learned. When presenting their suggestions the groups discuss meanings contained in their pictures. The programme is concluded by reflection.

Pupils get acquainted with concepts and facts of Egyptian history. They work with visual text, learn to understand symbols and metaphors and use their bodies and voices in simple role play. They collaborate in groups and develop their creative and communicative capacities.

In the Czech Republic it is rather unusual to connect history lessons with drama education. Drama education is not an obligatory part of the curriculum at basic schools. Like some other subjects such as a second foreign language it has the status of a complementary subject that can, but does not have to, be added to the educational programme if a qualified teacher is employed by the school. So drama education does not share an equal position with other art subjects such as music and arts. A survey of the extent of the integration of drama education into school curricula was carried out by Doležal (2015: 1–12) who says that schools more often use partial methods of drama education than teach it as a separate subject. As to the segment of secondary and higher education in the Czech Republic, drama education is a part of the curriculum of secondary and vocational schools of education. Drama education is a constant part

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1 Its founder was Hugh Lovegrove (1925–2002), counsellor for drama education, director of the British branch of IATA/AITA (International Amateur Theatre Association) and Honorary Chairman of EDERED (European Drama Encounters).
2 A total of 454 programmes were carried out between 1999 and 2007, in the course of which Egypt was performed fifty-four times (Rodriguezová 2012: 35).
3 A motion exercise stopping the body in order to activate its psychosomatic unity. It works as a means of communication of inner notions which gradually come together in the theme of the programme.
of amateur art education. At basic schools of art, literature/drama is equal to arts and dance. As for higher education, drama education can be studied at the Department of Drama in Education of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (besides, a doctoral study programme of Theory and Practice of Drama Education was started there in 2015) and at the Studio of Drama Education of the Janáček Academy of Music and Performing Arts in Brno. Drama Education can also be studied by teacher students as a study programme at several faculties of education. Teachers can become members of the Association for Creative Drama which organizes educational courses, seminars and drama festivals and publishes a specialist journal on creative drama. Another institution, the Association of Drama Centres was established in 2012 in order to develop and support the position of drama education in the Czech educational system; one of the members of this Association is the Centre where the programme of Ancient Despotic Rules: Egypt was performed.

Theoretical basis

As an organic part of our spiritual world, visual interpretation of reality has accompanied mankind since prehistoric times. The desire to capture thoughts, actions and visions in stone, clay, wood, papyrus, parchment or paper is not only a manifestation of the need to copy the world as it can be seen. Such a desire is also embedded in the inner structure of the mind of Homo sapiens sapiens. David Lewis-Williams considers (rock) drawings to be encoded images of the visions of (prehistoric) people, analysis of which may lead to a reconstruction of the neuropsychological model of the image of the world in the mind of (paleolithic) man (2007: 209–212). The symbolic level of the iconic text is fundamental: “The symbolic language is a particular one; it is the only universal language mankind has ever developed… Understanding the symbolic language should be taught in the way other foreign languages are” (Fromm 1999: 8). Images can speak a mute language that is “understandable to anybody’s eyes and fantasy” (Eco 1985: 42). The universal communicativeness of the language of images is the source of their impact on our minds. Competence in an iconographic perception of reality (Kratochvíl 2004: 72) is a part of visual literacy and includes the capacities to both understand visual messages (read them) and use these capacities to communicate (create such messages). Observation can be considered as active art. Such a skill is even more important for us humans, who are able to “read voiceless communications as easily as those printed or uttered” (Hall in Sztompka 2007: 21) and whose “capacity to distinguish microscopic nuances in the postures of eyes, head and body is extraordinary” (Goffman 1979: 18). To teach pupils to understand meanings hidden in visual messages and, at the same time, teach them to create such messages is an objective equal to the skill of reading or listening to a written text.

Cognitive potential of still pictures

The main substance of this article is a description of two still pictures that pupils created when working with an iconic text. Its form was that of a photographic print of the palette attributed to King Narmer, which depicts allegorically the unification of Upper and Lower Egypt, dated approximately 3,200 B.C. Deposited in the Egyptian Museum in Cairo, it is a key relic of the archaic period. “Originally Narmer had worn the White Crown of..."
Upper Egypt. Then he coupled it with the Red Crown of Lower Egypt so that the united crown represented his claim to rule both countries” (Harenberg 1992: 26). The task of the pupils was to describe the scenes on the palette in words and then choose some part of the image and transform it into a still picture.

Wearing the White Crown of Upper Egypt the King bludgeons an enemy at his feet. Opposite, the Falcon counts the defeated (there are six thousand of them) and behind the King stands a squire (fetcher of sandals) [...] Numerous reminiscences on the pre-dynastic era, the script and an important shift in artistic expression are typical features of the Narmer (or Menes) palette. The way of depiction of the human body, to which the Egyptians were faithful throughout their history, is perfectly elaborated; heads and legs are depicted in side view while bodies are viewed en face in order to stress the width of the back. The name of the Pharaoh is written in a cartridge; the heads at the sides represent the goddess Hathor with cow ears and horns. Facing the Pharaoh the Falcon counts six pegs, meaning six thousand enemies killed. Behind the Pharaoh walks his fetcher of sandals (Pijoan/1 1977: 50–52).

The creation of a still picture consists in physical interpretation and requires reflection on the meaning of the message. It is based on the depiction of details, which involves work with expression, gesture and props (either real, imaginary or alternative). Pupils start to interpret signs and symbols naturally, thus developing abstract thinking. At the same time, imagination and higher cognitive levels of reflection are involved. The depiction of details becomes the carrier of fundamental information specifying the scene in terms of time, hierarchy, relations among elements and circumstances of the action. Naming and analysis of these elements lead to cultivated thinking and imagination on the part of the audience, including the teacher. The limited means of communication
require pupils to look for substantial features and important characteristics that can provide mental comprehensibility of the result (Rodová 2014: 160). A still picture is an opportunity for all pupils; participation and cooperation of all members of the group is an important condition for its creation.

Example 1:

**Description:** A falcon is seen on top of a movable platform. Underneath this is a piece of turf with lotus flowers. The victor is standing and a defeated man is kneeling below him; on the left there is a servant in sandals. The bottom of the palette is occupied by a lying figure in the foreground.

The group chose to work on the obverse side. The task seems simple: to simulate as accurately as possible the scene (or a part of it) carved into the stone palette. It opens space for working with expression and gesture; besides human figures pupils may depict landscape, animals and things in varied perspectives. Having used the moving platform for the depiction they were able to maintain the vertical character of the scene. We see the victor, the Pharaoh, standing and holding a substitute prop (a plastic bottle of water) that represents the bludgeon with which he is beating the defeated enemy, as experts explain. The uncomfortable position of the kneeling boy in the role of the defeated man indicates efforts to keep to the artistic expression of the model as precisely as possible and capture the Egyptian code of depicting the human body. To depict the animal, the boy who represents the falcon (an incarnation of the god Hor) makes a gesture with his hand to symbolize the beak. The boy beneath, representing the motive of lotus flowers, is content with mere representation of the round form on which the falcon is standing. Six lotus flowers shown in detail, symbolizing the number of enemies defeated, are missing. The figure of the fetcher of sandals is captured in a realistic style that includes the real shoes he holds in front of him. His size, different from that of the Pharaoh, refers to his lower social importance and is indicated by his kneeling, which makes him appear smaller than the girl in the role of the Pharaoh. A girl lying on the ground represents two figures at the lower end of the palette to whom no particular attention is paid in
specialist literature. Yet pupils are usually interested in them and say these figures are probably escaping members of the defeated party (as the resemblance to the defeated enemy suggests), perhaps swimming in the Nile, which is evidenced by the identical angle of their heads. Their look back and the incline of their bodies evokes movement away in haste. Disregarded by the pupils are two cow heads, symbols of the goddess Hathora and the cartridge with the name of the Pharaoh. The simplicity and accuracy of the depiction clearly suggest, with minor shifts in meaning, which part of the palette is being treated.

Creative potential of still pictures

The second example presents the result of the group working on another task. In the first example the pupils “imitated” the painting style of an Egyptian artist who lived five thousand years ago. In this way they adopted various means of expression used by Egyptian painters such as the depiction of figures, work with spatial arrangement, symbols and epitomes. Also, the pupils had to decide which part of the scene they would depict, so as to correspond with the cognitive level of application. Then they entered the cognitive level of synthesis. They were supposed to depict their own scene and propose a design of a relief⁶ to decorate the tomb of a Pharaoh whose name they had deciphered in the meantime (Akhenaten, Nefertiti or Tutankhamun). Egyptian artists were even able to make their sculptures sound⁷. Therefore, every still picture would have its acoustic component: the name of the ruler for whom the relief was meant would be heard. The pupils had to decide how to add sound to the scene, whether the name of the Pharaoh would be pronounced by one or all and in which situation. Here they entered the role. At the same time they were to observe the Egyptian code of depicting figures as they had been introduced to it with the Narmer palette.

Example 2:

⁶“Reliefs are sculptures on a flat ground meant for frontal viewing and evoking the illusion of three-dimensionality” (Kvasil 1984: 299). “The relief is a common form of decorating burial chambers. It narrates the life of the dead and shows interesting details. At the same time the Egyptian way of depicting figures is evident here” (Pijoan 2000: 57).

⁷Here the teacher uses the information that one of the so-called Colossi of Memnon, sculptures from the Mortuary Temple of Amenhotep III on the left bank of the Nile, emitted sounds at dawn, caused by evaporation of water (Guidotti & Cortese 2006: 101).
Description: The Pharaoh (here Tutankhamun) is sitting on his throne, wearing a crown and holding the sacred sceptres. At his sides stand two girls, maybe wives, maybe dancers, whose portrayal keeps to the traditional Egyptian depiction of the human figure. In the foreground, a guard (a boy in blue) is restraining a thief who has just stolen a purse from a passer-by.

The overall arrangement is divided into two halves. One, more distant and situated at the top of the image, observes the official artistic style of the ancient Egyptians; the Pharaoh is depicted in a traditional manner that shows his majesty and signs of power, i.e. the crown, the sacred scourge and the sceptre (Barbotin & Biard 1993: 197), expressed by means of alternative props: pieces of resonant wood and three caps in a pile (the depiction of the Pharaoh’s crown as described below). The delicate symmetry of the composition is enhanced by two female figures at the sides. The other part of the scene renounces the traditional code, rather presenting a genre picture of everyday life.

In order to explain the uniqueness of this still picture we must return to the beginning. The boys who appeared in caps in the morning have removed them unwillingly and only after a vehement order by their teacher. Now the one who represents the Pharaoh (and was the most unwilling to accept the fact that he must remove his baseball cap) has used his cap to play the part of the Pharaoh’s crown. During the first block of the task pupils learned that the shape of the Pharaoh’s crown was a symbol of the unification of the country, presented as an intersection of the White and Red Crowns. Its shape is also a symbolic depiction of the body of Hor, the falcon god, who embraces the ruler’s head from the back, protecting it with his spread-out wings (Verner, Bareš & Vachala 1997: 371). The head of an attacking cobra over the ruler’s forehead represents strength and power.

The crowns constitute the main components of the Egyptian royal insignia. The White Crown (Hedjet) was originally weaved from stems of alloy; later it was made of fabric. The Red Crown (Deshret) was originally made of leather. The stylized shape of falcon wings and the cobra belongs to another type of crown, the so-called Khepresh, which was blue and made of ostrich skin. (Verner, Bareš & Vachala 1997: 260).

The group incorporated this information into the picture. If we look closely we can see that the boy who represents the Pharaoh has used the caps to depict symbolically the importance of the Pharaoh’s crown: he has put on all three caps with their peaks sticking out at the sides and front. He has imitated the shape of the crown, with the lateral peaks representing the falcon that protects the king’s head with its wings, and the front peak referring to the attacking cobra, a symbol of the ruler’s power. Although it seemed at first that the caps would be a source of conflict and the boys’ reluctance to participate, in the end, thanks to their inventive use as a symbol for the crown, they served as a connection between historical information and the world of the boys’ values. A baseball cap is such an important element of their identity that they are ready to run the risk of reproof for wearing it in socially inappropriate situations.

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8 During the discussion a pupil came up with the idea of a use for the duplicity of expression: under this Pharaoh people lived in safety, without having to worry about their possessions. The awareness of safety allows for the violation of the stiff depiction of human figures.
Conclusion

Emotional excitement strengthens long-time memory (Hughes 2007:48–51), which is also confirmed by a pupil who describes her experience\(^9\) like this: *I think sometimes it’s good to be sitting at the desk and learn something but I think it’s better to learn something and then repeat it when you play a game. That’s what I enjoy a lot. I can learn more.* Another pupil says: *I liked our class cooperating. No arguing or like that.* Cooperation is a significant feature; it is a condition for being able to create the still picture. This is confirmed by another girl: *…that we were able to work together so. well when we played the freeze and the performance here.*

A still picture means a specified spatial expression of an idea (Morgan & Saxton 2001: 116). From time to time pupil creators of still pictures provide a completely new incentive which in some way exceeds the established limits of viewer perception. Knowledge is important but so is intuition and the general ability to understand an iconic text. In order to create a still picture pupils must embrace the cognitive level of creative synthesis, i.e. create something new, understandable to others but based on previous knowledge. They also have to be able to substantiate and defend their suggestions. The involvement of psychosomatic modelling of the final shape of a still picture makes it possible to apply original ideas, and to creative authenticity as well as historical fact. In this particular case this was achieved by means of the depiction of the crown of the Pharaoh using caps, modern crowns of today’s children, as an original and accurate representation of the historical crown of an ancient sovereign.

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\(^9\) The analysis of pupils’ utterances as related to current research of communication in schools was carried out in my dissertation thesis (Rodriguezová 2012) and published in a book (Rodová 2014).
References


This article outlines the pedagogical practices expert New Zealand drama teachers employ in order to build an effective ensemble culture in their classrooms, and makes connections between these practices and key dimensions of culturally responsive pedagogy. Establishing an effective ensemble culture bears strong resemblance to the establishment of whānaungatanga in the classroom, a core dimension in culturally responsive teaching practice. Cody (2013) found that, despite the demands of a policy environment that requires outcomes-based performance products, experienced New Zealand drama teachers prioritised relational learning in their teaching. Learning to develop the pro-social skills necessary to work effectively in an ensemble was seen by these drama teachers as both the means to facilitate high levels of student achievement in Drama, and as one of the valued outcomes of the subject discipline itself. Five key practices are identified as central to effective ensemble development and the connections these practices have to the development of whānaungatanga in the classroom are explored.

Biography

TRACEY-LYNNE CODY is an experienced drama educator, working in initial teacher education at Massey University. Her research interests include drama pedagogy and practice in (primary and secondary) school and applied theatre settings, culturally-responsive teaching practice, and education for social and emotional well-being.
Introduction

Culturally responsive teaching is an important topic in New Zealand education and a significant outcome of Ministry-funded, Masters-level initial teacher education programmes currently offered across the country. Cultural competence is a goal many New Zealand drama teachers have embraced, but what does cultural competence look like in the drama classroom? Drawing on doctoral research, this article outlines the ‘bones’ of culturally responsive teaching practice, which lie within effective drama teaching.

Cultural competence in New Zealand schools

As Hynds (2011) points out, New Zealand classrooms are already responsive to culture—that is, responsive to Western, middle-class traditions in education. Arguably, the impact of monoculturalism in New Zealand schools is reflected in the statistics in achievement, where Māori young people underperform when compared to other ethnic groups. Many Māori leave school without qualifications (see https://www.educationcounts.govt.nz/statistics). Consequently, the New Zealand Ministry of Education identify Māori and Pasifika students as “priority learners” and have developed policy strategies to support their achievement: Ka Hikitia – Managing for Success Māori Education Strategy 2008-2012 Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success 2013-2017 and the Pasifika Education Plan (Ministry of Education, 2008, 2013a, 2013b). Reports into the impact of these initiatives suggest that the quality of teaching for Māori students has improved, however many schools need to do significantly more (Education Review Office, 2010).

The research project, Te kotahitanga (Bishop, Berryman, Cavanagh, & Teddy, 2007), investigated discourses that exist about the causes of Māori underachievement. They found students, teachers and parents subscribed to one of three discourses: Either underachievement was seen as being due to the child and their home, including influences outside of the school and the classroom; or due to structure, systems or influences outside of the classroom, but pertaining to the school itself and/or the wider education system; or due to relationships classroom, interaction patterns and influences identified as being within the classroom. Many teachers in the study were found to draw on deficit discourses, explaining the educational achievement of Māori students as a result of the students' deficiencies:

These discourses range from students' lack of motivation, skills or abilities to the perceived deficiencies within the students' homes or within the school structures and systems. Teachers who hold positions such as these are unable to offer realistic solutions to these problems and also can abrogate their responsibilities for improving the achievement levels of Māori students. Such deficit theorizing blames others and results in low teacher expectations of Māori students, thus creating self-fulfilling prophesies of failure, and leaving teachers bewildered as to how to make a difference... (Bishop & Berryman, 2010, p. 178)

Deficit-theorising is also highly problematic for Pasifika learners and has been explored in depth by Mather (2013).

Whilst the underachievement for Māori and Pasifika children is of great concern, Māori leaders in education challenge the sector to move away from deficit-theorising and problematising Māori learners, to emphasise aspirational goals of an education system that allows Māori to achieve success as Māori and enables Pasifika communities to realise cultural aspirations (Bishop, 2012; Bishop & Berryman, 2006; MacFarlane, 2004).
What works for Māori learners?

Research into effective pedagogy for Māori learners strongly emphasizes the need for relational pedagogy – that is, teachers who develop quality relationships with Māori students and their whānau, and consider the social and emotional climate in their classrooms (Bishop, 2012; Hawk, Tumama Cowley, Hill, & Sutherland, 2002; McLeod, 2010; Pere, 1982).

Tātaiako, a framework designed to support New Zealand teachers in their development as culturally-competent practitioners (Ministry of Education, 2011), identifies several cultural competencies for teachers of Māori learners (see Table 1.). In an approach that shifts the responsibility for underachievement away from Māori learners themselves, Tātaiako emphasises the need to for teachers to create classroom cultures that encapsulate the “vibrant contemporary Māori values and norms, reflecting the cultural milieu in which Māori students live” (Ministry of Education, 2011, p. 3). Similarly, Ka Hikitia Accelerating Success 2013-2017 emphasises the importance of the teacher-learner relationship, along with high quality teaching for diverse learning needs, and the active engagement of students (Ministry of Education, 2013a).

Table 1
Three models of culturally responsive teaching practice for teachers of diverse learners in New Zealand schools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Wānanga: participating with learners and communities in robust dialogue for the benefit of Māori learners’ achievement.</td>
<td>• Manaakitanga – teachers care for their students as culturally located human beings above all else.</td>
<td>1. Quality teaching is focused on student achievement (including social outcomes) and facilitates high standards of student outcomes for heterogeneous groups of students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Whānaungatanga: actively engaging in respectful working relationships with Māori learners, parents and whānau, hapū, iwi and the Māori community.</td>
<td>• Mana motuhake – teachers care for the performance of their students.</td>
<td>2. Pedagogical practices enable classes and other learning groupings to work as caring, inclusive, and cohesive learning communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Manaakitanga: showing integrity, sincerity and respect towards Māori beliefs, language and culture.</td>
<td>• Ngā whakapiringatanga – teachers are able to create a secure, well-managed learning environment.</td>
<td>3. Effective links are created between school and other cultural contexts in which students are socialised, to facilitate learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Tangata Whenuatanga: affirming Māori learners as Māori. Providing contexts for learning where the language, identity and culture of Māori learners and their whānau are affirmed.</td>
<td>• Wānanga – teachers are able to engage in effective teaching interactions with Māori students as Māori.</td>
<td>4. Quality teaching is responsive to student learning processes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ako: taking responsibility for their own learning and that of Māori learners</td>
<td>• Ako – teachers can use strategies that promote effective teaching interactions and relationships with their learners.</td>
<td>5. Opportunity to learn is effective and sufficient.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Kotahitanga – teachers promote, monitor and reflect on outcomes that in turn lead to improvements in educational achievement for Māori students.</td>
<td>6. Multiple task contexts support learning cycles.</td>
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<td>7. Curriculum goals, resources including ICT usage, task design, teaching and school practices are effectively aligned.</td>
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<td>8. Pedagogy scaffolds and provides appropriate feedback on students’ task engagement.</td>
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<td>9. Pedagogy promotes learning orientations, student self-regulation, metacognitive strategies and thoughtful student discourse</td>
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<td>10. Teachers and students engage constructively in goal-oriented assessment.</td>
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</table>
Cultural competence and New Zealand Drama teachers

Progressive education, particularly Deweyian education, has been the most influential philosophy shaping the development of New Zealand drama education. (Dewey, 1926; Greenwood, 2009, 2012; Heathcote, 1984; Heathcote & Bolton, 1995). Accordingly, many New Zealand drama teachers aspire to create an authentic bicultural space in their drama classrooms, in recognition of the Treaty of Waitangi. These teachers emphasise a commitment to citizenship, inclusiveness, social justice and human rights, and a desire to empower and support all young people to thrive creatively and collectively (Cody, 2013). The commitment New Zealand drama teachers have made to grow in cultural competence is reflected in the regular professional development opportunities offered through Drama New Zealand conferences1; in the many Teaching as Inquiry (Dreaver, 2009) projects secondary school drama departments are undertaking; in current Teacher-Led Innovation Fund projects2 focused on raising achievement for Māori and Pasifika senior drama students; and the regular discussions on Dramanet3 concerning effective practice for Māori and Pasifika students.

In the New Zealand context, Greenwood (1999, 2001a, 2001b; Greenwood & Wilson, 2006) has made a significant contribution to our understanding of what bicultural drama and theatre work might entail. Additionally, Baskerville (2009, 2011) has explored the culturally responsive potential of stories in New Zealand classrooms (a key feature in Drama work), and illuminated the development of cultural competence through engagement in a marae-based devised theatre project for Māori youth. More recently, Hindle and van Dijk (2014) examined teachers’ understanding of culturally responsive practice after they engaged with a performative, integrated arts model, designed to draw on Māori worldviews and pedagogies. These authors identify five variables that significantly impacted the quality and value of culturally responsive practice in the arts-based classroom. These include: teachers’ understandings of culturally responsive practice; the use of holistic approaches to learning that engage mind, body and soul; place-based strategies as a vehicle to explore and connect with cultural knowledge; the quality, nature and extent of relationships between teachers, students, parents and the wider community; and collaborative creation and leadership (Hindle & van Dijk, 2014, p. 6).

Background to this paper

My doctoral research investigated the philosophies and pedagogical practice of experienced drama teachers in New Zealand schools (Cody, 2013). Although my study focused on effective pedagogical practice for all drama students, and not on cultural competence per se, these pedagogical practices are also reflected in Bishop and Berryman’s (2006) Effective Teaching Profile (see Table 1). The specific practices include:

- Valuing and reinforcing positive classroom relationships (whānaungatanga) including being trustworthy as a teacher (manaakitanga), power-sharing, and holding high expectations (mana motuhake);
- Skilful management of the emotional and social risks demanded by drama work through: thoughtful planning; the teaching of metacognitive strategies; and prioritising and facilitating the development of ensemble skills (Ngā

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1 Drama New Zealand is the national subject association of Drama educators and teachers: www.drama.org.nz
3 Dramanet is the professional support network listserv hosted by www.tki.org.nz
In this paper, I outline these practices and explore their connection to the values emphasized in effective, culturally responsive teaching practice (see Figure 2.). Throughout this discussion I share aspects of the work of the six participants in my study – Aroha, Grace, David, Phillip, Julia and James to illustrate these practices.

The research study

“How do experienced drama teachers facilitate learning in drama in New Zealand schools?” was the central research question in my doctoral research. The study investigated drama teaching practice in New Zealand primary and secondary schools, through a case-based, qualitative inquiry into the practice of six experienced drama teachers. In-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with these teachers to discover the complexities of their teaching practice, their philosophy of drama education, and the decisions they made in curriculum content and pedagogy. Observations of classroom practice were undertaken, along with an analysis of planning documents and a focus-group interview with some of their students. Thematic content analysis was undertaken to identify key features of philosophy and practice across these cases.

Findings and Discussion

Towards whānaungatanga - relational pedagogy and ensemble development

While focused within the New Zealand context, the dimensions of effective and culturally responsive practice outlined here translate readily to international contexts and are consistent with international literature on culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002; Ho, Holmes, & Cooper, 2004; Villegas & Lucas, 2002). Participants in my study placed significant emphasis on developing a pro-social classroom environment. Although rarely assessed directly, these teachers believe the ability to function effectively in an ensemble context is essential to achieving quality drama/theatre work in senior secondary school, as well as being one of the significant outcomes of learning in Drama. Neelands (2009) highlights the connections between ensemble learning and citizenship, describing this as:

a way of modelling how through collective artistry, negotiation, contracting of behaviour and skilful leading, the ensemble in the classroom might become a model of how to live in the world. (p175)

MacFarlane, Glynn, Grace, Penetito, and Bateman (2008) state that “an abiding concern for the quality of human relationships needs to be established and maintained if learning contexts are to be effective for Māori students”. Central to the development of a positive ensemble environment is the establishment of trusting teacher-student relationships and quality peer relationships. Sometimes referred to as ‘relational pedagogy’ in educational literature, its role in effective drama teaching in the New Zealand context has been explored by a number of New Zealand education scholars (Fraser, Price, & Aitken, 2007; Holland & O’Connor, 2004; Wallis, 2010). Bishop (2012) also highlights the importance of quality relationships for Māori learners in what he calls a “culturally responsive pedagogy of relations”.

Wallis (2010) provides a detailed and illustrative account of what relational pedagogy
looks like in a drama classroom through her close examination of one New Zealand drama teacher’s work. She identifies several key characteristics relational pedagogy in the teacher’s work. Firstly, the teacher was positively and actively involved, participating, modelling and supporting the active learning. Lessons were cooperatively designed, and constructive, supportive reflection times were a regular part of the learning. In addition, as the practical work progressed, an inclusive environment was reinforced by opportunities to “recognise difference” – in creative work produced and in perspectives. Wallis also makes the connection between these pedagogical practices and the values found in Bishop and Berryman’s (2006) *Effective Teaching Profile*.

*Whānaungatanga* is a value drawn from Te Ao Māori (literally ‘the Māori world’) and is emphasised in research literature as key to addressing the needs of Māori learners. It is defined as “a sense of family connection - a relationship through shared experiences and working together which provides people with a sense of belonging” (Māoridictionary.co.nz). There are deep layers to whānaungatanga, as with each of the values Bishop identifies. He refers to each value as being a metaphor, to indicate there are riches of meaning that cannot be conveyed through literal interpretations (Bishop 2012). There are strong parallels between relational pedagogy, the development of an effective ensemble culture and building whānaungatanga.

While whānaungatanga refers to quality relationships, *whakawhānaungatanga* refers to the process of establishing these relationships (Bishop, et al., 2007). It is the ‘how to’. Practice-based illustrations of whakawhānaungatanga are provided here, however immersion in the teachings of Māori educators is needed to truly appreciate the riches of these values, drawn from mātauranga Māori (Pihama, Smith, Taki, & Lee, 2004). Ritchie (1992) emphasises the connection between whānaungatanga and the other values, explaining that each empowers the other in an interconnected web. The web metaphor provides a useful model, which captures the interplay between the practices discussed here - practices that both characterise and enable whānaungatanga.

![](image_url)

*Figure 1. Key features in ensemble building and their connection to culturally responsive practice*

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4 Traditional Māori knowledge, customs and practices
Whakawhānaungatanga - building an effective ensemble environment in the drama classroom

Each key feature (see Figure 1) is now outlined below and the connections to culturally responsive practice are discussed.

1. Through maanakitanga – caring and trustworthy behaviour as the teacher

Classrooms that are emotionally safe and respectful demonstrate an ethic of caring that is *maanakitanga*. MacFarlane (2004, p. 80) explains that teachers who demonstrate maanakitanga use a range of strategies to “promote the caring process in the classroom”. For Māori and Pasifika students this means having their cultural knowledge, beliefs and identity respected and acknowledged. He stresses that enacting maanakitanga is not optional, but obligatory for the effective teacher who wishes to be valued in return. Capturing the themes of responsibility, hospitality, reciprocity and caring, maanakitanga involves both the heart – having compassion for students, and the head – reflecting on the quality of the professional and personal roles they undertake as teachers (MacFarlane, 2004, p. 81).

Similarly, there is a strong ethic of caring needed for successful ensemble learning (Rabin, 2009). Istance and Dumont explain why the relational dimension is so important in learning:

> Learning results from a dynamic interplay of emotion, motivation and cognition…It is therefore important to understand not just learners’ cognitive development but their motivations and emotional characteristics as well. (Istance & Dumont, 2010, p. 321)

There are risks involved in being in relationship. Neelands (2010, p. 131) outlines these, saying:

> The teacher/leader is taking risks in seeking a shift in the normative power relations within the class and between the class and the teacher…Young people must make themselves vulnerable and visible in order to participate and must know that there is protection and mutual respect for difference from within the group to match the personal and social challenges of taking a part in the action.

As part of facilitating effective creative and collaborative drama work, teachers in my study emphasised the need to be trustworthy, to show genuine care and interest in each of their students, and to be consistent and fair in their dealings with students – that is, they emphasised maanakitanga. These teachers were mindful of the need to demonstrate warmth and enthusiasm as part of their facilitation of drama work. They also reinforced the need to build, maintain and repair (when necessary) their relationships with each student (Cody, 2013, p. 233).

School students in the study also strongly emphasised relational practices. They valued teacher behaviours and attitudes that increased emotional safety, enabled trust to develop, and positively impacted the tone of the classroom. They believed drama teachers needed confidence, a willingness to work in role, enthusiasm, humour, openness, positivity and warmth.
Always be positive and enthusiastic. And happy;
Be confident and relate to your students;
Let [students] do the work instead of you doing it for them.
(Student Interview: Year 11 Ju)

Be enthusiastic. Don’t be dull because that will make the class real boring;
Join in in what we are doing. Like [Mr X] gives examples and actually acts out things.
(Student Interview: Year 12 Dav)

Make [students] feel comfortable for what you are trying to teach them;
Also have fun as well. [The teacher] can have fun too if they want too.
(Student Interview: Year 10 Ph)

These students valued the mutuality of participation and enjoyment in the learning experience. This quality of relationship is also supported in the literature. Winston (2009, p. 44) notes that effective drama teachers intentionally foster qualities of “gaiety”, “compassion”, “charm” and “good-hearted cheerfulness” for both their intrinsic virtue and as part of establishing “a spirit of co-operation and generous good-humour”. Such qualities can be seen to acts of hospitality (Palmer, 1998) – a core concept of maanakitanga.

The students involved in the Te kotahitanga research voiced similar themes in describing the teachers they considered to be most effective. These included teachers who had a sense of humour, were approachable, fair and compassionate, participated in the lessons, and showed genuine interest:

You can tell he respects us, because when it comes to learning big time he’s always there, if we don’t understand something he doesn’t talk to us like little babies, he talks to us like young adults.

And you can rely on him, he’s there. Like some teachers are distant to you but he’s always there.

I suppose if you wanted to talk to someone you could talk to Mr H. (School 1: Group 2, 2004)

(Bishop, et al., 2007, p. 157)

Drama teachers and the students in my study described a sense of safety and emotional connection with each other that they did not experience in other disciplines. David’s students referred to the drama environment as being more relaxed and friendlier than in other subjects. One student referred to their Year 12 class as being “a family” and several students spoke about the high level of trust they had established as a group over the years of working together in Drama. These students also noted that their relationship with David was warmer and more responsive than the relationships with teachers of other subjects. Julia’s students also experienced her approach as being different to their other teachers. They described her as being “a lot happier” and felt she related to them more than other teachers did. These students recognised that the quality of their relationship with their drama teacher impacted the nature of their participation:
With other teachers the most talking you do is about answering questions or asking questions but in drama there is more discussing it and learning a bit more. You are a lot more willing to put your hand up and say something.

(Student interview: Year 12 Dav)

Effective drama pedagogy involves the development of an authentic connection between a teacher and their students in a way that communicates genuine care and trustworthiness. To enact *manaakitanga* in the context of culturally responsive practice, a further dimension must be added; where drama teachers care for their students as cultural beings. As Bishop and Berryman (2009, p. 30) explain, “Māori people see, understand and interact with the world in very different ways”, therefore culturally responsive teachers must work to create an environment where these diverse cultural understandings, experiences and ways of being in the world can be acknowledged and drawn upon. Furthermore, when these ways of being and seeing are brought forward, culturally-competent teachers can be trusted to recognise, value and build on these offerings.

2. Through ngā whakapiringatanga - thoughtful planning and management of emotional and social risks

Effective management of interactions in the classroom is needed in order to sustain a positive, relation-based environment. Bishop and Berryman state:

…teachers need to be able to organise classrooms so that all the individuals involved are able to contribute to their own learning and to support the learning of others. Ngā whakapiringatanga is about teachers taking professional responsibility for activating the engagement of all learners. (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, p. 30)

Part of being a trustworthy facilitator means ensuring students are not out of their depth in the work. Drama teachers must engage in thoughtful planning, cognisant of the emotional and social risks drama work entails in order to ‘secure, well-managed learning environment’ – ngā whakapiringatanga. The trustworthy teacher keeps the (emotional and social) ‘stakes’ low, while valuing (spotting & acknowledging) risk-taking in student work and pushing students to commit more and go further in their ideas.

To encourage engagement in the risky business of performing in front of peers, teachers in my study stressed the importance of valuing student participation and effort over performance expertise. This might mean early lessons begin with whole group improvisation tasks without requiring performance presentations. Conventions such as *Still Images* and *Thought-tracking* allow students to move briefly into role. More confident students can be invited to share moments of work before less confident students are asked to do so. Through thoughtful planning, teachers are able to scaffold the performative and social risks, and to provide learning time needed for students’ to develop the skills and practical knowledge they require to be successful in more challenging tasks. In doing so, they create a secure learning environment in which students can take artistic risks.

The youngest of the students I interviewed in my study were well aware of these risks. They told me they considered it important that drama teachers accept students’ boundaries at times, and to avoid embarrassing students:

...
Don’t put people on the spot if they really don’t want to do it. Don’t force them because if you force them to do something in the play, the play will be bad because they won’t be acting as well. And if they don’t want to do it, you can just help them to be more confident.

(Student interview: Year 7-8 Ja)

There is a dynamic relationship between safety and risk in the Drama classroom because risk-taking in creative work is seen as important to achieving depth and aesthetic impact (Burnett Bonczek & Storck, 2013). The (socially and psychologically) safe ‘container’ that drama teachers establish with their ensemble groups must also be a space where creative risks can be taken. Drama teachers in my study were very aware of this dialectic:

On the one hand [students] have to feel comfortable enough to risk, but on the other hand I don’t think they need to become too comfortable because otherwise it just becomes too easy and they don’t try any more. Grace

David emphasised the place of role models – the teacher, visiting professional theatre artists and senior students – who model expertise and encourage participation and risk-taking for other students.

It’s about taking risks. It’s about them feeding off each other and we’ve now got some strong performance individuals in the classes who will try things out and other guys will think, “Oh jeez that’s okay, I can have a go at that”. David

In order to effectively lead in the drama classroom, teachers need to be attuned to the experiences of their learners and appreciate the social context and performative demands of the subject discipline. Thoughtful planning that allows for trust to develop in step with the risks demanded by the work enables students to experience a greater sense of security. Teachers who demonstrate such skills possess a level of “withitness” (Kounin, 1977) that enables students to have confidence in them, increasing their mana5 and their effectiveness.

3. Through ngā whakapiringatanga - teaching metacognition

Teaching metacognition in Drama is another strategy to enable learners to take control of their learning. Metacognitive strategies are essential in assisting learners to become self-regulated (Timperley, 2013). Both metacognition and self-regulation have been found to significantly impact academic performance, despite student ability and/or prior learning (Aamodt & Wong, 2011; Hacker, Dunlosky, & Graesser, 2009; Ponitz et al., 2008; Pressley & Harris, 2006). Lucas and Claxton (2010) provide a definition:

Metacognition is essentially thinking about thinking. Metacognitive skills are the higher order skills which ensure learners have the ability to stand back and take control of their own learning.

If students are aware of the kind of cognitive and affective experiences they might have when engaging in a learning task - and if they have strategies they can apply - they can use this awareness “to initiate, motivate and direct their own efforts... instead of relying on others as agents of instruction” (Schunk & Zimmerman, 1994). As metacognitive strategies equip students to participate more fully, more consciously and more autonomously in learning processes, they are part of developing a ‘secure, well-

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5 Mana is a Māori term referring to a person having status, authority, power and/or influence
managed learning environment’ – the value of ngā whakapiringatanga.

3.1 Metacognition – thinking about the creative collaborative process

Drama teachers can empower student participation by teaching students about the creative process and the skills required to work collaboratively on creative tasks. Giving students thinking strategies and an awareness of the metacognitive experiences (Flavell, 1979) they might have can support them in this work. Ideas in drama can be developed from a range of sources and processes – including spontaneous processes such as improvisation, where certain ways of thinking are useful. Improvisation requires a level of spontaneity that counters much of our schooling; the merits of ideas are usually weighed up before they are publically offered. In improvisation, the onus is on the group to work with an idea offered rather than on individuals coming up with amazing ‘offers’. Teaching students to “Say Yes!” to ideas and to refrain from judgment is an important metacognitive strategy for moving ahead with improvisation and devising.

Teaching students about the kinds of inner experiences and challenges ahead is a way to equip them to sustain participation. For instance, students can benefit from learning that they can expect to experience cognitive dissonance; that it is possible to make a number of false starts in collaborative creative work; that following a creative lead may result in a dead end where the group has to back track or start over; that, in the face of the creative chaos of possibilities, it is useful to trust that something will emerge from the group’s creative “scratchings” (Tharp, 2003). Students who have an understanding of the processes they are working through are better supported, reducing the interpersonal conflict such collaborative creative tasks may invite.

3.2 Metacognition – thinking about the skills required to work as an effective ensemble

Alongside metacognitive strategies for engaging in the creative process, effective pedagogy in drama includes developing students’ metacognitive awareness of interpersonal strategies that support their collaborative work and enable an effective ensemble culture to develop. This means extending students’ self-awareness and social skills so they can come to see how the nature of their participation impacts others and the work generated. Noddings (2003) argues that learning about conflict and cooperation is absolutely vital for young people and should feature more prominently in the curriculum of our schools. Inevitably, collaborative work gives rise to conflict as well as cooperation. Therefore, there is a process of teaching both the skills of cooperation and giving opportunity for students to reflect on their metacognitive experiences in this learning environment. Such work enables a ‘secure, well-managed learning environment’ – ngā whakapiringatanga.

The addition of the Key Competencies in the New Zealand curriculum (Ministry of Education, 2007) has emphasised the importance of pro-social outcomes for learners as they engage in learning across the curriculum. The competencies of Relating to Others, Managing Self, and Participation and Contribution encapsulate the skills needed to participate effectively in an ensemble. This increased appreciation for pro-social outcomes has given Drama a greater profile in some settings, and drama teachers more pedagogical confidence (Cody, 2013).

The experienced drama teachers in my study are very clear about the importance of

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6 The Key Competencies include Thinking, Using language, symbol and text, Relating to Others, Participating & contributing, and Managing Self
interpersonal skills and processes. Aroha maintains the drama classroom is a place where social skills, cooperation, creativity, diversity, and acceptance of each other are taught and valued, describing these values as being like “tikanga” – the way we do things in drama; how we respond to each other”. These values have immediate relevance to the artistic/performance contexts students are working in. In particular, Aroha emphasises trust, generosity and acceptance of others through rehearsal processes and in the many problem-solving tasks students are confronted with in drama. Fraser et al. (2007) also acknowledge that the extensive use of group work in the Arts provides students with many opportunities to build relational skills in listening, turn taking, questioning and supporting others.

Similarly Julia sees the social dynamic in the classroom as one of the most important things to get right and acknowledges the powerful influence individuals can have on the group. She notes the need to manage participation and relationships in the classroom in order to differentiate learning for varying abilities and to allow all students to engage.

One of the key pedagogical strategies employed by drama teachers in my study to develop interpersonal awareness was the use of drama games. Typically, drama games involve concentration, active listening, physical discipline, making offers (giving creative ideas), accepting and extending on the offers of others (without reservation), and attuning to dynamic social cues. They often involve spontaneous and random groupings, physical contact and the sharing of personal space. Games that are fun and involve humour also make an important contribution to the development of a sense of unity in the group. The skills are overtly identified to students in order to increase their metacognitive awareness of what is valued and expected in the drama classroom.

As previously noted, ngā whakapiringatanga concerns the creation of a secure, supportive environment that enables learning and active engagement for every student. Cooperative learning and peer support is a key feature of an effective learning environment for Māori learners explored in the literature. MacFarlane argues that,

Māori students, in the main, have a co-operative orientation towards learning and life, and the whānaungatanga aspects within cooperative learning classroom structures have the potential to facilitate improved academic engagement. (MacFarlane, 2004, p. 71).

A central concept in Māori education is that of the tuakana–teina relationship, where an older sibling (or more expert student) teaches a younger sibling (or less expert) of the same gender. The use of such cooperative learning strategies is recommended for Māori learners (Ministry of Education, 2009; Winitana, 2012). Greenwood and Te Aïka’s (2008) study of Māori tertiary students affirmed that tertiary students valued being able to share expertise and to actively support one another in their learning. Drama teachers who teach metacognition and facilitate learning about collaborative creative processes are able to maximise the opportunities these processes afford to their students, while providing an environment that supports Māori learners.

4. Through mana motuhake - high expectations

It is a well-established fact that teacher expectations have a significant impact on student performance (Oakes, 1985; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Tomlinson & Javius, 2012). Holding high expectations for, and caring about, student performance is a key feature of Bishop and Berryman’s Effecti ve Teaching Profile, expressed through the

7 Tikanga – the term for appropriate customs, protocols and practices for Māori.
value of *mana motuhake*. These authors note that teachers who had low expectations for their Māori students “by and large received poor-quality work from them” (Bishop & Berryman, 2006, p. 30).

Given the problem of calling on deficit theories to explain Māori underachievement, teachers who hold high expectations of their Māori students, and who back these up with effective and culturally responsive teaching practices, are part of the solution. Defined as “agentic teachers”, Bishop and Berryman (2009, p. 29) explain that such teachers reject deficit explanations, rather they:

- see themselves as being able to solve problems that come their way and
- having recourse to skills and knowledge that can help all of their students, and that they believe all of their students can achieve, no matter what.

Alton-Lee’s research (2003, p. 25) found that expectations for learning must also be backed up with quality teaching. She explains that a “culture of niceness” can undermine achievement and, if unsupported by effective teaching, high expectations can be detrimental to the teacher-student relationship and to student achievement. In addition, she found a balance between critical reflection and encouragement is needed to support achievement.

Participants in my study believed strongly that drama teachers need to hold high expectations of all students, while maintaining interactions that are positive and affirming.

> I don’t think that just being completely sweet and accepting … it’s nice and it’s comfortable for a while but it doesn’t move students on, it doesn’t make them better or challenge them. **Grace**

Grace believes good drama teachers are able to push their students on to higher levels of achievement. She sets clear expectations for her students in terms of their focus and self-discipline, and while she works to facilitate and guide students in work they create, she refuses to accept work that is below standard.

> This is one of the things I’m quite clear about. Just because something is hard, doesn’t mean you don’t do it. Yes it is hard, so you’ve got to work harder in order to make it happen. **Grace**

Fundamentally, these teachers are committed to assisting each student to discover their own creativity, believing that each student is capable of creative acts. **James** positions his students as capable, aesthetic “knowers” who often exceed the expectations adults have of them. He gives the example of the low expectations theatre works for children can have of children’s capacities.

> … we are amazed at how children don’t like plays put on for children. They don’t like being condescended to. If you gave them a play and said this play is going to be all about refugees and how you’ve got to treat them and all the rest … Nah! They’re not going to watch that, just like adults don’t want to. **James**

The level of co-construction and negotiation in **James’** work reflects his high expectations. He consults with his students and respects their opinions, which also deepens the interpersonal relationship he has with them (Frymier & Houser, 2000). **Aroha** believes expecting students will have “something to offer” is a vital. She explains that this means being aware that students will be working at varying levels and “recognising what [individuals] are giving”, rather than expecting all students to attain blanket standards. She stresses the need to build loyalty in students so they come to
class wanting to share or eager to carry on from the previous lesson. To encourage the development of this work ethic, she uses goal-setting to co-construct and articulate expectations with students.

Similarly, David is mindful of the range of student abilities and needs within each class. He retains the right to determine the make-up of groups, particularly for assessment in senior drama, so he can determine a grouping that will continue to stretch and challenge students artistically and socially – allowing for greater differentiation.

*It’s good because it challenges them to move outside the boundaries. Because a few of them will go back to the same group every time and they get in these ruts and it actually limits their creativity … they get into routine and they have their little hierarchy already established. David*

These teachers get satisfaction in seeing their students’ progress, even if these gains are not reflected in formal assessment results. They are willing to invest in students with various abilities, not just those high-achievers. Julia notes:

*It fascinates me because you often find that the very talented students are not the ones who are developing as much as the ones who come in and who are a bit shy and scared. And we can get so much more from them. Julia*

Phillip stresses the importance of establishing a work ethic in the drama classroom. He believes he needs to set an example himself – in the effort he makes, and through consistency in his attitudes and in his expectations of students. This is an area of teacher practice also supported in research literature (Hawk, et al., 2002) Aroha makes a connection between low teacher expectations and students’ lack of discipline and passion for their work in Drama. She believes teachers who have low expectations, who give too much focus on task instructions and not enough focus on building relationships with the students, produce students who are slow to engage and “laid back” in their approach to drama work.

The goals of independence and autonomy are intrinsically linked to the notion of *mana motuhake*, and are sometimes offered as a definition the term (Alton-Lee, Westera, & Pulegatoa-Diggins, 2012, p. 4). These goals were also highlighted by the teachers in my study in their discussion of high expectations. Grace insists students take personal responsibility for both their work and for maintaining productive working relationships. She explains:

*I will constantly reinforce the fact that if you don’t meet your responsibilities to the group, I’m not going to save you. Grace*

David also resists rescuing students from interpersonal challenges in collaborative work, believing there are greater rewards for students who can negotiate these conflicts with some autonomy.

*It’s good to see one or two of the more highly driven kids having to cope with someone in the group who is looking out the window all the time when they are trying to get something done, and they will come to me and say, “oh …” and I’ll say, “It’s your group, you have to sort it out”. David*

Participants in my study strongly emphasised the need for drama teachers to hold high expectations for all students, in order to lift student achievement and autonomy. This is an important disposition for agentic teachers of Māori students, who need to recognise and reject deficit theories of explanation for Māori underachievement, in order to create a classroom culture that will empower Māori learners.
5. Through ako - co-artistry, reflection and consultation processes

The notion of ako is significant in effective pedagogies for Māori learners (Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Ministry of Education, 2011). Ako refers to being simultaneously a learner and a teacher, and incorporates power-sharing and relational practices. In line with socio-cultural theories of learning (Mercer & Howe, 2012), ako is described as “a teaching–learning practice that involves teachers and students learning in interactive, dialogic relationships” (Bishop & Berryman, 2009, p. 31). This requires a redressing of the power relations found in traditional Western classrooms. The principle of tino rangatiratanga (relative autonomy) is at the heart of Māori education initiatives and reflects the desire for Māori to be autonomous and self-determining in decisions impacting Māori people. On the micro level, this is enacted in classrooms where Māori learners can have input into their learning, determine their own goals, and where teachers inquire into the effectiveness of their teaching through consultation with their students (Bishop, 2012; Bishop & Glynn, 1999).

In the context of the drama classroom, three key pedagogical practices resonate with the notion of ako. These include undertaking a role of co-artist, the practice of group reflection, and the practice of group consultation.

5.1 Co-artistry

Haseman (2002) describes the drama teacher as being ‘leaderly’ – that is, the work in not explicitly teacher-driven but is also not without a leader. Leadership is provided by the drama teacher’s choices to structure and scaffold the dramatic learning experience. These choices may include times of leading from the front, times when teachers work in and out of role, and times when they direct students to reflect on the action (Anderson, 2004). Holland and O’Connor (2004) found that arts teachers often took the role of co-artist. Similarly, in an exploration of two case studies in drama and dance, authors Deans, O’Toole, Raphael, and Young (2009, p. 166) identify aspects of the teacher’s role in the learning process as ‘facilitator’, ‘questioner’, as ‘participant and sharer’ – all of which could be seen to be facets of the co-artist role. Co-artistry demands shared power and co-operation – and its success rests on a healthy relationship between teacher and students. It also includes offering opportunities to discuss thinking, encouraging inquiry and critical thinking, and encouraging acts of creativity (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). These are all dimensions of dialogic teaching (Mercer & Howe, 2012).

Drama teachers in my study share power with students so that they might develop their own sense of identity and agency as artists. The drama contexts for this varied. For the secondary teachers, significant opportunities for co-artistry happened within the performance of play texts or within devising contexts. On occasion devising may involve the whole class but more frequently occurred in small group contexts. These dramatic contexts allow varying levels of involvement for the teacher and students.

While the level of involvement may vary, drama teachers frequent operate as a co-artist. They may allow students choice in content and the power to make artistic decisions. Frequently, they design work that allows space for students to pursue stories and themes that are of interest to them or arise from their own worlds. This work may also be balanced with work that is more teacher-led – though, as James’ case reveals (Cody, 2013, p. 104), this may still involve considerable negotiation. Aitken et al. (2007) argue that allowing spaces for children to determine “where the learning may go rather than teachers determining where it will go” enables children to “participate more fully and actively construct knowledge through engagement with their teachers, their peers and the real and imagined words of drama” (p. 16). Teachers-as-co-artists provide
constructive feedback on creative work, which students can consider or disregard. They scaffold and structure work, teaching artistic-aesthetic processes and content for students to apply. Ultimately these teachers actively seek to give ownership of creative work over to the students.

Grace’s teaching programme offers students a wide range of choices in both their focus of study and in the aspects of work they wish to have assessed, in order to allow students to be spurred on by their own interest and curiosity. In this way, there is room for greater ownership and engagement with the work. As part of allowing creative space, Julia explains that she takes the role of facilitator, though at times will lead in order to model or inform students so they can explore these new ideas and lead the exploration themselves. In her work with juniors, Julia will intentionally design lessons that allow students to take ownership of the creative work emerging:

*They are the ones that decide which direction to take things in and often that is what happens. It doesn’t matter how well I have planned, what I have planned to happen in this sequence of lessons, the students may take it in a totally different direction and that is great.* **Julia**

While inventive teaching might be seen as creative, it is responsiveness – to context, to students, to the unexpected, to the moment, that gives rise to creativity and marks a creative teacher (Jeffrey & Craft, 2004). In this way, Julia’s artistry manifests as the ability to design and facilitate learning experiences that enable her to work alongside students as a co-artist. Julia’s students expressed appreciation for the openness of her practice in their interview. They recognised and valued the space she provides for them to make their own discoveries.

- Yeah she waits until we have something we are happy with. And then she says, “oh how about you guys do this” or “just try this and see how it goes”, kinda thing and she waits for us to learn it, not just tell us.
- She lets you do the thinking and you learn and it’s easier to remember if you discover.

(Student Interview: Year 11 Ju)

According to Julia’s students, this provision of intellectual space includes giving time to master skills and techniques, and allowing time for all students to form understandings before moving on to new content.

### 5.2 Consultation and reflection processes

Two other facets of drama teaching practice are part of establishing an ensemble culture and resonate with the notion of ako – that is, the use of consultation processes and the practice of whole group reflection.

As outlined above, drama teachers regularly share power with their students through negotiation over contexts, aesthetic decisions and processes, and through contracting together the kinds of values, routines and protocols the group will adhere to. The contracting of protocols and behaviour may be explicit – through written and signed contracts or through more informal agreement. This kind negotiation is seen in the work of Māori theatre practitioner, Jim Moriarty, who believes it to be vital in order to develop a shared, ethical vision for working together. Moriarty explains his process is that of establishing Tika (the values and principles the group will work with), Tikanga (the protocols and customs the group will adhere to) and engaging in regular reflection.
on Pono (the everyday actions and behaviours of the group).

This is a process which Indigenous mental health practitioner, Te Ao Pritchard refers to as “negotiating the kawa” (Personal communication 03/09/2013). Pritchard sees this consultation process as a means to creating a ‘living agreement’ as to how will we behave “in the presence of each other” in order to achieve a sense of unity alongside acknowledgement of diversity. Moriarty explains that the process of group negotiation and reflection allows members to raise and resolve tensions, reflect on group processes and individual contributions, and provides both accountability and support for the ongoing work of the group (Personal communication 29/08/2013). Both practitioners talked about this being a contract that needs to be revisited and reviewed in an ongoing way.

Reflection in Drama happens in a number of ways – individual and group reflection, reflection in and out of role, and reflection in and out of the action of a drama. Reflection might happen during exploratory drama work and may also occur in the form of critical (formative) feedback on creative work presented. Teachers in my study emphasised the importance of reflection as both performers and as audience members in order for students to develop artistic-aesthetic understandings. Here, in line with socio-cultural learning theory (Alexander, 2004), students are conceptualised as ‘knowers’ (Palmer, 1998) - their observations, reflections, their aesthetic engagement, their inner experience are pathways to deeper understandings about drama. Group reflection is a dialogic process where understandings are co-constructed between students and the teacher, and where insights from individuals’ experience and personal response are important sources of knowledge that may further shape artistic-aesthetic work. When framed constructively, the feedback from peers on drama work can be highly affirming and useful for generating new ideas (Saxton & Miller, 2008; Wallis, 2010).

An example of this comes from Aroha’s work (Cody, 2013, p. 217). In order to increase students’ critical awareness of the artistic-aesthetic dimensions of their drama work and the work of others, Aroha asks them to work as an “outside eye” for others. This is a process Aroha models, working alongside students to record and deconstruct drama their work and helping them to reflect on their decisions. This process enables students to practise giving and receiving constructive criticism. Students are taught to trust their own perceptions and responses when in the viewer role, and to offer these observations as part of formative feedback processes. This reflective role is undertaken with increasing independence in senior Drama, where students engage in critical reflection and feedback processes with their peers, independent of their teacher. Although not all participants in my study used the term ‘outside eye’, other teachers also engaged their students in critical reflection as part of developing their depth of understanding, aesthetic awareness and autonomy.

These teachers model ako through the provision of a space where students’ aesthetic experience, feedback and reflections are valued and validated. Through co-artistry and consultation processes, teachers involve students in decision-making and enable them to give feedback about matters that impact their learning. In these ways, teachers encourage student autonomy and responsibility for work and for their relationships.

Conclusions

In addressing how drama teachers might develop in cultural competence, there is much to gain from reflecting on effective drama teaching practice. This article has discussed

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8 Kawa – a contemporary use of the term, referring to the guidelines a group will follow. Other iwi (tribes) may refer to this as ‘tikanga’
several dimensions of drama teacher practice related to whakawhānaungatanga; that is the process of building whānaungatanga – equated here to the development of an effective ensemble environment. Demonstrating authenticity and genuine care for students (maanakitanga) is an essential feature of effective, culturally responsive drama teaching. In order to provide a secure and well-managed classroom (ngā whakapiringatanga), ‘agentic’ drama teachers support their relationships with students through quality teaching. This includes effective management of safety and risk, the teaching of metacognition and the intentional development of pro-social skills. Ako is demonstrated in drama classrooms through the use of dialogic teaching strategies that position students as ‘knowers’ in three key ways: power-sharing through the role of co-artist, through consultation, and through reflection processes. These teachers hold a genuine belief that all students’ are capable of growth, no matter their cultural backgrounds. Accordingly, effective and culturally responsive drama teachers convey high expectations for all students, empowering student autonomy and interdependence, while remaining responsive in their relationships (mana motuhake).

Closing thoughts
My intention in this article has been to identify and explore the strategies that effective drama teachers employ to develop an effective ensemble culture in their classrooms, and to make connections to culturally responsive teaching practices for Māori learners. In order that New Zealand drama teachers grow in cultural competence, it is important we can engage more deeply with the opportunities existing within our discipline to achieve these ends. This exploration of culturally responsive and effective drama teaching practice has focused on the building of whānaungatanga, the development of a secure learning environment and the teacher-student relationship, but it does not address all the ways in which drama teachers can be culturally responsive. The drama curriculum offers teachers the space to use Māori and Pasifika performing arts, texts that focus on bicultural and multi-cultural New Zealand, to explore national and local histories, and to reflect on social issues relevant to Māori students (Tangata Whenuatanga). In addition, the use of Te Reo Māori in classrooms is a significant area of cultural competence New Zealand drama teachers might seek to grow in. In addition, drama teachers might increase their connection with whānau and local iwi, through consultation, public performances, forums, and teacher-student-whānau conferencing (Wānanga; Kotahitanga). While the dimensions of effective and culturally responsive drama practice outlined here are focused on the New Zealand context, these can be applied in drama classrooms internationally.

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• Te Ao Pritchard (Ngā Puhi, Samoan) – Kaiwhakaruruhau, Indigenous Practitioner
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The limits of Language:
A Case Study of an Arts-Based Research Exploration

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Abstract
This paper has a twofold focus. It explores some of the possibilities of arts-based research, in particular how drama processes might be used to variously research social issues, to research art-making, and to research teaching through drama. It also reports a drama encounter between Bangladeshi and Czech teachers. The encounter took place through a three day workshop exploring uses of art-based research in Prague. The need to work across languages and cultures prompted us to begin the workshop by working without language. This developed into a focus for an hoc methodological study that considered how such a cultural encounter might be considered in terms of the three research focuses identified above. This paper both reports the cross-cultural encounter and maps some of the different ways the small body of data generated by the encounter might be used to address a range of research questions. As such its approach is conceptual rather than the report of empirical evidence.

Biography

JANINKA GREENWOOD is Professor of Education at the University of Canterbury, and Director of the Research Lab for Creativity and Change. Her current research focuses on teacher education and the development of criticality and the processes of change. She has a long-standing engagement with the uses for arts for learning and with arts-based research, and strong interests in learning communities, cultural difference, post-colonialisations and practice-based research methodologies. She is a Co-Convener of the Emergent Researchers Network in EERA (European Educational Research Association). She has various projects with colleagues in Norway, Canada, Czech Republic, Germany, Thailand, Malaysia and Bangladesh as well as in New Zealand, and works with local and international students. Her publications can be found on http://www.canterbury.ac.nz/spark/Researcher.aspx?researcherid=2020212
Introduction: Purpose and focus

We live in a world filled with texts and images. Sometimes they so saturate our senses that we are unaware of them. Sometimes we actively engage with them to create dialogues of various kinds. We each also create our own texts and images, in speech, writing and bodily presence, sometimes overtly and intentionally explicit in their communication, sometimes weaving complex webs of sub-text, sometimes latently provocative as silence.

It is in this arena of complexity that arts-based research plays an important role. Many researchers have found that the more traditional tools of qualitative research are insufficient to explore the complexity of meanings, relations, attitudes and understandings. We may look at the long-established palette of interviews, observations, document analysis and see them like the old train in the image below: well-built but a little rusty and parked beside railways lines that are too definitively linear for the research journeys we want to take.

![Image 1: Photo of old train at a Czech railway station, 2014 (Personal Source).](image)

Arts-based research grows out of the search to find ways to sidestep the constraints of predominantly intellectual and verbal ways of exploring ‘big questions’, and to find new richer ways of situating and understanding knowledge. Art products and art processes allow us ways to explore and play with form and meaning in ways that can be more visceral and more interactive.

This paper explores one learning encounter and examines a range of ways arts-based tools might be used to research aspects of the encounter. In the process it maps some of the different ways the data might be analysed to address different kinds of focus. It also reports some of what might be called findings and indicates areas that might provoke further inquiry.

The encounter took place through a three day workshop exploring uses of art-based research in Prague. Although the majority of the participants were Czech and either teachers of drama or doctoral students, three Bangladeshi teachers joined the group. The Bangladeshi teachers spoke English and no Czech; few of the Czechs spoke much English, and I, the facilitator, spoke Czech and English. The need to work across languages and cultures prompted us to begin the workshop with a session where we worked without language, developing physical imagery and finding ways to negotiate and refine work without words. This developed into a focus for our methodological discussion and we looked at ways the study of such a cultural encounter might serve each of three primary research proposes that could be meaningful and useful to our group: using art to research social issues, to research art-making, to research teaching.
through drama. We developed a small body of data based on the first wordless session and a further body of work exploring the theme of “ma vlast” (my heritage/identity).

A brief meander through Europe before coming to the encounter

The seminar took place at the end of a short trip to Europe by me and the Bangladeshi teachers. We had been to a conference in Portugal together, briefly visited Paris, with its cathedrals, Eiffel Tower and Louvre, and came to Prague, the city of my birth, for the workshop which I would lead. Like all tourists we succumbed, to varying degrees, to the addiction of taking photographs. My companions photographed everything: scenery, buildings, food, people and themselves in relation to everything they experienced. We returned with thousands of photographic images. Of particular interest to me were the interrelationships between us, the experiences we had (individually and together), the camera, and the layers of imagery that emerged. The images that follow are made from photographs taken by from our collective archive. With the permission of my colleagues, I created the collated images.

The composite image (Image 2) below illustrates a simple case of the shifting focus of perception. In the first photo the camera is outside, held by one of our group while the rest of us (in red café blankets) are seen enjoying our food. In the second photo, again captured by the one outside the frame, we see the process of capturing an image of the food. In the third photo the image of the food is being looked at in the camera and the outside photographer captures the act of looking. Our immediate experience included all these dimensions: being, deliberately looking, and being deliberately looked at. Our later reflections were mediated not only by our own experiential memories (visceral, emotional and mental) but also by the way the act of photographing had crystallised specific aspects of experiences and by way the collected images recalled the experience to us. All this then might be called data. As I will discuss later, such a composite and complex approach to data has important implications for arts-based research.

Figure 1. Three different purposes for using arts-based research.

1 The individual photos were taken by Alam, Salahuddin, Rasheed and Author. After a time it is difficult to remember who took each photo and so we have all agreed to assign collective attribution.
Sometimes the act of looking is more important than what is being looked at. Sometimes we cannot see because of pressure associated with looking. I first remember looking at a print of the Mona Lisa when I was in my early teens and wondering, like others, why a woman who was supposed to be mysteriously beautiful had no eyebrows. Over the next five decades I have often looked at images of the painting, sometimes with careful attention. One time when I did not really look at the Mona Lisa was when I was in the Louvre during this journey. I think I did intend to. I saw the wall the painting was hung on. I saw the frame and an image of some kind inside it. Above all I saw the crowds of people and their cameras between me and the target I had come to view. In truth the crowds did not really block my view; they pushed and moved and everyone got a chance to spend time at the front barrier. Rather it was that my focus seemed to be on going to the Louvre, finding the hall with the Mona Lisa and shuffling through the mass of moving people to secure my own vantage post. The arrival point was neither a disappointment nor an enchantment. The painted image simply dissolved into the dense montage of other experiences. The recollection reminds me of the intense subjectivity and situatedness of attention and understanding.

It seems the others in our party might have had similar experiences. Image 3 below captures some of this fractured experience of encountering the Mona Lisa. One of our group did actually photograph the painting, at an angle that did it less justice than images that could be gleaned from the internet, but as a kind of evidence of personal presence. The second photo in the image captures the omnipresence of other people’s cameras and infers the presence of our own party’s camera as one of us turns spontaneously from looking at the painting to face the camera that will record his presence. In the third photo there is a deliberate pose that signals the satisfactory completion of an experience of discovery and witness.

Not only is looking a complex matter; so is being seen. Image 4 hints at the complex ways viewpoints interplay to determine relationship and positionality. In the first photo in the collage my colleague is seen presenting an image of the school he has been researching. He is well outside the image. He is alive in the room; the image is frozen on a screen behind him. He can be seen clearly; the image is bleeding out. He has control; he points to the image signaling the significance of its aspects. In the second photo I point the camera at ceramics in the museum, but it is me who has become the subject. Moreover, my reflection is caught in the glass casing and I surround and even become part of what I am looking at. Yet this is the first time I have seen these objects and they are several thousand years older than me. On the other hand, my colleague has been an active participant in the research that is flattened on the wall behind him: he shares language, culture, history and religious belief with the research participants; he has walked with them, talked with them and shares love with them. Separately each of the photos reflect an aspect of how we might be seen and see ourselves as insiders or outsiders in a research project. As a composite image, with accompanying narratives, they suggest more complex and sliding positions. They hint that what is seen is not always the truth (although it may well be a truth). As I discuss later, this is important when we use arts-based processes to record and interpret experiences and outcomes.
Pausing to reflect and collect

One of the values of arts-based research is that it challenges us to acknowledge and sift through the complexity of experience. It prompts us to think again and perhaps differently about the nature of evidence, about the layers of forms and perceptions that we might consider as data. It prompts us to ask if objectivity is possible, and if it not, what might we consider in its place as a means of validating our exploration. It subverts facile positionality of ‘insider versus outsider’. Because it involves processes of making and remaking it allows us to play the hyphen (borrowing Fine’s metaphor, 1994, for re-conceptualising self and other).

Another value for those of us who are artists is that this is a form of research that uses our kinds of performative and written languages. It carries capacity to be aligned with our sense of artistic agency and with the questions we want to explore through our art. It also allows us to explore art itself.

Of course, the tools and strategies that distinguish art-based research from other forms of research have congruencies with other methodological approaches. Action research, and particularly in its participatory forms, acknowledges the blurred distinction between processes and products and is concerned with shifts in awareness. Reflective practice involves a constant re-positioning of gaze and an active deconstruction of the practitioner’s role. Photo voice asks participants to capture their ideas in images as well as in words. And, inevitably, art-based researchers can also impose their own methodological limitations on their work, sometimes developing new constricting orthodoxies.

So, in the end, perhaps it is simply the artist in us that draws us to arts-based research and that asserts the claim that our media are legitimate ways of exploring the world and creating knowledge.

And arriving finally at the workshop encounter

As explained above, the workshop was initiated as a teaching seminar. However, serendipitous presence of participants from two cultures who did not share the same language allowed us to work together in ways that developed a body of data that we could use to illustrate aspects of our conceptual exploration of methodology. The image below captures some of the moments of the shared work.

As a facilitator I was faced with the challenge of bringing the two cultural groups together actively and quickly, and without the need for turgidly polite translation. In research terms this intercultural composition of the group could be seen as giving rise to two interrelated questions: How is it possible for a teacher to operate within significant language differences? How is it possible for students to collaborate within language differences? And then as I began to shape a strategy, a third question emerged. How can the use of art(s) help?

After a brief physical encounter exercise using mirroring, I fell back on a wordless (for the participants) devising process I have used before. It begins with each individual working in their own space and devising short movement sequences in response to the prompts of home, leaving, memory, offered successively. After each separate movement
piece was explored, refined and remembered in the body, each individual was asked to create a physical narrative that integrated the three separate elements in some ways that was personally meaningful. Then I asked the participants to find a partner who they had not known before the workshop and, without speaking, to share their pieces, and from them to create a new joint performance narrative. After time given to explore and consolidate the new pieces of work, pairs were asked to find another pair and in a foursome to repeat the same wordless process. These works were then presented to the wider group (and inevitably captured in the ever-lurking mobile phone cameras).

We then talked about the experience, now using words and translating them. Participants variously commented on initial awkwardness of collaborating without language, points where a sense of flow began to develop, reluctance to surrender their own sequences, processes that emerged for contesting or yielding leadership, tendency to turn to clichés, bodily shifts from self-consciousness to relaxation, and desire to hear the verbal narrative behind one another’s stories.

We were approaching lunchtime so I then asked the participants to work over the lunch break in groups of their own choice and develop a short physical or photographic devised piece that, avoiding clichés, could exemplify the concept “ma vlast”. Ma Vlast is the title of a Smetana’s music that exalts in Czech heritage. We briefly explored what these words might mean in a contemporary context to the Czech participants in the room, and what Bangladeshi parallels might be. By now three further possible research questions were emerging in my mind. What can we learn about the cross-cultural interactions through art processes? How can we use arts to collect data? How can we interpret the data we have gathered?

The devised work was shared after lunch. And so were the images participants had taken of the morning’s work. We then talked about the work for some time, deconstructing images from viewers’ and makers’ perspectives and brainstorming themes that were emerging. This discussion, the images, and our memories of the work created a body of data that we used to inform our subsequent exploration of arts-based methodology.

The discussion that follows draws on that material and develops it to explore three...
different purposes for arts-based methodology might be used with the case of this intercultural encounter. For the most part this discussion is conceptual and speculative, building on possibilities that arose out of the workshop rather than reporting explicit inquiries or findings.

Using art to research social issues

The first purpose is one that is frequently addressed (for example, Finley, 2005; Prosser, 2011; Donelan & O’Brien, 2008) in art-based approaches to the social sciences. In such cases researcher and participants use various art processes to investigate questions that address any of a broad spectrum of social issues. The intention is to open up different, and hopefully more empowering, options for exploring such issues and expressing perspectives.

In the case of this particular intercultural encounter, there might be questions that address the processes of communication, concepts of identity, or power relationships. Each focus would direct a slightly different field of inquiry. In terms of the questions I posed to myself and discussed earlier, about finding ways to overcome language barriers, the following sub-questions might direct the investigation. How can we talk to each other? How can we negotiate meaning and refine collective understandings? What assumptions do we make in negotiating meaning? What kind of power dynamics are operating in this negotiation? How can we facilitate better communication and better understandings?

In processing the data that arose it might also be useful to pose some further questions that could also be illuminated by the data. What concepts of identity do each of us bring? As individuals? And as groups? How do we perceive the Other? And whose needs should be/are being met?

Our data gathering tools for such a study could begin with those that have been described above: wordless improvisations, devised work, photos of the processes, and reflections about processes and products. It is worth noting perhaps that while the basic process for generating work was arts-based, the data is not limited to art forms. Reflective discussion prompted by work in the arts is also an important part of the investigative process.

Analysis might take a number of directions. In the workshop we began by identifying the themes that participants saw arising out of the work, and by seeking out and developing individual narratives. We also began to note differences in interpretation and what these might suggest about the degree to which communication was perceived as effective (noting that different interpretations did not necessarily preclude effective collaboration or reflective dialogue), where the locus of power lay and how it shifted, and what cultural understandings might be latent in the work and in the dialogues. On the last day of the workshop we brainstormed but did not fully explore other ways we might analyse our data within this same broad intention. We noted we could look at the silences that occurred, and at fractures that appeared in discourses. We might focus our analysis on identifying moment of change in content focus, in energy or in group dynamics. We might overlay our analysis with a theoretical framework such as third space (Greenwood, 2005), other-ing (Said, 1978), or globalisation (Alborw & King, 1990). We might even decide to take the baseline work a little further by applying some of the analytic theatre strategies of Boal (1979) to explore and debate understandings of the problems that inhibited full and free participation, of what we might see as ideal solutions, and how we might initiate first steps.

The brainstorm is summarised in Figure 2 below.
Within the explicitly limited scope of our workshop, we did acquire some data that we could interpret and critically analyse. In terms of exploring interaction between the two cultural groups, it was evident that they did work together. Part of this may have come from innate courtesy, but it was also clear that both groups invested energy into the collaboration, were willing, in various ways, to explore the workshop’s concepts curiously and critically, and found some enjoyment in the process. Image 6 captures moments of the interactions. It shows active engagement and laughter, both during the work and while socialising in the evening.
It seemed that working physically facilitated interaction where language was an initial barrier and that working wordlessly reduced shyness and feelings of formality and awkwardness. Once both groups of participants had developed physical interaction and collaborated in physical meaning-making, they showed confidence in talking verbally, even arguing, and in informal as well as formal discussions would often call on the help of a translator to allow them to communicate at a level where they could more fully explore each other’s ideas.

**Researching art and art making**

Because all the Czech participants in the workshop were involved in some way in making theatre, be it on the stage or in the classroom, we also examined how art-making could itself be investigated by arts-based processes. It was an initial surprise to me that almost all the art workers came with the assumption that while art had the power to fire motivation and generate useful learning, artefacts themselves and the resultant learning should be investigated by more traditional research methods. Therefore, we brainstormed the methodological approaches we might take to researching the art-making itself. The resulting brainstorm is summarised in Figure 3.

![Figure 3. Brainstorm of using art to research art and art-making](image)

Here our questions centered around semiotics, the aesthetic and the realisation of makers’ intentions. Whereas in the last section the emphasis was on processes and effectiveness of communication, here the emphasis is on the work itself. How are we reading it? How do we react spontaneously? And after hearing the makers’ intentions? How do we navigate between makers’ intentions and our own reactions in interpreting the work? What traditions of performance and emotional resonances were evidenced in the work developed by the Bangladeshis? In the Czechs’ work? What kind of semiotics were evident when members of the two cultural groups worked together? We might also consider the work as in progress. How then might it be further developed? What latent texts could be teased out and explored? What attitudes or ideas might be stronger if they were expressed as sub-text rather than through overt words or actions?

The data we could use was initially the same as in the previous section, with similar tools for gathering it. However, it could also be useful to play further with the improvisations, particularly by inviting makers’ to refine their work as reaction to viewers’ readings. Art-
making is a cyclical layered process, and so in researching it, the enactive analysis of data can become data itself prompting further analysis and further data.

Analysis might again begin with participants’ reflections on the work, but now the lenses would reflect the questions about form and meaning suggested above. As we examine semiotics we might consider specific elements of drama such as language, movement, manipulation of time and space, narrative style, emergence of symbols. We might consider performative traditions and ways in which makers manoeuvre within them. We might examine emotional impact. In all these cases we step into the ambit of the aesthetic, a domain that is multi-faceted and overtly subjective (see Greenwood, 2011) and thus evasive of precise description. As researchers we might either seek to map some the complexity, as this paper is doing, or we might select a particular focus to track whilst still acknowledging it as a track within a highly complex conceptual framework.

For example, one track our data might invite us to explore is the different semiotics the two groups brought to art-making. While there was active collaboration from both sides there were also hints of difference. One of these was in the alignment of the performative body. Both the Czechs and the Bangladeshis had experience in performing on stage. Image 7 captures some of the ways their bodies expressed tension in motion, particularly in terms of spinal alignment. Perhaps this is the result of the countries’ different performative traditions as well as of different cultural concepts of personal space. If the work of devising was to progress further it might be interesting to develop exploration of this semiotic.

There were also slight differences in choice of performative style. As is seen in Image 8, the Bangladeshi trio chose a naturalistic style to perform their concept of ‘ma vlast’: they sat and talked, in Bangla, about the affairs of the day as they took tea, just as they might in their respective home villages. Most of the Czechs tended towards abstraction, building symbolic image clusters that reflected their fragmented attitudes towards national pride, europeanisation, history and contemporary challenges. No doubt this difference in chosen style arose partly from the fact that the Bangladeshis were aware of themselves as visitors to the space, but might also have grown out of previous drama-making experiences. Whether or not to encourage further border crossing would be an issue to be considered, not only in terms of its aesthetic potential, but also terms of pedagogical goals.
Researching our work in drama pedagogy

Teaching with or through drama was the primary professional focus of most of the Czech participants in the workshop. It was therefore the third research purpose that we examined. To an extent this research space overlaps with the two examined previously: it is concerned with social behavior and learning, and also with examination of art and art-making processes. However, it brings a further specific focus: it looks at how teaching through strategies that involve one or more of the arts may lead to specific learning outcomes. Such outcomes might involve content knowledge in some field, art-making skills, or shifts in attitude or group dynamics. It might be useful sometimes to also investigate teachers’ learning as well as that of students. My own focus of inquiry, both during and since the workshop, was on how well the drama-based strategies I used were facilitating understanding of the concepts that were the subject matter work of the workshop, and how I might need to adjust what I was doing (and also how I might change it for future work). Figure 4 sums up the brainstorm. We recognized, however, that not only are learning and teaching closely interrelated but also that their power develops over time and so our exploration on the third day of the workshop was aspirational rather than fully grounded on work we had produced.

For the purposes of the workshop, as for this discussion, we retained the data base we had already developed but suggested it might be useful to add reflective journals (to record shifts over the passage of time) and to use further drama strategies, such as hot seating or Boal’s deconstructive use of physical imagery (Boal, 1979).

Accordingly, analysis could be in terms of specific content goals (knowledge and/or skills), increases in active engagement and/or self-concept, or in terms of particular theories of learning, such those of Zygotsky, Brunner, Freire, or Heathcote.

My own evaluation of our work together, brief though it was, is impressionistic rather than analytical. I found that I could indeed engage two groups who were significantly divided by language and also by cultural experience by working from a physical and creative basis rather than from a discursive one.

I also found, perhaps not for the first time, that content and method were unescapably linked. Each of us drew something different from the learning encounter. We performed some collective understandings of that individual learning by developing and sharing physical improvisations and playing with the resulting dialogues. Thus each of our
learning experiences was woven with both personal and collective threads. Like our experiences as academic tourists in Europe, what we learned by working together over the three days was multi-layered, both subjective and objective, and resistant to exact identification.

Because of this complexity, I could not with any claim to certainty identify how each of the two cultural groups (who unsurprisingly reviewed the evolving process among themselves as well as openly sharing reflections within the workshop) interpreted the intercultural engagement. The work that was presented and our recordings of it captured only fragments of the total experience. In addition it perhaps further fractured the experience. The work done by makers and viewers (and in arts-based investigation both viewers and makers are called on to work) was inescapably situated not only in expectations created by past experiences and in received semiotic codes, but also in the consensual decisions of each group. Although the choices made in such work are not random, there is an element of seizing fortuitous opportunities, and so of capturing fluid emotions or conceptualisations ‘on the hoof’, and of working with the edges of understanding rather than with considered conclusions. Just as the image At a Czech café captured a montage of being, deliberately looking and being deliberately looked at, so too the participants in the workshop operated on similar interwoven planes. Makers worked to recognise their feelings and thoughts, focus their awareness and select ways to represent them knowing that their viewers would be interpreting what they saw. Viewers tried to simultaneously enjoy the work they viewed and critically reflect on and interpret what they saw, knowing that the feedback they gave would create a further layer of marks and associated meanings over the work.

Learning through drama, therefore, while it may lead to specific planned and even measurably learning outcomes, may also lead to more complex and less definable learning. Along with other practitioners (for example Gallagher, 2010; Heathcote &Bolton, 1995; O’Neill, 1995; Schonmann, 2016) I might argue that it is these fluid visceral chameleonic elements of learning that make teaching through drama so interesting and valuable.

**So what? Beyond the limits of language**

As I write this paper I find that the title assumes a growing number of dimensions. Initially it was prompted by the fact that the people I worked with in the three day seminar were divided by language, and that I sought a way to break through that limitation. Secondly it became a description of the way we began our work: finding a physically creative base that could both integrate the group as whole and provide a common experiential base for the theoretical concepts we were to explore.

As I explored the photographs that had been taken I began to appreciate how much they captured of the various flows of energy and the moments of hesitation, of the shifts in mood and emotion, and of the fluid dynamics of leadership. I also began to appreciate the complexity of the aesthetic and cognitive meanings embedded in the practical work. I found myself straining to reflect that complexity in the words and images I have used in writing. Some of that complexity, I hope, is expressed in this paper. Some, however, is beyond language and the ways discursive language mediates our experience. Playing with what lies beyond is the role of art.

So return to my beginning. We live in a word filled with texts and images. We live also with visceral, kinesthetic and emotional experience. Somehow we navigate our ways through this multiplicity of input and make shifting, perhaps growing, sense of it. To research that complexity – if we want - we need a methodological approach that engages with the complexity. As artists and as teachers through art, we can turn to the tools we already use for making our art and use them to explicitly research our experience.
References


