Education & Theatre

Vol 23 (2022)

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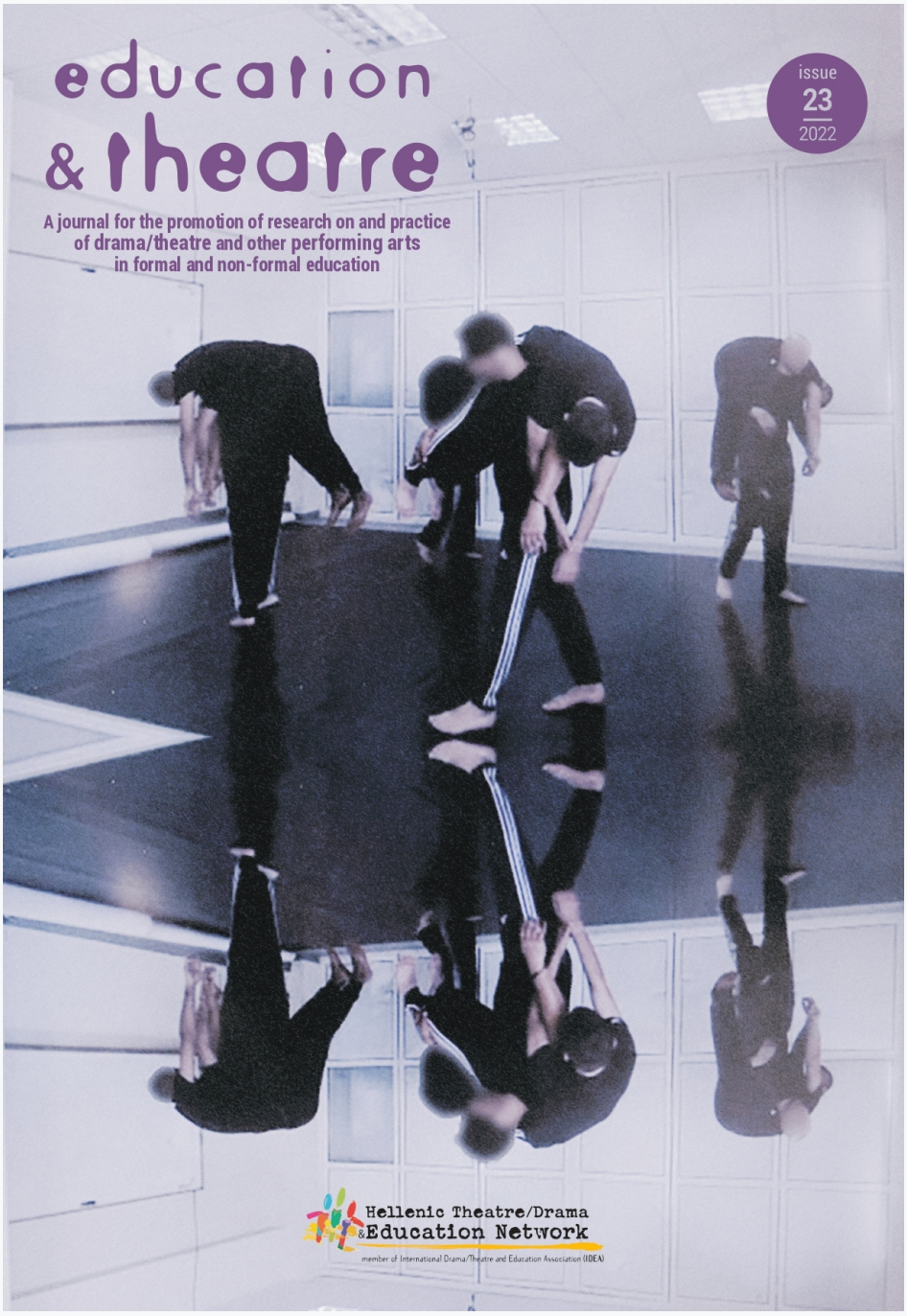

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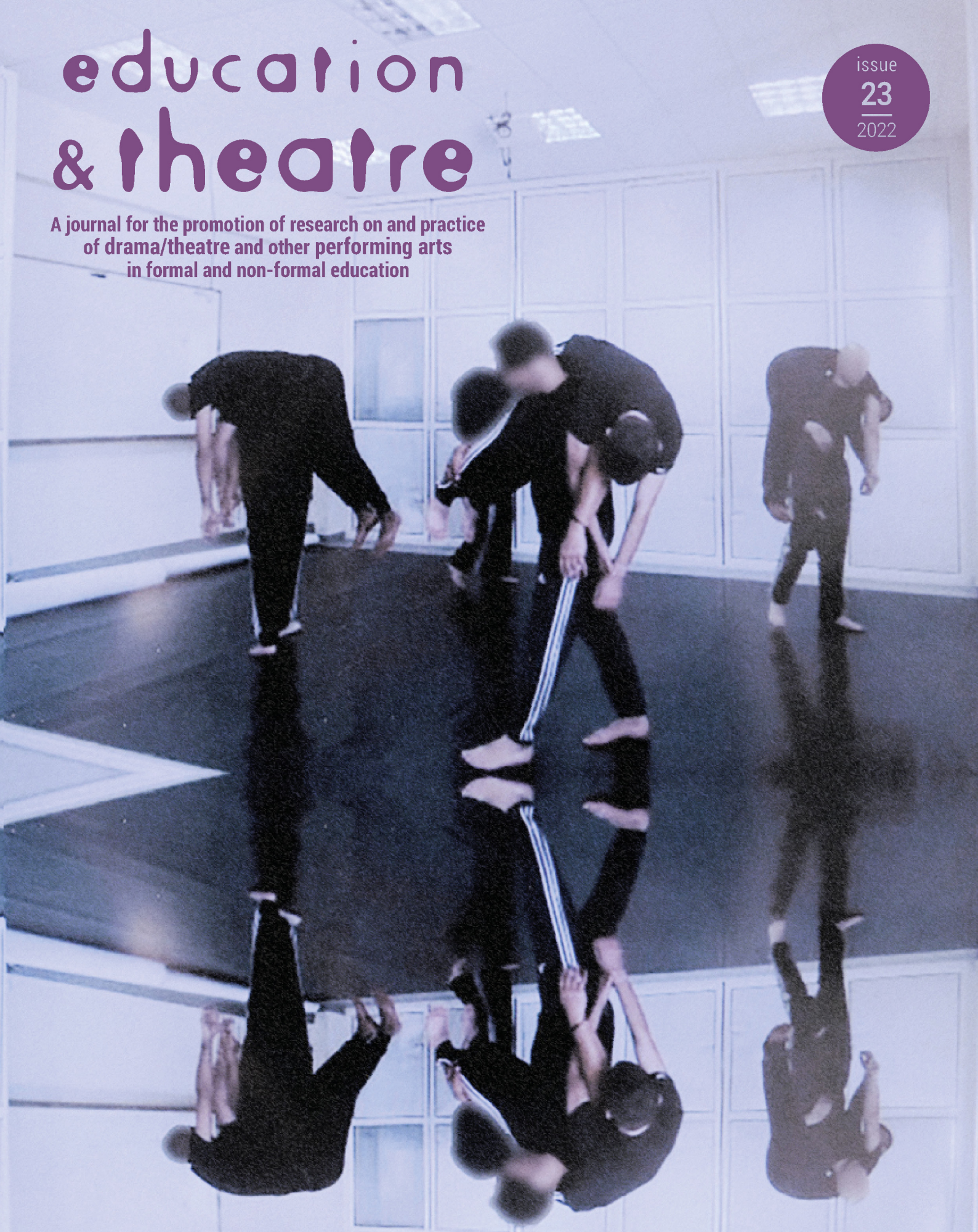

Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network
member of International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA)

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ISSN 1109-821X

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A journal for the promotion of research on and practice of drama/theatre
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Copy editing - Proofreading: **Aimilia-Alexandra Kritikou**
Layout - Cover design: **Liza Panteliadou**

The Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr) is a professional association of teachers and artists, a registered non-profit organisation and a full member of the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA)

Education & Theatre
A journal for the promotion of research on and practice of drama/theatre and other performing arts in formal and non-formal education

Founding editor: Nikos Govas

Editing Committee for this Issue: Katerina Alexiadi, Nassia Choleva, Betty Giannouli, Mary Kaldi, Marios Koukounaras-Liagkis, Hara Tsoukala, Christina Zoniou

Editors of Issue 23: Mary Kaldi, Betty Giannouli

The Education & Theatre Journal is an annual, peer-reviewed journal published by the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr).

Its main aim is to foster a dialogue among teachers, scholars, students and artists with a special interest in theatre, drama and performing arts in formal and non-formal education.

It combines international theory and practical approaches to theatre/drama and education.

The Journal's fields of interest include Theatre/Drama and Performing Arts teaching, Theatre/Drama as a teaching method, Community Theatre, Playing-through-Theatre, Theatre as Social Intervention, Theatre Studies and Education, Theatre for Development, Theatre in Education, Drama therapy, Theatre/Drama & Museums, other issues of practice or research on theatre/drama, arts and education.

The Editing Committee is happy to receive submissions of articles year round.

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Education & Theatre Journal
Issue 23, 2022

a Note from the Editing Committee

Dear friends,

For 21 years now, our journal has been a welcoming place to record thoughts and present innovative ideas from established teachers in the field of Theatre in Education as well as young researchers, educators, artists and theatre educators. When we started the first issue with **Nikos Govas**, who envisioned and conceived this journal, we could not have imagined that after so many years we would have a substantial presence in this field, highlighting the issues and possibilities offered by Theatre in Education as an alternative way of teaching but also as a social intervention. After 20 years the circle has closed for Nikos, who leaves behind an admirable legacy. We thank him for his great contribution and continuous effort to enrich the journal with new voices and ways of presentation. Thus, we grew as a group and learned to collect, record, judge and present the concerns, questions, results and conclusions of those who work in and love this field. Along the way, we had help from the Academic-Advisory Committee and all our friends and fellow travellers. The dialogue continues with this issue which leads us to new paths of knowledge and experience by raising noteworthy questions.

What is the status of drama education in the world today? Has its special significance been recognised in our times? Why is it often seen as something dangerous? These are the questions that preoccupy **Robin Pascoe**, who admits that as drama teachers we walk on a tightrope and wonders how we stand astride the line between safety and risk. He believes that drama teacher education must be firmly embedded in a framework of values that recognises our responsibilities and balances them with our instinct to lead the way for change. We need an articulated philosophy about why and how we operate – a Theoretical Framework. He then puts forward the basic principles that should apply to both the introductory activities and content of drama lessons.

On his part, **Chris Cooper** discusses with **Betty Giannouli** the historical evolution of Theatre in Education (TiE) as a particular form of theatre art with a distinct pedagogical approach and methodology. He highlights its social and political aspect from its very beginning at Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, UK and outlines the trajectory of TiE from its heyday to its gradual decline. He also talks about his personal journey as an artistic director, his work as a playwright, as well as his unwavering focus on the fundamental principles of TiE. Finally, he refers to his relationship with ancient Greek dramatists as well as his fifteen-year experience in Greece within the framework of his cooperation with Greek theatres.

Is art in prison simply entertainment or is it a social intervention, a place of shelter, a vehicle for reintegration? What do artists do in prison? This is the subject of research by **Ioanna Mitsika**, who takes us to Diavata prison in Thessaloniki, where from 2016 to 2022 she organised theatre and dance workshops. On the one hand, the interaction of participants with a new "language" of physical expression and communication highlighted issues such as the inequality of access to education, the lack of a mechanism for decoding art as well as the limitations set by the social and cultural capital they carry. On the other hand, this common language of art brought them together and provided inmates with a tool to speak and address society in their own personal way against prison stereotypes by strengthening the concept of community through teamwork, solidarity and cooperation.

In a different place, **Sofia Vlachou** presents a pedagogical project of embodied-experiential learning that she developed during her collaboration with refugee teenagers at their accommodation centre in Filippiada, Preveza during the 2020–2021 school year. With techniques deriving from the

Freinet pedagogy, such as "What's new?" and "Class Council", they first processed experiences from their everyday reality and ultimately created a "performance text" of public protest through collaborative processes. Priority was given to physical expression through theatre play and forum theatre techniques. As part of the project's outcomes, teenagers showed a noticeable improvement in understanding the Greek language and were able to adequately perform in school.

Exploring the challenges of our time, **Anastasia Voutyra** presents a pedagogical scenario that allows students to take on the roles of eco-journalists, visual storytellers and artists, take an interest in dealing with major global issues and succeed in acquiring life skills. Language and art education expand by incorporating socio-ecological concerns, particularly climate change, thereby raising awareness of the areas where nature, human rights and culture intersect, encouraging ecological literacy, sustainability values, student creativity, critical thinking and active participation.

Using educational drama as a vehicle, **Ioanna Lioutsia** leads us to an alternative way of approaching our history and national tradition. Specifically, from 2019 to 2021, two educational drama projects – on the Greek Revolution of 1821 – were carried out in primary schools as part of "The NTNG in Education", a series of educational programmes by the National Theatre of Northern Greece (NTNG). The article demonstrates how students are encouraged towards experiential learning with the appropriate tools of Theatre in Education and acquire in a safe framework the ability to connect the historical past with current events and sensitive issues that concern society. From memorisation to experience to empathy.

From Northern Greece we travel to China together with a new drama teacher who has been active in the country for the last two years. **Miao Bin** describes his experience, placing it in the wider context of institutional changes and efforts made by older and younger drama teachers to promote drama in education and introduce drama at all levels of education in China.

From the Far East we move back to the Mediterranean, where **Eleni Polyviou** presents the results of a primary research conducted in Cyprus with the aim of putting together an overall picture of active Youth Theatre organisations during the years 2017–2020. The research records the objectives of the Youth Theatre programmes, the composition of the organisations and the theatrical activities that take place in the context of their action. It also examines whether these programmes result in the staging of a theatre performance and to what extent teenagers participate in the various aspects of the entire process.

Finally, we set sail for a transatlantic journey with **Christiana Moschou** who studies Mexico as well as Greece through social theatre used as a tool of expression and learning. The central theme of her doctoral dissertation is the education of the citizen in democracy focusing on the common way in which citizens learn to form communities and cultivate qualities within democratic institutions.

We wish you an enjoyable read!

Sincerely,
The Editing Committee

Swimming in the **infinity pool** of **drama education**
Reflecting on the status of drama education*

Robin Pascoe

An infinity pool is a swimming pool in which water continuously flows over one or more of its edges. This produces a visual illusion of water without a boundary, appearing to be vanishing or extending to infinity.

Drama explorations are powerful ways of engaging students in possibilities, creative opportunities to enter worlds where they have options. In taking on role, we ask students to be simultaneously themselves and others. They can make choices to explore ideas and situations beyond their immediate lives. Students living in suburban Perth can, for example, become group of refugee children on a boat from Sri Lanka. Students can imagine themselves confronting plague in other times and pandemic in their own. Students can question, wonder and challenge. They can explore their own lives and situations as well as imagined ones.

Teaching and learning drama – like the infinity pool – does move towards unlimited possibilities. In taking on role and exploring situations through creating productive tension, we embody physically, mentally and emotionally the potentialities of human experiences that can be real and imagined. This is exhilarating and potentially life-changing opportunity for our students. But it's also challenging. As drama teachers we carry a weight of responsibility. The choices we make as teachers about subjects explored and roles taken need to be responsible. When our students move into dangerous places, we need to know how to lead and manage experiences safely. We and they can be caught so strongly in the rip tide of the moment that we lose sight of the impending danger of drifting towards the cliff or edge where we crash over the abyss.

In a recently completed chapter for the *Routledge Companion to Drama Education* (Pascoe, 2022) I explore the concept of "abyssal thinking"[1] and its impact on drama teacher education. Santos (2007) identifies abyssal thinking as "a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones being the foundation of the visible ones. The invisible distinctions are established through radical lines that divide social reality into two realms, the realm of 'this side of the line' and the realm of 'the other side

of the line'". In the case of the infinity pool, this side is inside the pool and safe; the other side is over the edge into the unknown.

- What are the lines we draw as drama teachers? What are the limits of our practice, the edges of safety?
- When do we cross the line?
- Can we swim on both sides of the line?
- How do drama teachers stand astride the line between safety and risk?

After a lifetime of teaching Drama in schools and in universities, I am often struck by the observation that there is still a lack of acceptance of the place and value of drama. I wonder about what leads to this resistance to recognise that the teaching and learning of drama is life-enhancing and valuable. What leads some to put drama the other side of the line?

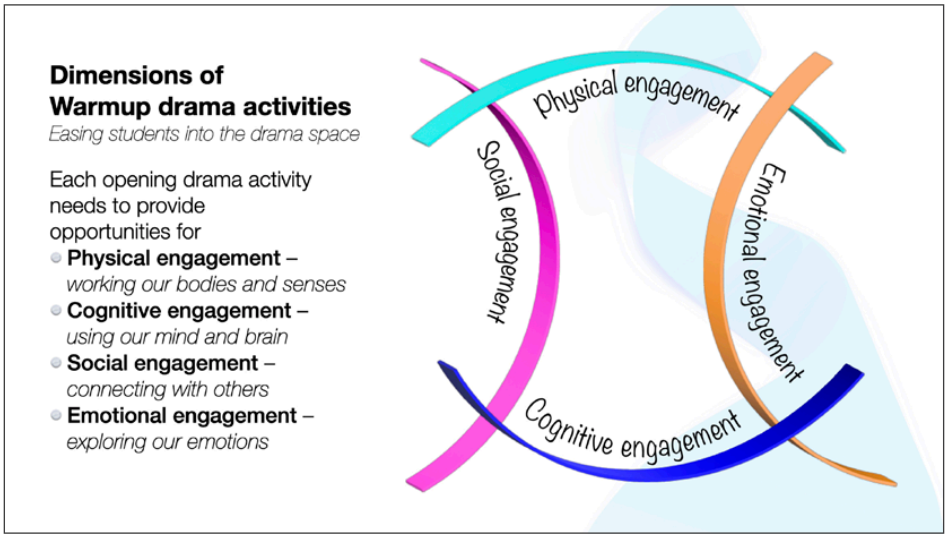
Drama is risky business

Some drama education teachers can find themselves being drawn towards unsafe practice. Some of the focus, concentration and warmup activities, for example, while helping students step into the drama can also take them into darker places. Some warmups are considered too trance-like. There are reports of drama lessons where students disclose events that are too revealing. The subject matter explored is sometimes considered too confronting or questioning of authority.

In fact, one of the major criticisms of drama in schools, driven by fear from some parents and community members, is that drama takes their children into places that they don't want them to explore.[2] They argue that drama classes are loose and uncontrolled "therapy sessions" where "it all hangs out". They argue that the topics explored are "subversive" and question the status quo. The texts explored in drama are considered to be "unsuitable", questioning values and social norms. As drama educators, we can be considered to be on the other side of that invisible line of what is acceptable (Pascoe, 2020). These sorts of myths about drama in schools are inflamed in the context of "culture wars" (Brownstein, 2022; Hunter, 1991). As much as we might scoff at this characterisation of drama education, we need to take these criticisms seriously or we risk being rendered invisible (see Finneran, 2008, for a critical lens on the mythologising of drama education).

We need to be clear about the limits of drama in schools. Drama therapy is, as I tell my drama teacher education students, a legitimate field of therapeutic healing with medical protocols and protections, but this drama education course is not a drama therapy course. Drama therapy addresses specific mental health issues. "Drama therapy is an aesthetic healing form (...) its uniqueness among psychotherapies is that it stems from an expressive, aesthetic process – the art of drama and theatre" (Landy, 2007). It provides "a safe space for individuals in specific mental health and community settings to explore telling their stories, expressing their emotions, and finding new ways of looking at their situations, fostering a greater understanding of their experiences, as well as improved interpersonal relationships" (Snyder, 2019). As drama educators, we do provide safe spaces and encourage understanding of experiences, but we also need to be conscious of the limits of our field and have strategies that help us know them – and when we need to seek help from trained health practitioners. When drama lessons unveil significant mental health issues or disclosures, we need to have skills to defuse situations and capacity to channel any student to the needed help.

To help balance on that abyssal line, it is necessary to reaffirm the purpose and limits of what we do. For example, the purpose and focus of the activities that help us initiate drama – loosely, our warmups – need to recognise that they are something more than games and that they need to have clear educative purpose. They serve as a bridge from the world outside the drama space and the safe space for exploration. They necessarily should pre-figure content, skills and processes of the drama lesson. I have written before about the skilful choices drama teachers need to make about their warmups. In easing students into the drama space, each opening drama activity needs to provide opportunities for:



- Physical engagement – *working our bodies and senses*
- Cognitive engagement – *using our mind and brain*
- Social engagement – *connecting with others*
- Emotional engagement – *exploring our emotions*.

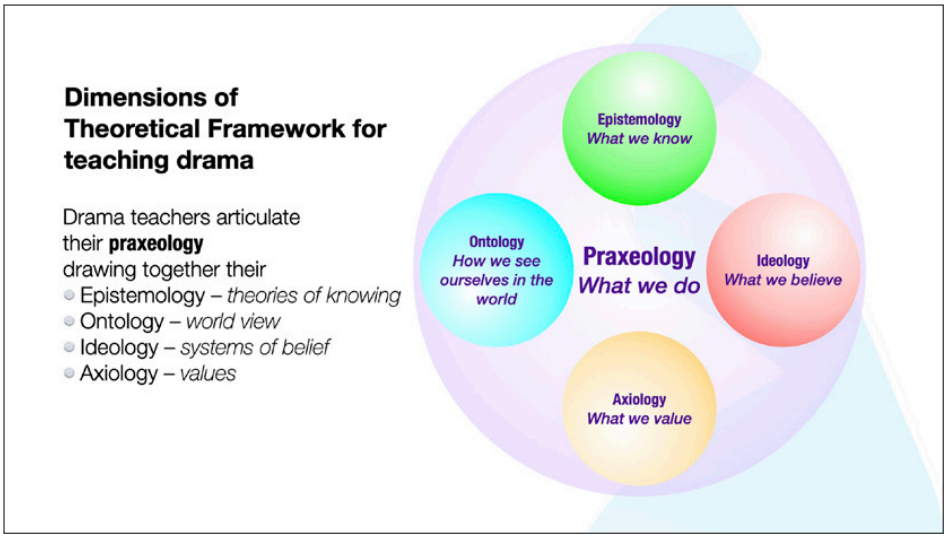
These principles also apply to the content of our drama lessons. The choices that we make about the content of the drama exploration should be made with care. We need to understand how the topics we choose challenge and have relevance for students. We need to recognise that the drama we make can often set up dissonances between parents and students, between community and students. Drama education has long been associated with "progressive education practice" and identified with "subversive thinking" (see, for example, O'Toole et al., 2009). But it is timely to remember Boal (2011, p. 115, as cited in Del Moral-Barrigüetei & Guijarro, 2022): "Art not only serves to teach how the world is, but '(...) also to show why it is like this and how it can be transformed'". A drama exploration about the impact of farming practices on the Australian Great Barrier Reef engages students with a significant climate change issue, but it also necessarily involves students in the politics and competing passions of people. Drama teaching must take account of both challenging and conserving values and ideas.

Similarly, the texts we choose as we draw on the published literature of drama and theatre presents us with choices that can promote radical thought and challenges. The plays of Shakespeare, so often held up as the established cannon, also highlight teen rebellion (*Romeo and Juliet*) or the overthrowing of tyrants (*Julius Caesar*). No text we choose (apart from the most bland) is values free. What interests us in great drama is how it brings ourselves face to face with ideas, people and situations where something is at stake, something matters. Without this we do not have conflict and dramatic tension. But as Heathcote usefully reminded us, in drama workshops we need to build on *productive tension*[3] (O'Neill, 2014).

As drama teachers we walk the tightrope. Or swim in a pool of ambiguous possibilities.

Drama teacher education must be firmly situated within a values framework that recognises our responsibilities and balances them with our instincts to lead change. Drama teachers need an articulated philosophy of why and how they work – a Theoretical Framework. It is not enough to just recognise that drama is risky business but to know why it is and how we proceed to work in the world. Teaching is a refuge for pragmatists. Often, teaching is seen as *atheoretical* (a point I have often made about the way Australian Curriculum documents are presented to teachers). But none of us teach in a vacuum of ideas. We are the sum of our ideas of knowledge (epistemology), our world view (ontology), systems of beliefs (ideology) and our values (axiology), all contributing to our praxeology that links our actions and our thinking. The quality of our work as drama teachers lies in our knowing, being and doing.

To stay afloat in the infinity pool of drama education, we need always to know where we are and where we are headed. Without that, we risk moving towards another abyss – a loss of perceived relevance and we move towards that "the other side of the line", becoming non-existent. We can be cast in the role of being "the other" in education. What we need to do is to challenge the most fundamental characteristic of abyssal thinking: the impossibility of the co-presence of the two sides of the line. We need to remind all that we are here, we have relevance and meet a human need. We do not belong beyond that perceived line, where there is only nonexistence, invisibility, non-dialectical absence (Santos, 2007). As we teach our students about acting – we must be both ***in the moment*** and ***out of the moment*** simultaneously. We must be in the pool eying infinity while keeping ourselves oriented to present reality. We must fight against being seen as invisible and ignored and, as a result, viewed as a "waste of time".



* A version of this article was first published on the *Stage Page* blog (https://www.stagepage.com.au/blog) on 27 September 2022.

Notes

1. Editor's Note: *Abyssal Thinking* is a term coined by Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2007) that refers to a specific particularity of modern Western thinking that divides the world into what can be thought of, understood and/or imagined and everything else. By assuming that only what can be imagined can also exist, modern thinking actively erases from reality and existence anything that it cannot imagine. Thus, it creates an abyss between what it can and cannot imagine. The fundamental characteristic of abyssal thinking is that it does not allow for the co-presence of what is imaginable and of that which is not. What modern thinking cannot imagine is actively produced as non-existing, irrelevant and untrue.
2. I was astounded to see in the suburbs of Washington DC in July 2022, a table in the Barnes and Noble Bookstore labelled Banned Books. Among them was one titled *Drama* (Telgemeier, 2012), a graphic novel about middle school students and a drama production. In some places it has been banned not for profanity, drug or alcohol use, or sexual content but because it includes LGBTQ characters. Drama = Danger (in some eyes!).
3. Editor's Note: In an article entitled "Productive Tension", Dorothy Heathcote wrote: "The main challenge is to create the binding circumstances that hold the group in the fictional world at a level of attraction that catches their interest. If the attraction holds, then the attention, interest, investment, commitment, concern and productive obsession will progressively deepen and widen the range of interaction. Involvement follows and promotes reflection about being human" (O'Neill, 2014). Productive tension is "productive" because it creates the "bonding" in the group, in a particular situation.

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Theatre in Education: **Children** as **human beings** in their **own right**

Chris Cooper in conversation with **Betty Giannouli**

Introduction

Chris Cooper discusses with **Betty Giannouli** the historical evolution of Theatre in Education (TiE) as a particular form of theatre art with a distinct pedagogical approach and methodology. He highlights its social and political aspect from its very beginning at Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, UK and outlines the trajectory of TiE from its heyday to its gradual decline. He also talks about his personal journey as the artistic director of Big Brum Theatre in Education Company, his work as a playwright as well as his unwavering focus on the fundamental principles of TiE. He refers to his relationship with ancient Greek dramatists and his choice to not avoid challenges when writing plays for children and young people. Finally, he comments on his fifteen-year experience in Greece within the framework of his cooperation with Porta Theatre and, more recently, with the National Theatre's Young People's Stage.

The interview was given to Betty Giannouli, a member of the Editing Committee, in Athens in May 2022.

Betty Giannouli: *Let's start from the beginning, not the very beginning... from 1988, when you started working as a TiE actor-teacher.*

Chris Cooper: 1988, yes.

B.G.: *What made you be involved in the TiE movement, as you used to call it in the UK? What was the path that led you there?*

C.C.: The theatres had their own TiE companies and there was a lot of significant support for that work in universities and colleges. Rose Bruford College was the most significant, of course, providing generations of actor-teachers and other TiE workers to different theatres up and down the country, the Belgrade Theatre, of course, where it all started in the mid '60s, but also other companies such as The Cockpit, Greenwich Young People's Theatre (GYPT) and the [Bolton] Octagon.

B.G.: *I see... the history of the early years of TiE.*

C.C.: That's right. I always had a passion for theatre at school, and I made up my mind to be an actor when I was six, apparently. I would stand at the breakfast table, and I would say that I was going to be an actor and therefore didn't need to go to school anymore because they didn't teach it there, but my mum didn't fall for that, so I was sent to school and told l had to wait until I was old enough. Then I went to Newcastle Polytechnic, which is now University of Northumbria, where they had a Creative and Performing Arts BA course. A lot of people didn't go to London or didn't go to the Rose Bruford or many of the big colleges. Newcastle Poly produced quite a lot of people who had a specific interest in Drama in Education and Theatre in Education. In the Northeast, at the time when I went up there, we also had Dorothy.[1] She was still teaching at Newcastle University. Gavin[2] was down the road, at Durham University, and there were many people who had taught drama in the Northeast in the '70s, people like David Davis, Geoff Gilham and many figures that are familiar to this world. One of my lecturers was Tony Goode; he introduced me to the *SCYPT Journal* in my first term, and he got me reading about all of these TiE and YPT companies and all these people. I'd always wanted to do theatre that was political, and I suddenly said, "Oh, this is it". So, I left university in 1986, doing various things for two years. Then The Dukes TiE in Lancaster invited me for an interview, which is about 50 miles north of Manchester in the northwest, so I became an actor-teacher there in 1988.

B.G.: *Have you always worked in the north?*

C.C.: That's where I spent my first years. I really did not want to go to London at all, so I started at The Dukes. There were eight to nine full-time members in the TiE company. We were a free service to all schools in Lancashire. It was a huge area.

B.G.: *Were there nine members in every TiE company?*

C.C.: It wasn't unusal back then to have a similar number. We had a director, an education officer, a stage manager, five actor-teachers and a team of people, who were not full-time members, that we could draw on for design, writing, etc. So, in some projects we had more than nine to ten people involved.

It was a time of real growth and exploration. We had weekly educationals as a company, we had regional educationals for SCYPT members and we had

the annual week-long SCYPT Conference we all attended. That's when I first started to write because it was kind of expected that I would. I became one of the editors of a journal called *Theatre and Education Journal*. We only got to produce four issues, but they were extremely significant issues at the time because there was a real poltical and theoretical division and difficulty within the movement, which was brought about by Thatcher's Conservative government. They [the Conservatives] smashed Theatre in Education, and there were differences amongst us about how you dealt with the attack, how you tried to deal particularly with the National Curriculum, you know, the 1988 Education Reform Act which transformed state education. There was nothing reformist [progressive] about it; it was reductionist, that's what it was. An attempt to establish political control of education and take the profession of teaching away from teachers. So, teachers were no longer trusted to know their children, to develop a broad curriculum with the input from local authorities and with curriculum advisors. It became a National Curriculum taught to tests, every kid doing the same course, you know the story.

B.G.: *Just as it still is in most countries...*

C.C.: Yes. People aspire to follow us, which is quite shocking to me in every respect. So, that really brought us to the beginning of the end. In my case the local authority, which was co-founder of The Dukes TiE, cut us 100%. That was done by the Labour Party, by the way; it wasn't only the Tories [Conservatives]. It is very important for people to remember that members of the Labour Party participated in this as well – The Dukes TiE was closed and we were all made redundant, I think in 1994–95. They just closed the company overnight and that was it.

Dereliction, *the first part of the Fear & Anger Trilogy, written by C. Cooper for Big Brum (2008).*

B.G.: *I have heard some stories about it.*

C.C.: You will have done, I am sure. It is a familiar one and it occurred in many places up and down the country. There were differences over the way the work needed to face this crisis and how we needed to deal with it politically as well as artistically, and I would say that by the time I left The Dukes there were perhaps only a dozen TiE companies or so left that would be creating work that I would have recognised as TiE. There are many companies that say they are doing TiE, but I wouldn't say they are. I think they are doing different things. And obviously the work has evolved and there is some good work, but it's not necessarily TiE either.

B.G.: *Shall we clarify now what TiE is? There could be a whole book about it, I suppose. What would you say TiE is?*

C.C.: Yes, exactly. Let's talk about how it evolved historically, and we will take it from there. What is really important is that TiE evolved as a discrete art form with its own unique methodology, and it's now being very often integrated into the term applied theatre. There are a lot of dangers in that. For example, people will say about Museum Theatre that it is TiE. I would say that this is inaccurate. What other is Museum Theatre than theatre that is done in museums, which is often participatory and uses a lot of the discrete methodology that was developed by TiE? But they don't understand how to use the TiE methodology. So, I'm not saying that applied theatre can't be a useful umbrella term. I'm saying that this can be a kind of a reductionist approach that, I think, is designed to suit universities, to enable them to repackage themselves so that they can sell this idea of "We can do participatory, immersive theatre in every situation". While it has a lot of value and I certainly don't have a problem with that, I think you can lose the specialism and not recognise many of the interactive or immersive or participatory methods people actually use, which come directly through Drama in Education and Theatre in Education and how it is used as an art form. So, this is a kind of explanation and I hope it is clear.

B.G.: *You said that Drama in Education is different from Theatre in Education. In Greece we use "Theatre in Education" as a general term.*

C.C.: I understand that as well, and it is more complex for me, as I also differentiate between theatre with drama in it, in the Greek sense of the word, and theatre which is empty aestheticism with no drama in it, which is very fashionable for theatre for young people these days.

If I go back to the original purpose of TiE, it was the idea of using theatre as a tool for learning and as a participatory form. So, it would move more or less seamlessly between performance and participation. A lot of the participatory methodology was developed and pioneered within what we call Drama in Education, particularly by pioneers like Heathcote and Bolton. But what is important in TiE is that it is not children performing, it is professional actors performing. Traditionally you had a full-time professional company developing that expertise. From programme to programme you developed your pedagogical, your philosophical and your artistic content, so form and content were intimately bound up. So, we would have these professionals that we call *actor-teachers*, which is a very strange hybrid. And then obviously you would have your own designers, stage managers, production managers and, of course, directors who had that specialism as well. The idea was to create the highest form of theatre art as a tool for learning, which tours into schools and, resources permitting, could include – as we did with The Dukes – up to five or six actor-teachers per programme. The aim would be to ensure that you are working with only one class at a time. This was the most significant thing. So, when I first started out, we could do a whole-day TiE programme with just one class. We started at 9.30 a.m. and finished at 3 p.m., including a lunchbreak of course. That would be with only 30–35 children participating, which, of

course, gave you a high actor-teacher to pupil ratio. Because if you have 5 actor-teachers and 30 kids, it means that each actor-teacher can focus on 6 kids, and that, of course, enhances the quality of experience they have as participants. So, I suppose that was the main basis of it. And, of course, at the heart of any TiE programme are the theatre elements such as a full play, or theatre episodes, or even theatre moments that are more improvised, where the actor-teachers would stop at different points and the kids – the participants – would interact with the actor-teachers and there are, of course, a range of participatory elements.

B.G.: *So, the participation of the children took place not only in the beginning or at the end, but all the way through the performance.*

C.C.: Yes. I was at Big Brum from 1999 to 2015, where we had a permanent team of three, but we always had actor-teachers who I've been working with over a decade. In two of the cases the model became so much more sophisticated that you could understand what a child was saying and decide to stop the play at any point, respond to what they were offering and explore that way. But it requires many years of practice to be able to do that.

B.G.: *You were artistic director of Big Brum for 17 years. How easy was it for you to be consistent with the principles of TiE over these years?*

C.C.: It was very difficult, but Big Brum ironically was more able to survive because it was so badly funded. I know it sounds odd but, for example, The Dukes TiE company was funded 100% by the local authority and was a free service for schools. When you lose all that money, how do you replace it just like that? Big Brum always had to operate on partial funding from the local authority, Birmingham City Council, or the Arts Council, and from different trusts, foundations, from charities and also from what it earned in its box office. It has been through many financial crises since it was set up in 1982. When I first joined in 1999 as the artistic director, there was a major restructuring of the company. I was the first artistic director the company ever had, but they couldn't afford my wage. So, I had to earn a percentage of my monthly wage by going out and selling my services to schools for workshops and projects to add to the income of the company. However, because of that sort of flexibility, Big Brum was more able to adapt to change. But still it was very difficult to sustain that. When I left Big Brum in 2015 there were nine people. Now there are only three full-time members

The Examination, *Drama Rainbow Youth Theatre (Beijing, 2018).*

Worlds Apart Together – 1918*, the last play in the WWI End of Reason cycle, written by C. Cooper (2018).*

and this year's two actor-teachers are on a year-long contracts, and they are not going to be permanent. During COVID, the company didn't even have two actor-teachers.

There was of course the Thatcherite, monetarist, neoliberal attack. Tony Blair was much the same for TiE; they were all much the same. A political and ideological assault, and the funding cuts that came with it, which were actually a form of censorship. It was always presented as "We haven't got any money", but of course they choose who to support. I also think 2008 was a critical change, as it was in Greece with the financial crisis, and we have never recovered from that. Obviously, we never suffered like Greece – what happened to Greece with austerity is appalling – but we experienced austerity too. The cuts to the arts have been brutal and the biggest arts organisations have been protected at the expense of the smallest. Big Brum lost its position as what we call a National Portfolio Organisation, which means that you get annual revenue funding, so you are not project dependent. Big Brum was cut 100% by the Arts Council England in 2014, the year before I left, and I have absolutely no doubt that it was a political decision beyond a financial decision. They would deny it of course, they did at the time, and I can't prove it, but I believe they did not support our values and principles, or recognise TiE as a discrete art form. It's been a real struggle for Big Brum ever since, but despite everything, it continues to do the work, miraculously.

B.G.: *Are you still working for Big Brum?*

C.C.: Yes. I work for them as a playwright and as a consultant on various projects now. Richard Holmes, who was an actor-teacher for many years, is now the artistic director. But things have changed a lot over the last 7–8 years. It's very difficult to do a day-long TiE programme today; Big Brum stopped doing that in 2008. Now there is what we call half-day programmes, between two and two and a half hours long, which means the company can perform twice a day for two classes. But over the years the company has developed different models to keep on getting into schools. For example, I have adapted *Frankenstein*, *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and also *Romeo and Juliet* because they are stories that the company has been drawn to and they are also part of the English syllabus on the national curriculum. Over the last seven years, Big Brum has managed to sustain its TiE programmes by performing to whole year groups. Richard has developed a model whereby the company will perform, say *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, to 200 kids in the morning and then *Paper Umbrella,* which is a TiE programme thematically related to *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to one class in the afternoon. But the company sells both as a package and in effect used *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* to subsidise *Paper Umbrella*.

B.G.: *But where is the participatory element of TiE in the performance of a play?*

C.C.: Well, in the performance of the play there isn't really. But with something like *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*, for example, the school gets what it wants, because the kids need to see an adaptation of the book for their GCSE examinations. The performance of *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* did have elements of participation and interaction in it too. The performace was framed, it is always framed, there was also interaction and reflection with the audience too, but it is not a TiE programme.

B.G.: *So, this is how things are right now.*

C.C.: That's what Big Brum do to deal with the financial constraints because not enough schools will pay to have the company work with just one class at a time to sustain a whole tour. I am sure that other companies deal with it in different ways.

B.G.: *I suppose most companies do not do what they did 10 or 20 years ago.*

C.C.: I think not. I do not know anyone who does. I might be ignorant, but I would be surprised if I am totally ignorant.

B.G.: *You gave us a very clear picture. I feel it is important for us to be clear that TiE is not the same as Young People's Theatre.*

C.C.: Exactly. There are many different approaches, for example, doing a performance of a play for young people and then hot seating some characters after the performance. That is not TiE, as far as I am concerned. That is hot seating some characters after a performance, that is Young People's Theatre and it's perfectly valid, but it's not TiE. It doesn't have the frame, role, task, pedagogical, philosophical, artistic underpinnings that a TiE programme has.

B.G.: *Do you think that the teachers and the students you have worked with in TiE programmes have been somehow influenced by the work? Would you like to comment on that?*

C.C.: Yes. The relationship with schools today is much more transactional, and that's tragic because schools are more transactional as well. Teaching has become politically controlled, so being a teacher is often referred to as "delivering the curriculum". I have a problem with that as a phrase because I think that "delivering" is what postal workers do, they deliver things. Teachers are much more creative makers of meaning in the moment. What tends to happen now is that everything is calculated financially

Worlds Apart Together – 1918*, the last play in the WWI End of Reason cycle, written by C. Cooper (2018).*

rather than educationally, departments get X amount of money to spend on X number of kids, so the pressure is enormous. They need the theatre in the school to fit a very utilitarian end.

However, in the 17 years I was working with Big Brum there were still teachers who were able to do everything that was required of them by the National Curriculum (NC). Let's be honest, the NC is not complex; I mean, the GCSE Drama Curriculum is very limited, performance skills orientated and borderline incoherent. Teachers can do all the work they are required to do, such as the review of the theatre piece, some kind of stage design, etc., but they still can go way beyond the demands of what needs to be tested and develop some rich schemes of work coming out of the TiE programme so that kids also get something more meaningful. And I know that there are some teachers who developed schemes of work on the back of the education resource pack that we developed for certain TiE programmes 7–8 years ago and are still using them now with their kids.

B.G.: *Wonderful. So, TiE has been supporting teachers in their work.*

C.C.: That's right. In fact, what Big Brum is trying to do in the last two years is to make those materials as widely available as possible. So, if you email Big Brum or visit the website, you can access material that's both available online and also has been published in books. In response to COVID-19, we came up this idea of something we called The Monuments Trilogy. I was working on *Romeo and Juliet* when the pandemic broke out. This had to stop. In an attempt to respond to that Richard [Holmes] commissioned me to write a monodrama, which became *Socially*

The Examination, *Drama Rainbow Youth Theatre (Beijing, 2018).*

Distant. While this is a response to COVID, it is also thematically linked to *Romeo and Juliet* and in a way the Man in the play is an embodiment of all the adult male roles in Shakespeare's play. The Monuments Trilogy will be completed with *Over The Balcony*. I will be writing that this autumn. This play is set in the future but will also thematically link with both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Socially Distant*. The trilogy will therefore be concerned with the past, present and future. *Romeo and Juliet* has toured schools and will resume in early 2023. Due to the extended lockdown *Socially Distant* never made it into schools, but it has been made into a film that schools can access. Big Brum has also published a *Socially Distant* book with a number of articles related to the play by practitioners alongside the script and all the teacher resources for the TiE programme. *Over the Balcony* will also tour in 2023.

B.G.: *And schools have access to this work?*

C.C.: Yes. If they contact the company and sign up to it, they can get all those materials both online for *Socially Distant* and physically with live theatre performances of *Romeo and Juliet* and the *Over The Balcony* TiE programme. Big Brum did also a five-year project called The End of Reason: 1914–1918. We started it in 2014 before I left the company. Between 2014 and 2018 I wrote five plays, one for each year of the First World War – 1914 to 1918. In an attempt to keep the dialogue with teachers going and make resources available, the company published two books, one of the play texts with commenataries and another of teacher resources related to the plays. They are also available online. If you go on the Big Brum webpage, you can download them for free as pdfs.

B.G.: *Very useful information.*

C.C.: What they've tried to do during and post pandemic, with my support, is keep that kind of intervention into schools alive, which is really fighting for some very clear principles about what learning is, what the function of theatre in society is, and not to compromise the principles, try to make the transactional a secondary question and focus on young people using theatre in order to explore what it is to be human, what kind of world they want to live in, what kind of people they want to be. I think that sums up what TiE has always been about in this country, what I try to develop in all of my time working here and what I have been trying to do in all my international work. I try to share that methodology and these values, for example, in Porta Studio in Greece and also at the National Theatre of Greece where I am currently working. For the last twelve years I have also been working a lot in China, where I have been trying to develop a similar approach.

B.G.: *You have already written more than 40 plays, haven't you?*

C.C.: I am writing fifty-one as we speak.

B.G.: *Are they all for teenagers?*

C.C.: No, actually. Around ten of them are plays for communities, a dozen of them is for youth theatre, for young people to perform themselves, and the rest are all plays for children and young people. So, I have written five or six plays now for four to eight-year-olds, some for slightly older children and right the way up to young adults.

B.G.: *Have any of your plays been translated in Greek? I suppose I would have known if there had been.*

C.C.: I do not think so, not published at least. I am hoping they will. The Porta Studio did a production of *The Emperor's New Clothes*, so that one has been translated by Xenia Kalogeropoulou. Another theatre company, Mikros Notos, also did *Frankenstein* and they are hoping to do another one next year. Three is not bad. I am kind of proud of that.

B.G.: *You are such a prolific playwright. I am amazed by the fact that you have already written fifty-one plays. Where do you derive the themes of your plays from?*

C.C.: I suppose, like anybody really, it's just from looking at the world, observing and meeting young people and the changing culture, and thinking about how to explore what it is to be human from

their point of view. So, there is always a variety. For example, the last one I wrote, which is called *The land between two rivers*, is a reworking of Sophocles' *Ajax* and it's about the war against terror in Iraq and the invasion of Iraq. I've set it in 1917, as part of the End of Reason cycle, which is, of course, when the British first invaded Mesopotamia in competition with the Turks and the Germans and established the country that we now call Iraq, which didn't exist until after 1917 and then obviously became very valuable for its oil. So, I am using that historical moment but, actually, I'm bringing together two worlds. One is the world of Sophocles, and one is the horrific reality of a post-imperialist British colonising war against humanity set in the first world imperial war.

I've got a play called *Making Mummy*. I first developed it as a TiE programme for four to seven-year-olds. It was inspired by a newspaper article that my wife pointed out to me, which is about a six-year-old girl whose mother died of cancer. The way she dealt with it was to make a mother out of cardboard boxes to substitute for her real mother. I thought that was a wonderful way of looking at death with small children. So, I dramatised the story, but I wouldn't say it's a play about grief or death. I would say it's a play about imagination and trust. I am sure you remember the case of Jimmy Savile in 2014 when there were all those child sex abuse cases that were revealed after his death. It also led to the exposure of many other cases up and down the country too. I wrote a play, *Barefaced*, about that. I wrote a play called *Virtue*, which was retelling the Peloponnesian War in ancient Greece but was really exploring the invasion of Iraq in 2003 and the relationship between education and democracy. So, you are always using lots of different things. It might be an image, a story, a personal event. But it's always about connecting your experience of the world with how you see children experience it.

B.G.: *I was happy to participate in one of your workshops last year at Theatre Porta. We worked on your play* Splintered*, which takes place during a civil war.*

C.C.: Yes, that's right.

B.G.: *A very difficult theme for youngsters, I would say, which leads me to my next question: In your plays, you seem to choose strong themes and sharp contradictions. How do these choices reflect certain principles about the way we should work with children and young people?*

C.C.: *Splintered* was commissioned by the Red Cross in Hong Kong. When I produced the play, they were kind of "Oh, that is a bit strong". Yes, being a child

The Examination*, Drama Rainbow Youth Theatre (Beijing, 2018).*

soldier is quite strong and no, I'm not going to include scenes where someone gives them a phone number and says, "It's all right, you can phone the Red Cross". Because that's not truthful, that's not quite how it works. The underlying drama strategy you are asking me about is really important, and that has to do with what Edward Bond talks about as the extreme and how drama works – and I think this draws upon the Greek tradition of tragedy. In terms of the methodology of being a dramatist now, I'm really trying to revisit what the tragic is – only the tragic in contemporary form. And for me what that does is to expose all the extremities of human experience. It's only through the extremities that all those prejudices, all those narratives that we unquestionably absorb break down. We all know that from our own personal experience. You know that when a marriage breaks down, you know that when someone you love dies, when everything that you assume to be reality is totally challenged by the extremity of the experience. I always choose to engage children in extremities because of three things; one is that I always assume that young people are curious and they want to know; secondly, I think they want to know the truth; thirdly, I think that the reason why they like fairytales is because they have a need to engage with the darkest aspects of what it is to be human, through

their fears and through all of the elements of human experience that in reality are overwhelming but in a fictional context are distant and safe enough for them to begin to see themselves and challenge their own values from a distance.

The people in the Red Cross were saying about *Splintered*: "Well, we need a psychologist to attend the performance"; and I was saying, "Why?" and they were saying, "Because children might be traumatised". I said, "But they won't be traumatised, because it is a story and we will frame it". As you know, in TiE you don't just perform the play, you give it a context, you give it a pretext and you give it a frame where they're actually watching it with a task or purpose in mind. Of course, it is always about compromise, isn't it? So I said, "You know what, you bring the psychologist in and then we will have a meeting. She can watch the first performance, she can see how the children respond and then you'll be able to make your decision". Of course, by the end of the first performance the psychologist decided that the children were absolutely fine.

I've been doing this for over 30 years and I think I know what I'm doing. Of course, *Splintered* is a difficult play, it is a challenging play, but there wasn't even one child who was reduced to tears or shaking with fear from watching it. And even if that had been the case, that would tell us much more about the state of being of that particular child, about that child's ability to deal with difficult content. If we have to put up trigger warnings in advance that "This may be this or this may be that" all the time, we might as well not do theatre at all, we can just watch Disney all the time.

Some of my most enduringly important inspirations as a dramatist have been from Greek mythology. Where can you get anything more extreme than in Greek mythology? And why is it extreme? Because we need it. We need its capacity to engage with our darkest fears. Why do small children prefer *Hansel and Gretel* more than most other traditional stories? Because it deals with being abandoned by your parents and that is our greatest fear, and we do not grow out of it as children. We cannot try to control a child's curiosity, micromanage it and interpret it for them and tell them what it means to be human, because no one can tell you that, because no one can tell you who you are.

B.G.: *Unless we want to have a certain kind of humans... (ironically)*

C.C.: Exactly. And this is why Theatre in Education has always been at loggerheads with authority. Now there is a huge battleground about what is and what isn't appropriate. But for me, one of the most important things is that we have to trust the power of story and, even more importantly, we have to trust children to know themselves as social, historical, intellectual and emotional human beings, not as adults in the waiting – they are not. They are human beings in their own right, even four-year-olds. And they want to sort things out.

I remember the last time I was in Greece, just last month. In the first day I was working with a group of five-year-olds doing a very extreme contemporary fairy story that I devised with my colleagues in Big Brum many years ago, called *The Giant's Embrace*. It's about a giant literally devouring the planet, and the situation hits a real crisis point. I began the session by saying to the children: "The thing is", I said,"I know the story up to a point and then I just can't finish it". And a child said, "Do you mean you have lost it?" "Yes", I said, "yes, in a way I have". And then a girl said, "Do not worry, we will find it for you". They are so capable. The same group of children at one point said to me, "The problem with this giant is that he is eating everything, but what he does not realise is that he is eating so much that in the end there will be nothing left, and he will have to eat himself". That is so intelligent, so perceptive and shows more wisdom than any single senior politician in the G20 does. They are not capable of recognising that a child totally gets it. Children get it and they are not intimidated by the challenge, they are not frightened by it, they need to know and they need to make sense of it.

B.G.: *It's good to hear that. I do not know which world they will live in if they do not recognise reality.*

C.C.: It's horrendous, because what we are doing, we're taking resilience away from children. I would

argue that there are three elements that constitute the making of self. The first one is the ability to be an active agent of your own life. The second is the ability to develop empathy so that you can recognise the other because if you can't recognise the other, you cannot recognise yourself. The third one is resilience, the consequence of an authentic and attached self, learning how to overcome obstacles and not seeing an obstacle as a problem. An obstacle is actually the springboard for motion, the very essence of development. But somehow within our culture now we see an obstacle or a challenge as being something destructive – and it is not. Not necessarily. It can actually be how problems are overcome. The way we see things has partly to do with control and partly to do with the fact that everything, including people, has become a commodity.

B.G.: *Everything you have said about TiE is about what pedagogy should be like.*

C.C.: Yes, because at the end of the day, I think Theatre or Drama – I know it's a difficult distinction – changes our perception of the world. What else is pedagogy, if it's not that? When they see a child in *Making Mummy* showing power, sharing the cardboard mother and explaining what she did the day her mother died, the audience, participants, feel it as well as think it in a most profound way. That's actually how we learn in life, that's its connection to play, that's its connection to the most profound and highest-level psychological functions that you can only develop through the imagination and through creativity.

That's what children used to do when we used to let them play. We don't do that now. What we do is we sign them up to classes, we drive them around in 4X4 cars, we drop them off, we pick them up, they go to lessons micromanaged by other adults. We deny them their space and that denies them their resilience. When I was a kid – I do not know about you – my parents used to call me in when it got dark, used to go looking for me to bring me home. And I would be out there and sometimes, yes, it would be difficult, I had to negotiate bigger boys, tougher boys. We learned so much about our world, our place in society, our own limits, our own boundaries; we had a completely different connection to the natural world, because we had some freedom that wasn't mediated for us by adults. And I think this is very very lacking in the culture now.

B.G.: *We don't seem to be going back to that, so perhaps that's why we need more than ever different ways of working with kids.*

C.C.: Exactly. Autonomy is critical. A child that lacks autonomy lacks agency and a child that lacks agency spends all their time trying to satisfy authority and not experiencing things in a way that satisfies their own curiosity.

B.G.*: I believe so too and I like hearing that from you. May I ask you something different now? You have been working for more than 10 years now in Greece, with teachers, pedagogues, theatre-pedagogues, theatre practitioners and writers recently. Would you like to comment on that or share any particular observations you have made about the work or the people?*

C.C.: I first came to Greece in 2007, 15 years now, so it's a long time. One of the things that obviously is different is that the context is very different. In Greece there is not a historical tradition of state funding and subsidising theatre arts for young people, not for performing but for using theatre as a tool for meaning making. What has also been very different here is that very rarely do I work with men.

B.G.: *Is it only in Greece that you've noticed that? What about the UK?*

C.C.: In the UK more drama teachers are male.

B.G.: *Very interesting observation.*

C.C.: It's a very feminised sort of environment in Greece. But in my experience, even though there is that historical tradition and the gender imbalance – which I do think is a real loss for kids and for adults – there is also a much healthier culture of education in general, which has to do with the value that people see and place in the power of learning. It may be quite formal and it may be quite traditional in many respects, but in terms of the engagement with the two different aspects of the culture, "logos" and "mythos", this culture of education is deeply saturated in both. So, Greece has always been a place where I feel very much at home. My theatre heroes are all in Greece. Euripides is my favourite, and I've been reading the *Bacchae* today actually. I think there is a drama tradition where there's much more respect for the child's potential. Certainly, I'm talking about within the field that I've been engaged – I'm sure within formal education it's not the case – but certainly within the people that I meet, who are really engaged in theatre, there is a real hunger for dramaturgy, for pedagogy and for how you can use these tools to work with children. And that's why I feel very much at home and why I always come back. And I always feel very humble, because

Dereliction, *the first part of the Fear & Anger Trilogy, written by C. Cooper for Big Brum (2008).*

I know how much commitment and investment, for example, parents have to have in these very difficult times to continue sending their children to a weekly drama lesson over forty weeks. In a situation where there's such a financial crisis, you only do that because you really want to do it, or you really want it for your child. And there is a set of values in there that I think is very strong. And that's something that I note when I meet actors, when I meet people like yourself in workshops or seminars I do with adults, but I also see it in the parents and it in the kids. I think that this is due to a historical view of the importance of learning for the sake of learning, which has been lost in the more industrial North, certainly in the Anglo-Saxon world. We were the pioneers of public education but only because we were trying to develop the workforce that capitalism needed. Now we are trying to develop the workforce that post-capitalism needs, still doing it with the 17th century model of what school is, which is just terrifying, but it is what they are doing.

B.G.: *This year you run a playwriting workshop for the National Theatre of Greece. Was it the first time you did something like that? What was it like?*

C.C.: Yes, it was. I met Sofia[3] online in the same group as you, when we did the masterclass using *Splintered* two years ago. She approached me; she said that she really liked *Splintered*, that she was trying to develop principles and programmes of work for the Youth Stage of the National Theatre of Greece and invited me to become part of that journey by mentoring some writers. She also said that during the masterclass she had realised that there is a very specific set of concerns when writing for children and young people. And she is right. Obviously dramatic structure is dramatic structure. It doesn't matter who you are writing for. However, there are very specific concerns and demands that writing for young people and children requires, so you do have to approach it differently.

So, the call went out, there were 54 applications and we whittled it down to four writers and I began working online with them up to Christmas. After Christmas they started to explore some of their ideas in schools. I provided them with a structure so that they would be supported in that because, as you know, you can walk up to kids and ask them what they think, but they are not going to tell you unless you know how to ask the right questions. I bring that tradition and I also think, without sounding arrogant, I am still developing new forms; it's not just repeating something I learned 30 years ago. I hope I am, anyway; other people might think I am not. So, I brought that and I met that wonderful energy and engagement and some interesting young people.

B.G.: *So, apart from the writers, you also met some young people!*

C.C.: Yes. What we did was we had some actors from the acting company and the writers. In the first day of

the workshop, I used one of my plays as an example of how you create dramatic structure for young people. Then we tested this with the writers and the actors. After that a group of young people of the Youth Theatre came in and we did a two-hour session working on what we had worked on. For four more days, because there were four writers, we did the same, this time with their work. Each writer produced an opening scene of the play they had been developing, we worked with the actors and explored it and then we worked on it with the young people. I facilitated this part of the work. Then we reflected on what we had learned, and that was wonderful because the young people were extraordinary. What was interesting was the ability to universalise from the particular, which is something that comes from an engagement in thinking rather than from just processing information. I know that they are middle class kids with all those benefits that being middle class brings in terms of their life experience. I understand it doesn't speak for the whole population, but again it's a much less transactional relationship to learning.

I am coming back to take part in the Conference of the Youth Stage of the National Theatre of Greece and to carry on the work with the writers.

B.G.: *So, it is a work in progress.*

C.C.: Yes. And the idea is to produce the four plays as best as we can and then hopefully some of them one day will find their way into performance either at the Youth Stage of the National or somewhere else. The important thing is to try and build a tradition on the set of values about the role of theatre and young people's need to explore all aspects of what it is to be human. So, it's really about creating theatre that enables them to think for themselves rather than think what we want them to think.

B.G.: *Having this conversation with you has been very inspiring. In terms of future plans, what comes next for you?*

C.C.: Hopefully a rewritten *Making Mummy* will start touring in Beijing as a community tour for families. We are trying to rearrange it now for August because the first performance got cancelled yesterday due to another lockdown. We got 10,000 people watching online, which is wonderful, but you can't sustain a tour like that. I'm also finishing a play for Big Brum now, which is going into rehearsal in August. I have also just finished a play for a theatre company in Finland, In Vassa, called *The Clearing* exploring themes about sustainability and climate and ecological crisis. I am also finishing another play for a youth theatre in China. So, I am doing quite a lot of writing at the moment including some articles for various publications.

B.G.: *Best of luck to all your plans and thank you very much for our conversation. Everything we talked about is very significant for us.*

C.C.: Thank you.

Interview editor: Jenny Karaviti

Notes

1. Dorothy Heathcote
2. Gavin Bolton
3. Sofia Vgenopoulou, Head of the Young People's Stage at the National Theatre of Greece (2017– today)

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Poverty and **Theatre** in **Prison**
The **theatre** and **dance groups**
at the 3rd Second Chance School of Thessaloniki

Ioanna Mitsika

Dance performance Timeless *held at the 3rd Second Chance School in Diavata prison by contemporary dance group Vis Motrix with the participation of inmates (2022). Photo by Katerina Striaka.*

Abstract

From 2016 to 2022, five theatre and dance groups were formed at the 3rd Second Chance School of Thessaloniki. This article focuses on the relationship between applied art through the body and the social profile of learners at the Diavata prison in Thessaloniki. Based on the observation of the author, who has been the facilitator of the groups, and the testimonies of inmate learners, some initial conclusions are presented on how participants interacted with this new-for-them "language" of physical expression and communication. The importance of poor social and cultural capital, the inequality in education and access to it, and the lack of a mechanism for decoding art on the part of learners explain the usefulness of the body code and the experiential approach of the workshops, presenting the multiple benefits that emerge for inmates.

Keywords: *prison, theatre in prison, dance in prison, poverty, migrants, refugees, cultural capital, education*

Introduction

This article is part of a wider study on the Body in Prison within the framework of research carried out by the author/researcher. It presents the relationship of inmate learners attending the 3rd Second Chance School (SCS) of Thessaloniki – which operates in the General Detention Centre of Thessaloniki (Diavata prison) – with the performing arts of theatre and dance through the respective groups created between 2016 and 2022 and in relation to the social background of the inmates who participated in these groups. The members of the theatre and dance groups were adult male inmates and learners at the 3rd SCS. Qualitative analysis methods were used to provide an ethnographic approach to the theatre and dance groups and preliminary findings in relation to theatre, dance and the cultural capital of learners are presented. Social origin, the role of school, language and cultural capital are approached in connection with the functioning of theatre and dance groups within the prison context. The research process and interpretation of findings draws on the disciplines of social anthropology and sociology as well as the theory and practice of contemporary dance, physical theatre and applied theatre. Although the methodology followed in the group meetings will be mentioned, a detailed description of the tools and exercises will not be given in this article, as it focuses on the relationship between applied art through the body and the social profile of the learners in Diavata prison. A brief overview of theatre and dance as applied arts in prison is provided in order to place the example of the Diavata prison in a wider context.

Theatre and dance as applied art in prison

Michael Balfour, Professor of Theatre and Performance at UNSW Sydney University and founder of the Centre for Theatre in Prisons and Probation (TIPP), notes in the introduction to *Theatre in Prison* (2004) that the emergence of art in prison possibly occurred almost as soon as the first prison was built. According to Balfour, the records and testimonies we have of art in prison during periods of extreme violence, such as in World War II, are particularly important, as they highlight the human need to create as equal to that of survival and place art beyond its interpretation as merely a means of entertainment or even education. Art in prison is not just entertainment. "It is a basic form of human expression that addresses fundamental needs. In the prison context, as elsewhere, the needs that theatre addresses are those of self-expression and identity, freedom (imagination), creativity and community" (Shailor, 2011, p. 19).

The examples we have through research and implementation of theatre and dance programmes in the USA and European countries such as France, Spain, Italy, Romania and Great Britain as well as in Brazil, Peru and African countries demonstrate that performing arts in prison have now accumulated a rich experience as social intervention (Thompson, 1998). Theatre and dance in prison as art education, as a process of reintegration, as a connection between prison and society and as part of therapeutic programmes[1] constitute areas of concern for the scientific and artistic community. At the same time, the organisation of relevant conferences[2] and the publication of collective works (Balfour, 2004; Shailor, 2011; Thompson, 1998) create a space for research, action and debate between artists and the criminal justice system (Balfour, 2004). Through diverse examples, theatre and dance in prison emerge as interventions with transformative potential within the difficult everyday life of prison (Thompson, 1998).

The ways in which theatre and dance programmes in prison are implemented vary in their methodology and approach, but they all seem to aim to convey the benefits of the arts, relieve inmates from the suffering of incarceration, create a safe space for expression within the closed prison system and empower inmates by contributing to the acquisition of social skills in order to reduce recidivism rates (Balfour, 2004; Shailor, 2011; Thompson, 1998). As Shailor states in the introduction to *Performing New Lives*:"Theatre has a special role in the prison context. As the contributors to this volume show, a theatre programme in prison can be a place of refuge, a cauldron of transformation and a vehicle for (re)integration" (2011, p. 22). In many cases, theatre groups work through analysis and adaptation of well-known plays, rehearsals and performances of those plays (Buell, 2011). Shakespeare's plays have a special place and frequency in prison theatre, serving as exclusive content for many programmes (Bates, 2013; Scott-Douglas, 2007), as does Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (Thompson, 1998). Theatre and dance workshops are often linked with or form part of therapeutic programmes (Mountford & Farrall, 1998). Finally, the use of theatre techniques, contemporary dance techniques and improvisation to create original works based on the lives and experiences of inmate learners is a particularly widespread practice. The aim of these projects is to open up a space for exploration and reflection by the inmates themselves, provide a safe space for personal expression and initiate a dialogue with the public and wider society, raising issues of social equality (Clare, 1998; Dowling, 2011).

The school outside of prison, migrants and refugees

In the case of the learners of the 3rd SCS, who constitute the research group, and in order to understand their relationship with the Greek society and art, it was considered useful to first examine the role of school outside of prison and its wider social correlations over the last decades in Greece. By looking at the school reality within the society that most learners of the theatre and dance groups grew up in or found when arriving in Greece, we can put together a picture of how easy or difficult it was to complete or, in many cases, even start compulsory education outside of prison.

The link that Alexiou (2009) examines between education, inequality in access to it and social classes is applicable to the cases of inmate learners of the 3rd SCS, the vast majority of whom come from working class families and are overwhelmingly immigrants and refugees. “Aptitude, talent, social skills, therefore, depend on social classes, from which class associations (habitus) derive, which, according to P. Bourdieu, link structure to action and are externalised in the social and cultural practices of social groups and classes” (Alexiou, 2007, p. 93). The statistics provided by the UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)[3] on the access of refugee children to education are revealing: a. Enrollment in primary education for children worldwide is 91%, while for refugee children it amounts to 63%. b. Secondary school enrollment for adolescents globally is 84%, while for refugee adolescents it reaches 24%. c. Enrollment in tertiary education for youth worldwide is estimated at 37%, while for refugee youth at 3%.

According to Alexiou (2009), school, as the dominant educational structure and a key socialisation factor, seems to have a limited role in correcting and changing the extra-educational elements that structure social inequalities (economic, cultural factors) and, indeed, legitimises existing inequalities in favour of the middle class strata. It does not intervene to reverse the indirect violence of structures, the social situation that brings students to school from a different base from the outset, with different expectations and high or modest ambitions, depending on the social and economic situation of their family and social environment. He also claims that the reproduction of dominant ideology, what is taught and how it is taught in school, and the treatment of social differences as individual deficits create a school oriented towards the values of middle class strata with a strong ideological function, which cannot raise questions regarding the organisation of society and unequal opportunities. On this basis, the linguistic habitus, the language of the subordinate classes, which is an expression of their collective identity and is differentiated from the standard language of school, is also perceived as a cultural and cognitive deficit. Its utterance, however, is not perceived as the result of a different organisation of thought based on social experience, but as a cognitive failure to align its speakers with the dominant linguistic norm. "What are the possibilities for immigrants with precarious legal status, for example, to influence 'public opinion' and state agencies that define crime and to shake off labels of criminal behavior?" (Alexiou, 2009, p. 222). In the absence of a linguistic capital, in what linguistic type will they articulate their thoughts, claims, rights and with what tools will they decode the dominant discourse in society and the “language” of art?

The perception of art: "I haven't even been outside a theatre"

According to Bourdieu (as cited in Prior, 2005), understanding art presupposes the existence of a decoding mechanism, which operates subconsciously and depends on the corresponding mechanisms of understanding developed by the receivers (the public) as parts of a historical continuum, through social processes, at different levels. Also, according to Panagiotopoulos and Vidali (2019), this historically constructed mechanism does not depend on the individual, but on the association of the commonly accepted artistic code in a given society at a given moment in time with the individuals' tools of reception in order to understand it. Successful reception, then, occurs when the codes used by the artwork match those possessed by the receiver. They also point out that based on the same school capital, social background weighs decisively in terms of cultivating the tendency, the need, the disposition to come in contact with art, while the inherent social inequalities that are maintained and reproduced in the school context are reflected on the unequal distribution of opportunities to access the works of formal culture. Therefore, the relationship with art and familiarity or, on the contrary, exclusion and embarrassment in the face of the unintelligible cannot be interpreted through the ideology of “natural taste”, “gift” or “personal inclinations” but, instead, as the result of social conditions, as the performance of social inequalities, as the product of social determinations through which the privilege of the ruling class is legitimated. Thus, the most needy are abandoned to their situation, which is often presented as a “cultural specificity” and choice, without ever being provided with the means to change this situation in any meaningful way. The negative answer of the learners of the theatre and dance groups at the 3rd SCS to our question whether they have ever attended a theatre performance seems almost natural

Dance performance Timeless *held at the 3rd Second Chance School in Diavata prison by contemporary dance group Vis Motrix with the participation of inmates (2022). Photo by Katerina Striaka.*

and expected: "The work of art considered as a symbolic good does not exist as such except for the one who has the means to appropriate it" (Panagiotopoulos & Vidali, 2019, p. 15).

Methodology

Field research was chosen as the methodology for the study of the Body in Prison, part of which is reflected in this article, and qualitative research tools were used for data collection and analysis. More specifically, participant observation was used, with the author/researcher in the role of trainer and facilitator of the groups, in addition to content analysis of the researcher's diary entries, semi-structured interviews with participating learners and audiovisual material from rehearsals and performances. The speech of inmates was also recorded during the meetings of the theatre and dance groups, through exercises and group discussions. In many cases learners are quoted verbatim, as this helps with further analysis. For privacy reasons, we refer to learners by using the initial letters of their names.

The workshops of theatre and dance groups were based on somatic practices, drawing on elements from different fields. The basic methodology was the contemporary dance technique (Smith-Autard, 2000; Barker, 1981; Blom & Chaplin, 1989; Bradley, 2009; Brook, 2000; Clarke, 2020; Evans, 2009; Olsen & McHose, 2014; Snow, 2016), kinetic improvisation (Buckwalter, 2010; Johnstone, 2011; Kaltenbrunner, 2004; Marshall, 2003; Bogart & Landau, 2020; Tufnell & Crickmay, 2001) and physical theatre (Barker, 1977; Boal, 1996; Grotowski, 2010; Clifford & Herrmann, 2006; Graham & Hoggett, 2014; Lecoq et al., 2005; Brook, 2000; Oida & Marshall, 2003; Robinson, 1999; Chekhov, 2008; Wright, 2014). In each workshop, three periods can be distinguished: a. introduction to basic technique, group introduction, improvisations, b. composition of the work for presentation and c. rehearsals and performance.

The body was placed at the centre of the work within the groups as the main medium of expression and communication and the techniques used were each time selected to address a series of objectives, initially defined by the needs of the prison context itself, as observed by the author. The release of accumulated tension and the activation and mobilisation of bodies rendered passive by the daily confinement as well as accessing language barriers, given that the inmate learners often did not speak Greek, were the first and most obvious reasons for focusing group work on the body. The body reflects the suffering of incarceration and the mechanisms of survival in prison. The usual image of the incarcerated body is either a hard, impenetrable and locked body or a body that is apathetic and withdrawn (Leder, 2004). Contemporary dance was introduced more as a technique of physical communication and contact than a choreographic pathway, and particular attention was given to improvisation and the exploration of a personal movement vocabulary. Movement was approached as a way of creative expression of individual and collective experience and a process of exploring personal possibilities (Kaltenbrunner, 2004, p. 17). At the same

time, the aim was always to strengthen the group and, through it, the notion of community. Physical practices that foster a sense of trust, approach and understanding of difference, freedom of thought and sharing of experience as well as non-judgmental observation and feedback between group members were also part of the methodology (Boal, 1996; Tufnell & Crickmay, 2001). The final performance as the conclusion of each workshop was the result of synthesis of each participant's ideas and improvisations into a collective work of shared aesthetics and "language". Creating a safe space in which each group member could test, reject, change their ideas, discuss and redefine issues critical to them was a goal from the outset, methodologically approached through the practice of choreographers such as Steve Paxton: "The pleasure of dancing with someone spontaneously, where you are free to invent and they are free to invent and no one is in the way – this is a very pleasurable social form" (Kaltenbrunner, 2004, p. 11).

The theatre and dance groups in Diavata prison, the students of the 3rd SCS

From 2016 to 2022, the theatre and dance workshops in Diavata prison were held in the context of and in cooperation with the 3rd SCS of Thessaloniki, which operates inside the prison. The author had the role of trainer and facilitator of the groups, either alone, in most cases, or as a member of a team of facilitators during the 2021–2022 period. The frequency of the meetings was usually a three-hour session every week, during the hours devoted to open-ended projects as provided for by the SCS curriculum, and participation was voluntary. The groups formed, five in total (November 2016–June 2017, September–October 2018, September 2019 and two groups during the period October 2021–June 2022), consisted of male adults (23–60 years old), the majority of whom were refugees and migrants. There were few learners of Greek origin (three out of forty-two, whereas two in three had themselves been migrants to other countries in the past). Their occupation in Greece, if any, was mainly manual work, as they worked as craftsmen and painters or in construction and refrigeration. Their educational level corresponded to primary education, with almost all of them having great difficulty with the Greek language, both written and spoken. Very often the motivation for delinquency was the desire for a better life. Delinquency was also an alternative "job" to unemployment. There were also many learners whose "career" in delinquency was built very early in life, through family or friendship networks, and was the only way as a natural continuation of a family tradition. Twenty-four-year-old T. said shortly before his release from prison: "Everyone knows me, no matter where you ask. Thirteen years of illegal activity is no short period". For some it was their first time in prison, but for most prison was part of their lives in a constant back and forth from the street to prison and back again. The theatrical and movement improvisations were more revealing of the group members' relationship to poverty, economic deprivation and lack of opportunities for a better life than any conversations exchanged on the sidelines of classes, in the courtyard before class and during breaks. There, in the quest to connect the exercises to the lives and experiences of each individual, the world of inmate learners was revealed.

The trainees who participated in the theatre and dance groups in prison, as they themselves report, left their country because of war or poverty, in search of a better life, because they had no job and because of a feud or their political beliefs. Some travelled to Greece by sea, others tied under a truck and destined for "wherever the truck was going" (S., migrant). N. (migrant) reports that by the age of sixteen he had already attempted to cross the border ten times on foot. "I was caught and [sent] back again. In the rain, in the snow, I was walking. I slept in the cornfields, among lice, snakes, bears and wolves. I climbed the trees to escape and then I was beaten by the soldiers. In 2001, I got a green card with the help of my brother and came here". L. (refugee) ate ice cream for the first time when he came to Greece at an advanced age, and T. (migrant) lived for months in a house on a tree, with no clothes, plate or spoon. K. (refugee) lived on trains and commuted back and forth until he found a fellow countryman that lent him his phone to call his folks and tell them he was alive. At a meeting of the contemporary dance group, as we were finishing the rehearsal of the performance that would soon take place at the 3rd SCS, refugee A. said: "In our country we didn't have this. We knew the dances at feasts, but we didn't know these. This is the first time I have seen them and I feel good. I like them. I feel good. I will do what you tell us, but I might cry". The learners in the groups had never seen a theatre or dance performance, had never read a play, had never been in a theatre and many, as migrant trainee K. mentioned, "had never even been outside a theatre".

Artists and inmates: in search of a new language

The reasons why inmates decided to join the theatre and dance groups, as most of them said in response to a question posed during the interviews, were out of curiosity or because their friends joined. The curiosity and the question of what artists were looking for in a prison was evident from the first meetings,

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and the different “languages” spoken by dancers and inmates confirmed the conclusions of Panagiotopoulos and Vidali (2019). Learners often referred to how paradoxical the first appearance of the trainers had seemed to them. As inmate learner H. said: “We saw you come in on the first day with those pants (wide dance overalls) and said 'What are they doing here, dressed like clowns?' We were making fun of you". The reasons, however, why no one ever left, but instead they all stayed until the workshops were completed with them participating in the performance varied greatly. The responses collected by the author, some of which are listed below, highlight the need for meaningful communication, their personal empowerment, the enhancement of self-esteem and the concept of community. They had, in short, to do with eliminating their distance from the "language" of art. It was observed that physical "unlocking" created the conditions for reconnecting with the self, reapproaching the experience, reflecting and changing the image of the self. M., a learner from Iran, said: "We saw you coming every week, never missing a session, and said 'They are always here for us and we will be absent? We can't do that'". Romanian learner B. often said that he never expected they could achieve all these things. A., a Kurdish learner, said: "Look what we, who everyone sees as and calls 'criminals', have created. It never occurred to me that I could do all this. Outside of prison, we don't hang out with people like you". S., a Kurdish learner, said: "This way we can show that we are not rubbish. Everyone can make mistakes in life, but you see that we can do nice things too". During the workshops, many of the trainees expressed their desire to continue their theatre and dance education after their release.

The possibility of creating a common "language" through bodywork that can bring artists and inmates together is also evident. This language of bodily expression gives inmates a tool to speak "on equal terms", address society through the performances in their own personal way, through their own body, their own eyes, without the need to speak a language they do not possess, either because they have never learned it or because this language has never been connected with their own social reality. In order to do this, the inmates had to move against prison stereotypes of the body which is, as they themselves often described it, invulnerable and hard. On a collective level, experiential group work seems to foster solidarity, trust and belief in a common goal, qualities and functions that are relevant to society at large. In many cases, the teams had to fill gaps, replace someone due to a last-minute absence and find ways to support the collective effort when it encountered difficulties. Mobility in prison

groups, due to transfers, releases and personal difficulties created by the daily life of incarceration (courts, intense stress, illnesses, disciplinary offences), requires team spirit and solidarity. If trust in the group community is not won, it is very easy and likely that the project will come to a halt.

At the beginning of each workshop cycle, the exposure of the group to other inmates, who peeked through the windows at the exercises and improvisations, acted as a deterrent for the learners. As the workshops progressed towards completion of the work and the final performance, the learners were not ashamed, did not care if anyone was watching them from the window and, in fact, often interpreted the prying eyes as a sign of the other inmates' desire to participate. In all five cases, in the five groups that were formed, a change in the learners' attitudes towards the final performance was observed. The initial negative attitude, as shown by the analysis of the author's diaries, transformed during the workshops into a desire to show their work to others, hear their impressions and share their own experiences of the process. The "others" in our discussions were always those from the outside, from society. The consistency with which the inmate learners participated in the groups, their meaningful contribution to the content of the projects, the boldness with which they passed, without exception, through the harsh body of the prison to the expressive body of movement and the testimony of personal experiences and the transgression that each of them made to speak with their bodies beyond the role and manner of the prison were reflected in the performances that took place at the 3rd SCS for an audience that came "from the outside". In all cases, the result of the group's work reached high levels of quality and aesthetics, with the trainees receiving the audience's excitement and emotional response every time.

Epilogue

The inmates of the 3rd SCS, who have so far formed theatre and dance groups, accumulate all the characteristics of the socially disadvantaged. They seem to fall into all the cases analysed above in relation to social inequalities, poor social and cultural capital, unequal opportunities to access education, language difficulties and deficit in their ability to communicate and express themselves and a "crippled potential" (Panagiotopoulos & Vidali, 2019, p. 18) in terms of accessing and understanding the dominant discourse in art. Theatre and dance, applied through physical and experiential practices in the prison context, can introduce inmates to a language which on the one hand, goes beyond prison stereotypes and on the other, highlights their own personal voice while contributing to the socialisation of inmates, reinforcing the notion of community through teamwork, solidarity and cooperation. As Alexiou states: "The type of activity of the individual, the form and content of the work determine to a significant extent his or her terms of thinking as well as his or her ways of perceiving and classifying reality" (2009, p. 108).

Notes

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8Pl2KzgPZZw&t=48s, https://www.cleanbreak.org.uk, http://www.geese.co.uk, https://www.dancetobefree.org/
2. https://shakespeare.nd.edu/service/shakespeare-in-prisons/sipc4/, https://www.stmarys.ac.uk/events/2013/04/drama-prison-theatre-conference, https://irw.rutgers.edu/conferences/marking-time/222-marking-time-conference-main
3. https://www.unhcr.org/gr/wp-content/uploads/sites/10/2019/09/Set_1.pdf

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Learning with the body: a pedagogical project with **refugee children** combining elements of **cooperative learning** and **theatre techniques**

Sofia Vlachou

Abstract

In this article, I will present a pedagogical project of embodied-experiential learning that I developed during my collaboration with refugee teenagers at their accommodation centre in Filippiada, Preveza in the 2020–21 fall/winter semester. This project arose from the children's own imperative need to express to a familiar person who would be interested in listening to them the pain they experienced from being exposed to racist underestimation and rejection in their various daily interactions with local community members. Through the collaboration that followed, their initial narratives evolved into small theatrical acts, parts of an original "performance text" of public protest, that made this aspect of their reality visible to their wider social environment in a penetrating way. Emphasising once again the importance of theatre education for the learning and psychosocial enhancement of all students, without exception, I set as an ultimate goal of this article the initiation of a discussion on the development of creative methodologies and innovative tools of embodied learning. Such methodologies and tools could make great use of arts subjects and/or a more creative application of physical education in the frame of cross-curricular teaching in order to promote the inclusion of refugee children in their respective school environment.

Keywords: *refugee children, libertarian pedagogy, cooperative learning, Theatre of the Oppressed, social exclusion, embodied learning*

Introduction

In this article, I will present a pedagogical project of embodied-experiential learning that I developed during my collaboration with refugee teenagers at their accommodation centre in Filippiada, Preveza. This project, which lasted from the middle of November 2020 until the beginning of March 2021, initially arose from the children's own need to express to a familiar person and member of the "host society" who would be interested in listening to them the pain they experienced in their various daily interactions with local community members, who would belittle and reject them on racist motives.

As part of the process, we elaborated on their experiences by selectively combining tools such as an initial experience-sharing activity, named "What's new?", deriving from the Freinet pedagogy, the establishment of a "Class Council of Students", which has been applied by a number of radical and libertarian twentieth-century educators[1] as a basic method of democracy training, techniques inspired by Forum Theatre (or Theatre of the Oppressed) as conceived by Augusto Boal[2] and also theatre games and drama in education techniques in general. Throughout our sessions, the children's initial narratives evolved into small theatrical acts aimed at creating an original performance text of public protest, capable of making this aspect of their reality visible in a penetrating way to a wider social environment that seems to ignore it.

Underlining in principle the importance of theatre education as a basic pedagogical tool capable of enhancing all children's participation in education processes, I set as an ultimate goal of this article the initiation of a discussion on innovative, embodied learning tools that can be developed in the context of cross-curricular teaching of arts subjects[3] and/or a more creative application of physical education so that educators can become more perceptive towards the subjective and cultural particularities as well as the experiential richness of displaced non-native young speakers, by ultimately attempting to transform that kind of knowledge into creative methodologies for the inclusion of migrant/refugee children in their respective school environment.

Why with the body? "I hear and forget, see and remember, do and understand"[4]

The fact that in mixed school classes with non-native speakers among the total body of students – who in any case learn in different styles and at varying paces – the common language of oral communication is minimal (and sometimes even non-existent) frustrates many colleagues. It is also a common realisation that we cannot base our expectations about generating interaction between members of the entire group exclusively on auditory and/or visual input, provided either in combination or separately, as is the case with certain standard practices applied in foreign language teaching where, however, a second common communication language exists in the background. That is actually so because sight and hearing alone may be valuable in providing stimuli, activating memory and raising hypotheses about meaning, but they don't lead to independent, complete and contextualised explanations; and above all, they do not sufficiently support the need for expression of interacting subjects.

However, we all have bodies, which, regardless of their particular anatomical traits, constitute amazing multisensory tools that embody our personalities, carry our experiences and express our perceptions and attitudes through their movements across space and time.[5] Therefore, our bodies, as the best tools for expressing our creativity, can help us invent new multimodal teaching methodologies capable of potentially activating the senses of all our students. In practice, this is what happens whenever, in the framework of the playful activities we develop, we recall, demonstrate and represent the meanings that we want to explain through our movements while composing small acts, which we gradually connect to the respective vocabulary that expresses our oral communication needs.

At the same time, due to their highly entertaining and experiential nature, theatre games – alongside various other dramatisation methods that can be adapted to our particular classroom communication needs – form an ideal tool for initially developing a positive approach towards children, when we aim at building friendly relationships among all group members. As we play, laugh and have fun together, we bond as a whole, cultivate our creativity and imagination and remain open-minded and accepting towards divergence and ambiguity as we explore the multiple options available for the evolution of the stories that we collectively invent, without adopting a logic of value judgment based on linear and absolute concepts in line with a "right" or "wrong" dichotomy.

The project's particular historical context: the pandemic amplified the exclusion of refugee teenagers. The confinement within the camp, the immobilisation of the body in lockdown and the difficulty of communicating through screens

In our case, during the 2020–2021 school year, the adverse public health conditions arising from the COVID-19 outbreak amplified and multiplied the social exclusion that refugee children living in mass accommodation centres had already been

experiencing. Under these circumstances, the prior disruption of education, which is characteristic of many of their biographies, was coupled with the anomaly created by the excessive delay that competent education authorities displayed in hiring staff to teach Greek as a foreign language in schools where reception classes for non-native children had been established.[6] The unschooling of refugee children was further enhanced through a series of consecutive government decrees that restricted, generally and indefinitely, the residents' right to exit accommodation centres where COVID-19 cases had been recorded to protect against further transmission, without however providing any clarifications as to whether that restriction contravened the children's right to access their schools to attend classes. Ultimately, their exclusion from formal education was complete because of the lack of personal equipment and technical infrastructure such as computers, tablets, wireless network, etc. that would allow them to participate in the so-called "tele-education" (i.e. distance learning) programme like any other student in Greece.

Unfortunately, due to the above-mentioned conditions, we were not able to fully implement the Forum Theatre practice – which entails a pause of the action at a specific point before the play ends so that audience members will decide on the development of the story[7] – for the simple fact that we could not present our final result to an audience at all. The most we were allowed to do under the circumstances was to gather and practise with a maximum of 10 persons in total inside a large container, intended as a gathering point for emergencies, which nonetheless also served as our "stage". Therefore, the different story endings were proposed by the "protagonists" themselves and were decided upon after a lot of improvisation that each time evolved into a kind of "experiential consultation" about the preferred versions to be "perfected" for our final composition.

During the entire process, I personally remained consistent in my role as animator, i.e. facilitator (also referred to as "joker" in this type of theatre).[8] The same givens dictated the final video recording of the whole thing with the aim of making some kind of a short film out of it. Below, I will describe the stages we went through until the completion of our project.

Initial stimulus: the need for understanding and justice

At the beginning of fall semester in 2020, some of the teenagers started coming into my office in small groups to inform me about the adversities they were experiencing in their daily interactions within their immediate environment. They told me about various people who offended them in racist ways and asked me to somehow intervene in order for that situation to come to an end. To better capture their experiences, I set up regular group meetings twice a week. At the beginning of each session, we undertook the "What's new?" activity, as suggested in the context of the Freinet pedagogy, which builds the learning process on aspects of children's real lives and focuses each time on one particular topic of interest.

This kind of introductory activity also constituted some sort of "democracy training", since everyone participating in the conversation circle would learn to actively listen to each other and propose collective solutions. Thus, the teenagers illustrated some of the incidents, recounting how they would become recipients of hostility from their native classmates at school or while boarding the bus to travel from the refugee camp to school every day in addition to revealing various occasions where they felt ignored by their teachers in class. Much to my resentment, they also explained that their classroom was laid out in a way that would actually separate the student body into "ethnic zones" by creating a "trench" between "refugees" and "locals".

Over the next days and after realising that I was listening to them and recording their testimonies carefully, they described in the assembly circle that essentially followed the "What's new?" activity the way in which they were casually treated at the regional public hospital, where – as they explained – the nursing staff mostly didn't take their problems seriously but summed up the examination procedure by recommending that they should take paracetamol for all kinds of health problems. Also, they narrated a shocking incident of visiting a clothing store, where apparently the saleswoman threw them out within seconds and for no reason at all when she realised that they were young refugees.

Their narratives resonated with pain and indignation under the burden of the injustice they had experienced and were mostly accompanied by a painful realisation that the majority of locals in their wider environment viewed them with loathing and contempt. Soon after, however, these racist attitudes and behaviours would come into being before my eyes during the dramatisation phase. Certainly, those emotionally charged accounts troubled me quite a bit in terms of my ability to overturn such entrenched social dynamics and help them in a practical way from my position. On the one hand, what concerned me the most was how to comfort them and lift the weight of their grief and on the other, I strived to figure out a way to stop their daily re-traumatisation caused by the kind of humiliating experiences their wider community put them through, especially in places where I could clearly neither have direct access nor a lasting influence, for instance in healthcare services, school transport or commercial transactions.

The situation presented itself as extremely complex because any clear reference on my part to the repeated racist incidents the children brought back as news from school to the staff who were officially responsible for the smooth running and positive climate of classrooms tended to be taken as a kind of "unsubstantiated" complaint against those specific colleagues. It was perceived as undermining their moral and pedagogical credibility solely on the basis of the children's testimonies, which are traditionally discredited as exaggerations and/or "myths" under the light of the dominant adultist ideology and even more so, when the matter involves "foreign" children, whose communicative competence in Greek is a priori put to question.

Also, given the almost total absence of any independent mechanisms of pedagogical supervision to monitor the inclusion of refugee children in schools and the establishment of an overall welcoming atmosphere in addition to the self-perceived lack of competence of school authorities to deal with racist attitudes and derogatory discriminations in the school environment, my individual attempt to support them and fight head-on against these attitudes appeared in advance to be a lost cause. Therefore, while striving to jointly find solutions for their empowerment, we came up with the idea of this theatrical action plan in order to make the situation visible to their wider social environment, without opening more fronts of asymmetric confrontation that could only make matters worse.

Methodology development: how we cooperated

At first, I invited the children that had reported the specific incidents to a council meeting, where we discussed the possibility of working on those experiences by preparing a performance with the aim of showing the world what was really happening to them. They liked the idea right from the start, although they did not seem to have a real understanding of the process to be followed or any concrete notion about the expected result, since it would be their first time participating in such a project. So, we entered a phase of “bonding” by arranging two two-hour meetings on a weekly basis. In some sessions we only indulged in theatre games in order to "loosen up our bodies", i.e. free our movement, express our feelings and laugh together with the view to building our group.

To achieve that aim, we engaged in familiarisation activities such as those referred to by Govas (2003), Kouretzis (1991) and MacDonald & Rachel (2001). We thus worked (mainly) on our listening comprehension by doing pantomime and a series of motor activities, memory games and improvisations. For instance, the children really liked the games and exercises in the plenary circle or in groups, where we walked and ran in alternating rhythms stopping at a signal while anyone who lost concentration stepped in the middle and sang and/or danced whatever they chose, or we chased imaginary butterflies and walked while trying not to let our “imaginary overflowing panties” fall off, or we practised our vocabulary both in polite expressions and swearing words in pairs by "swearing politely" and "exchanging polite words rudely", etc.

We preserved this playing-through-theatre process during the next stages – except only for the final one –, but we limited its duration to the warmup stage, which occupied the first half hour of our sessions. Thereafter, our meetings were devoted to developing action scripts based on expressions that the children already knew, many of which had been imprinted in their memories during the initial experience that inspired those scripts. In that second, "productive" part of our session, the children represented faithfully the situation they had experienced, by framing their improvisations with simple words and cliché phrases etched on their memory, for instance: a.1. "It’s full!" (on the bus), b.1. "Open your books on page 34." (at school), c.1. "The shop is not for refugees!" (in the clothing store), d.1. "There’s nothing wrong with him/her." (at the hospital), etc. Having recorded these very short phrases, we expanded them so as to produce a short script, which could still be easily memorised by the actors. As an

example, the above phrases evolved into sentences such as: a.2. "It's full, there are no seats! Take the next one." (on the bus), b.2. "Well kids, let's see what we have today! Open your books on page 34.", c.2. "Please get out! The shop is not for refugees!", d.2. "There's nothing wrong with him! Come on, you're fine! Take these!" and so on.[9]

By thematically grouping these scattered narratives, we produced four sequences: "On the school bus", which evolves in two different scenes that develop differently, "At school", "At the clothing store" and finally, "At the hospital". After writing down the dialogues and descriptions between sequences, we used the performance text as a reading text in the context of the usual process of staging a play followed by a theatre group. The fact that the children were reading texts the contents of which they already knew since they had produced them themselves made reading significantly easier for them, thus offering a self-empowering sense of achievement.

At this stage we also did several vocal exercises (i.e. oral speech training) in the most entertaining way possible: e.g. in chorus, with a straw along our tongue, only boys, only girls, in a formation of "girls against boys" and vice versa as well as loudly, whispering or singing, etc. The distribution of roles was subject to negotiation, since the "class council" decided upon the roles, which were then gender adapted and allocated based on the children's expressed interest.

In the next phase and after we had already memorised our texts, we began to invest our dialogues with movement and improvise until we found the right frame – i.e. the optimal shooting angle – for each scene, given that our work would eventually be video recorded. During the farewell circle that took place at the end of our sessions, each teenager would step in the middle and take the floor to repeat the phrases that had been ingrained in him/her. Having completed our preparation, we performed (once again just for us) our play two or three times from beginning to end, before making a final decision about the scenes in order to start filming.

Conclusions

In conclusion, I personally argue that the whole project had only positive results, as it managed to include both the most "studious" children and those who had lost interest in any formal education process. By applying a participatory learning methodology based on libertarian-radical pedagogy principles and enriched with theatre pedagogy techniques in order to cultivate a climate of equality and respect, the teenagers in question attended the rehearsals constantly and participated enthusiastically; they also learned to listen carefully, respect each other's opinions and cooperate. Throughout the entire process, they had 100% equal say in decisions concerning text production and were consulted regarding the invention and distribution of roles. In that framework, the target language was taught as a means of communication via a spiral-constructivist approach and not as an end in itself, aiming at the students' "transformational learning" and – initially – the audience's "consciousness shift".

The benefits that arose from this process were manifold for all those involved: as for the children themselves, I would like to mention first of all the improvement of their language proficiency at the cognitive level, both in Greek and English, since they had to process and expand verbal contents which had already been imprinted in their memory. Secondly, on the emotional level, the fact that they were allowed to express their traumatic experiences and reinterpret them positively by satirising the hostile reality that surrounds them and taking control of the narrative within a new, playful, anti-hierarchical context – where all of them were protagonists – contributed to their moral empowerment, bearing thus a therapeutic effect on their psychology as a whole, which as a matter of fact is particularly important for this multi-burdened age group.

Thirdly, on the social level, it achieved the creation of a youth group that maintains its hope for a better future in the midst of the depressing reality it experiences and remains in friendly contact to the present day. In the end, nine out of the ten

teenagers who regularly participated in the sessions were strengthened in terms of their self-efficacy and maintained their motivation to attend their classes and ultimately achieved better school results. Meanwhile, the whole process offered me the opportunity to acquire a deeper understanding of their idiosyncrasies, social backgrounds and cultural heritage and therefore, familiarise myself with elements of their history and culture, but also to realise my own limits, attitudes and prejudices while reflecting on my practices, since I had to also act as a "cultural interpreter" for some of their questions in relation to the local community and prevailing conditions.

Notes

1. Indicatively, I will mention here Dewey, Freinet, Freire, Korczak and Niel as such examples. As Moschos and Kalisora (2019) demonstrate, those pedagogical communication tools foster a cooperative spirit and respect among all team members.
2. According to its inspirer, Augusto Boal (2000), this specific type of theatre transforms "the oppressed" into an artist by maximasing the participative nature inherent to this means of expression, since the process of the "Forum" – that is, the marketplace as a space of dissemination of ideas and consultation – presupposes team members negotiating throughout the entire process of designing and performing the meanings that have to be communicated.
3. See Pavlidou (2020) and Tsakoumagkou (2020).
4. Diction attributed to Confucius.
5. See Shusterman (2009).
6. Notably, during the 2020–2021 school year, teachers showed up at the reception classes in secondary schools across Greece no earlier than 11.1.2021.
7. From that point on, the audience is actively involved and shapes the final flow of the story by proposing and performing various versions of its ending.
8. See also MacDonald & Rachel (2001).
9. In a standard foreign language class, that phase of the process would correspond to the framing of listening comprehension with the production of oral speech, embedded within a specific context, and with the subsequent expansion of the corresponding vocabulary.

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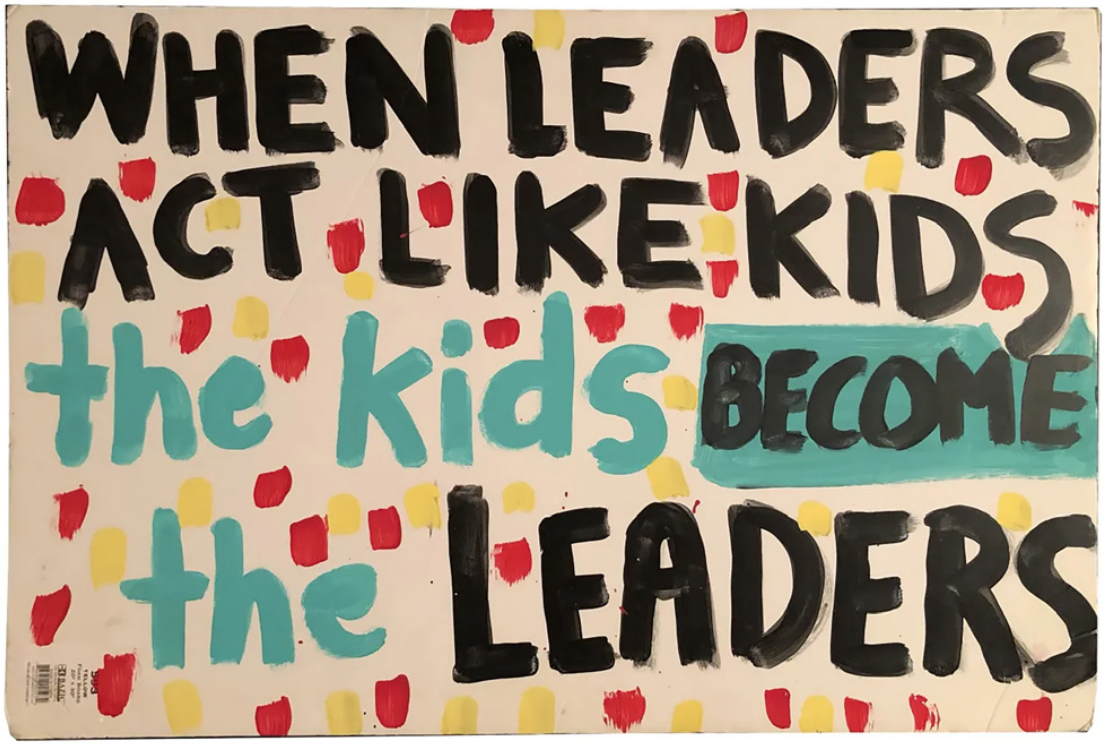
Learners in the **role** of **eco-journalists** explore global **environmental** challenges

Anastasia Voutyra



Abstract

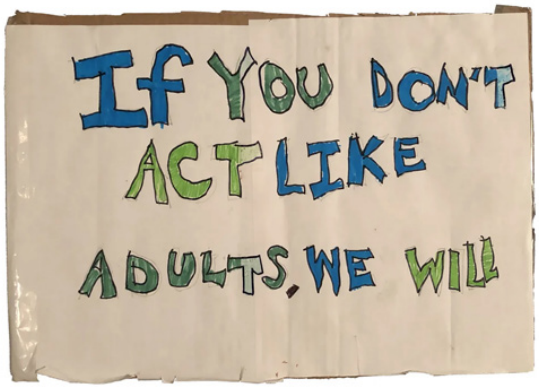
This article presents a pedagogical scenario where an educational approach of drama-based practices at the upper primary or secondary school level was developed. The proposed interdisciplinary and differentiated learning approach combines (native or foreign) language teaching, drama workshop techniques and environmental education concepts, values and desired attitudes. Language and arts education open up to the extra-disciplinary horizons of the curriculum by integrating socio-ecological concerns, particularly the climate change, which is documented to be a most vital contemporary challenge, thus raising awareness on the intersections of nature, human rights and culture, fostering ecological literacy, sustainability values, students' creativity, critical thinking and active engagement. The proposed six teaching hour activities, described step by step, will allow learners to assume the roles of eco-journalists, visual storytellers and artists, take interest in tackling major global issues and manage to acquire competences for life.

Keywords: *climate change, interdisciplinary differentiated pedagogical scenario, eco-journalists*

Theoretical background and rationale

An urgent need has been acknowledged worldwide for a fundamental rebalancing of the human-nature relations to preserve ecosystems and promote a more sustainable resource use (Haglund, 2019). A convincing body of evidence demonstrates that the activities and habits of *Homo Sapiens* are leading to the natural world's exceptional dysfunction (Wals & Benavot, 2017) and are undermining our planet's capacity to regulate itself (Crutzen & Stoermer, 2000; Waters et al., 2016). However, by mobilising education, we empower people to recognise and effectively respond to the crucial global and local environmental concerns. In fact, by bringing forward and processing ecological challenges in the classroom, learning becomes more meaningful for the students who adopt active roles of responsible citizens. According to Wals (2012), there are two complementary ways of understanding the role of education for environmental sustainability. The first one, called "instrumental" approach, aims at developing some specific environmental behaviours considered to be essential, particularly social marketing-based and policy-driven; the second one, called "emancipatory" approach, focuses on education that develops autonomous, responsible and reflective citizens, able to make up their own minds and follow appropriate courses of action. The emancipatory approach promotes collaborative, participatory and transformative learning. How can we, educators, realise students' emancipation so that they critically engage in meaning-making discourses on global issues and be willing to participate in safeguarding the Earth's future? A modern learning process allows new relationships between the inner world (internal) and the external world of students involved in the educational transition space (Ellsworth, 2005). Besides, the holistic vision of education includes a sense of the whole person who is connected to his/her surrounding context and environment (Miller, 2004) and is willing to take response-ability (one's ability to respond). Through a flexible and dynamic process, holistic education launches an exciting journey for both the educators and the students.

Therefore, we may suggest several steps which the teacher needs to take during the groundwork/preparation phase of this intervention: Identify learners' goals and focus on their needs, establish good relationships, trust and a positive, inclusive classroom climate, join forces with teachers of various subjects (interdisciplinary method/integrated learning), plan thoroughly, by scaffolding learning step by step, the contents of the lesson and its implementation building on the learners' prior knowledge, opt for diversified learning methods and assign collaborative/project-based work, whereas during the implementation phase he/she just has to monitor/facilitate the activities performed by the students and make clear that committing "errors" is a constructive means of learning.



One of the most effective methods to differentiate the learning process are the drama-based activities in class. Drama, by dealing with immediate situations in daily life, broadens the concepts of character and therefore deepens perceptions of oneself and others. Accordingly, students experiment with the idea of "otherness", offering them significant practice in empathy. Winnicott (2005) repeatedly underlined that play has an important role in shaping democratic citizenship. Moreover, Vygotsky (1978) emphasised the importance of the social nature of the imaginative play in children's development, considering the fictional situations emerging during classroom communication activities as "zone of proximal development" (ZPD), which indicates the level of task that the student can accomplish independently, which, in turn, demonstrates the actual activity that can be accomplished with teacher-guided support or in collaboration with more capable peers.

On the other hand, students assuming the role of eco-journalists is of great immediate interest, since a high alarm is being expressed by the public globally; people are a lot more concerned now because of the increase in weather extremes (Molek-Kozakowska, 2017), such as biblical floods, heat waves, violent storms, cyclonic winds, hurricanes, etc. What is more, the students gain awareness of the fact that the media plays a vital role in the way society perceives the environmental concerns. A critical way for education

to encourage sustainability is through the notion of environmental stewardship (Wolff, 2014), which signifies the responsible use and protection of the natural environment through conservation and sustainable practices to enhance ecosystem resilience and human well-being (Chapin et al., 2011). This notion highlights the ethical and moral commitments that individuals make so as to being mindful of a more sustainable planet and encourages key principles such as empowerment, collaboration, transformation and resilience.

In primary and secondary education, the environment is mostly treated as a stand-alone subject, not mainstreamed into the curriculum (Benavot, 2014). Our attempt is to bridge this gap by integrating environmental education into the teaching and learning of a varied assemblage of subjects, such as languages, drama, visual arts, geography, science, civic education and computer science. The scenario which we designed and carried out is addressed to learners of upper primary and secondary classes. The implementation may combine the co-teaching of various speciality teachers or their collaboration with the class teacher.

Learning objectives

- Draw students' attention to the human impact on environmental issues/Cultivate civic ecology education values and life skills for the promotion of resilient societies and sustainable development
- Foster critical consciousness and civic responseability
- Explore various ways of self-expression
- Empower students' respectful advocacy, allow them to re-think attitudes and behaviours
- Develop life-long skills to research, discuss, evaluate the data and collaborate with their peers

The learning procedure/ Implementation stages

Each of the following six steps has an average duration of one teaching hour.

Step 0: Negotiate and establish a pedagogical contract of the ground rules of how students should present their arguments and counterarguments within a climate of mutual respect.

Step 1: Visual storytelling

1a. Visual stimulus/prompt: Youth-made climate-strike signs (Kalman, 2019)

1b. Brainstorming activity: What is being affected by climate change/global warming? Name the impacts.

The students provide their answers (orally or using the interactive presentation tool Mentimeter in case the lesson is delivered online) and the teacher writes (or projects) them on the board. He/she may organise all students' ideas proposing a mind map.

1c. Students familiarise with notions and terms, such as weather extremes, ecological interaction, interconnected ecosystems, carbon footprint, greenhouse effect, global sustainable development goals (SDG), renewable energies, alternative means of transportation, decision-makers, G8 countries, summits, take urgent action to respond to a crisis, petitions, a cause, activism, eco-journalism and its functions, Pulitzer Prize.

The teacher forms 6 working groups of 4 students and assigns them the task to search on the web and employ multimodality to express themselves, which is to write down or draw the definitions and concrete examples of the above-mentioned concepts. This practice of strategically combining words and images to convey information is called visual journalism or visual storytelling. It enables readers to

better understand complex, sophisticated topics in a shorter amount of time. Students' creations are to be published on the school's blog.

Step 2: Interview an agent of positive change
The girl named Helga Thunberg was the catalyst for the worldwide movement that raised people's awareness on climate change. The students assume the journalist's role, while the teacher steps into Helga Thunberg's role and provides answers to the students' questions who take turns to ask. Authentic, either simple or more elaborate questions are formulated by the students, according to their level of language fluency:

- What is your name?
- Where are you from?
- How old are you?
- Have you got any siblings?
- Have you got a pet?
- What is your favourite subject?
- What inspires you the most?
- Which countries have you already visited? Have you ever been in Greece?
- What made you famous?
- What does "activism" mean?
- How did you develop this special interest?
- What are your feelings while fighting for a cause?
- What do your parents say about your involvement in tackling the climate change?
- How do you imagine yourself in ten years? What career would you like to pursue?
- Do you "see the glass" half-full or half-empty?
- Could you suggest what actions should we, schoolchildren, take in order to save our planet?

Step 3: Let's tackle climate change together. Students discover the 20 challenges proposed by the British Council (n.d.).

Step 4: Young people's voice can be heard!
4a. Present to the class the Youth Advisory Group on Climate Change launched by the United Nations in July 2020 (United Nations, n.d.): the profiles of seven young people on the front lines of climate action.
4b. Reflection and class discussion in a circle to exchange perspectives, ideas and possible solutions to the problem. Explain to the students the rules of the Fishbowl technique and allow 10 minutes so that they prepare their questions. Name the topic (i.e. Is sustainable development an oxymoron?), according to the students' level. They may consult the webpage European Data Journalism Network by the key term "climate crisis". Then, they form a circle of 5-9 chairs ("the fishbowl") and enough room around the circle for the remaining students to observe what is happening in the "fishbowl". Students seated inside the "fishbowl" actively participate in a discussion by asking questions and sharing their opinions, making sure everyone in the inner circle has a chance to speak, while students standing outside listen carefully to the ideas presented. They take turns in these roles, so that they practise being both contributors and listeners in the group discussion (Vogel, 2019).

The teacher suggests they use "I-statements" (I feel, I believe, I think, I read, I learned). I-statements make a person ask oneself, "Why do I think and feel this way?" This reflection can lead to greater self-knowledge, which in turn can help to have better conversations with people.

Step 5

Students, by using upcycled materials and natural resources, create art objects in order to express themselves and raise awareness among the rest of the school's pupils and inspire green transformation to as many people as possible.

Finally, a Mime & Guessing Game may be played whenever there is available time: "The top 20 climate-smart cities of the world".

First, we may visualise their locations for 5 minutes on Map Hub. Then, students are randomly divided into two groups. The procedure evolves as follows: while one member of the first group practises non-verbal communication and mimes one location and this city's most striking characteristics, the members of the second group try to identify which city it is about.

Dissemination

Upload the project's creations and outcomes on the school's blog. Also, organise a happening with presentations, a flashmob performance and more interactive activities devoted to the protection of the planet and invite all the local community and stakeholders (i.e. on the occasion of Earth Day on the 22nd of April).

Assessment

The assessment descriptors focus on the learning outcomes being consistent with the learning objectives. Students fill in a self-evaluation form, which identifies their accomplishments as well as their area(s) for improvement. They also receive verbal feedback from the teacher. Overall, this learning journey has a positive effect on the students' holistic learning, the teachers' professional growth and the school community's well-being. As for the effectiveness and the added value of these activities, the feedback we received can be summarised as follows:

We shift the focus from the teacher as a unique source of new knowledge and place students in the position of co-creators of knowledge, providing them clues for creation and reflexion, sharpening their critical thinking. The proposed experiential approach strengthens the collaborative culture, students' self-efficacy by expressing their beliefs through roles, mitigating the inhibitory factors of self-exposure, developing the production of oral speech, tackling environmental themes, discovering universal values with the ultimate goal of their adoption for the common good in their adulthood, developing skills such as active participation in solving the problems of society (Walker & Shore, 2015).

Concluding remarks

Taking everything into account, the best educational practice is rather reflected to be a "whole school" approach to education for sustainability. This allows to create an integrated and systemic response to global concerns, that is to nurture a positive mindset within the school context to foster a variety of actions aiming at raising students' awareness and engagement to tackle major environmental issues and cultivate everyday habits and behaviours for leading eco-friendly lifestyles, in order to involve all students, teachers and parents to assume responsibilities (support recycling, reduce waste, conserve energy and water, purchase local foods, encourage eco-art practices) and therefore avoid overburdening the Earth's bio capacity, manage to decrease our collective carbon footprint and increase our ecological handprint/positive impact. The challenging vision feels right to re-design and create educational institutions where policies, operations, contents and practices work together in an integrated way and, hopefully, build an extended network of eco-schools where there are possibilities to connect, share resources, and join forces. Then, education will be a valuable contributing factor to halt unsustainable practices and develop the agency of learners to act in meaningful ways towards the environment.

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The **Greek Revolution** through "**Towards Liberty**" and "**In the Land of Liberty**" educational drama projects by the National Theatre of Northern Greece (2019–2021)*

Ioanna Lioutsia

Abstract

This article presents the approach, preparation, work and implementation of two educational drama projects on the subject of the Greek Revolution of 1821, realised as part of "The NTNG in Education", a series of specialised educational programmes by the National Theatre of Northern Greece (NTNG). In detail, the projects, titled "Towards Liberty" (2019) and "In the Land of Liberty" (2019–2020), were presented in primary schools in five regions across Greece. Using the sixth grade history textbook as a basis and, in particular, the events related to the besieged Missolonghi and the swiftly liberated Mani, the aim of these educational dramas was for pupils to not only get a better understanding of the historical context, but also delve into concepts such as solidarity, cooperation and teamwork, peace and freedom. An alternative way of capturing the historical past, connecting it with current concepts and themes that concern society by encouraging an experiential way of participating in learning. An attempt to help pupils shift from memorisation to critical thinking so that they can perceive and receive history differently.

Keywords: *history, refugee question, Greek Revolution of 1821, primary education, Exodus of Missolonghi, educational drama, theatre pedagogy project*

In the – perhaps not so distant – year of 1825, a pack of dogs in Missolonghi begins to realise that something strange is afoot. Food is running out, people are unhappy, the sky is grey. No one can enter or leave the city. It's up to the dogs to make their decisions and follow their own route to freedom.

This brief description accompanied "Towards Liberty", an educational drama addressed to children of primary education and, specifically, third to sixth grade pupils. The project was part of "The NTNG in Education" programme, implemented within the framework of the Operational Programme "Human Resources Development, Education and Lifelong Learning" and co-financed by Greece and the European Union.

The programme was carried out for three consecutive years (from 2019 to 2021). In this framework, the above mentioned educational drama, launched in March 2019, and "In the Land of Liberty", another educational drama introduced in the following season, toured five regions of Northern Greece (Eastern Macedonia and Thrace, Central Macedonia, Western Macedonia, Epirus, Thessaly), focusing on remote schools in border villages, where in most cases children had never come in contact with theatre as a genre.

As the drama teacher who designed and animated this educational project as well as the accompanying material (preparatory and follow-up material), I will not dwell further on numbers and statistics, but I will focus on the essence, which concerns the use of a history textbook and historical narrative in creating an educational drama. More specifically, I will focus on the ways in which educational drama can, in addition to the knowledge it offers, involve a variety of social, mental, aesthetic and psycho-emotional goals.

The subject of "Towards Liberty", setting out on its journey to primary schools in March 2019, was the Siege of Missolonghi. In planning the project, I consulted the sixth grade history textbook and the chapters about the events of Missolonghi, but also more generally the events of that entire time period. I thought it would be helpful to use identical phrases and follow the textbook's historical timeline so as not to cause any misunderstandings, agitation or confusion in the children's minds if they received differentiated or even conflicting information. However, wanting to have a comprehensive picture of the events, I also consulted other books and studies on the history of the Greek Revolution for my own personal research.

However, I did not limit myself to simply incorporating or paraphrasing historical events, nor did I engage in a mimetic, representational process of what was mentioned. Instead, I decided to shift the

focal point and approach history from a different perspective. For this reason, I chose to speak allegorically and use animals as characters in this educational drama, which have served throughout the ages as an inexhaustible source of fiction as well as dramatic and/or on-stage development of imagination. Investing animals with a symbolic character, I placed them in the society of Missolonghi at the time of the Siege and subsequent Exodus. How can we delve into the events of the Greek Revolution through a fictional, allegorical story?

With these guiding questions in mind, I proceeded to the design and final animation of the educational drama. The goal was to encourage children to see the world and history from a different perspective, avoid the high-flown, pompous or excessive – and often one-sided – praises of heroism and turn to the essence of things and the messages of the Greek Revolution of 1821, at least in the way I understood them. One of the many ways that could be used to make this happen – and which I eventually chose – was to create a dramatic context in which the narrative focuses on non-human characters who, however, are characterised by human emotions and have pertinent dilemmas, thoughts, desires, etc.

Thus, apart from the narrowly knowledge-related objectives of educational drama, which included, for example, the familiarisation of participants with the historical and geographical context of events through techniques such as *group space configuration*, the project aimed at the experiential familiarisation of participants with notions concerning solidarity, the formation of individuality within the collective, peace and freedom. In order for this to happen, a story was written that ran parallel to the Exodus of Missolonghi. In this story, the roles of animal residents of Missolonghi were taken over by participating students and the project's three actor-animators. Through their role they were called to decide on their fate, discuss with arguments, vote and, in general, take an active part in the development of the plot.

Some of the techniques used to encourage the above processes are *hot seat*, *thought tunnel*, *council* and, finally, *voting by show of hands*. I would like to note at this point that the parabolic use of animals as historical heroes tended to liberate children and provide them with the necessary safety to express themselves freely through the consequent distance created because of the fictional dramatic context, thus enhancing their active citizenship.

In the second year of the programme, the 2019–2020 season, another educational drama titled "In the Land of Liberty" was added to the educational activities of NTNG, essentially continuing the story of the dogs presented in the first educational drama. I quote the description of the project:

Mani, 1826. In the rugged but beautiful Mani, the Revolution is now over and the Wolves, residents of the area, are enjoying their freedom. Soon, Pericles arrives at their place, a dog that managed to escape from the besieged Missolonghi. He seeks asylum in Mani and hopes that he will be able to bring his friends to this place where the war has ended. Now, it is up to the Wolves to decide whether to help Pericles and the other Dogs in their quest to live in a peaceful place.

The same work method was employed in creating this project, but this time special emphasis was given to a topical issue, that is the refugee question. The wolves in Mani are called to decide: will they accept the dogs that have irregularly fled a state of war in their liberated country? The starting point of our dramaturgy was historical events as well as testimonies of Greek fighters of 1821, which refer to the effort of the approximately 2,000 survivors of the Exodus of Missolonghi to seek asylum and assistance in Eastern Peloponnese, specifically in Mani and Nafplion. My main source was the military memoirs of Greek fighter Nikolaos Kassomoulis.

I tried, therefore, to illuminate the conflicts that broke out even among the Greeks during the Revolution in the light of a more internationalised and modern humanitarian approach. That is, solidarity *need not* be extended only from Greek to Greek, or wolf to wolf. Again, the use of animals as a symbol seemed to help children better understand the relationships and positions projected over time on issues of diversity, xenophobia, etc., without being influenced by the characters' national or racial identity. Children in the role would very often connect the dramatised events with the then-current conditions and would respond to the questions of the past through their view of the present.

Especially in this case, the use of animals as dramatic characters freed children from the reproduction of stereotypical discourse about right or wrong, coming either from their personal environment or from the educational process. On the contrary, it facilitated the expression of their own judgement, which was the product of the processes of educational drama, through the actual personal, individual formulations of each child. This happened using techniques such as *transformation*, *interview*, *take a stand* and *role on the wall*.

It is worth noting that when this educational drama was presented, the refugee issue had been rekindled, while its performances at the border schools of the villages of Dikaia and Metaxades in the prefecture of Evros coincided with intense border clashes and the presence of a large army unit in February 2020.

With the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, the project was redesigned and continued to be offered to schools participating in the programme through the online platform Sway, where short texts alternated with videos featuring the actors who, on the one hand, promoted the storytelling and, on the other, invited students – in different ways this time – to become part of the story.

In the 2020–2021 season, and with schools closed for most of the time due to the persisting pandemic, the project continued asynchronously and digitally with particular emphasis on the provision of ample print and audiovisual materials for theatre pedagogy as well as the animation, guidance and support of teachers in their effort to implement educational programmes using the techniques of theatre and educational drama.

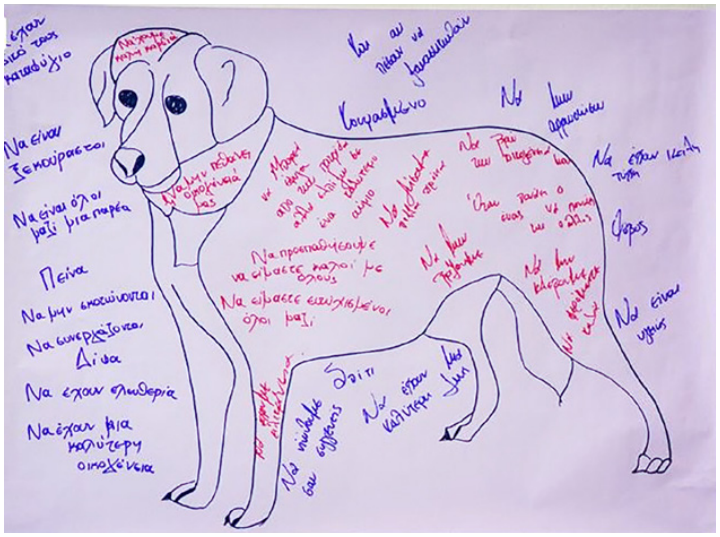
The provision of these materials, the support offered to teachers in order for them to continue engaging with the theatre pedagogy methods proposed by the project as well as the creation of teacher networks were among the goals of this project from the very beginning. The ultimate aim was the project's viability and the potential long-term impact on the educational process, proposing "best

practices" for approaching a variety of subject areas while setting psychosocial goals. The preparatory material and the material offered to schools consisted of booklets (in print and pdf formats), which included activities relating to literary texts centred on the events of the Greek Revolution, constructions and original writing.

In conclusion, I would like to emphasise once again my view about the crucial importance of connecting and teaching the past through a comparative approach to the "now" of each historical moment. Through the correlation of national tradition with current concepts that respond to the language and the questions, desires and concerns of children, we are given the opportunity to use historical memory as a vehicle for approaching "sensitive" contemporary issues. In this way, history may one day be able, as a subject area, to shake off its image – repulsive to most people – as a sterile memorisation of dates, names and events and to be restored as a valuable starting point for the production of a mechanism for critical thinking and meaning-making, through the experiential learning that theatre in education can offer.

Photos: Tassos Thomoglou
(available at https://www.ntng.gr)

* This article was presented – with certain modifications – as a paper at the Anniversary Conference "Theatre and Revolution" of the Department of Theatre Studies of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, which took place on 10–13 November 2021. All rights to the text are reserved by the author. Co-translated into English with Yannis Stamos.



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Endeavours to introduce **drama** in **education** in **primary education** in **China**

Miao Bin

Introduction

In 2018, a top-performing Chinese student participating in the "Epidaurus Lyceum – International summer school for ancient drama"[1] approached me and recounted his story, revealing his ambitious or, I dare say, bold plans. In addition to his artistic activities, Miao Bin used to work for a shipping company in Shanghai, which announced the opening of a branch in Greece in 2013. He and his musician wife moved to Greece, where they enthusiastically began to study the Greek culture and language. They became travel bloggers, published travel books, studied the history of Greek music and theatre and set up Muse Academy και Meetculture, the companies through which they organised numerous high quality cultural exchange projects, concerts, performances and summer schools in Greece and China.

Impressed by the academic standards of "Epidaurus Lyceum" and wanting to delve into theatre/drama teaching, Miao shared his desire to study at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of the Peloponnese. I recommended that he should attend the department's MA programme in Drama and Performing Arts in Education and Lifelong Learning. In this context, he was able to come in contact with the magic of theatre pedagogy, at both practical and theoretical level. He also found a framework to experiment further on the osmosis of the two cultures and intercultural performances. Through the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network (TENet-Gr), of which he became a member, and then the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA), he discovered the work and research carried out in the field.

Returning to China in 2019–2020, he was equipped with knowledge, passion and the powerful vision of a new theatre/drama educator. Drawing on his robust experience in cultural management, he has been implementing innovative projects, which are deemed quite remarkable not only by China's standards but also from an international perspective. These projects often have a research-reflective aspect and are undertaken by small research groups of educators, which can serve as a true breeding ground for novel ideas. As a PhD candidate at the University of the Peloponnese, he maintains his close bond with Greece. Despite living in China, Miao continues to be a full member of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network and a recipient of our journal, *Education & Theatre*, which, as he claims, has been a useful source of inspiration for his activities.

We, as the journal's Editing Committee, asked him to share his experience of the past two years in China in the context of a wider framework of institutional changes and endeavours undertaken by older and young facilitators to introduce drama at all formal education levels. After all, China has shown considerable progress in the field of theatre/drama in education since the 2000s and in particular, following the 2007 IDEA World Congress in Hong Kong. We are witnessing here the inspirational activity of a new colleague driven by vision, knowledge, consistency and intercultural flexibility. We sincerely hope he will be able to achieve his goals.

Christina Zoniou

Abstract

Drama in education has been developing faster in recent years in China, and its value has been recognised by schools, parents and education authorities. Nevertheless, its integration into the school curriculum is still difficult due to various reasons such as the beliefs of principals and the lack of qualified teachers, amongst others. In this article, I will outline the efforts I have made as a theatre/drama educator to help change this situation. I will present the initial positive results of my endeavours, which have resulted in drama becoming a compulsory subject for all students at Tianfu No.7 High School Primary Section and leading other arts subjects, including music, fine arts and dance, to build an integrated arts education. These practices are valuable and worthy to be held up as an example for schools willing to add drama in education into their curriculum in China and beyond.

Keywords: *drama in education, school curriculum, compulsory subject, integrated arts education*

Theatre and drama in education in China

In China, theatre and drama in education have been developing for around 30 years, however the interest in this field has significantly increased only in recent years. Especially since October 2020, when the State Council (2020) published their policy about arts education, in which theatre/drama was for the first time listed in the curriculum together with music, fine arts, etc. This can be seen as a signal for the national educational system to adopt theatre and drama in school education. Another positive sign came from the revised curriculum standards, which emphasised an integrated arts curriculum to replace single-subject classes such as music and fine arts in the first and second grade of primary schools.

It was not easy to promote theatre/drama in education or generally arts education in schools, as most children are pushed to focus on the subjects of Chinese, mathematics and English. For this reason, national education authorities introduced the so-called "double reduction policy" to reduce the burden of excessive homework and after-school tutoring for compulsory subjects. Therefore, at a policy level, theatre and drama received enough support to become integrated into school education.

But at a practical level, there are still several significant obstacles. Based on the large population in China, the number of students per class is normally 45–55 in public schools and 30–40 in private schools. So, drama activities become more difficult with so many children in one classroom, especially when they have had little experience with theatre and drama. This presents challenges for teachers, and even teachers with a relevant educational background need to adjust their teaching methods to such class sizes. But the reality is that most schools have no qualified teachers, which makes an effective drama class impossible. As a result, in most schools, there is no class time dedicated to drama.

It is more common to have drama as an elective subject, either taught by teachers of Chinese, English or music or teachers from theatre groups and companies. These classes are supplementary to regular classes, so they can be easily cancelled for various reasons. In such classes, children normally perform a play under teachers' guidance. Just as with other

art training, most theatre companies prefer to offer courses in acting, singing, etc., which can be easily turned into a performance to render adults satisfied.

Along with the introduction and spreading of drama in education in China, some schools and parents have become aware of the disadvantages of "acting" courses, which might lead children to act in a "fake" and superficial manner. On the contrary, improvisation, which is emphasised in drama in education, can be more effective in training children in performing arts more naturally (Davies, 2011). Several new theatre companies offer drama in education courses, and most of the founders and teachers have attended MA programmes in drama in education in countries such as the UK and Ireland. They in turn have provided training to their staff or whoever has shown interest in training more drama teachers. Sometimes they have collaborations in place with universities in Europe, such as Trinity College Dublin and University of Warwick, among others, to offer training materials or certification.

In 1995, Ms Li Yingning participated in the World Congress of the International Drama/Theatre and Education Association (IDEA) in Brisbane, Australia, and then studied for an MA in Drama/Theatre in Education with David Davis at the International Centre for Studies in Drama in Education of the University of Central England from 1996 to 1998 (Li, 2016). In 2005, the Shanghai Academy of Drama established a Department of Drama Education, which still focused on performing without introducing the concept of drama in education. In 2007, around 100 Chinese drama educators and practitioners participated in the 6th World Congress of IDEA in Hong Kong,[2] and drama in education started to become known in China. Li Yingning introduced her course, titled "Theory, development and practice of drama in education", at the Shanghai Academy of Drama in the same year. From 2009 to 2013, several drama in education groups appeared in China, such as Drama Rainbow in Beijing. In 2014, Li Yingning started to organise summer schools offering training to drama teachers, who gradually became the seeds of drama in education in different cities in China. In fact, the vast majority of them chose to set up commercial entities. In 2015, the Ministry of Education for the first time listed theatre/drama alongside music and fine arts in the arts syllabus, and the State Council also asked schools with necessary resources to organise drama activities. However, these policies or guidance did not change the situation for drama in education, which still remained absent from formal school education.

Following Shanghai, the Central Academy of Drama in Beijing also established a department of drama education, and certain other universities started becoming aware of the difference between drama in education and traditional drama education. Since 2015, organisations and events such as IDEC and CTLACDE[3] have generated a wider discussion about drama in education across various parts of society. However, as presented by Professor Ma Wenqi at the IDEC conference in Beijing in December 2020, there were still no dedicated and compulsory drama classes in the primary schools of China.

Drama in education in the school curriculum

The Affiliated Elementary School of Chengdu University was an exception and as of September 2020, all students have had one drama class per week. So drama became a compulsory subject in this school, and I became the first drama teacher to be assigned to teach it in Chengdu.[4] This happened after my graduation from the MA programme in Drama and Performing Arts in Education and Lifelong Learning at the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Peloponnese in Greece.

In collaboration with Professor Manolis Papagrigorakis from the University of Athens, I designed "Myrtis", a drama in education project for fourth-grade pupils based on the story of a girl who died in the plague in ancient Athens (Papagrigorakis et al., 2021). The project was implemented for one semester and integrated Greek culture with the evolution of the COVID-19 outbreak, leading children to consider their roles in the pandemic and combining applied drama with moral education (Winston, 1998). It was a success, reported by both Greek and Chinese media. It also served as an attractive factor for the diplomatic visit of the Greek ambassador to the primary school and Chengdu University. A performance titled "Myrtis" was presented by the students at this event. In the meantime, drama classes

became well-known across the city along with these activities. As part of the National Teacher Training Project, I presented "Prometheus", a public drama class, and a lecture about drama in education for around 100 school principals in Chengdu.

A further step was made when I was invited to become head of arts education at Tianfu No.7 High School Primary Section. Apart from retaining drama as a compulsory subject for all students, I became head of an arts education team, consisting also of teachers of music, fine arts and dance, to create an integrated arts curriculum centred on drama in education. The Chinese Ministry of Education (2011) clearly stated in the Arts Curriculum Standards that the arts curriculum integrates music, fine arts, drama, dance, etc. The course from the absence of drama in the school programme to drama leading arts subjects can almost be seen as a revolution in arts education. As an integrated art itself, theatre/drama has been considered an ideal carrier for other arts, but making theatre/drama a leader of arts subjects is still a pioneering act.

A mature drama in education system has been established during this past year, which includes three levels: compulsory, elective and special drama classes. The compulsory class is based on drama in education, with one class per week for all the students. The elective drama class is based on dramatic art, with two to four classes per week for students who are interested in drama. The special drama class is based on performing arts, and there is one class per week for the students who have shown potential in performing on stage. These three levels clearly show the different functions to match different needs and educational purposes. Taking into consideration all pupils in one class, drama classes not only concern the uniqueness of each child but also aim at developing teamwork and group creation (Özbek, 2014).

On top of the aforementioned, the Zhiren Theatre Festival is organised in December every year. Different from traditional school performances, this festival is innovative in content, form and venue. Created by the children, the content derives from their daily drama classes to reflect the real teaching and learning experience, whereas it is not specifically designed and rehearsed for the festival. There are four parts: environmental theatre, cultural heritage, experimental theatre and future world. The forms are diversified, such as improvisational theatre, dance theatre, readers' theatre, environmental theatre reading, giving students a comprehensive experience with theatre. Apart from the traditional stage, various venues are used in the Zhiren Theatre Festival as theatrical spaces, such as the lobby, the library, the square, and even the grassland under a tallow tree to promote theatre across campus. The

festival proved influential on parents, the community and education authorities, offering a fresh concept and a new form of school theatre festival for other schools as well.

Throughout the past year, drama has developed into one of the most important school subjects, which is inspiring progress since only few drama classes have been so far included in the curriculum of different schools. In Tianfu No.7 High School Primary Section, drama is not only a compulsory subject similar to other subjects of the national curriculum but is also leading arts subjects to build an integrated arts education.

Traditionally in school education in China, Chinese, mathematics and English have been the basic subjects and decisive factors in evaluating students' academic performance. Especially since Chinese, being the native language, is the most important part of the school curriculum. Can drama be integrated with the Chinese language, just as is the case with English language learning in the UK (Baldwin & Fleming, 2003)? To explore how drama can be applied in Chinese language teaching and literacy, I set up the "Miao Drama Education Workshop" in cooperation with a work group of four art teachers and six teachers of Chinese in the school. Weekly meetings were held to discuss and record the project's progress. In one semester, three classes of the Chinese language were the topic of research and discussion in terms of how drama could be helpful in making Chinese language teaching more creative and effective. In the past, Chinese language teaching emphasised standard answers and results, simply centred on knowledge transfer. In the classroom, teachers would be

at the centre, as opposed to drama in education which advocates for teachers to step back and trust their students to share different artistic expressions (Tsichli, 2009). The Ministry of Education has started reforming the Chinese language curriculum, focusing on holistic literacies. It is good timing for drama in education to join hands with Chinese language teaching. In addition to benefitting the teaching methods of Chinese language, the position of drama in education will improve in connection with its increasing effect on this most important subject.

Theatre and drama in education in the communities

Drama was not limited within the school but was also linked to social entities such as theatres, galleries, museums, bookshops, etc. (Landy, 1982). Based on the three-level drama classes and the theatre festival, the school collaborated with A4 Gallery to co-produce "Youxi" Children's Theatre, an event featuring performances by the school's theatre groups. In the after-talk, children shared their thoughts and feelings about studying drama with the audience, who were impressed by drama's influence on children.

When drama in education is introduced as a daily class for all pupils, theatre in education also becomes essential for children. "Antigone" performed by second to fifth-year primary pupils was the finalist of Daliangshan International Theatre Festival, which is a well-known theatre festival in China. It was the first time that primary pupils had performed in such a formal theatre festival. Upon an invitation, the "Du Fu, the Poet in Chengdu" performance was presented at the Du Fu[5] Museum in Chengdu. In addition to performing, pupils accompanied by their teachers and parents had the opportunity to attend theatre performances and sometimes meet with directors and actors. Children need to experience theatre, but good quality performances for children are still not enough in China.

Lack of qualified drama teachers and no drama subject in the school curriculum. These are the main problems faced by children in terms of their school education, although they are willing to receive drama education, especially since they are aware of the importance of drama. So attention turns to the communities. In collaboration with Yizhou Community in Chengdu, we organised several drama in education workshops for children living in that community, so they could have a chance to experience drama even if their schools did not offer drama classes.

Discussion

At a macro level, drama in education has attracted significant interest from schools, parents and education authorities in China, even though this trend started much later than in Europe. More schools are expected to have drama classes in the coming years, offering not only elective but also compulsory classes. More teachers with a professional background will work or collaborate with schools and in the meantime, more teacher training programmes will be organised to secure enough teachers to teach drama classes. The general attitude towards drama in education development in China in the coming decades is positive, because it is in line with the national strategy of school education, which is in the process of reforming and innovating.

The beliefs and attitudes towards innovation of school principals are decisive factors to make drama a part of the school curriculum. Without the courage and support of principals, it is not possible to add drama into the school programme, not to mention to regard it as the leader of arts subjects as Tianfu No.7 High School Primary Section has been working on. A drama class could be easily abandoned once a principal or a drama teacher left the school. To have theatre and drama integrated into school education, apart from policies by governmental departments, the stability of principals and drama teachers cannot be ignored.

Another fact that needs to be emphasised is that drama in education should be introduced in higher education with an expanded focus going beyond acting and directing. Until now, most drama in education teachers have studied abroad, in countries such as the UK, Ireland and Greece. To have more qualified teachers, teacher training by theatre companies will not be enough, therefore universities need to set up degrees in drama in education.

We need to be aware that the cultural background of children differs significantly, so promoting drama in education in China should adapt to local children's characteristics and conditions. In the present phase, various practices are introduced across China, and communication among these practitioners is increasingly strengthened.

Introduction and notes: Christina Zoniou

Notes

1. An international programme of the Athens & Epidaurus Festival, certified by the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Peloponnese and led by Georgina Kakoudaki. It run for three years, from 2017 to 2019.
2. For the 6th 2007 IDEA World Congress in Hong Kong, entitled "Planting ideas: Global Vision in Local Knowledge", a detailed report can be found in Issue 8 of our journal (available in Greek), which was written by Mary Kaldi and Nasia Choleva, who attended the congress along with other members as representatives of the Hellenic Theatre/Drama & Education Network. https://tinyurl.com/y7bh97hx
3. The International Drama Education Congress (IDEC) is an IDEA member located in Beijing. CTLACDE was a conference on the application of drama in education, hosted by the Chinese Drama Literature Society.
4. With 18 million inhabitants, Chengdu is the capital of the province of Sichuan in Southwest China and one of the most important economic and cultural centres across the country.
5. Du Fu (712–770 AD) is a well-known Chinese poet.

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Mapping of Youth Theatre workshops/organisations in Cyprus

Eleni Polyviou

Abstract

This article describes the main findings of a primary research which was conducted in Cyprus during 2019–2020 and is part of the doctoral dissertation of the author. The purpose of the research was to outline the overall picture of the organisations that were active in Cyprus in the field of Youth Theatre during the years 2017–2020 so that its results could be integrated into the general geographical context that the dissertation examines. The research records the objectives of Youth Theatre programmes, the composition of organisations and the theatre activities that are carried out. In addition, it examines whether these programmes result in the staging of a theatrical performance and to what extent teenagers participate in the various aspects of the process. As a methodological tool, a specially designed questionnaire was used.

Keywords: *Youth Theatre, Cyprus, teenagers, non-formal education*

Introduction

The participation of teenagers in theatre workshops and groups can provide them with a supportive environment where they can express themselves freely and explore their abilities, get to know themselves better and become empowered to make successful transitions to adulthood (Burton, 2002, p. 63). Young people share their own story and use their personal experiences to embody a role. In addition, they are given the opportunity to change and shape their story according to their emotions and mood, since they know that theatre provides a safe space for dialogue and expression (Vettraino et al., 2017, p. 82). Youth Theatre programmes provide a framework for collaboration between young people, in which they are called upon to manage their emotions, both on a personal level and within the group, while cultivating their emotional maturation (Larson & Brown, 2007, p. 1085).

For the purposes of this research, we we will

adopt the the definition of Youth Theatre used by the National Association of Youth Theatres (NAYT) in the UK, according to which Youth Theatre defines a group or several groups of young people who come together regularly to participate in theatre/drama activities. These groups are led and/or facilitated by experienced/trained staff and the participation of young people is voluntary and outside of statutory education (National Association of Youth Theatres, n.d.).

Youth Theatre

The literature review shows that the term Youth Theatre is not clarified in Cyprus. It might refer to school performances presented by the students themselves or performances by professional theatre groups that visit the secondary schools. Also, the term Youth Theatre is often not differentiated from the term Children's Theatre or Young People's Theatre, but it is used as an umbrella term for Theatre for Young Audiences. According to Grammatas (2014), the term Theatre for Young Audiences is used to define the theatrical activity of professionals who perform plays addressed to young children and teenagers. As highlighted in his article, these performances have a pedagogical use and put emphasis on music and scenery in order for the story to be more comprehensible to the young audience.

The young audience in Cyprus attends performances by professional companies that visit the schools – performances either in the traditional sense or, much less often, using the methodology of theatre in education (TiE). It should be noted that the professional companies need to be primarily approved by the Cypriot Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth. The TiE performances deal with topics that are relevant to the children's lives and aim to activate the participation of the audience (Jackson, 1993, p. 5). In addition to this, in Cyprus and Greece the term Youth Theatre seems to be used by various practitioners and theatre professionals who lead theatre groups of young people in non-formal education.

According to Neelands (2008), Youth Theatre is a process that requires the cooperation and dedication of all actors and is directly intertwined with the lives of young people. As he adds, "being with others who have that same kind of restlessness (...) and through youth drama being offered the chance to build a voice and a sense of belonging (...) Through building character, building stories, their own voice develops. This is one of the great qualities of good youth theatre. Also being given permission to be different from other people: being given permission to dream by the people with whom you share your community, and having something bigger to work towards" (Neelands, 2008).

The research of Hughes & Wilson (2004), conducted in collaboration with the National Association of Youth Theatres, has collected data on the organisations that are active in the field of Youth Theatre in the United Kingdom. The research aimed to explore the impact of participating in Youth Theatre programmes on young people's personal and social development. Moreover, it aimed to record the Youth Theatre programmes implemented by organisations in the United Kingdom, and researchers identified four models of practice in Youth Theatre provision.

The first model was called Theatre/Arts and focused on providing young people with access to professional theatre education. These programmes were not focused on the personal and social development of young people. The second model was called Community and its goal was to promote the reflection and concerns of specific communities in order to foster the development of the community through theatre. The third model, called Youth Arts, aimed to support the personal, social and political development of young people through theatre. Finally, the aim of the fourth model, that is Applied Theatre, was to use theatre as a tool to address specific issues. It did not necessarily aim at creating an aesthetically correct theatrical product (Hughes & Wilson, 2004, p. 62).

Relevant research was also carried out by the National Association for Youth Drama in Ireland during the years 2007–2008, entitled *Centre Stage +10*. The objective of this research was to examine the state of Irish Youth Theatre under the following four general headings: (1) Youth Theatre structures in relation to their funding and resources, (2) Youth Theatre practice and programming, (3) Youth Theatre members and coordinators and (4) young people and the benefits from their participation. The research resulted in five models of Youth Theatre that emerged through the categorisation of researchers, which was based on the key decision maker, the "parent" organisation ultimately responsible for running the youth theatre (such as a professional theatre company), or were classified as "autonomous" (self-governing youth theatres with a voluntary board or committee) (Dunnett, 2009, p. 30). The same research was repeated ten years later in Ireland by the same organisation, with the same objectives and based on the existing theatre models. The main difference identified was that in the intervening years several new youth theatres were created and in many of the existing ones the participation of young people was increased (Dunnett, 2019, p. 7).

Objectives of the research

Based on the literature review, a gap was identified in the research on Youth Theatre in Cyprus. Therefore, field research was carried out by the author in order to collect data on theatre workshops/drama and theatre schools/theatre organisations/theatre and drama institutions (hereinafter referred to as "Youth Theatre Organisations") active in the field of Youth Theatre in Cyprus (in non-formal education). Furthermore, the research aimed to collect information about their programmes addressed to teenagers (aged 11–18). This article is part of a broader research study, which was carried out in the context of the doctoral dissertation of the author and will present only the answers concerning the following questions posed to the participating organisations:

1. How many organisations in Cyprus run Youth Theatre classes and what is the profile of participating teenagers and teachers?
2. What theatre activities are included in the programmes of Youth Theatre Organisations and what methodologies do they use?
3. What are the aims of Youth Theatre programmes?
4. Is it considered necessary to stage a theatrical performance?
5. To what extent and in what ways do teenagers participate in the selection of the play, the stage direction and the promotion of the theatrical performance?

Data collection tools

A specially designed questionnaire was used to collect the data. The questionnaire was disseminated to the Youth Theatre Organisations via email or by message on their websites and social media. The Youth Theatre Organisations were given a week to complete the questionnaire and return it to the researcher. The questionnaire was structured in three parts. The demographics of Youth Theatres were included in the first part of the questionnaire. The second part consisted of closed-ended questions aimed at collecting information on the operation of the groups. The third part included open-ended questions aimed at recording the views of theatre practitioners based on three factors: (a) the impact of participating in Youth Theatre on young people's personal development, (b) the impact on the development of their interpersonal relationships and (c) the impact on the development of their aesthetics. The use of open-ended questions allowed the participants to freely express their thoughts, feelings and preferences. They answered whatever they liked without being limited or influenced with predefined answers (Papanastasiou & Papanastasiou, 2016, p. 91). In addition, through open-ended questions the individual has the possibility to reflect their own point of view even in more complicated issues (Kyriazi, 1998, p. 128).

It has to be noted that this article will only present the results of the quantitative analysis of the data. The analysis of the open-ended questions, which is inextricably linked to the research, will not be analysed in this article but will be presented later in the dissertation. Moreover, in the dissertation the author will attempt to categorise the organisations into models based on the impact of participating in Youth Theatre on (a) young people's personal development, (b) the development of their interpersonal relationships and (c) the development of their aesthetics.

Sample

A total of 22 Youth Theatre Organisations in Cyprus participated in the research and, according to the data they provided, they were offering Youth Theatre Programmes to teenagers. It should be noted that initially 62 organisations had been identified, however after the researcher's communication with them it was found that 16 of them, due to difficulties they faced, could not activate a Youth Theatre Programme during the years 2017–2020. Furthermore, 5 of them refused to answer the questionnaire, because they considered that they were asked to answer questions related to personal data. The other 19 Youth Theatre Organisations which received the questionnaire and agreed to participate never returned it to the researcher. The Youth Theatre Organisations were identified through a personal search of the author via their websites and social media.

Analysis

The analysis of data was done using Microsoft Excel, followed by a descriptive presentation of all the questions in the questionnaire. For the most important findings, data was presented in charts.

Presentation of results

According to the information supplied by the database, most Youth Theatre Organisations (31.82%) are based in Nicosia District, whereas the fewest are based in Famagusta District (4.55%). Regarding the number of teenagers participating in Youth Theatre programmes, there is an increasing trend of 14% during the 2019–20 school year (355 in total) compared to the 2017–18 school year (in which a total of 312 teenagers participated). The participation of teenagers is also interesting since, as it turned out, the majority are girls (73%). Also, most of the teenagers (41.50%) are aged between 11 to 14 years old, while as they grow older there is a decrease in their participation rate, limited to 31.74% for teenagers between the ages of 15 to 18.

As far as the professional status of the staff of Youth Theatre Organisations is concerned, it was identified that the majority of the sample (71.43%) holds a qualification related to theatre (actors, theatre educators and theatre scholars). Also, there are staff members that hold a degree in primary education, Greek philology and secondary education.

More than 90% of Youth Theatre Organisations answered that they meet with their groups once a week, with an average duration of one hour and thirty minutes. More specifically, 63.64% meet for two hours, 31.82% for an hour and thirty minutes and 4.54% for an hour. In addition, in relation to the activities in which teenagers take part within Youth Theatre programmes, it was identified that all Youth Theatre Organisations include theatre games, concentration exercises, collaboration exercises and improvisation in their programmes. Almost all (21 Youth Theatre Organisations out of 22) teach acting skills, while others include orthophony, singing and physical theatre.

Based on the analysis of the data, it was identified that 9 Youth Theatre Organisations use both educational drama and applied drama as part of their teaching methodology. The sample was given three options for this question. The first one was educational drama, the second was applied drama and the third was the option “other”. Educational drama was proposed as it has a pedagogical aim and uses activities inspired by theatre to allow participants to express themselves physically and verbally and collaborate with the other members of their group acquiring social responsibility (Avdi & Hadjigeorgiou, 2007, p. 19). The second option was the use of applied drama, a methodology that uses theatre as social intervention, outside of conventional theatrical environments. In addition, applied drama uses techniques from drama/theatre in education and community theatre to achieve its goals (Nicholson, 2005, p. 2). The third was the "other" option, in which participants could record their own methodology. The answers included in the “other” option were the use of dramatherapy techniques, ancient Greek drama and fairy tales.

Regarding the question about the goals of their programmes, all Youth Theatre Organisations answered that they aim to improve the self-confidence of teenagers. Also, 21 Youth Theatre Organisations responded that they aim to enhance the creative expression of teenagers. 20 of them aim to develop the collaboration skills of the teenagers as well as teach acting. 19 Youth Theatre Organisations focus on language development, 18 on developing interpersonal relationships between teenagers as well as enhancing their decision making and 9 on developing creative writing.

Also, the sample was asked to state whether they are staging performances during or at the end of the school year. The school year starts between September and October and extends until June of the following year. According to their responses, all Youth Theatre Organisations in the sample offer a full year-round provision and stage performances as part of their programmes. 59% of Youth Theatre Organisations stage at least one performance, while 22% also stage a second performance. Furthermore, on this subject, the teachers replied on whether they consider it necessary to stage a performance or not. The majority of Youth Theatre Organisations (68%) responded that they consider it necessary for the following reasons: "The performance is an integral part of the whole process and the culmination of the work done in groups of teenagers during the school year", "Children must be able to interact with the world and have a specific goal; to convey the message they want each time", “They show everything they learn during the school year. They also learn how important it is to be consistent and participate in the rehearsals. They learn to take on responsibilities. The performance is also important to show parents the work that has been done during the school year" and "Communicating with the audience is very important for teenagers as it empowers them and strengthens their self-confidence”.

The majority of the organisations in the sample

(15) replied that their performance or performances are not always based on existing theatrical texts. In some cases, the group itself composes the dramatic text that will be performed. In order for the researcher to collect more information on this, Youth Theatre Organisations were asked to indicate the techniques or activities that they use as a starting point for the composition of a dramatic text. The question was in the form of multiple choice and, therefore, 15 Youth Theatre Organisations answered that they use the technique of improvisation, 12 the practice and techniques of creative writing, whereas 11 Youth Theatre Organisations choose the method of devised theatre and 6 the method of process drama. In devised theatre, the dramatic text is created through the experimentation of a group, which chooses to explore theatrically an idea, a thought or a topic that interests them with the aim of performing it on stage (Pigkou-Repousi, 2019, p. 40). On the contrary, in process drama, the teacher and the participants work together to create an imaginary dramatic world in which they explore a problem, situation or topic that interests them for the benefit of the participants and without the aim of staging a theatrical performance in front of an audience (O'Neill, 1995, p. 152).

Youth Theatre Organisations involve young people in the decision-making aspects of theatre programming in various ways. According to the data obtained, the choice of the play that will be performed is collective work. 68% Youth Theatre Organisations answered that professionals and teenagers decide together on the play. 73% of them stated that teenagers participate in the promotion of the performance by posting on their personal social media accounts, sharing flyers, creating and sharing videos and even organising outdoor events in order to attract the public. Statistics showed that teenagers are not involved in finding funds for staging the performance (86%). It should be noted that teenagers pay monthly fees to the Youth Theatre Organisations in order to participate in their programmes.

73% of Youth Theatre Organisations offer teenagers the opportunity to get involved in directing the play. As they stated: "Teenagers come with suggestions about directing and these suggestions are always accepted. So, teenagers become assistant directors", "During improvisation, teenagers are free to direct their scene based on their role but the main stage direction of the play is up to the professionals", "Every suggestion is worth listening to and being discussed" and "This is most likely to be done via group discussions".

Regarding the evaluation that follows after the end of the performance, it is identified that 78% of Youth Theatre Organisations evaluate the performance through feedback questions and group discussion. As they mentioned: "There is a closing meeting that includes a discussion about the teenagers' experience being on stage and after completing the performance", "Feedback and debriefing" and "Discussing after the end of the show about the whole experience. The discussion is mostly about reminding teenagers that it is more important to enjoy the journey that theatre offers".

Conclusions

The purpose of this research was to identify the Youth Theatre Organisations that were active in Cyprus during the years 2017–2020, record their theatrical activities, the methodologies they follow and their goals and examine whether their theatre programmes result in the staging of a performance. According to the answers of the sample, the above purpose was achieved and an indicative map of Youth Theatre Organisations in Cyprus was created.

As it turned out, there is an increasing participation in theatre classes by teenagers aged between 11 to 14 years old. The members of the staff in Youth Theatre Organisations are professionals or hold some sort of theatre-related qualifications. Also, their programmes include a variety of activities and share common goals in terms of the influence of theatre in enhancing the self-confidence of teenagers and the impact on their personal and social development. With regard to the methodologies used by Youth Theatre Organisations, data does not allow us to carry out an in-depth analysis but testifies that there are no strict methodologies used. Professionals choose their methodology based on the goals and objectives of their programmes.

The staging of a performance is considered important by the staff of Youth Theatre Organisations. By participating in a performance teenagers express themselves creatively and apply in practice what they were taught during the school year. In addition, the performance does not only have pedagogical goals but is also the highlight of the completion of theatrical creation, which requires communication, a sense of responsibility, cooperation, mutual understanding (Grammatas, 2003, p. 489). Similar is Richardson's view (2015, p. 15), according to which the process that precedes the staging of a theatrical performance is just as important as the product for two reasons: Firstly, the involvement of teenagers in theatre activities aims to achieve the goal of youth theatre, which is the development of teenagers personally and socially. Secondly, the staging of a theatrical performance then follows to complete the process. In addition, during the preparation and staging of the performance, participants use their bodies to express themselves and tell stories (Schechner, 2013, p. 28).

The involvement of teenagers in decision-making about the play that they will pursue, the stage direction and promotion of the performance appears to be collective work that requires the collaboration between teenagers and professionals. A Youth Theatre should be focused on action, both on and off stage, it ought to give voice and space to teenagers to create and work with a sense of responsibility to the group as a whole (Neelands, 2008).

Based on the analysis of the data, some limitations have emerged in the present research. To our knowledge, no prior studies have collected any data concerning Youth Theatre Organisations in Cyprus. In addition to this, the information collected about Youth Theatre Organisations was identified through the author's personal research on the web and social media pages of the Organisations. Therefore, all collected information had to be further investigated in order to determine whether it was valid or not, so this process was time-consuming and delayed the dissemination of the questionnaire. Moreover, the fact that some Youth Theatre Organisations delayed the completion of the questionnaire was another difficulty that had to be overcome by the researcher.

Taking into account all the above limitations of the research, the data collected cannot be considered exhaustive, since there are aspects of this research that can be further investigated. However, they can be a starting point for future research with the aim of making a wider effort to collect more data and information on Youth Theatre Organisations in Cyprus. What we can certainly argue is that there is a large community in Cyprus that deals with Youth Theatre, who seems to lay a solid foundation for the subsequent development of this genre and works consciously so that more and more teenagers will participate in theatre groups.

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Citizenship and **Democracy**: **Social interaction abilities** of **adolescent students**

A transcultural study through social theatre in Mexico and Greece

Dissertation synopsis

Doctoral dissertation,
Universidad Veracruzana and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki – February 2021

Christiana Moschou

The doctoral dissertation arose through research questions and literature review. Theoretical parameters, previous research and established techniques of social theatre and educational drama were examined. Taking into account the conclusions of literature review, a theatrical intervention programme was developed to mobilise the political potential of adolescent students. A pilot implementation was designed and carried out in the city of Aguascalientes, Mexico. The feedback from this intervention shaped the actual field research of the dissertation, which took place in the cities of Aguascalientes and Thessaloniki. The final text consists of the following parts: introduction, six chapters where the dissertation is developed, bibliography and appendix.

The dissertation begins with an extended introduction to familiarise the reader with the problem under examination. For this reason, this section presents the modern meaning of democracy and the formation of citizenship. The presentation is enriched with examples of alternative coexistence, while the connection between social theatre and citizenship is described. In this way the object of study is defined; that is, the formation of citizenship through social theatre, which promotes the active participation of citizens. It is a type of political theatre that aims to give voice to people and emancipate them. Also, a review of literature on the formation of citizenship in relation to social theatre based on the principles of inter- and trans-disciplinarity is carried out and the dissertation's work plan is outlined. Furthermore, an initial connection with the school curriculum is attempted, placing the dissertation within a school context, since the educational system has been traditionally considered a space that favours the formation of citizenship.

In addition, the empirical framework is presented, that is, the academic field of the dissertation. It involves a pedagogical intervention, which aims to explore different ways of teaching social and political education under an experiential learning paradigm. To clarify the planning framework for this intervention, this chapter describes important trends in artistic theatre as well as the types of applied theatre. Then, the educational systems of Greece and Mexico are presented, with an emphasis on their provisions regarding political education in secondary schools and the various educational programmes that enrich the formal curriculum.

Furthermore, the theoretical framework of the political concepts affecting the intervention is introduced, followed by a presentation of two concepts: transculturalism and democracy. Each of these concepts provides essential conceptual elements for the understanding of the problem posed and the argumentation presented.

Transculturalism as a way of reading political and social reality gives meaning and promotes studies similar to this dissertation. The concepts of globalisation, global governance and the Global South in the cross-cultural context of modern era define a citizenship beyond national borders, where forms of political behaviour are determined by locality and worldviews. It could be said that Mexico and Greece have a similar position not in geographical terms but within the political mapping of global systems.

Common political and social characteristics between Greece and Mexico place the two countries among the regions comprising the "Global South", as defined by the theory of global systems. Cross-cultural and transcultural approaches to the countries of the Global South can contribute to a more

comprehensive understanding of the current social phenomena and political trends governing these nations, highlighting their similarities and leading to useful conclusions. Therefore, due to this relevance, a comparative study between these two countries not only facilitates the study of the phenomena within each one of them but also allows a more substantial understanding and treatment of problems that go beyond local conditions, given that they are based on an international political and social complex.

This dissertation studies Mexico and Greece through social theatre as a tool for expression and learning. However, the main topic of the dissertation continues to be the education of citizens in a democracy. The interdisciplinarity outlined in the introduction, theatre and drama as presented in the first chapter, transculturalism and the previously discussed concept of Global South as well as critical pedagogy to be presented in the chapter on epistemology constitute elements of a central argument about the common way in which citizens learn to form communities and foster qualities within democratic institutions. To frame all this, a definition of the concept is proposed in addition to active participation in democracy and citizenship.

The epistemology of the thesis is then examined within the theoretical foundations of critical pedagogy. The methodological design is presented as action research and the methodological elements are explained in detail. The presentation of field research is followed by an analysis of data and results: The profile of the schools before the intervention and its basic elements in addition to the topics discussed during the intervention. After examining all the information, the results are presented based on each data collection tool: observation, interview and journal. In conclusion, the results are integrated by methodological triangulation.

Returning to the axes outlined in the dissertation's title, the final chapter associates the conclusions with inclusive democracy and transculturalism, education for democracy and the formation of citizenship as well as the interaction of students in social theatre. Finally, conclusions, research limitations and the position of the dissertation are summarised. In terms of conclusions, the dynamics recorded during field research show a great difference between the groups of students in the two countries. Students who participated in Mexico seem to be more affected by compassion, while students in Greece appear to be guided by the intellect. However, the nature of the research, that is, a short-term study with a limited sample, does not allow for the results to be generalised. It is important to avoid illustrating complete patterns and representations that can lead to stereotypical images. Still, this research demonstrates a trend that needs to be explored more carefully in future studies, both between these two countries and between the different social formations of the Global South.

Finally, democracy can become the political response to socio-political problems both at the level of central organisation and private relations that are still social and form a great part of civic culture. The governance of the state and the governance of associations and collectives require training in decision-making, previous experience in democratic environments, participation in the common space and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

Notes:

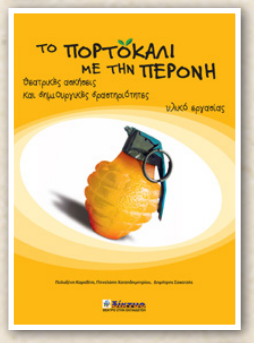
1. A double and joint doctorate between Universidad Veracruzana and Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, as published in the Official Government Gazette B' 131/29-1-2016.
2. The dissertation supervisors were Dr Roberto Anaya, Universidad Veracruzana, and Dr Konstantina Ritsatou from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. The advisory committee also included Dr José Matías Romo Martínez and Dr Antonis Lenakakis.
3. The doctoral research was funded by Mexico's National Council of Science and Technology (CONACYT).
4. The title of the dissertation in Spanish is: *Ciudadanía y Democracia: habilidades de interacción social en estudiantes adolescentes. Un estudio transcultural en México y en Grecia a través del teatro social*.
5. The date of the dissertation defense was 4 February 2021.

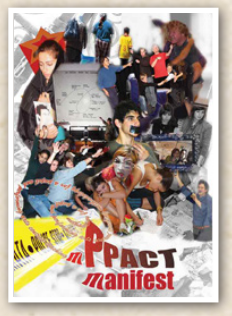
Christiana Moschou is a graduate of the Department of Theatre Studies of the University of Athens and holds a master's degree in Psychopedagogy of Inclusion from the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. In 2021 she received with honorable mention her doctoral degree for the dissertation *Citizenship and Democracy: social interaction abilities of adolescent students. A transcultural study through social theatre in México and Greece* by Universidad Veracruzana and the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki. She works in education, participates in the Hellenic Scientific Association of Theatre Scholars (PESYTH) and is one of the founding members of the Regional Chapter of the European Democratic Education Community. She has directed social theatre performances in Greece and Mexico. In her artistic work and experience, drama and theatre were the means to express social solidarity, awareness, resistance and claim. The thread that connects the different theatrical approaches is locality and the female narrative.

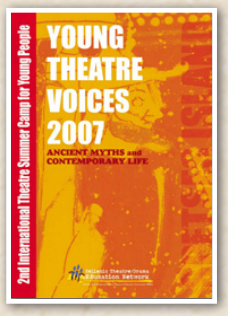
PUBLICATIONS

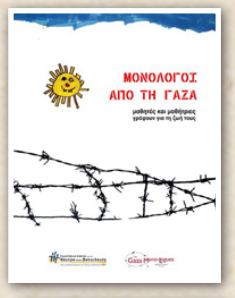
PROJECTS-SEMINARS-WORKSHOPS

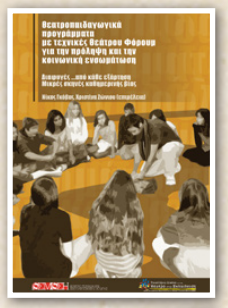
THEATRE SUMMER CAMPS

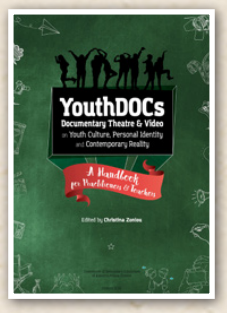


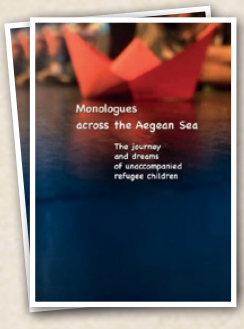


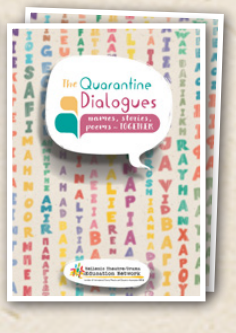












INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCES

Education & Theatre JOURNAL

ISSN 1109-821X