

Abstract

Theatre art can be included in education in different ways and with different goals. The first two pillars of theatre pedagogy – theatre literacy and theatre creation – have as their goal familiarisation with theatre art and theatre creation. The third pillar of theatre pedagogy – learning through theatrical approaches – understands theatre (or theatre approaches, methods and techniques) not only as a goal but primarily as a means for achieving broader educational goals. Drama in education (DiE) represents such a theatrical approach, which can be applied to various subject areas. In addition to educational goals, we also achieve aesthetic goals – we learn through drama and about drama. Drama in education belongs to the so-called process forms of drama, as it does not envisage a final product, that is, a performance. It originates from an improvised symbolic play/role play, and due to educational goals, it can also be argued that it indicates a learning approach in which the teacher/theatre pedagogue uses a combination of methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy connected in a meaningful dramatic structure. In addition to creative theatre activities, drama in education devotes most of its time to the negotiation and structuring of meanings directed by the teacher/theatre pedagogue. Even if a precise definition of drama in education is not possible, its key characteristics are processability, role play, improvisation, collectivity, dialogue and a symbolic dimension.

Keywords: theatre pedagogy, theatre approaches, drama in education, process, role play, improvisation

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Theatre Pedagogy: When Drama Becomes a Learning Approach

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Summary

The phenomenon of play connects theatre art and pedagogical science and lays the foundation for the development of theatre pedagogy. Theatre art can be included in education in different ways and with different goals. The first two pillars of theatre pedagogy – theatre literacy and theatre creation – have as their goal familiarisation with theatre art and theatre creation. The third pillar of theatre pedagogy – learning through theatrical approaches – understands theatre (or theatre approaches, methods and techniques) not only as a goal but primarily as a means for achieving broader educational goals. Since the first two aspects are traditionally more established in the Slovenian educational system, the article focuses on learning with theatrical approaches, or more precisely, the drama in education learning approach.

Drama in education represents a specific form of process drama, as it does not envisage a final product, that is, a performance. It is one of the established learning approaches in the Anglo-Saxon context, but in Slovenia, it is included in regular lessons only in fragments. However, the field is rapidly developing, starting by establishing Slovenian terminology, and the new generations of teachers might be more open to using drama in education. The theatrical approach originates from an improvised symbolic play/role play. Due to educational goals, it can also be argued that it indicates a learning approach in which the actor teacher/theatre pedagogue uses a combination of methods and techniques of theatre pedagogy connected in a meaningful dramatic structure – it enhances the phenomenon of symbolic play with dramaturgy. Drama in education rests on four foundations: (drama) play, learning within a wider (drama) context, personal involvement in the learning process and symbolic representation of reality.

Dorothy Heathcote was the first to establish drama as a learning medium. Even if a precise definition of drama in education is not possible, after her, several researchers tried to identify its key characteristics: processability, role play, improvisation, collectivity, dialogue and a symbolic dimension. Since its inception in Great Britain

in the 1950s, drama in education has undergone several stages of development and, consequently, different definitions. However, the above-mentioned key characteristics appear in all definitions, although they are differently represented. Gavin Bolton and John O'Toole focus on processability, which plays a key part in personal development. Jonathan Neelands thinks collectivity is the main factor that represents the inclusive experience of drama. Brian Edmiston focuses on dramatic dialogue, which needs to be active, autonomous, polyphonic, experimental, performative and reflective, taking place in and out of a drama context. Cecily O'Neill establishes the connection between play in educational forms of drama and contemporary theatre. Pamela Bowell and Brian S. Heap see the symbolic dimension as a drama work's most prominent component which helps young learners to understand all the complexities of the world.

The reasons why drama in education is not more common in the Slovenian educational sphere are connected to several factors, for example, a lack of educational programmes and terminological questions. Hopefully, these issues will be resolved in the near future because, by limiting the role of drama to literature studies and theatre productions, we lose the greater potential that theatre pedagogy has to offer to a much broader educational spectrum. The participatory practices of Theatre in Education (TiE) and Drama in Education (DiE) promote active learning based on the most organic children's activity: play. Thus, the methods of theatre pedagogy are not limited to a single subject, but they can be used by teachers from all subject areas, not stemming from the traditional position of power but by transferring a large part of the decisions to the pupils and merely directing them to the set goals. Drama in education devotes most of its time to the negotiation and structuring of meanings, directed by the actor teacher/theatre pedagogue. While students co-create the fictional world of drama, a teacher's guidance is crucial in setting new challenges, encouraging students to find creative solutions and reflecting on often complex social issues. In addition to educational goals, we also try to achieve aesthetic goals – we learn through drama and about drama.