

DRAMA IN EDUCATION: EVALUATING ITS ROLE IN CONVEYING CULTURAL THEMES

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Abstract: This paper presents findings from the evaluation of a drama pedagogical project centered on the play "The Hat is Yours," performed by a professional theatre group and shown to junior high school students in the autumn term of 2002. The study gathered data from 16 students, 6 teachers, 5 performers, the play's director, and the playwright, along with classroom observations involving 60 students during post-performance sessions. The research aimed to assess the effectiveness, intensity, and depth of educational drama in conveying cultural messages. Findings indicate that both the play and the project were positively received by students, who appreciated the integration of drama into their curriculum and engaged actively in sessions, suggesting the triggering of emotional and intellectual processes. Students' unanimous support for the educational drama efforts highlights the potential of drama in fostering imaginative learning and perspective-taking. However, the study also reveals mixed opinions among actors regarding the moralization of dramatic scenes and the resolution of problems in a manner perceived as culturally biased. This paper argues for the continued and expanded use of drama in education, particularly for minority and socially disadvantaged students, to enhance aesthetic expression and interest in other subjects.

Keywords: Educational drama, Cultural messages, Student engagement, Pedagogical evaluation, Imaginative learning

INTRODUCTION

The present paper has been developed through research conducted in two projects. The first is an evaluation of the effects of drama teaching on creative learning by students, in terms of the efficiency, intensity and depth at which creative learning was produced, in terms of its ability to mediate important cultural messages, at a school that we have termed New Park School, in Göteborg. The drama teaching in question was carried out at the school by teaching staff there in connection to the presentation of a play by a local theatre group that we have chosen to call Front Forum Theatre.

The play was called *The Hat is Yours*. It was shown to all students at New Park junior high school and other schools in Göteborg during the autumn term of 2002 and data were gathered through participant observation in drama teaching afterwards and through interviews with 16 students (7 girls and 9 boys), 6 teachers, 5 performers, the director of the play and the playwright. 60 students, the drama teacher and several performers were involved in the participant observed drama teaching.

Field conversations at these times have also been carried out. Anonymity has been maintained by the use of pseudonyms throughout.

The second project is an ongoing European Union SOCRATES programme project termed CLASP (Creative Learning and Student's Perspectives). This project involves 9 European partners and aims to (i) identify the strategies teachers and students use to try to develop creative learning in educational contexts, (ii) examine the effectiveness of incorporating student perspectives into the teaching and learning process and (iii) highlight the advantages to be gained for the quality of teaching and learning by examining cross European practices. Within CLASP, data emanating from the evaluation project have been analysed in relation to CLASP aims and the present paper focuses extensively on conceptualised observation and interview materials and conversation data from this research. The observation took place in classroom settings during drama teaching with several groups of students at different times.

BACKGROUND

In the popular imagination the New Park area of Gothenburg conjures up images of segregation and problems of space and race on the margins of a city facing issues of large cultural differences and distance (cf. Pred, 2000) and this has been important in the selection of New Park School as the main school involved in the present project, where the willingness and enthusiasm of staff there to cooperate with Forum Theatre has also been influential. The drama project at New Park School was co-ordinated by a drama teacher supported by professional performers who tried to help facilitate a reflective learning process about the performance and its main intended messages. The ultimate goal was to open children's and young people's minds, stimulate their imagination and language abilities and spark their enthusiasm and awareness for diversity, tolerance and understanding and thus for continued personal development and discovery about oneself and the surrounding world (Siks, 1977; Sternudd, 2000). All the students interviewed loved the performance and appreciated the efforts to broaden understandings of cultural messages through imaginative learning and perspective taking through drama.

The performance of the play itself

The basis of the present project has been formed by the presentation and subsequent treatment in drama teaching of a play termed 'The Hat is Yours' that was presented by a local theatre group, Front Forum Theatre, to Göteborg secondary and upper-secondary school pupils in 2002. The play, although not unique, represents a particular genre in that it presents five or six scenes about human interaction simultaneously. These blocks of interaction are taking place in a lower class tenement block and involve an immigrant Turkish family; an elderly lesbian couple; an Iranian grocer with two wives; a gangster and two street crooks, a retired man (waiting for the revolution to erupt) living with his homosexual son, a divorced woman whose two young daughters sympathise with Islam and whose son (Jack) falls in love with a neighbourhood girl (Rania) of Kurdish origin. This relationship was intended to represent a previous murder of a Turkish girl by her own relatives for resisting her relatives' choice of a marriage partner and came for several reasons to form the centre of reflections amongst the audience and in the discussions in the drama sessions afterwards. The scene of a tragic love story was between a young immigrant woman and her Swedish boyfriend and the events that unfolded in the relationship when it became known that the girl's family had arranged a marriage for her with a boy from her own country of origin. The scene showed a painful dilemma experienced by many young girls when they become torn between a sense and requirement of loyalty to their family and its often traditionally religious cultural value systems and the individualistic values of a secularised society (also von Bromsen, 2003).

The Swedish media has in recent years consistently portrayed how many girls are currently living in hiding, resisting arranged marriages and two years ago, graphically described how one young woman, Pela Atroshi, was brutally murdered by her own relatives in the name of family honour. It was this event that in large part incited the playwright to write the play 'The Hat is Yours'. However, the cultural phenomenon of family honour shocked the whole of Sweden first when Fadima Sahindel, who was well known for campaigning against what are known as honour crimes, was shot dead by her own father for loving a man of whom her family did not approve. This sensational and extremely tragic murder provoked intense debate and public discussion about ways to better integrate immigrants and protect thousands of young women in Fadime's situation.

Goals of the theatre and drama project

The discussion and concern about family honour has infiltrated different levels of societal and political infrastructures including cultural and educational institutions. However, the term actually refers to an entire social code of behavior that keeps females in an inferior position and preserves male supremacy. The murder of women for the sake of family honor is actually just the tip of the

iceberg of an entire social institution that assumes that the man's honor resides within the body of his sister, daughter, mother, or wife. This is why Front Forum Theatre decided to dramatize the phenomenon. The goals of the project were outlined in a four-page document (dated 2002, 05, 23).

To help youngsters, with the aid of professional theatre and drama, reflect on and formulate their thoughts and insights in a creative manner using the language of theatre.

To deepen understanding and imagination of the perspective of the other and thus mentally transcend cultural, religious and linguistic barriers.

To help students see how barriers are formed by ignorance and prejudices.

To help pupils' voices be heard with the help of drama as a method.

To create a basis for new forms of cooperation between schools and the culture industry (Front Forum Theatre, 2002).

Drama was used as a mediated learning experience. This paper aims in part to evaluate and assess the impact of specific activities to reveal the achievement of the goals above and set the outcomes in relation to the goals of CLASP concerning the identification of strategies teachers and students use to develop creative learning. The following have been central:

To assess the project in terms of its official objectives, the expectations held by students, teachers and professional actors and to identify unanticipated outcomes.

To identify what seems to have influenced the success of the project and what the main difficulties or problems pertaining to it are as perceived by those involved.

To make qualified and testable speculations about a possible future role of creativity and drama in schools and to suggest guidelines for the Front Forum Theatre with respect to future projects.

These foci raise epistemological, ontological and methodological quibble, as it is not certain if it is at all possible to capture the effects of dramaturgical intervention map outcomes as suggested. There are several key questions: How can we be sure that there is some attitudinal change in the desired direction in relation to the goals of the project? How can we distinguish real learning outcomes from superficial expressions? How do we know what level of drama pedagogic experience and conception of drama the students had before the project and how can we, therefore, identify if and how this, as is suspected, might be important? The investigation and the paper must, therefore, only be considered as suggestive, speculative and exploratory - rather than definitive - in these respects.

Speculative Results and Investigative Outcomes

This 'results' section has been divided into four subsections. The first briefly introduces New Park School and then presents a review of the school pupils' appreciations of the play 'The Hat is Yours'. The second presents the responses of the teachers, the third that of the professional performers and other professionals and the fourth presents the speculative conclusions and recommendations as discussed above.

The school and the students' responses

New Park is an immigrant intensive suburb of some 6,579 people on the outskirts of a segregated city. Seventy percent are of foreign background. Unemployment is estimated at about 90 percent and for some groups it is even higher. New Park School is situated on the edge of a Park area in the city district of Clay Valley and caters for some 400 students between the ages of 13 and 16 years (school years 7 through 9). The school is overwhelmingly 'multi-cultural' with some forty different language groups and many nationalities represented. 16 students at New Park School from grade 8 (students aged 14- 15) who watched the performance and took part in the post performance sessions have been interviewed. The questions posed clustered around experiences of the performance, reflections over the different dramatic scenes and learning experiences. Observation data from drama teaching session has also been produced and used in the analysis. Within this total data corpus, apart from individual scenes that had impressed individual students, there was generally expressed an overwhelming fascination and admiration for the various components of the performance. Both the interview and observation data confirm the positive reaction of the students. Sometimes they concerned the genre itself. A 15-year-old boy stated:

I have never seen a so entertaining performance... These simultaneous scenes... kept me alert and focused throughout the play... (Amir).

Sometimes, in addition to the genre itself, the positive comments concerned specifically the musical and comedy content and the cultural messages. For instance a 16-year-old girl expressed:

It really was fun... the music and the comical scenes... We have seen some plays before but they were not that funny. 'The Hat is Yours' also has so many features; it is extremely entertaining but also presents our conflicting life styles and complexities in our society. (Francisca)

Although it is not unusual that young people purposely avoid discussing the most agonising and complicated features and scenes in a drama as well as in real life, discussions with the pupils unravelled some fascinating reflections over the key dramatic images. This applied particularly during the drama sessions to the following dramatic episodes, which according to field notes and interview texts have *both* troubled the interviewees *and* provided a fertile ground for transforming sensations and emotions into symbolic form:

The confrontation between Hussein and Jack

Ralf's suicide

The confusing wedding ceremony

The two Swedish girls dressed in the headscarf of

Muslim women (Hijab)

Abdulla's obsession with his mat while his daughter's life was at stake, and,

The confrontation between Bea, Vanja and Metmed as Metmed's love for Bea was exposed.

The confrontation between Jack and Hussein, Rania's brother, is a good example of both the troubling and transformational dimension. Although the interviewees did not use explicit terms to articulate the ideological and cultural overtones of the confrontation, they remembered, recalled and with enthusiasm also enacted the scene

and violent arguments within which Jack positioned himself for liberty, freedom and individual choice while Hussein extolled the values of family honour and loyalty to traditional values and patriarchy. This dialogue was characterised in the play itself by expressions of intense emotion, passion and violence, and appears – strengthened through the post-drama sessions in the classroom settings where they were re-enacted and mimed out - to have offered the audience a *possibility* of being in more than one frame of reference at a time. This seems stimulated reflection over the Rania's dilemma and Jack's love.

Many of the students wondered why Rania abandoned her earnest desire and love to be with Jack and decided to marry Mustafa who was picked by her relatives. This was a painful, perplexing and puzzling chain of episodes for many of these students. However, two boys and a girl (all with middle-eastern background) unhesitatingly expressed that Rania's decision was both correct, insightful and offered the best solution in the troubling circumstances, because it averted eventual bloodshed that might result in the death of Rania and Jack. One boy commented: *Rania was right to say that there are other more important things in life than just being happy and in love... Life is indeed about more than just being in love and being happy...* Similarly a Swedish boy remarked: *Rania probably did the right thing... The situation she was in was so complicated. If she follows her heart, her relatives may kill her and her lover... It is sad though.* (Peter).

Another scene that promoted greater than average levels of response in the drama sessions and comment from the students in interviews was the one relating to when Ralf shot himself. Several students wondered why this had happened and it also shocked them to see how a grey metallic car took Ralf's body, flanked with red wings, away. The students expressed a number of speculations to these events in both the drama sessions and in interviews. These included his disappointment with his son's gayness, his own loneliness, his chronic illness or the delay of the socialist revolution he had so longed for since his youth. Again this shows the play's ability to awaken cultural knowledge and elements of sympathy, understanding and caring were observed with respect to all of these points among many of the students, especially the girls. This process indicates an act of imagining in which we create a separation between our actual situation and an alternative that enables reflection and new thoughts to take form. This is important because it suggests that as long as we identify too subjectively and strongly with an experience, we cannot see or illuminate it further from different perspectives. Distance is needed (Gersie and King, 1988: 36 cited in Sternudd, 2000). Using the imagination to create space is effective because of its multidimensional and multifunctional qualities and it suggests one way in which creative work can encourage an awakening of critical questions in the sense expressed in Bleakley (2000, p. 28), as it suggests how an aesthetic sensitivity to competing positions and difference and the possibility of acting from within an ethical standpoint which respects the tolerance of difference and ambiguity within a negotiation of alternative explanatory potentials has been created in one empirical instance.

What we are suggesting here is that although the play seems as if it is reflecting real relations in the histories of humanity, this idea is constructed in an inter play between the content of a play and its experience, in terms of the sensations which this play awakens through its verisimilitude and metonymy, our view is as that expressed previously by Barthes (1977), Atkinson (1990) and Tedlock (2000) that through synecdoche, verisimilitude and metonymy, a play or text or piece of art can interact to create a particular message (see also Bleakley, 2000; Beach, 2001, 2002) and that it is actually through the power of the imagination and past experiences that what is represented seems to be like something else when it is not *realistically* like it in any conventional sense. To call the play 'The Hat is Yours' realistic (or even realist fiction) is thus simply wrong. The play writer has put a good deal of imagination into the use of a set of fairly standard myth themes and characters, such that what they describe

can be understood in terms of a specific criticism or issue to which the author intends them to become related. But neither the elements of the actual stories in the play, such as the love relationship between the two youngsters or the bearing away of Ralph's body, nor the 'imaginings' of history they encourage are realistically true in the conventional sense and the play really works in Genosko's terms as a *Nietzschean reverie on the power of Pseudos* (Genosko, 1994: 28) rather than through its *realism*. It convinces us more as a fable at a point where truth and fiction merge rather than by direct referencing to capture the imagination of an audience and help them toward an understanding of a specific set of issues and relations that were not actually directly spoken on.

The drama teacher seemed to be at least partly aware of the issues of the politics conviction spoken on above and in class sessions centred work accordingly very often on the pupil's memories of the performance and the play's most significant moments and the drama teaching sessions we feel were important for collecting together the different reflections, coordinating them and channelling them in specific directions. However, as each student participated in less than three hours' post performance sessions we cannot expect significant artistic – aesthetic experiences and reflectivity. The students were unanimously supportive of the drama teacher's efforts. Students often mentioned the importance of teamwork; a sort of we feeling; and a sense of group work could be discerned in most of their responses. Interview excerpts with two 15 year-old students may illustrate this:

"*The Hat is Yours*" made me more interested in drama and theatre and the sessions after the performance were also interesting... It is something different from what we normally learn and do... and I am hoping there will be more of it... (Elena). Through the forum theatre sessions we were able to work in teams; we discussed what we wanted to replay from the performance, and shared roles... It is kind of different and fun. (Lena)

Drama's crucial feature in the learning process, as McGregor et al. (1977, p. 206 cited in Strenudd, 2000) stated, lies in it giving children opportunities to explore, interpret, express and communicate feelings and ideas by representing them in a variety of symbolic forms, through active exploration and by it allowing deeper understanding through experiences of a vast range of human feelings and perceptions that otherwise may not be dealt with in the curriculum. As also Wagner has put it (1992, p. 23), drama pedagogic skills become acutely relevant in settings where conflicting values and interests are a manifest. A multicultural school can be one of them (von Bromsen, 2003). National curricula in Sweden stipulate the importance of educational drama using democratic values as a working method in order to develop creativity, critical learning, imaginative knowledge and language development as a way of bringing life to literature and the contents of other subjects. Strenudd (2000) identified four perspectives in various Swedish curricula (Lgr 62; Lgr 69; Lgr 80; Lgr 94). These are: (1) the artistically oriented perspective, (2) the personal development perspective, (3) the critically liberating perspective, (4) the holistic learning perspective. All four seem to have been active in the present situation in the viewing, interview stimulated recollection and drama teaching treatment of the play 'The Hat is Yours'.

Teachers' responses

Six teachers were interviewed but several informal chats and discussions were held with other teachers during coffee breaks in the staff room around their evaluation of the drama pedagogic project. These conversations included references to their reaction to the play, their evaluation of the pupils' reactions to the performance and the drama pedagogic endeavour. The interviews were quite brief due to the teachers' stressful work situation (see also e.g. Lindqvist, 2002 and Nordanger, 2002) and also their limited involvement in the project.

In general, the interviewed teachers were positive about the project and several of them were 'amazed by the performance's success in captivating the students' interest' (e.g. Dan). The teachers reiterated that they had never before seen such a level of satisfaction and excitement among their students for a dramatic performance.

One other teacher commented:

The pupils talk about the performance all the time... For the first time there seems to be a common subject that has captivated the interests of everybody... I think it has stimulated their imaginations and sparked enthusiasm for continued dramatic engagement... However, it is hard to tell what level of attitudinal change occurs in just a short period of time and even what type of attitudinal change is desired... (Carole)

Similarly, another classroom teacher stated: The play was warmly appreciated and they also liked Erica (the drama teacher)'s work with them. They say it is fun and different... As to what actually happens in their mind is yet to be seen... Although there are many *Muslim students*, there are no manifest indications of *violence against girls* or explicit sympathy for murder of honour... However, there are a few documented cases of threats against *young girls* by their own brothers. One case is in my own classroom... We should take these signs very seriously and *create a supportive environment for the Muslim girls*...

The above response (our emphasis) represents, in our experience generally and in the specific data corpus generated in the investigation specifically, a fairly typical 'Swedish' response to the play and the emotions and deliberations it has helped to articulate or mediate, in the sense that the problem is interpreted and voiced primarily if not only as a problem for immigrant girls, rather than a problem of an entire context. This applies notwithstanding that immigrant girls are the ones who have been ritually murdered. A teacher with an immigrant background made remarks that can help illustrate an important difference: This kind of drama is very good for the students because it deals with current affairs that touch upon issues of integration and intercultural communication... Our pupils rarely read newspapers. In fact, many do not even have access to them at home, nor do they, therefore, usually become easily able to follow up current (societal) affairs. So, this kind of dramatic play helps them to catch up with the times. Also, if the school had not covered their expenses (a special arrangement made with Front Forum Theatre), most of our students could not afford to go to theatre....

In general, the teachers expressed approving voices for continual engagement and participation in drama with critical societal issues and were positive that the emotions and reflections from dramatic action and dialogic interactions could turn into insights and perspective learning. 'The Hat is Yours' and the subsequent drama teachings are ideal examples of these processes. However, given the currently highly stressful work situation for teachers in general and teachers in economically poor but culturally enriched (multi-cultural, multi-lingual) neighbourhoods in particular, perhaps they would be tempted to endorse anything that gave them some time for relaxation and reflection (Lindqvist; Nordanger; both op cit.).

People at Front Forum Theatre

The interviewed members of the Front Forum Theatre included five performers, a director and a playwright. The performers were directly involved in the drama project in tandem with the drama teacher. The questions posed centred around opinions about the drama project. They included questions pertaining to their satisfaction with their own roles in the pre performance and drama sessions and their evaluation of the play.

"The Hat" is Yours is one of the most talked about dramatic plays staged by Front Forum Theatre. Evaluation of the play shows a striking pattern. Young people love the play whilst many adults, and in particular literary critiques and some artists, were critical of the way main or central messages were presented and expressed a general view that the performance was superficial and *boisterous*. The director and the playwright provided a rationale for this that the drama took into consideration the needs, interests and tastes of mainly young people. His position was that if young people are happy with the performance, he is happy, too.

Comedy, boisterous music and intense passion were injected in each scene, according to the director of the play and the playwright. There was also a range of preconceived opinions or prejudices (that we encounter on a daily basis in our present society) included in each scene. Homophobia, bigamy, theft, violence, and forbidden love are the critical dramatic social phenomena that captured the minds and hearts of the spectators, not to moralise social events or produce politically correct scenes on the stage ‘but to express something about how to live with conflicts... by presenting social realities as they are manifested in our day to day life’ (The Director). This fits in with most of the performers expressions about the play and their role in it as well as statements about these issues by the playwright, who felt that writers and artists should focus on the aesthetic and artistic dimensions. As he put it, ‘ I strongly believe that our job as theatrical... It is up to individual families to teach morals and the school should primarily be concerned with scholastic matters... Of course it doesn’t always work like that. There can be some overlapping... Our job is not to moralise or solve problems.

Many people are unfamiliar with drama work in school and many performers have in the past only met students in school settings in order to introduce their performance for marketing purposes. The present event was the first of its type engaging professional actors in classroom settings, not only to introduce theatre but also to explore pedagogical possibilities. Generally, the performers were satisfied with their engagement in and contribution to the project. However, there is a mixed opinion about moralising dramatic scenes and solving problems in a manner believed to be right by one group of people or civilisation, and the opinion appears to be that *artists* should not take explicit positions or perspectives, but present multiple perspectives or discourses so that the audience are able to critically evaluate the embedded social and educationnal messages. One performer put things as follows: ... I think we have been successful with this project. We have... reached our audience and we are very happy for that. As some said, it may be true that there are superficialities at some level. However, had the play been done differently, I don’t think it would have captured the young people’s interest... The important messages of the play can be further sorted out and discussed at school level ... (Reine) Most of the artists have expressed a willingness to continue on similar projects. They mentioned the need for drama programmes on a regular basis at school. Sporadic dramatic and theatre, it was suspected, would only have a limited effect.

DISCUSSION

This study attempted to map out the impact of a drama project at New Park School around a play presented by Front Forum Theatre and adopted a cocktail of methods.

However, the pupils’ responses and feedback are the main data upon which categorisations have been made. Their experiences of the performance and the drama sessions that took place at the school constitute the main evaluation information, complimented by interviews and field conversations with teachers, performers, a playwright, a director and administrative staff at the theatre and the school. Reviews of the play ‘The Hat is Yours’ by journalists and literature critiques have also been read.

It is not easy to capture learning effects or learning incidents after only a two and half hour dramatic performance and less than three hours’ drama teaching. However, from the students’ responses and active engagement in the sessions it may be safely inferred that some form of emotional and intellectual processes are being sparked. The musical, scenographic and comedy moments have attracted the attention and interest of the youngsters and in that respect the play has been successful. However, for the main goals to be achieved, a continuous engagement that involves teachers on a regular basis may be needed. Through these processes, students and teachers can become part of a creative learning event, posing questions, becoming critical, creating possible (fantasy-reality) worlds, solving problems, finding solutions and ways forward as well as discovering many problems that have no easy

solutions. References to the role of imagination as an inter-textual quality in the making of experience as suggested above is also found in several other sources (e.g. Bengtsson, 1993; Bleakley, 2000; Schwant, 2000) that give imagination a special value in the way in which a content and an experience can become fused as part of a creative capacity, such as when ‘summoned by art. When, for example, we see a face expressed in a picture of a forest or hear an emotion expressed in a piece of music (also Schwant, op cit.). However realistic the experience is felt to be, neither the face, the forest, nor emotion in the notes is real, while both faces, forests and emotions are real in everyday life and experience as they derive from an association with previous experiences. In this sense perhaps an even more varied array of work formats could have been beneficial. The drama sessions used predominantly oral modalities. Individual pupils’ reflections in written form and other forms of art might have further stimulated processes of imagination, knowledge and learning about the complexities of our society which at this stage of the children’s reflective processes appear on the *sensations* and *emotions* level only (see also works by Vygotsky, 1933, 1995; Lindqvist, 1999). Exploring alternative discourses such as those dramatically performed on the stage by Jack and Hussein might provide a good example. The purpose is not to ‘discover’ the right way to look at an issue, but to ‘uncover’ fresh perspectives, explore new points of view, and in a dialogue, forge new ethical understandings (see also Wilhelm, 1998, p.63). It may be unsettling when students examine different discourses as they critique and examine their own, but the project has not fully explored / utilised this opportunity.

Given the ‘first time’ nature of the project, this failure to fully tap into the depth of the children’s world may be understood.

According to observations, the drama teacher was careful not to moralise scenes from the play. However, further sessions could have been held to *problematise* a number of issues that the play purposely left *unsolved*, and to grapple with a number of complex questions of social and cultural significance. The students have become interested, engaged and switched on. This is partly because the passionate dialogue in the play was culturally and thematically relevant and interesting and that at some level most students at New Park School could relate their life to it. This could have opened a window of opportunity for further dialogue and for more in-depth understanding so that prior knowledge and experience could be drawn on key issues such as morality, ethics, democracy, solidarity, humanity, tolerance, inter cultural communication, diversity, peaceful co-existence, liberty, freedom, equality, equity, etc.

What we mean by this is that we suspect that the drama project could have achieved more had there been subsequent sessions as part of regular classroom activities that allowed students to consider different discourses and to critically examine their own. This is one way to forge new ethical understandings and explore new points of view and perspectives. There are many forms of learning that promote a range of different outcomes including imaginative, emotional, empathic, caring, natural and artistic-aesthetic and group interactions (Swartz, 1998). Learning in extended integrated contexts engages forms of intelligence other than linguistic and logical-mathematical, and hence provides improved learning opportunities for students with different abilities, cultural backgrounds and learning styles.

The Swedish curriculum (see Sternudd, 2000) and a number of drama theorists (e.g. Heathcote, in Wagner, 1992; Wagner, 1995; O’Toole, 1992) emphasise the advantage of drama in finding ways to deal with socially critical issues and thereby support social and personal development (also Boal, 1979), but perhaps the critical element in the drama pedagogic project was not sufficiently explored so as to allow for the gradual articulation of a complex world (O’Neill, 1995, p xvi). However, this evaluation has concentrated on reflections by students, on their

awareness of the complexities surrounding our society, on their created fictions about social inconsistencies and non-reconcilable differences, not in order to discover or show the way to look at an issue, but to present the reality in its complexity to encourage people to explore fresh perspectives and new points of view. However, a crucial issue here is how to establish sustainable educational dramatic activities that permeate the curricula throughout the educational system.

Conclusion

At this specific point in human history, we all appear to increasingly realise the complexities surrounding multiculturalism, including opposing values, religion, ideas and ideologies and multiple and overlapping group identities and the current political and national security crises that hold the world in suspense. The way macro processes work have, to a certain, extent allowed large populations of young people caught up in economic and social limbos to create a culture of violence, disrespect and aggression. If drama makes a difference in young people's life, in general, and immigrant youth in particular to *deal with* the painful dilemmas they are presented with, and the suggestions of the present investigation is that this is the case, it can become a kernel for an integration of all arts and an opportunity for creative self-expression (Ward, 1930, p. 3). If this is the case, in the spirit of critical reflection and the creation of alternative visions of the past present and future to those currently predominant, Drama should perhaps be offered greater scope in the school curriculum.

As Tesfahuney(1997) has noted, segregation at the metropolitan level creates an effective barrier between people and induces suspicion and the construction of We/Them boundaries (von Brömssen, 2003) Relatedly, Allan Pred (2000) has pointed out that for many nativeborn ethnic Swedes, places like New Park sound as far away as Istanbul, Addis Ababa, Santiago, and Teheran. They are places that are never visited but whose names make their way through the media, where they are also often associated with *negative news*. The segregated city ought to be regarded as much the cause of social processes as the result of residential and moving decisions made by different groups. There are currently 6,579 people in New Park. Seventy percent are of foreign background. Unemployment in the area is estimated at 90 percent and for some groups, e.g. Somalis, it is even higher and can be put at 99 percent. This offers great challenge to our society. Dramatising issues of power, poverty and interest may be a way to produce a necessary critical distance for reflection on them. Encouraging (and helping) the firing of the imagination has some resemblance to some experiments across the common distinctions in semiotics between the sign and the signified and can form a space from which to forge a connection between the lived and the possible, as a faculty of mind- semiotic practice (or semiotic mind). This has been put in a similar way using different terminology by Helmstad (1999) with regards to the play of the imagination with respect to the perceptual and grammatical elements of experience in the construction of understandings of understanding itself, and appeals also to the notion that thought and semiotic experiences are inseparable from the elements of the material culture of latemodernity which they relate to (see also Serematakis, 1994; Säljö, 2000; Alvesson and Deetz, 2000).

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