

THE EFFECT OF DRAMA ON TEENAGERS' VALUE ORIENTATION: A THEATRE IN EDUCATION PROJECT IN THE HUNGARIAN CLASSROOM

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As a summary it can be stated that based on the mixed-method applications developed for the drama pedagogy research, due to the project the value orientation indicators in the examined groups have been developed during the research period, and changed significantly compared to themselves and the control group.

Keywords: drama-pedagogy, values in education, theatre in education

More and more people believe that there is a crisis in Hungary's value system and is evidence to support their view: In Hungary today, "*hedonistic values*" are tending to displace all the values which do not have a "*hedonistic nuance*", but are considered vital for the effective socialization of young people. (Trencsényi, 2008; Hankiss, 2008; Báthory, 2006; Bábosik, 2001; Vekerdy, 1989). In light of this growing public discontent and mounting evidence, the education system has come under fire with policy makers demanding pedagogical innovation and teaching professionals pushing for reform to stem the crisis.

The target group of our research is the young people born in the years of transition (the Nineties). They are the so-called "omega-alpha" (Váriné Szilágyi, 1987) age-group, who obtained their general certificate of education in 2008 and 2009 and only have experience of living in the new social system.

Since the 1970s, when drama pedagogy became more widespread, the technique and practice in Hungarian professional centres has been enriched with a theoretical and methodological background. Even so, there is a gap in the systematization of the theoretical background and to date there is no standardized conceptual framework. This is partly due to a failure to keep abreast of the latest developments in the field and partly, to the practice-oriented professional discourse, which is constantly expanding and changing. It is also because of the diversity of method-specific professional centres in Hungary. Despite this apparent weakness, in the last 30 years, Hungarian drama pedagogy and theatre in education has been effectively encompassed into curriculum and teacher training and become a dynamic research area in its own right: It has prompted civic partnership and community projects and lead to innovations in teaching practice. In fact, arguably, this "*multi-functionality*" is one of the strengths of Hungarian drama pedagogy.

There is no doubt that the social or sub-cultural trends appearing today in the inner world of the school are determinative and yet they seem beyond our control and influence. Finding a connection to them could be one of the

biggest challenges of 21st century education. Our pressing goal is to redefine the delicate borders of this interplay between the classroom, the pupil and the student body and to subject its direct and indirect impacts to empirical examination (Horkai, 2004:131). Incorporating themes which address real social problems into drama programs can play an effective role in education and initiate new discourses on diversity in terms of intercultural, multicultural pedagogy.

Multicultural education has a theoretical background and approach to education that is very similar to that of drama pedagogy: It encourages diversity and accepts different ways of thinking as a value. It is also committed to integration, inclusion and "simply considers diversity natural" (Torgyik, 2004).

The process of successful learning for the drama teacher is based on a partnership between teachers and students. The structure and style of a drama lesson depends on the participants: The teacher and the students work together to create an effective learning environment. The approach selected by the teacher and supported by the conventions of Applied Drama in Education is designed to take into consideration students' cultural, linguistic and motivational levels. Within the context of multicultural education, which is based on the principle of equality, drama is the best way of tackling issues that between students due to differences in culture, ethnicity and gender etc. (Banks, 1999:17)

The approach advocated by multicultural education appears to share many similarities with an alternative pedagogical and artistic method-system: drama pedagogy. Applied drama (serves as) a rich ground for developing pedagogical methods in a creative way. In general, the principles which allow these processes are also outside the normative expectations of the traditional approach.

The practice of multicultural education and applied drama is a real challenge for cooperation, and gives a chance for bridging the social and learning differences and diversification. It can help to have a better understanding of difficult and troubled educational and peer and mostly classmate relationships. One of school subjects, drama has a unique opportunity to achieve the above mentioned.

The interactive methods (cooperative techniques, project work, etc.) have been appreciated in postmodern didactic, at the same time there is no need to argue in favour of the interactivity of theatre in education. It is beyond dispute that if *theatre comes true in the school* the pupil experiences the interactivity: he becomes a player, a creator. If *school goes to the theatre*, the pupil makes a stay in the position of spectator. The *applied theatre and drama in the school* is able to disclose the phenomena of social life in dramatic, narrative, reflective, symbolic and aesthetic levels (revealing the necessity of human conditions) so that it calls forth activity from the *audience*: committed creative work and self-reflective feedbacks, during the more and more deeper learning process. It makes the "*spectator*" a thinking-playing individual.

How can drama and theatre address and how is able to provide positive feelings and thoughts to those children and young people who are neglected from the traditional education? How can we enhance their identity, how can we provide them with new and strong means for expression with which they are able to respond to the world? How can we help using theatre in education programs, how can we create aesthetic meanings and new learning possibilities for students with learning difficulties and special needs, or for addictive youth? Dramatic methods being applied in various ways help us to reveal the group-dynamics in the community of the

classroom, to resolve conflicting situations, and help the pupils to clarify their relations to repressive and socially exclusive systems. It helps them to understand what factors jeopardize themselves and others in terms of relationships in the classroom:

“Trough theatre work, students have the opportunity to examine conflict in the context of a drama world where they often begin to better understand what is at stake for self/other in their actual working relationships in the classroom. It is this analogous way of working in drama that helps students bring important “real life” understanding to their experiences of conflict and exclusion, both within the school and beyond.” (Gallagher, 2004:29).

The results of investigations in Hungary so far suggest (Fernezelyi & Váradi, 2010; Horváth, 2009; Novák, 2006; Novák, 2008; Szitó, 2005) that the success and efficiency of drama programs depend on the application of pedagogical methods developed and realizing according to special educational needs, and on the professional developing work and on the change in teachers’ approach. Important principles, goals in the future of drama pedagogy in Hungary can be the following:

1. To develop drama curriculum in terms of an anti-discriminative and equity-principled education
2. To support art teachers by educational politics
3. To involve action researches and drama trainings with teacher- and pupil-groups in the curriculum
4. Adaptation possibilities of drama trainings of common experiences
5. To clarify the frame of intervention at school level

Drama in the learning process, or its consequences, encourages and teaches the participants to use a special conflict resolution technique in which they can have a chat without prejudice, openly and honestly (in accordance with equity-principled education) about the situations protected by roles and cultural diversity.

Arts Based Research

Analyzing Popular Theatre is based on a critical understanding of cultural and political dimensions and is a radically new approach. This is the source of the narrative-analysis in arts based research (ABR).

In ABR the researcher examines the way the student absorbs the experience and the way he interprets gestures and movements on the stage. In ABR the performance becomes the subject of qualitative research (Leavy, 2009). The studies on performance appear to be an epistemological, theoretical and methodological innovation and require an interdisciplinary approach. Diane Conrad argues for the methodology and procedures of Popular Theatre with an empirical example (Conrad, 2009).

In applying an arts based research method, the present study seeks to uncover not only the external, material values but also the internal, constructive, interiorized, so called *life goal* in the youth’s value choices. We also aim to describe how a Theatre in Education (TiE) project works in the classroom and to demonstrate the quantitative and qualitative results of our research.

Problems and Hypothesis of Empirical Research

The topic of my participatory action research (PAR) is the problem of value acquisition in Hungarian schools. My colleagues and I also wanted to create a new TiE-project. The two year TiE research project ran from 2007 to 2009, with the first period running in 2007-8 and the second one in 2008-9. It involved Hungarian secondary school classes with markedly different socio-cultural backgrounds from schools where Applied Drama and Theatre Education were absent from the curriculum.

The research explores the effect that drama workshops like TiE can have on teenagers' attitudes and value orientation.

Problems

This experiment employs a teaching-learning method which aims to develop students both emotionally and intellectually. Drama and theatre are applied to the educational process in order to help teenagers to develop an awareness of their value orientation. But how can we measure and present the effects of this method?

The results of the investigation so far suggest that the success and efficacy of drama projects depends on the professional training, views and attitudes of teachers, and the way in which and the extent to which pedagogical methods have been applied.

The research aims to answer the following questions:

- What does value acquisition mean for teenagers?
- What does value orientation mean for teachers of teenagers?
- Is there a value crisis in the value systems of Hungarian teenagers today?
- How does one particular theatre in education model project influence the value orientation and attitudes of teenagers?
- Will the pre-observed advantage or disadvantage between the groups still remain at the end of the action research? Has the drama project managed to close the gap?

Hypotheses

Basic hypothesis. Drama and theatre applied in the educational process help teenagers in value orientation and value acquisition.

Further hypotheses. The value-giving pedagogy of drama and theatre results in positive changes both in students' attitudes and the educational process.

It helps in the value acquisition process. It makes the value orientation function of school more effective. It improves social interaction and communication. The pedagogically relevant methods of contextualized classroom drama further enrich students' indirect experiences during the learning process by widening their perspectives. The value orientation indexes of the observed groups develop during the ten-month period of the research. They show significant changes in themselves as well as compared to the control group.

Measuring

Data was gathered through questionnaires. The questionnaires were designed so that they could be analyzed statistically.

Methods of the Research

Qualitative methodological procedures; structured, semi-structured, unstructured interviews, interviews within a focus group, document analysis, qualitative narrative analysis (covered by ABR method), recorded audio-visual material (video recording of the workshops).

Using several methods of research allows us to examine both the results and the process of investigation: It permits us to ask not only what happened but how it happened. We can take measurements and analyse the results using quantitative methods and then use qualitative methods to analyse the results from another angle, potentially adding another layer to our understanding (LeCompte & Preissle, 2003).

Theatre in Education: Framework of the Research

The project was divided into two ten-month sessions. Each session consisted of 8 theatre in education workshops which lasted for 135 minutes and 4 which lasted for 140 minutes. Altogether three secondary schools were involved in the project: two of them were from Budapest and one was from Pest County. In all three research groups, there were introductory drama workshops and project evaluations (feedback).

Characteristics of the study groups in the first year of the research project. Altogether 82 pupils from two school types ("Humane"/H and "Foundational"/F) participated in the study. The distribution of the pupils can be seen in the following tables:

Table 1. *Number of students participating in the study grouped by school types*

School	Target group	Control group	Total
H	26	26	52
F	13	17	30
Total	39	43	82

Table 2. *Number of students participating in the study grouped by gender and school type*

School	Male	Female	Total
H	13	39	52
F	19	11	30
Total	32	50	82

Characteristics of the study groups in the second year of the research. 238 pupils participated in the research project in 2008-2009: 128 took part in the drama workshops while the remaining 110 made up the control group. The group consisted of students from three school type ("Humane"/H, "Foundational"/F and "Technician"/T). The distribution of the students by school types and gender can be seen in the following tables:

Table 3. *Number of students participating in the study grouped by gender and school type*

School	Target group (Male/Female)	Control group	Total
H	52 (32/20)	57	109
F	26 (19/7)	19	45
T	50 (45/5)	34	84
Total	128 (96/32)	110	238

Table 4. *Number of students participating in the study grouped by gender and school types*

School	Male	Female	Total
H	74	35	109
F	26	19	45
T	72	12	84
Total	172	66	238

City – Theatre in Education: framework of the research

The drama project was structured around a series of scenes from Alessandro Baricco's novel, *City*, which had been adapted for theatre in an educational context by my colleagues (all of whom are actors/drama teachers.) During the workshop, we analysed different situations, discussed problems of identification in youth and considered ways to combat loneliness and extreme egoism by accepting other people and cultural diversity. In the theatre in education project, we were looking for answers to the following questions: *What kind of consumer culture is being created by young people? What values do young people generate and promote? What values do they acquire?* How do these values relate to the latest social problems in our rapidly changing and globalized world?

The project was realized with the aid of a non-governmental organisation: the 21st Theatre Association for Education provided drama professionals who were willing to work voluntarily on the project.

The project was a pilot study: it was the first, long-term research project in Hungary in the field of drama pedagogy which involved both a small and large sample size of student groups (first year of the project: n = 82, second year of the project: n=238) and mixed methods. The aim was to present how the drama program works in the classroom, and to map its impact on a range of factors (value acquisition – value orientation).

Summary of the Results of the Qualitative Research

Statistical analysis of the questionnaires, first year (n=82). Although the value orientation of young people, as was demonstrated by previous studies examining the behaviour of young people (Rácz, 2005; Pikó, 2008), can be clearly divided into internal and external values, this is not done consciously by individuals.

The proposition that “*there is no strong link between an individual’s value orientation and her socio-demographic background*” (Pikó, 2008:67) was not supported by our drama pedagogy research. On the contrary, we found that it was not age, gender or socio-cultural factors which affected young people’s value orientation but their socio-economic status. Young people with lower socio-economic status tended to choose external values. Theatre in education programs can play a special role in the lives of these disadvantaged young people by drawing attention to this choice and enhancing their awareness of problems related to their social relationships and way of life.

The main sections of the questionnaires were divided under the following headings:

1. General value orientation (e.g. What is really important for youth nowadays in your opinion? Which of these is the most important for you?)
2. Value choices (e.g. How important for you personally are the following attributes (in alphabetical order)?)
3. Perception of the importance of certain social values (e.g. Put these general human values (e.g. love, justice, equality) in order of importance (preferences))
4. Workshop’s sensitivity to issues (Did the workshop raise the right issues? Did it raise issues effectively?)
5. Confidence in institutions (e.g. churches, government and NGOs)

The value orientation scales of the questionnaires administered prior to and after the drama program were composed of the following larger factor groups:

1. *Conformity – Ambition – Freedom*
2. *Humanity – Leadership – Genuineness versus surface*
3. *Carpe Diem – Task orientation*
4. *Relationships – Way of life*
5. Confidence in institutions

The items of these factor groups were factor analyzed. In my research two of the above mentioned question-groups (1. and 4. highlighted with bold) were chosen for analysis because these were relevant to our goals. During the statistical analysis the following variables were used for examining the effect of the drama program: School – Group – Factor – Time. The results indicate that the young people who participated in the drama project have strong value preferences with regard to *friendship, family and romantic love*. Money was among the five most frequently chosen values, surpassing love.

Statistical analysis of the questionnaires, second year (n=238). Quantification of quantitative data of the questionnaires administered prior to and after the drama program in relation to drama and control groups. Questionnaires conducted during the drama training contained not only qualitative data, as was already mentioned in previous sections, but also short texts which allowed individuals to elaborate on their value choices.

When the questionnaires of the drama and control groups were analyzed, there was a significant difference between the values the majority of middle-class Hungarian society viewed as being important and the values the teenagers identified and expressed individually as being important. For us it was obvious to ask these teenagers *what was important for them in their life and why they thought these things were valuable*. The questionnaire provided the students with an opportunity to verbalise their reasons. Their explanations were read and analysed. To make the analysis more objective, we used independent ratters and evaluation sheets. The analysis of the mini-narratives of those young people who had participated in the workshop revealed that they had become more self-reflective and aware, complementing the goals of our drama training. Using statistical methods the following results were found.

During the statistical analysis of the evaluations carried out by the ratters (independent ratters: 2 females and 1 male ratters of 25-41 age, who are not teachers and have no information of the research), the portion, distribution and relative frequency of value category-types were examined in the students' written answers (value choices). The four category-types were the following: *External - material, Internal - intellectual (psychological), Relationships - community, and Ambition - self-assertiveness*. Thereafter the students' answers were analyzed again from 3 viewpoints: 1) degree of elaboration (on a 1 to 10 scale where 1 means that the answer is considered to conform most to stereotypes and 10 means that the exposition is judged to be the most complex (and original), 2) how optimistic or pessimistic the clarification is, and 3) whether, in the ratters' opinion, the writing reflects a young person's or an adults' value system.

The most important result concerned the change in value choices: *in which direction did the target/drama groups' value choices change in comparison to the control groups?*

It was supposed that, irrespective of the ratters' evaluation and consistent with the hypothesis of the research, there would be a significant change in the value orientation of the target group: It was expected that their answers to the questionnaire would not only change but be less stereotypical and more complex after the drama workshop. This would mean that there had been a shift from the material - external value choices to the internal - intellectual value choices, or the so-called target values (awareness, future planning, constructing a way of life, individual and collective values) which coincide with the goals of our drama training. In order to verify or reject the hypothesis of this research, we need to analyze the possible correlation between the points given by independent ratters.

If there was a difference between the target and control groups *in terms of the extent of elaboration* as well, we could say that shifts in value orientation are influenced by the theatre in education program.

Finally, the changes in value choices were examined according to *the trend and mean extent* of the changes and from the aspect of *elaboration, maturity and optimism*.

In the control group, the external value choices were typical. However, in the drama group, in the case of those pupils whose value choices tended to shift from the external value category to the internal value category, there was a significant difference between pre and post data in terms of both elaboration and optimism.

The Effect of TiE on Students' Narratives

In the theoretical framework of social categories and from a phenomenological standpoint, we should include emotions when analysing social patterns. In the past, emotions were put in parenthesis. In comparison to the theoretical framework of “real story telling”, used by social psychologists, the practice of analysing narratives, which appears in the TiE program and in an interview situation, is more complex. It was made even more complex in our research project because the workshops were not ‘real’ events but ‘staged’ events. As a result, applying the ‘real event and narrative structure’ employed by social psychologists is more complicated but nevertheless a valid approach. Our workshops had 3 stages: We used theatre (a collective performance event), drama (a reflection of the theatre (event) and narratives (reflection and re-evaluation which occurred during the interview process). These stages appear as *personal experience* (e. g. the students create a new scene in the drama program), *re-called experience* (e.g. reflections on the theatre event) and as a *story* (e.g. drawing life lines or other elements of narrative in drama).

Gould, the teenage genius burdened with problems, the main character of *City*, has an intense inner world and troubled life story. This life story was considered interesting enough to captivate youngsters and facilitate their involvement (Novák, 2009; Horváth, 2009).

During the workshop, while the drama teacher and students are re-writing and re-creating the fictional story, they can relate to the crisis of identity (on an individual level), and also identify with the diseased world on a social level.

Through these recreated relations the participants are able to actively build and create a personal walk of life and they are also forced to look for their own identity. What is the result of this process and what effect does the positive or negative emotional difficulty of social or public performances have on the narratives of young people?

Key Themes for the Analysis of the Narrative Interviews

We focused the educational aims of the drama project. The questions listed below show the view-points for analysis:

1. How participating students resonate to the TiE program?
2. What personal problems can they express thanks to the drama workshop?
3. How do they identify with characters of City-world and (with people) in their own lives?
4. What do they miss from their own lives?
5. What are their aims in life? Which values have they chosen (and which are imposed from outside)?
6. Which kind of personal stories have been evoked by working with the City-story? How can they interpret it and make it meaningful for their own lives?
7. What kind of symbolic, metaphorical reflections and self-reflections has the drama and theatre work provoked?
8. Which kind of dreams, aims and future plans do students envisage for themselves?

During the 40-50 minutes interviews we can move beyond the surface and arrive at a deeper interpretation, prompting greater personal reflection and self-analysis.

The project reveals that drama and theatre creates a *here-and-now world* which is capable of opening emotional gates. By stepping through these gates the individual student is now in a position to elaborate more fully on his/her value orientation. These detailed explanations can be observed and the students' personal voice can be heard in the interview. The story teller student can move away from the world of obvious stereotypes and analyse his/her dramatic experiences in the context of his/her own personal life. In the drama workshops students are encouraged to analyse the story and draw comparisons with their own experience. In this way, as they gain a deeper understanding of the social dynamics of the play and the psychology of the fictional characters, they are compelled to identify and address aspects of their own character and lifestyle. The story becomes his/her story, prompting a new line of questioning and personal reflection. This method leads students to develop a deeper understanding of situations, events and relationships and makes them aware of their ability to change their behaviour.

Summary of the Results of the Empirical Research

The statistical analysis of the category types, which were drawn from the qualitative data of the general value orientation questions, only *partially* verified our hypothesis. This is because the analysed questionnaires can only reveal parts of the process and motives behind value orientation. A fuller picture can only be gleaned by analysing the target groups' interviews. In this way, we must emphasize again that this research is committed to using the Mixed Method Research methodology.

Applied drama and theatre, considering other emerging factors and variables, has an indirect effect on teenagers' value orientation. So that with its complex art-pedagogical methods, drama workshops helps the students to acquire values.

The Applied drama and theatre method resulted in positive changes *in this research project: As a result of* the drama workshops, value acquisition increased among the participating students, making the value orientation function of the schools they attended more effective:

1. It improved social communication.
2. It significantly helped to improve students' self-awareness and awareness of others.
3. It improved students in both the spontaneous skill, individual and cooperative, collective creative work skill.
4. It enabled the students to change their stereotypes when they moved the experiences from the drama world.
5. It enabled the students to interpret their individual and collective experiences.
6. The pedagogically relevant methods of the contextualized classroom drama further enriched students' indirect experiences during the learning process, widening their perspectives.

These patterns appeared in the theatre in education program in the format of personal experience (e.g. creating the scenes), re-called experience (e.g. reflections during drama work), and story (e.g. creating background stories) and other narrative elements in drama work. In this *triple-method model* (Theatre + Drama + Interview process) both an individual and a collective

dimension was incorporated when constructing the events of the social world they live in. The conflict situations that were recreated were lifelike and prompted the students to think about their decision making and behaviour.

Reflections and analysis occurred during the interview process. The interview process can be linked to previous experience (from the TiE program and from their own lives). From that, the actual (individual or social) basis of the students' behaviour patterns can be interpreted.

In my research I have made an attempt to describe the effects of drama on teenagers' value orientation. This research was about a theatre in education project in the Hungarian classroom. It is reasonable to expect art-pedagogical projects to be effective and successful within the school environment and at different stages of learning.

Further applied drama and theatre research in Hungary should be aimed at incorporating the latest international innovation, developing and adapting measuring tools to record the effects of the drama process and the complex documentation of changes in the educational process.

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