PERSPECTIVES ON THE EFFECT OF PRESENTATION AND PERFORMANCE IN PREPARING STUDENTS TO TEACH DRAMA

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The project reported in this paper is a description of a course, its content and its intentions, in preparing graduates for the first stage in the training continuum of initial, induction, and inservice education. Its prime focus was to collect 'research snap-shots' of the effect of performance and presentation in preparing secondary English teachers to use drama both as a learning medium in the English Curriculum and as a separate subject in secondary schools. The study acknowledges the limitation of contact time on a PGCE course and seeks to tease out the effects of building into such a course the demands of presentation and performance both as a strategy and methodology. It describes the development of students' awareness of the potential of drama in the classroom through participation in a performance; assesses the development of students' skills in drama; and checks on their perceived confidence in managing the process of engaging children in creative work.

Although there is a growing interest in research in drama, and evidence of a greater number of researchers active in the international field (Somers, 1996), there is a sense in which research activity remains extremely piecemeal and disparate. This is particularly the case in drama education. It is almost becoming a cliché to talk of the lack of understanding about the role and function of drama in the curriculum; to wonder 'what' children learn through drama and 'how' they learn (Landy, 1975); and to lament the lack of a more secure curriculum role for the area. Nevertheless, these remain major concerns for the drama research community and represent the broad issues around which a systematic search has to be undertaken to understand the nature of students' learning in drama and to demonstrate the importance of the medium in the curriculum, both as a separate subject and a general teaching medium. More general and broadly based research will undoubtedly and eventually provide a deeper understanding of the power of drama to inform and explain a wide variety of creative practices in the classroom.

The importance of the accumulation of descriptions of drama in practice and responses to the experience of drama as an aid to developing an understanding of its role and function in the learning process has long been an accepted aspect of the eclecticism of qualitative research processes in drama and the arts (Bogdan

& Biklen, 1982; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994; Stephenson & Vincent, 1975). The methodology, however, can only realistically be seen as having the potential to provide snapshots of practice and intentions, and perhaps as going some way towards furthering and deepening understanding of what happens when teachers and pupils engage in drama. The main weakness of research in drama is still the lack of a structure or conceptual map against which new evidence can be set. The need remains for an effective way of accumulating, organizing, and co-ordinating research which will effectively give a sense of direction to the teaching of drama in schools and, by implication, in training institutions.

The small-scale piece of research reported in this paper is a brief description of a course and its intentions in preparing graduates for the first stage in the training continuum of initial, induction, and inservice education. It is limited, however, by being a selection of what can only be described as 'research snap-shots', which makes generalization difficult. The most that can be offered is a flavour of practice and student responses to the experience of a particular aspect of teacher preparation, and the possibility of the 'shock of recognition' (Jenkins & O'Toole, 1978) about the potential of a particular course design. It does, however, subscribe to a current view in the literature that the attention now being paid to 'student voices' (Oldfather, 1995) as responses to the experience of learning and, therefore, as a way of examining the effectiveness of courses is an important way of redefining student learning at whatever level (Marshall, 1992). This emphasis, Lincoln (1995) claims, is also 'quintessentially an inquiry (research) activity' which casts the teacher in the role of researcher (Kincheloe, 1991; Stenhouse, 1975). Closely associated with this concept is the further notion, in the initial training of teachers, of focusing programmes of study around the organizing principle of the 'reflective practitioner', i.e. how do I improve what I am doing? And how do I help my students to improve the quality of their learning? (Whitehead, 1975)

The research incorporated in this report primarily uses data in the form of questionnaire responses and semi-structured interviews to approach these questions and to make some judgments on students' perceptions about the value and relevance of an experimental approach to learning about drama, through the experience of drama. The approach adopted is also about inviting reflection, in a focused way, on dimensions of learning and this, arguably, is the beginning of the process of reflection on teaching and learning by teachers so valued in the research literature. Indeed, Schon (1983) has pointed out, in discussing the nature of professional knowledge and how it is acquired by trainee teachers, there could be a range of issues and assumptions relevant to learning practical knowledge that might be unnoticed and neglected without the 'reflection in action' perspective. Students' focused responses to the inquiry in hand, it was

assumed, could well provide information about some of these possible 'knowledge' gaps, as well as assisting in the process of crystallizing thinking, clarifying perceptions, and deepening understanding. While Korthagen (1988) cautions that it is impossible to train students for every professional situation that they might meet during their teaching careers, he does argue and support the view that they can be trained to reflect on their experiences and on the manner in which they function as teachers. The research was further mindful of Shulman's (1987) detailed case study of the student teacher who claimed not to have learned anything from her English methods course! Because this course was organized around the preparation of Secondary English specialists, some of whom would develop particular competence in teaching drama, it was assumed, not unreasonably, that this cohort fitted into Calderhead's (1991) grouping of trainee teachers who believed that in learning to teach 'hands-on experience is central since learning is from experience.'

The report is a record of students' responses to a course which was structured around a public presentation that required the demonstration of performance skills. The hypothesis, in a general sense, was that, in a fast-track programme, and particularly in a subsidiary section of such a programme, an emphasis not just on 'doing' drama in workshop situations, but also on presentation and performance, would be particularly effective in developing students' confidence and skills in using the drama medium and in recognizing the potential and uses of drama, both as a subject and as a learning medium in the Secondary English curriculum.

The paper reports on the data provided by the student group, reflects on the findings of this snapshot of views and perceptions, and attempts to place this evidence in the context of the Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) course provision and current practices in schools.

THE COURSE

The Post-Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) extends over 36 weeks , 12 of which are spent in university and 24 in schools. The structure of the PGCE in Northern Ireland does not follow the partnership United Kingdom mainland model where schools are contracted to work with teacher trainers in return for pro-rata funding from the training institution. While Northern Ireland is currently exploring ways of developing closer links with schools in the supervision of school experience, a decision has already been made that the prime responsibility for the training process would continue to remain with the third-level institutions and that there would be no transfer of funding.

The training course for English teachers incorporates compulsory short units in Drama and Media. In the case of those students who do not take Religious

Studies (the only subsidiary subject course available), the time allocated for this subsidiary is equally divided between Drama and Media, and the inputs are referred to as 'extension' courses. In real terms then, all English students have the equivalent of 15 hours work in Drama, with those taking the extension course having an additional 15 hours. All drama work is largely completed before the first period of teaching practice which begins after students have been in the institution for only six weeks.

It is important to remember that in a one-year course there is no time for that incubation of learning which is the hallmark of 3- and 4-year concurrent initial teacher training courses. By definition, PGCE patterns of teacher preparation are fast-track, and can only realistically be structured and focused around a conviction that they are merely the first stage in the training continuum of initial, induction, and inservice education. It is also necessary to point out that in the Northern Ireland common curriculum, drama is identified as a discrete subject only at GCSE level. Outside of that, drama is defined as a teaching strategy at all levels and for most subjects, but is seen as being of particular value and importance to the teacher of English.

But the short drama course followed by all English students could only really aspire to making students aware of the function and place of drama in the English curriculum and to helping them develop some measure of confidence in using drama as a learning medium in secondary English teaching. Three-quarters of students chose to take the 'extension' course which, at one level, was intended to deepen and develop the skills and understandings acquired in the general programme. Students would also be helped to devise syllabuses for drama as an autonomous area of study and to teach drama with some confidence to GCSE level. But what would give the course its focus?

GENERAL CERTIFICATE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION (GCSE) (DRAMA)

A decision was made that the course had to be singularly designed with a view to developing some measure of competence in teaching drama to GCSE level. This feature would distinguish the extension course from the compulsory course which all students were required to follow, and further provide a continuum of progression and sequence in the experience of learning to teach drama. Of necessity, this would involve becoming aware of the issues and content underpinning the development of syllabuses, and logically these concerns would extend and develop the skills acquired in the core. The key to the organization of the course experience was to be found, not surprisingly, in the detail of the syllabus for the Northern Ireland GCSE (1999) examination and the underpinning guiding concept was to be experiential.

The GCSE examination is designed to enable pupils to demonstrate achievement in 'making' and 'appraising.' 'Making' is defined as creating or using drama forms and competences in order to understand and express ideas about the world. It generally means becoming involved with other people and employing such processes as negotiating, experimenting, problem-solving, refining, shaping , and performing. 'Appraising', on the other hand, involves applying the skills of reflection, analysis, and evaluation to the process of 'making' in order to enhance understanding of how meaning may be made and expressed through the use of dramatic skills.

There are three assessment components: coursework, terminal examination, and practical examination. In coursework, pupils are assessed in a number of drama forms or competences — drama forms being defined as improvization, acting, mime, dance drama and competences in design, electronic media, critical and creative writing. For the end of course practical examination, pupils are expected to devise a performance in a dramatic form or forms derived from one or more stimuli which are usually issued by the examination council in December of the year preceding the examination. The work is performed in groups of 3 to 9 pupils and is intended to last from 15 to 30 minutes. The terminal written examination requires pupils to answer questions on one of the set plays on the syllabus.

Two thorny concepts in drama work are important features of the course. The first, evaluation, is implied to a large extent by the notion of appraisal. Pupils must develop the ability to appraise their work critically, and indeed the work of their peers, using sets of defined criteria. Training in this important form of reflection, in practical, oral, and written forms, is fundamental for teachers' effective engagement with pupils. Indeed, while reflection is the key to effective appraisal and evaluation, the depth of pupils engagement with content has to be further assisted through the use of a range of drama strategies which might include hot seating, thought tracking, conscience alley, role reversal, tableaux, and freeze frame. Although an awareness of the 'making and appraising' dimension of work in drama should become familiar to pupils, in the last analysis, it is the teachers' appraisal which will be realised as the final evaluation and assessment of pupils' achievement.

The other important concept is progression. Four aspects of drama work are indicated where pupils may experience progression and display progress in achievement. These are labeled as (i) complexity, where pupils show an increasingly sophisticated approach to ideas and issues; (ii) control, where pupils show an increased mastery of drama forms; (iii) depth, where pupils display a better understanding of ideas and issues and the ways in which drama

forms can express ideas, and (iv) independence, where pupils show increasing ability to make independent judgments.

TOWARDS PRESENTATION AND PERFORMANCE

All of this represents a very substantial amount in terms of content, understandings, and skills to be effectively covered in a comparatively short time. A linear course structure, with exposition exemplified by practical workshops, was a possible option, but time was at a premium. A style which took account of the fast-track nature of the entire course had to be considered. Content had to be carefully selected, links had to be securely stitched, and the experience had to make sense. But more than that was required. Students had to learn, familiarize themselves with and experience a broad range of expressive and technical dramatic and theatrical skills and, in the process, get some feeling for pupils' learning needs and difficulties.

As presentation and performance were at the heart of the GCSE programme, in both a practical and theoretical sense, an experiential design to the course leading to performance was seen to be probably more likely, in the time available, to give students a feeling for and understanding of a range of dramatic forms and strategies. Hence, content to be explored in the drama studio would range from improvized dialogue, poems, and prose to scripted texts and would, of necessity, be subjected to dramatic presentational elements such as light and shade, tone and texture, point and pause, shape and level, movement and stillness, all in an effort to dramatically interpret, portray, and represent in both formal and informal ways. The focus of the work would be the movement towards a public presentation based on the exploration and development of a theme in the course of which students could show, in a general and group sense, their developing grasp of basic drama forms and the potential uses of selected drama strategies to develop empathy with concepts, ideas, characters, and contexts. As the drama space available to students was technically equipped with a small but adequate range of lamps, staging rostra, and an effective sound system, the performance would further be able to demonstrate an awareness of the technical processes by which the forms and strategies with which they might work, could be visually, spatially, and aurally realised for performance. The integrated process, furthermore, had the potential to demonstrate, where appropriate, an awareness of set design, costume, lighting, and sound.

The concepts of 'making' and 'appraising' would be implicit — indeed explicit in the preparation for a performance — with sessions trying out, evaluating, and then selecting those aspects of content and form which best portray and realise the collective thinking and judgments of the group. Students were informed that the end product of their 'extension' course was to be the

dramatic presentation of a theme developed around a title. (The title chosen was 'Aspects of Love', but this was of no particular significance). Initially, sessions were structured around giving students experience of the use of dramatic forms and strategies, in a studio context, in exploring a range of topics and issues, many of which were culled from literature, yet still connected with the general theme. The lecturer's role was to help students realise their intentions, but in the process, all activities and content were used to make connections with the general roles of the teacher in school who uses drama for specific purposes. Indeed, the presentation being prepared was not very dissimilar to the type of final performance required of pupils taking the GCSE Drama examination.

The presentation was performed in a drama studio and 'in the round' on two occasions to audiences of undergraduates, postgraduates, and staff. The claim was that if students were capable of developing and sustaining, in a focused way, a dramatic presentation which was underpinned by a wide literature and communicated effectively to an audience using dramatic and technical communication skills, the resulting learning had to augur well for their competence to use drama in the secondary school. To test such a view, of course, would be difficult, if not impossible, short of a longitudinal study. What was possible, and indeed what was attempted, was the collection of views and perceptions about the course experience to help assess its effectiveness in developing students' personal and dramatic skills and their awareness and understanding of the learning and teaching potential of drama in schools. The value of the exercise could only be assessed, in the last analysis, by those 'to whom it concerns!'

As a research activity it was clearly somewhat 'ragged' around the edges, but in any course in arts education where the experiential is a crucial element, reflection and analysis of course experience by participants is crucial for both course and staff development. This is particularly the case in the situation described where the theatrical (theatre arguably being the arts medium from which drama education is arrogated) has been claimed as a pivot for the development of and ultimately the transference of pedagogical skills and insights to the world of school. In one sense, this has been an action research perspective on students' responses to the experience of a particular course. But because of the limited time available and the dimensions of the task, the course required a particular organization, a judicious selection of content and experiences, and the creation of a structured learning context, while still respecting the integrity of learners and their various and different academic and practical drama backgrounds.

The approach adopted further reflected a 'felt' view of the connections between drama and theatre, and contributes to the power of co-operative

learning and team work, as well as theatre and performance, as potentially crucial components in the process of learning through drama.

DRAMA AND PERFORMANCE

The relationship between drama and theatre is a complex one and in need of careful analysis and thought which are beyond the scope of this paper. Way (1967), however, in an attempt to distinguish between the terms drama and theatre and to focus on the distinctive role of drama in education, claimed that the prime function of theatre was a concern with communication between actors and an audience, while drama in its educational context was concerned with experience by participants without any communication function to an audience. While Way's distinction is clear, it does, however, represent an attempt to dichotomize theatre and drama too sharply, with the result that many commentators believe that the debate about drama in education is related at least in part to the nature of the relationship between drama as a creative process and theatre as an art form (Robinson, 1975). Duncan (1974) believes that because drama in education has had to fight for the right to use imaginative methods with children, the teaching fraternity appears to have taken up 'a position which has prevented children from being introduced to the theatre by the experience of acting in plays.' Is it possible, he asks, that schools are 'being robbed of theatre and drama in their true senses by theatre in education and drama in education.'

The drama in education area has been bedevilled for a long time, writes Bowskill (1967), by the misunderstandings which have arisen relating to the differences between drama and theatre. He argues that it is essential to realise that the essence of one is contained in the body of the other. Drama in education, for Bowskill, is a creative activity, while theatre is illustrative but, he insists, that while the two may be separated, they are not mutually exclusive. Landy (1975) develops this thought by pointing to theatre as the crucial disciplinary component of drama in education. Not only does it provide important constructs relevant to classroom learning, it also provides an essential method of learning called representation, which he claims can be best understood and demonstrated in theatrical terms. Whatever the relationship, it is difficult to argue with the view expressed by England (1976) that the very application of the word drama to educational practice must surely involve 'some analogy with the literary and theatrical activity from which it was arrogated.' While performance is not necessarily the goal of drama in schools, it may in fact result from the need of participants to find the appropriate symbolic form of expression to 'both unearth and represent the problems of meaning.'

An awareness of the theatrical medium and theatrical constructs has much to contribute to children's search for appropriate expressive forms. An argument

could be made that unless the drama in education area judiciously introduces theatrical perspectives, experience, and criteria, children will be severely limited in the range of expressive structures available to them in their search for 'meaning' in ex tempore drama activities. With such an emphasis incorporated into drama in education, theatre arts courses could be seen more logically as aiming towards deepening children's knowledge and awareness of the theatre medium through forging links with earlier expressive work. The mutually nourishing relationship between drama and theatre must be rationalized and adopted into the 'education through drama' process. In so far as work in creative drama is social and creative, and relies on linguistic and bodily communication (Robinson, 1975), there are close parallels with theatre work. However, Robinson does caution that while many of the techniques and activities drama teachers use were developed in the theatre, the focus in drama in education must be on 'the process of such work rather than any eventual end product.'

THE ENQUIRY

Students were provided with an open-ended questionnaire to be completed at the end of their first period of teaching practice in school. This to some extent allowed the issues to 'incubate' in a professional context where some testing of the course experiences was possible. Some of the cohort were also selectively interviewed to further test and qualify general written responses and observations. The questionnaire invited a short appraisal of the presentation. This involved an assessment of the extent to which students felt knowledgeable about and/or confident in using the dramatic forms of improvization, acting, mime, dance, drama; an indication of some of the ways in which the use of drama strategies can deepen the understanding of content and development of drama skills; an assessment of the importance and value of the presentation in deepening understanding about the potential of drama in schools, and the identification of induction/inservice needs in terms of the content, skills, and support which students felt they still required to help them teach drama effectively across the age range.

STUDENTS' RESPONSES

Appraising the Presentation
Although appraising involves applying the skills of reflection, analysis, and evaluation to the process of 'making' in order to enhance understanding of how meaning may be made and expressed through the use of dramatic skills, at the heart of the process are the skills of reflection and evaluation, widely viewed as being crucial for the developing of teaching competence. The intention of the appraisal was to prompt students to focus on dimensions of learning (albeit

locked in a dramatic frame, but obviously capable of transference) and to make judgments about their developing insights into the structure and management of creative learning activities.

Most spoke of the dynamic in experimenting with a variety of drama forms and in having to make decisions about selecting appropriate drama strategies to explore a theme and shades within a theme. 'It felt practical — like the sort of thing that teachers could usefully do in school.' However, the prevalent practical and experiential dimensions of the work were seen by some, at least initially, as threatening and a few spoke of feeling 'exposed', 'awkward' and even 'incompetent.'

Others mentioned the complex variety of interpretation and dimensions of presentation which had to be adjudicated on, selected from, and then shaped to explore meaning. 'Ultimately content had to be tested for its appropriateness and relevance to the coherent development of the theme' was the response from one student. The thinking and decision-making was not the principal concern for a few students; 'it was the gnawing uncertainty about whether I could stand up and do it.'

The background of the students (all were English graduates) meant that a rich mix of classical, modern, and popular texts became readily available for group deliberation. 'The task was to seek out appropriate and effective theatre presentation skills to provide dramatic shape, form, and impact to carry meaning,' it was claimed. Students reported how accommodations had to be reached in the selection of presentation techniques and in the use of dramatic forms to produce a coherent and focused statement. 'Groups learned to negotiate and resolve strong differences,' it was further claimed, 'and we all came to realise the importance of the continuous shaping and refining which has to take place constructively and which is, after all, an integral part of appraisal.' Very few students had any previous experience of group work and all confessed to the trauma of the sharing and negotiation that it involves. 'Group work isn't easy' was the comment of one student, and was the reaction implied by the responses of others. 'It requires great tact and diplomacy,' 'It's a good confidence booster,' and 'It employs skills needed in the classroom,' added others. The majority further claimed that they became less and less inhibited as time went on because of the experimentation, negotiation, and problem-solving techniques they had to learn and which were an implicit part of group deliberations. One student was impressed by how individual beliefs, attitudes, and emotions were effectively and constructively subjected to group scrutiny. 'If work is to develop in a meaningful way, it must be monitored, accepted, and responded to by the entire group,' one student remarked.

Several students acknowledged that the exercise provided an introduction to the making and appraising components of the drama process, and helped show how meanings can be constructed. 'A range of content and style helped depict a kaleidoscope of relationships, attitudes, and emotions centering on the theme, and the imaginative and effective use of strong dramatic links provided cohesion' claimed one of the two students in the cohort who had previous experience of drama.

It was generally acknowledged that the themes that were explored, which ranged from quiet humour and zany comedy, to the serious and emotional, dictated to a large extent the style and genre which would be used for the portrayal, and 'the development of ideas and dramatic forms continually coincided with increased confidence within groups.' 'Everyone drew on personal and emotional experience,' and characterization followed relatively easily and naturally as a result it was claimed.

For others, it was the experience of a variety of dramatic forms and competences, and learning to manipulate them to produce a meaningful performance, that was important. 'We began as a group with little practical experience of drama and its potential, and succeeded in increasing our skills, confidence and appreciation of the value of this kind of work' it was claimed. Although all students claimed that the presentation pushed them towards a more real understanding of the power of drama in the learning process, not surprisingly, several saw the transference of skills learned to the classroom as being yet another traumatic hurdle to be overcome.

But for many of the students, it was the 'tight teamwork', the sharp and focused selection and pruning of material, the collegiate spirit and the use of carefully selected drama forms which helped pull the statement together with all 'its emotion, humour, and cold realism.' Such an exploration is a difficult task, it was reported, because there were so many different interpretations to juggle with, to say nothing of the diverse sources in prose, music, song, and scripts which had to be collated into one piece of work. To capture even a small portion of this, and still make it entertaining and informative, is no small feat, but the actual process of getting it into one cohesive form, particularly finding links for the beginning and ending of each scene within and between themes, was the most daunting task of all, according to others.

Although insecurities were not eliminated about this form of fast-track learning, all students in varying degrees spoke of their surprise at what they had achieved in such a comparatively short time: 'the ability to work in a group, the ability to create and sustain roles...a knowledge of dramatic shape and form, an awareness of drama forms and strategies....how to use them in an innovative

way....to say nothing of an increased awareness about the potential of the medium in the learning process.'

Assessment of the Extent to which Students felt Knowledgeable About and/or Confident in Using the Dramatic Forms of Improvization, Acting, Mime, Dance Drama

Although it was not possible for students to avoid giving some reaction to the question about the extent to which they felt knowledgeable about and/or confident in using dramatic forms in the course of appraising the overall presentation, the question nevertheless provided an important opportunity to focus attention on specific dramatic forms used by teachers in schools to explore a wide range of content. There were, however, two areas of possible ambiguity which had to be addressed, particularly in some of the follow-up interviews. Knowledgeable had to be interpreted as a relative judgment in that the experience of presenting was clearly recognized, not surprisingly, as being a more powerful form of learning than would have been the case if students had simply been lectured to. But slightly more problematic was the confusion felt by some students as to whether confidence in using dramatic forms referred to the use of these for learning and teaching purposes in school or whether the reference was to their perceived confidence in using these in the development of formal drama activities at their own adult level. In the latter case, students were instructed to interpret 'confidence' as applying to the use of these drama forms in classrooms.

Although some students claimed to feel more confident than knowledgeable, the presentation was generally seen as a 'sound' base to build on, principally because it provided first-hand practical experience which was perceived to be of 'enormous benefit.' 'The presentation certainly helped to increase my knowledge of what can be achieved through drama and I feel much more confident both as a participant and possible instructor and adviser — all essential to the teaching of drama' was not an untypical response.

Because improvization was the main drama form underpinning the presentation, students reported that they felt particularly confident with it as a dramatic expressive form. But substantial insights into the effectiveness of other forms and drama strategies were also claimed to have been gained from watching peers at work. One student claimed that 'watching other groups using strategies was fascinating. I could see numerous ways in which these could be used in school and feel reasonably confident that I could use them in a teaching context, but after a little more practice!' 'The presentation gave us a clearer idea about how the various dramatic forms actually work in helping learners develop an empathy and depth of understanding about characters, issues, and contexts,'

one group of students reported, while another spoke of having a better understanding of problems encountered in such work and now felt better equipped 'to anticipate such problems in future, in both presentation and in normal classroom work... and hopefully avoid them!'

For some students who described themselves as 'less confident' performers, 'tableaux' was a particularly manageable and effective expressive form 'because portrayal through improvization requires substantial levels of concentration and attention to detail — to say nothing of an awareness and capacity to effectively communicate in verbal and non-verbal modes.' For others, the use of tableaux and freeze frame was not only a confidence builder in getting some control over the medium, but it also demonstrated the power of strong, non-verbal visual images in drama. Mime was generally seen as a particularly versatile and flexible drama form for the exploration of meaning, but dance drama which was used briefly by one group for a very particular reason, was not perceived as ' a comfortable medium,' even though its power was remarked on. 'It demands very particular technical skills which we just don't have as yet' claimed one student, 'but its potential for exploring the emotional and physical in stylized expressive form was demonstrated.'

There was general agreement that the eclectic nature of the drama forms used across the group work, and ultimately across the entire presentation, substantially increased knowledge and confidence about how drama could be used in the classroom. Furthermore, the process of having to consider and then test out various drama forms to assess their relative importance in the process of conveying meaning was claimed by several students to have been instrumental in helping them engage with the appraisal of performance to express meaning in a constructive and logical way.

Ways in Which the Use of Drama Strategies can Deepen the Understanding of Content and Development of Drama Skills

Although the drama strategies indicated below are widely rehearsed in the literature, students made the terms their own as they spoke of the ways in which they were now able to recognize their potential in deepening the understanding of content and the development of drama skills.

Hot Seating was claimed to allow pupils enter a role and try to view and judge issues from a new and different perspective. It encourages the process of empathizing, it was said, while also allowing opportunities to demonstrate insight into the character or situation under review. In the process, pupils can see someone who lives through the text, but it also lets characters be seen as whole persons. Hot seating was described as a 'testing and reflective' activity, 'with an edge, a learning edge.' The strategy allows questions to be posed which may not

have definite answers in the text, and this 'prompts the kind of speculation about and exploration of issues that are most important in the learning process.'

Thought Tracking was variously described as encouraging the verbalizing of emotions or, as one student put it, 'it allows an outpouring of internal feelings and therefore encourages freedom of expression.' Another claimed it was 'an ideal way to convey subtle information to lower ability groups who perhaps need more instruction or information about a text or an improvized drama. Others saw it as a way of allowing the exploration of characters in their given context, thus allowing for greater understanding of character, motivation, and theme. All spoke of the power of the strategy in fostering empathy with characters and 'in exploring characters psyche to the full.'

Conscience Alley it was claimed, gives further access to meaning, reinforces the physical portrayal of action, and gives greater depth and insight to action. It allows the possibility of enhancing expressive skills when the emotions to be conveyed are required to be conveyed through body language. Large groups can be involved, thus pooling their ideas to inform the whole group about the content as they see it. Some students saw it as a potent approach to examining a variety of ways of looking at and interpreting any given situation, while at the same time fostering respect in pupils for the opinions and ideas of others.

Tableaux was the strategy with which many students felt most comfortable. Many saw it as 'an excellent way of introducing pupils to the presentation of drama without the stress of having to perform and act it.' 'It's a powerful means of conveying emotions and character and it encourages precision of thought.' All are capable of this form of self-expression, including the less confident. Several students remarked on the potential of tableaux to capture 'the essence of a moment, issue, or theme,' thus giving pupils a strong starting point in the expressive act. It was also claimed to help closely examine and create an awareness of body language, of character work, and of the effect of tension, dynamic, and levels in portraying 'visually strong' meaning.

Character Transfer was seen as being effective in allowing pupils to visualize any particular character at another time in their lives through getting involved in creating another character's reality outside the confines of the script. It was generally accepted that it permits imaginative response to character and situation by increasing pupils' appreciation of a character's actions in any given scene. One student claimed that it 'prompts lateral thinking and so deepens understanding.'

Students claimed to realise that through the use of drama strategies, reasons for behaviour can be explored. Some added that they helped to 'make visible the invisible,' add depth to characters, deepen pupils' understanding of events, and add variety and colour to the 'learning journey of discovery and exploration' by

strengthening comprehension and therefore appreciation of the final destination. They represent a crucially important learning stage between idea and performance.

Others amplified on this. 'Not everything is obvious to everyone; depending on ability, pupils will not always understand the ambiguity and sub-plots of some texts,' 'Drama strategies aim at a greater understanding of text and have the power to give a greater and deeper understanding of characters and their motivation and actions,' 'Through understanding character, plot and structure can become so much clearer,' 'They are a good precursor to written work because of the way they prompt thoughts and language.'

A few students, however, did indicate how an awareness of theatre genres and skills can add a further dimension of choice in portrayal when using drama strategies and therefore increase the range of possibilities and effects available. More knowledge of these means more choice was the implicit challenge in the comment of one student.

Although there was general agreement that the effective use of strategies would help pupils to really explore and identify what is going on for a particular character, assist their power to empathize, develop their creative and imaginative skills and their ability to perform using improvization and other drama forms, there was also a large measure of agreement about their effectiveness in prompting thought, reflection, and appraisal, 'instead of just making!'

Assessing the Importance/Value of the Presentation in Deepening Understanding about the Potential of Drama in Schools

The main purpose of this work was to consider the effect of presentation and performance in preparing potential teachers of English to teach drama and to identify some of the perceived limitations of the approach as reflected through students' declarations of their continuing needs along the training continuum. Students' perceptions of the importance and value of the presentation in deepening understanding of the potential of drama in schools were, therefore, quite crucial in arriving at any kind of supportable conclusion.

There was general agreement that the presentation, and the preparation associated with it, was indeed important in helping students get a feeling for the potential of the drama in school. Some of the more general responses ranged from 'It's an empowering medium which builds confidence and self-esteem,' 'Experiencing the drama process makes you draw on sources you may not have realised you possessed' to 'Working in the drama medium encourages the use of negotiation skills and interaction with peers, and develops the ability to work productively as part of a group in or out of role.'

Many also spoke of the insights gained into the creative process and of the awareness, confidence, and personal development to be gained and promoted through teamwork. Others reported on beginning to recognize the potential of drama for learning to share ideas and develop powers of enquiry, constructive thought, interpretation, and discrimination. Indeed, one student claimed that 'it allowed for personal expression while feeling safe within the confines of the medium.'

It was claimed that the variety of drama forms and strategies available to the teacher means that pupils could have access to some forms of dramatic expression which may free them to explore, not only personal resources 'but also aspects of the society and world in which they live.' Most spoke about how their research for the presentation, and then the portrayal of it, showed how in the school context, drama 'deepens understanding of texts,' 'supports and assists the exploration of written and oral language,' 'prompts language use and development appropriate to context and seems an effective way to assess talking and listening,' 'encourages self and peer appraisal resulting in a deepening of knowledge of both text and presentation,' 'allows academically weaker pupils a different way to present their knowledge of texts studied while still encouraging self-confidence which is particularly important for the very shy and introverted,' and 'helps develop interpersonal and communication skills.'

The particular potential of drama for the teacher of English became increasingly obvious as the preparation for the presentation developed. Students came to recognize and then articulate how drama encourages empathy and depth of understanding, and helps explore the world of the imagination through acting out, while also providing opportunities for the development of talking and listening skills through group negotiation and collaboration. It was also seen as an excellent medium through which effective learning can take place in the exploration of cross-curricular themes, and the potentially 'thorny ' topics embedded in social issues.

'The presentation proved conclusively that you don't have to be a performer to contribute something worthwhile and valuable to an area of drama' claimed one student, 'and this is crucial to remember in the classroom.' This was a response echoed by others who claimed that working through the presentation showed that all have the ability and potential to express themselves through this creative medium, whether experienced or not. It further illustrated the value of drama in promoting confidence and in nurturing and enhancing creative and imaginative abilities. Some students also remarked that the experience of the presentation illustrated the place and value of technical supporting effects in the exploration of meaning, 'even in the school context.' Although all confessed that

the presentation was 'hard work,' there was a genuine sense of 'feeling amazed' at what can be achieved in a short time.

'A greater and deeper knowledge and awareness of the theme and therefore issues in the world we live in developed,' 'There was increased confidence as we succeeded in making and seeing something coherent coming together,' 'We experienced tremendous satisfaction as we grappled with a complicated issue in a supportive and open environment,' 'People were given the opportunity to express themselves, and there was real enjoyment and satisfaction in participating in performance,' 'All of these are extremely worthwhile outcomes and point to the great potential drama holds for learning in schools.'

The presentation affirmed for students that drama brings ideas and themes to life, thus making them more accessible to pupils, and that 'it has the potential to increase a child's confidence as a speaker and thinker, preparing them for the communicative social world, as well as teaching them to think in a pragmatic and imaginative manner.' For several students, the presentation helped to identify how pupils might feel about the prospect of performing, and it further provided for some an insight into the diversity, flexibility, and indeed personally fulfilling dimensions of the subject.

One student reported that through her involvement in the presentation, she came to realise how 'drama can help develop pupil creativity, confidence and communication skills....It did it for me....It allows the exploration of a variety of roles and experience ... It helps develop group work and provides pupils with a sense of responsibility for their own work....The presentation was of major importance to my learning about drama and its uses....It was an invaluable experience.'

All groups spoke of the positive learning gained from seeing theory put into practice. 'Having had no personal experience of drama, I now realise how important it can be in an educational context....It is a unifying force and it would help pupils develop a sense of performance and audience which could not only be a means in itself, but is of crucial importance in the teaching of English.' Some further benefits accruing from participation in drama were claimed to be the development of listening skills leading to understanding of different positions and learning how to support others while at the same time trusting one's own beliefs: 'This is excellent training for young people.' For others, it was the 'satisfaction in taking a piece from the embryonic stage, experimenting with it, shaping it, getting frustrated, coming back to it, watching it become something of meaning and impact....These are meaningful learning activities for pupils to be involved in.'

But it was the opportunity for self-expression, in or out of role, which students referred to as being one of the major objectives in using the drama medium in

school. It was also claimed that drama can 'provide pupils with a variety of media which allows them to express themselves through an appropriate content,' 'permits opportunities to reflect and reconstruct positions, ideas, and attitudes,' can 'cause pupils to be clear and strong in their views and delivery,' and 'encourages the appraisal of work constructively, thus instilling confidence in the process of verbal and non-verbal representation.' All of this represents, it was reported, important learnings of vital importance in schools. One student summed up a position, shared by most, that learning about drama through developing a presentation 'opened a door of understanding and learning about the role and function of drama in school in an enjoyable and unconventional way.'

CONCLUSION

Students' responses and the application of criteria identified for making judgments about the 'making' and 'appraising' of drama work pointed to a variety of factors: a developing capacity to apply skills of reflection and evaluation to the 'making drama' process; some understanding of how meaning may be made and expressed through the use of dramatic skills; signs of a relatively sophisticated language (essentially the language of the medium in which they were working) which was used with increasing surefootedness to articulate and explain perspectives on the learning processes involved; an increased ability to talk with confidence about theatrical shape and form and presentation techniques; some confidence in using the medium and in their ability to express themselves through it; a recognition of the importance of group work in the learning drama process; developing insights into the effectiveness of drama as an expressive creative medium in the educative context; an awareness of a range of drama forms and strategies which can deepen understanding and explore meaning; an understanding of the need to blur the polarized distinction between drama as process and product; a recognition of the complimentary concerns of process as exploration and the theatrical as the performance art form from which the education process was arrogated; a knowledge of the technicalities of production and staging; and a realization that drama is not only a powerful learning medium, but also an enjoyable one (see Wilks, 1972).

Although students saw the presentation and performance as assisting them in getting a feeling for the kinds of issues and problems which might be encountered in schools, they identified several other factors as representing the potential of drama in the learning and teaching context. Inter alia, it was claimed that drama has the potential to build confidence in pupils; can improve their ability to communicate in verbal and non-verbal modes; allows pupils opportunities to explore their own imaginative power in investigating themes,

emotions and relationships, and issues in an immediate way; has the potential to motivate and capture the attention of pupils of all ability levels; develops skills in team work and particularly in negotiation, skills which will have a positive effect on all aspects of a pupil's social interaction; gives pupils the opportunity to control the medium in which they are working and therefore fosters a sense of achievement in a very unique way; allows access to literature in a direct way through the use of drama forms and strategies; and has the potential to encourage reflective thinking in the appraising process.

In an effort to allow students to reflect on the gaps in their knowledge and the limitations of the course they had followed, all were invited to identify the perceived content, skills, and support which they thought they still required to help them teach drama effectively across the age range. Not surprisingly, students found this a difficult task, mainly because of their limited experience in thinking about, engaging with, and teaching drama. While several cautiously reported that they would be relying on established school procedures and experienced teachers 'to keep them on the right track,' all had perceptions of their additional needs even at this early stage. These included different kinds of support and advice, courses, further opportunities, and experiences in the areas of: investigating the roles of the teacher; developing a clearer sense of how, when, and where to apply approaches across the age range and the personal confidence to follow through; helping develop pupils' ideas and make them work; progression and sequence in drama work; recognizing and appreciating pupils' differing abilities, backgrounds and confidence levels in drama, and selecting appropriate content to match these; making decisions about pupils' progress in drama and how to record this, in particular in assessment of course work; breaking down inhibitions, especially in older pupils who may be image conscious, to encourage them to be more imaginative and responsive in a drama class; exploring groupwork and its dynamics as an important area of personal growth involving creative, interactive, and evaluative skills; analysing and evaluating drama forms and theatrical genres and conventions.

Although there was substantial evidence from students' responses to suggest that the experimental course design described in this study had been relatively successful in fulfilling its purposes, the approach adopted is not, needless to say, the panacea for training English teachers to use drama. It took account of the serious limitation of contact time on a Post-Graduate Certificate in Education course and sought to tease out the effects of building into such a fast-track course the demands of presentation and performance, both as a strategy and methodology, in an attempt to focus students' learning about drama as a subject and a learning process. It took as its guiding maxim Courtney's (1968) view that within a form or frame, there is scope for process. The form was performance,

the process an investigation into the uses of drama in education. Some of its more obvious limitations were considered above. And, like all courses in initial teacher education, it can only be as good as the induction and inservice provision which supports it.

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