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Creative Learning Through Drama

Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir and Rannveig Björk Þorkelsdóttir

Abstract

The article is based on a study, Creative learning through drama, carried out by the authors in 2007-2009 on creative learning through drama. The authors looked into the place of drama as an art form and drama in education in primary, secondary and upper secondary schools in Iceland. The main research question was: Can drama affect students' ability to learn? To answer the research question, mixed methods were used. A total of 16 teachers were interviewed and 22 students, three participation observations were done, and curricula for Art both in secondary and upper secondary schools were examined and compared. At the same time the project aimed to raise the educational profile of drama. The findings of the study showed that drama is particularly useful for students with learning disabilities and for immigrant students.

Introduction

Learning through drama combines a few concepts that involve using drama as a teaching method. These concepts, such as dramatic expression, are applied when teaching various subjects in different educational settings. Learning through drama is a method where students approach different assignments following a special procedure. They compose an act, or role-play scenario, based on their project, resulting in a story to be told. The story's course of events results in communication between characters. Emphasis is put on imagination; students explore and make decisions based on the characters they are representing, resulting in communication and debate. In a way it can be said that role-playing gives students the opportunity to understand what it means to be human. Learning and understanding takes place when the student explores various roles, investigates different aspects of human relations, and takes independent decisions while in the role-play setting. Scaffolding takes place when the student builds on knowledge and experience through looking for solutions and problem solving.

The number of children in need of exercise is constantly growing and fun and games involving movement are in decline. Playing games has been replaced by television and computer games and children experience games that are other people's creation. It is important to encourage children to rely on their own imagination by creating their own games and solving problems, and making independent decisions. Children have a unique need to express themselves through role-playing and have an exceptional ability to shape their surroundings to suit different scenarios. A characteristic of children's play is how sincerely they take on different roles in an imaginary situation, explore interactions, solve problems, and learn through experience. (Anna Jeppesen and Ása Helga Ragnarsdóttir 2004). The qualities and uniqueness of creative drama and role-play offer an exclusive learning opportunity. It can be said that every person is capable of creating and interpreting, although certain circumstances and environments will affect how this ability develops. Therefore, it is important for teachers to create situations where students get an opportunity to interpret and express feelings of their own and others.

This article discusses the effect of drama on learning. The data is based on research material from the study, Creative learning through drama. The objectives were to look at how drama affects students' ability to learn and to explore the extent of drama teaching in elementary and secondary schools.

Iceland's National Curriculum for Arts specifies five subjects; textile arts, music, visual arts, dance and dramatic expression. The three first listed are independent obligatory subjects to be taught in the first eight grades (K-7) but are elective at the lower secondary level (8-10). Dance and dramatic expression are, on the other hand, integrated with other subjects or taught as elective courses. It differs between schools whether drama is an offered elective. It often depends on the school administration and the supply of specialized teachers whether drama is an option, despite the fact that according to the National Curriculum, all students should be introduced to the subject.

All students at the compulsory level should have an opportunity to work with dramatic expression as part of their schooling as well as when working with self-esteem and other life skills (Ministry of Education 2006).

The National Curriculum outlines objectives for dramatic expression which students should have accomplished upon completion of grade 10. The fact that individual school administrators can decide whether drama is offered or not can determine whether students get their rightful opportunities. A study by Börkur Hansen, Ólafur H. Jóhannsson and Steinunn Helga Lárusdóttir (2008) points out that school administrators are expected to trust their own judgments when forming school policy and practices. Therefore, it is obvious that school administrators' views on drama instruction have an effect on how, or if, the subject is taught. It is evident that, while drama is a designated subject in the national curriculum, it does not guarantee the subject will be taught in schools. Kelly (2004) emphasizes that if a subject is to be used in schools, it is important, if not necessary, for it to be part of the school's formal curriculum.

Background

For a period of four years, in 2003-2007, the *Háteigsskool* (secondary and upper secondary school) was chosen to host a developmental project on drama in teaching. Following this project the City of Reykjavík decided to fund the researchers in an effort to promote drama teaching in the city's schools. The authors of this article took part in this developmental project as well as the city's funded promotion project. The authors soon realized that there was little research in the area of drama and learning and decided to conduct a study. Through foreign cooperation they heard about, Drama for learning and creativity study which had been carried out by the British professional association, National Drama, in schools in Norfolk, England in 2006-2008. This study was used as a model for investigating the effect of drama in creative education.

Research and theoretical viewpoints on the effect of drama on child education

Various studies have been conducted worldwide on the effect of using drama as a teaching method. No study has been performed in Iceland to assess the actual benefits of this method and therefore it was important to research the topic.

One of the main characteristics of drama in education is how students construct an imaginary world allowing them to add to their knowledge. The experience and understanding gained from this helps them in the complicated world of reality (Bruner 1996). Pioneers of using drama in teaching draw on ideas of cognitive constructivism from research done by Jean Piaget and his colleagues. Piaget's theory of cognitive development is about the nature and development of human

intelligence which progresses through a series of stages. Cognitive development takes place when children gain new experiences and make discoveries. As development progresses, the child gains experience which enables it to deal with new conditions and circumstances. Cognitive constructivism is based on the idea that students learn by building on previous knowledge and are active in creating new understanding. To be able to learn, the student must be an active participant in the process of understanding, knowing, and achieving. In a school setting the student is the main figure in the creation of new knowledge and understanding. Students have control and are responsible for their education and should be active participants in the process of knowledge construction. For students to rise to this challenge they need to be interested and see the purpose of learning to solve tasks. It is necessary to take in account a student's previous knowledge because new knowledge is adopted and interpreted according to previous knowledge. School projects and tasks need to be in coherence with real-life situations outside school. Students are expected to engage in complicated situations outside school and therefore, school work needs to prepare them for these situations. When using methods of drama in teaching, students are active participants who use their experience to take part in an imaginary process and take on responsibilities of different roles. At the same time they connect new experiences with older ones. Students use their experience to gain knowledge and build up additional experience while problem-solving. The educational environment should be resourceful, stimulating and open; similar to a real-life environment (Hsiao 1999).

The ideas of social constructivism put forth in the early 1970s state that interactions and connections between students have a great effect on learning. Students develop understanding through communication with fellow students. When working together on projects, they exchange understanding and express their ideas. It is necessary to be aware of students' prior knowledge because this is used to build and interpret new knowledge (Good and Brophy 2003). Drama is often taught through group work. Students must work together and find common solutions. Students use their experience to add to their knowledge in role-playing exercises. In this way drama teaching corresponds well with ideas of social constructivism. Communication and discussion in group work exercises lead to greater understanding. The education specialist Eisner (2002) puts emphasis on using arts in teaching. He believes that students' minds are not unploughed acres. On the contrary, he claims that students are susceptible to the seeds sown by their teachers. Using artistic methods in teaching develops student's attitudes and skills, such as talent, initiative, creativity, imagination and work habits along with a sense of pride for a job well done.

In drama, students are participants and have an opportunity to engage with material in an active way. They interpret their lessons with dramatic expression. The philosopher Dewey points out the advantages of learning by doing where students are active participants in a quest for knowledge, not only passive recipients. According to Dewey (1966), every child has an unused opportunity and the teacher's role is to create situations where talent can reach its full potential for the benefit of the child and the community. Understanding develops in situations where students can relate with experiences important to themselves. These situations need to

emerge in a social context, for example in a classroom. Ideas of the British teacher, Cook (1917), correspond with Dewey's theories, as he states that interest and participation will ensure results and that playing games is a natural situation for children's learning.

Research by Somers (1996) indicates that drama helps students retain school work in their memory. Students experience their lessons in a different manner than when only reading. As an example he points out that when working with a story related to a school subject, students construct a play based on the storyline. As characters from the story, they learn to be responsible for their actions and find solutions to problems making the lesson more memorable. Somers also states that the teaching method works well when teaching immigrants because diversity is a main element of drama and can easily embrace varied backgrounds. Additionally, he claims that role-play scenarios promote diverse language use. When representing different characters, students find it easier to speak in a new language, resulting in vocabulary growth. Baldwin (2004) agrees with Somers in that within drama one can find a variety of teaching methods allowing educators to approach teaching material in various ways. According to Bamford's (2006) theories, drama in teaching often leads to better attendance amongst students. The diverse methods of drama sharpen their focus and attention. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities often have problems with attendance and lack social skills. Group work with drama creates possibilities, according to Cruz (1995), who points out that through group work, students with reading difficulties can learn from fellow students as well as improve their social skills. Drama in teaching is also well-suited for working with boys in their first years of school. Drama involves lots of movement, which is helpful for children who have difficulty with sitting still (Wolthers 2005).

Other research shows that in mother tongue instruction, students' understanding develops through acting. When a scenario is based on a narrative or fairy-tale, language is used in a diverse way. Students need to use various language styles when interpreting different characters and this expands their language skills. Podionzy (2000) studied how language development changes when methods of drama are used in teaching. She examined students tackling problems and challenges in a lesson where drama was used. They were forced to take on different roles which called for diverse language use and resulted in increased language development.

These are especially interesting conclusions from international studies on the effect and impact of drama in teaching children, but no study had been conducted in Iceland on the status and effect of drama on children's learning.

Methodology, data gathering and data analysis

Methodology of the study was both quantitative and qualitative approach. Data was gathered through interviews, participant observations and analysis of the curriculum.

Interviews were conducted with 16 teachers and 22 students. All teachers were asked the same questions. The same was done with the students, although their questions were simpler. All interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Anonymity was ensured. In total 272 pages of written data were compiled. The data was thoroughly analyzed with respect to recurring themes and patterns and was also analyzed in smaller units.

Inductive methods were used to analyze the research data. Using this method means that even though the researchers have an idea about the possible outcome, they must analyze the material that is gathered, find patterns and themes, and make assumptions based on the data, which are then put forward as conclusions. Data analysis began before data gathering was finished. First the data was analyzed with open coding in search for general patterns. Secondly, closed coding was used to extract data which adhered to the main themes that had appeared. Teachers and students were interviewed. All interviews took place in the schools and lasted on average 40 minutes. Some of the interviews with younger students were very short. The data analysis involved searching for specific descriptions from the interviewees about certain aspects.

Participant observation was conducted in three elementary schools in Reykjavík. Two lessons were observed in grades 1 and 5 and four lessons were observed at the lower secondary level.

National Curricula for Art both in secondary and upper secondary schools from 1999 and 2006 were examined and compared and the National Curricula (NC) from 1999, 2006 and 2008, along with a new educational policy from 2009 were compared to examine the extent of drama in learning and teaching. The research study sought to determine the status of drama in the curricula at primary and secondary school levels. The curricula, laws and school policy documents were examined and analyzed.

Each curriculum was analyzed separately with searches for key words: drama, dramatic expression, drama as an elective subject and arts education. The results were then compared and data for each curriculum was compiled.

Participants

Research began in August 2007. A call for school participation was advertised the previous spring. Many schools applied, and three different types of schools were chosen. After research had begun one of the schools withdrew participation due to teacher illness. Therefore, two schools took part in the study during the year 2007-2008. The following year four schools were added to the study. A total of sixteen classroom teachers and one teaching assistant took part in the study. All of them committed to using drama in teaching in two lessons a week during the entire school year. Before research began, a daylong training session for the participating teachers was held. The purpose of the workshop was to introduce the participants to the

research study, provide them with teaching material and a textbook, and train them in the use of drama in teaching.

The researchers presented the research question to the participants: Can drama affect students' ability to learn? The researchers believed they could find answers to the research question through participant observations and interviews. It was decided that the participating teachers would, in addition, compose their own research questions which were relevant to their students and teaching situation. It was considered beneficial for the teachers to examine their teaching along with observing their class. Teachers recorded their observations in a special diary. Therefore, the teachers took part in action research as part of the researcher's case study. Sadly, keeping the diary turned out to be too much for some of the teachers. Incorporating methods of drama in teaching was enough. Nonetheless, a few teachers kept the diary and examined their own teaching.

The teachers were required to define their research questions and put reasons for their selection. Examples of research questions:

- Can drama in teaching increase student's tolerance for each others?
- Is it possible to promote social and positive interactions in the classroom through drama?
- Can drama as a teaching method effectively contribute team building among students?

Periodical meetings were held with the teachers to provide them with support and to follow teaching developments.

None of the participating teachers had previously used drama in teaching for specific purposes. All the teachers were extremely interested in experimenting with the methods and believed it necessary to promote the use of drama in their schools.

Findings

Interviews with teachers and students reveal that through drama students take an active part in the lessons and build up interactions between characters they make. They take responsibility for their assumed characters and solve the characters' problems based on their own real-world experience. Textbooks are set aside and students get a chance to let their imagination and creativity flourish. All students can feel equal when using drama. Non-native speakers have the same opportunities as others because the diversity of the methods helps those with reading and language difficulties. Students take on roles of different characters which call for diverse language use. Immigrant students find it easier to speak Icelandic when acting, and this strengthens their vocabulary. Since drama is essentially group work, students learn to cooperate with their classmates. They learn to debate, stand firm on their opinions and jointly solve problems.

Drama also allows students to choose roles they feel comfortable with, enabling them to build up experience. They take interest in their characters they create and at the same time the chosen roles give them a necessary sense of security.

In the following section attention will be given to two of the main themes derived from the interviews. With regard to teachers, the main themes were teaching methodology and instruction. For students, the primary themes were learning and experience. Lastly, the participant observations will be discussed.

Interviews with teachers

In general, the teachers were positive towards participation in the study. They remarked that they had been insecure in the beginning but became more confident as the study progressed. Only a few of them had used drama in teaching before, and none had used it as an integral process combining a number of different methods of drama. All the teachers found using these methods effective in teaching. Few problems were mentioned; two examples were the lack of space and insecurity amongst students. Some also stated that they themselves were insecure and felt they were not prepared well enough in drama teaching methods. However, teachers also mentioned that using drama in teaching gave them a certain freedom and helped students broaden their perspectives.

Quotes from interviews with the teachers:

'Because you go into character, you are no longer yourself; you can open yourself in a completely different way than usual. You are not the same person; you are somebody completely different and you can somehow do much more than your limitations allow.'

'When you are working with a child or children in your class and all of a sudden they start to open themselves, a child that has had a really hard time with reading and all of a sudden is the center of attention - I think that is so great.'

It was notable that all teachers mentioned that students with academic difficulties flourished in drama activities. The method helped students with reading and/or attention difficulties. Quotes from interviews with the teachers:

'It is evident that some of the children who have learning difficulties do a good job with drama.'

'I notice that kids who are really shy and quiet seem to blossom in drama activities.'

'There was one boy who couldn't remember anything when we had finished reading but told me, "after you made us act I remembered everything about the murders." He remembered all the circumstances, which was who and things like that.'

A majority of the teachers stated in the interviews that although they were reluctant at first, students of foreign background enjoyed and took advantage of lessons involving drama. At first they held back and chose to observe rather than take part. The teachers felt that immigrant students were on equal footing with the others when learning through drama. They thought the methods motivated immigrant students to express themselves orally. They also felt that drama helped develop their understanding of concepts and use of terms. However, some teachers said that immigrant students often needed a lot of encouragement, which was challenging for the teachers.

'I don't pressure my students. The immigrant students were allowed to take as much part as they felt comfortable with. As the lesson progressed, all students started to work together, reason with each other and find solutions.'

'The students get to know each other better, respect each other and are all able to work together. For example, I have two immigrant students who did not want to take part at first, but this gave them the chance to work in situations where everyone is equal.'

'During group-work, I always made sure that no one was left out'

Interviews with students

Twenty two students were interviewed and most of the interviews were shorter than the teacher interviews. A majority of the students mentioned how fun it was to work 'in this way' meaning to be allowed to act out aspects of the lessons. It was interesting to see how popular group work was. Interviews with students:

'To work in groups - it is sometimes fun to work in groups - that is the main point in drama.'

'And then I also learn to make new friends in the play that I hadn't played with before.'

'We were setting up and kind of dividing things between us and working in a group.'

'And we are learning to have fun and work together like this.'

'You learn to be with other kids.'

'This helps with interaction and helps with getting to know kids.'

'It is so much fun to be together and do things together like cooperating and things.'

'It's no fun to act alone.'

Students' experiences:

'Then I see the events, you know, in drama. Sometimes I don't understand stories when I'm reading because I can't visualize or maybe there are no pictures or things.'

The quote above is from an interview with a ten year-old girl who was introduced to methods of drama in teaching. She had reading difficulties and her teacher decided to tell a story by acting it out and using still images to help her understand and connect with the story. The girl was able to describe the story plot even though she had not read the story. This is a good example of how drama can affect children's learning.

Participant observations:

Three classroom observations were done in grades 1, 4 and 9. The students were observed in their usual setting where their actions were tracked to assess their knowledge. This enabled the researchers to acquire information directly and without guiding the students' answers with predetermined response items. The aim was to gain insight and understanding of the children's experience and actions.

The 4th graders were eager and enthusiastic students. Their teacher divided the students into groups and assigned different lessons on bullying to each group. The students listened carefully to instructions and showed great interest in the lesson. A teaching assistant interrupted the class to fetch a student for individual instruction but the teacher decided the student should not leave the classroom because she did not want the student to miss out on a lesson in drama. After a while, the teacher called the groups together and asked them to share their work. The students rejoined the whole group with the usual commotion and jostling about who would be first to present. The first group consisted of four boys. They stood in pairs, excited and with smiles on their faces. The performance went really well. The girls laughed the whole time. All the students agreed that drama is fun; they ask for drama activities and are quick to prepare the classroom when asked to by the teacher. When all the groups had performed the teacher told them to improvise and act out what had happened in the lesson. Some students called out right away: "May we leave the classroom?" (to prepare their play). The teacher managed the class with patience and in the end three groups left the classroom and two stayed. There was a lot of commotion in the classroom while the children prepared. The students used violence as part of their improvisation. It was apparent how active and determined the boys were.

Researcher's reflections:

In my mind it is obvious that students enjoy drama; no question about it. Most of them work well and are quite creative. Actually, some have problems working together but in whole all went well. I have noticed some changes in the students

since I first began observing. They are quicker to get started on the tasks given by the teacher.

The teacher has become more confident and has firm control over her class. It is interesting to see how the majority of boys in the class are more active than the girls, even though some of the girls are very active. The most creativity was at the table where only boys were working. They worked together and discussed a plan. When it was their turn to perform there was no need to discuss who should perform, two of them simply stood up and delivered.

It is interesting to realize what kind of reality the children are creating in their improvisations. They are creating imaginary circumstances that anyone could find themselves in. This relates to the reality the children are familiar with. They are putting themselves in other people's shoes and exploring other lives. It was fun to see how active the boys were. They enjoyed this type of work and were outgoing and happy. The boys' creativity and organization exceeded that of the girls who sometimes slowed down the process with bickering.

One of the classes was a special needs class. As a part of the drama lesson they were asked to write a diary while they were working in drama. The students allowed looking into their writings. It was interesting for the researcher to be able to read what the student was saying about the drama lessons.

'I feel fine today.'

'It was o.k. today because I was positive.'

'It was fun today, we were playing in drama, I was the wolf.'

'I was not feeling well today, because of what I did, but I was feeling better in drama.'

One student said it was boring, mentioning on the same time that he was not feeling very well today. Most of the students were boys. The class was a little bit noisy but on the other hand very much engaged in drama.

The Curricula

The research study sought to determine the status of drama in the curricula at primary and secondary school levels. The National Curricula (NC) from 1999, 2006 and 2008, along with a new educational policy from 2009 were compared and little difference was found regarding the status of drama in teaching. The National Curriculum for Arts for secondary schools (1999) was the first to define a study course in arts. In addition, three elective art courses, one of them in drama, were defined.

Even though the importance of drama in teaching is discussed in the National Curriculum for Arts at the compulsory level, no set number of teaching hours is designated. Instruction in the arts is meant to be interdisciplinary and used to integrate pedagogic and educational objectives as stated in Iceland's compulsory school legislation:

All students at the compulsory level should receive the opportunity to work with dramatic expression as part of their studies, both in specific lessons and when working with self-esteem and other life skills (Ministry of Education 2006).

As the above quotation indicates, it is clear that all students should be introduced to drama in teaching. Drama is viewed as a way to stimulate personal development and increase social skills. According to the NC all students in grades 1-7 should receive training in dramatic expression and drama should be offered as an elective at the lower secondary level (grades 8-10). The NC clearly stipulates that drama should be an interdisciplinary subject and students in the first stages of schooling have the right to be introduced to drama methods. Few schools in Reykjavík use drama as a subject in school. Teachers and headmasters interviewed informally agree that through drama students learn to identify with others. They learn to deal with imaginary situations, practices organized and effective collaboration that promotes social development. They receive training in the use of spoken word, become more independent in practice and learn to behave. When children participate in drama, or drama education they seek to understand and recognize the relationship between culture and values. Drama helps children to understand that it is possible to understand the meaning of words other than literally. They learn to look for hidden meaning and discover different aspects of life (Asgeir Beinteinsson 2008).

The current educational policy for elementary and secondary levels puts emphasis on increasing educational and developmental opportunities as well as ensuring their security and well-being. The policy also intends to strengthen schools' ability to meet all students' needs and interests and realize their full potential (Ministry of Education 2009). In a new addition to the National Curriculum, general section (2011), it highlights creational activities with the emphasis on individuals learning by responding to stimuli, and relates it to former experience, thereby creating knowledge. In this way education is in a sense self-creation, a path of the individual to grow. The desire to create is rooted in the instinctive curiosity and promotes the initiative of the individual. The joy of creation leads to the interest of learning when children and youngsters sense the meaning of the subjects and their value.

Creation is to discover, enjoy, stimulate the curiosity and interest and activate the imagination (Ministry of Education 2011).

In drama, creative abilities are developed. Increasing the role of drama in teaching is an effective way of reaching the objectives set forth in the new educational policy. Many schools offer drama as a subject and professionally trained drama teachers are working in a number of schools. Hopefully, drama will soon be recognized as a subject in its own right. It is our conviction that as awareness of drama as a teaching

method spreads amongst teachers and the number of trained drama teachers in schools increases, the position of drama in schools will strengthen.

Discussion

The following points have been collected in response to the research question of whether drama affects children's ability to learn.

The research findings suggest that methods of drama are effective when working with students with learning difficulties. This coincides with Cruz's (1995) ideas that students with academic difficulties can gain from learning through drama because the use of written text is not necessary and the methods are diverse. Bamford (2006) adds that drama in teaching offers students with reading difficulties different opportunities since books can be set aside. Since drama is essentially group work, students learn to cooperate with their classmates. They learn to express and stand firm on their opinions and jointly solve problems. In this way, students with learning difficulties increase their knowledge and social skills.

The findings also show that drama is useful when teaching students who have Icelandic as their second language. Our knowledge of the research done by Podionzy (2000) enabled us to understand how language development increases when methods of drama are used in teaching. Students who take on different roles and characters use diverse language. Drama methods give immigrant children the courage to use the foreign language, which helps them improve their language use. Through drama, students get to choose roles they feel comfortable with, allowing them to build up experience. They show interest in their characters and the roles they play give them a sense of security. It is easier to express oneself behind a mask. The education theorist Bruner (1966) mirrors this opinion with his belief that when students have a say in their education, they are more willing to share their feelings, imagination and personal values. A 'mask' offers protection in difficult situations and provides a buffer between the individual and reality. This helps students stretch their limits.

It was interesting to follow the boys in the classroom observations. They seemed to enjoy the methods of drama in teaching. They took initiative in group work, were resourceful in finding solutions and clearly enjoyed themselves. In the interviews they stated that they enjoyed drama and emphasized that learning through drama was fun. This is interesting in light of the number of studies which show that boys do not enjoy themselves in school as much as girls, their scores are lower, and behavioral problems are more frequent amongst boys (Ingvar Sigurgeirsson and Ingibjörg Kaldalóns 2006; Arnot et al. 1999). Hafsteinn Karlsson (1997) has rendered thoughts on the matter and asks whether creative and hands-on school work is in decline and too much emphasis is being put on academic subjects.

In Anette Wolther's article, *Piger og drenge i uddannelser* (2005) she discusses conventional teaching methods with respect to boys. Boys are disciplined for being

active. They get tired of sitting still, especially in the early grades, because they are not able to sit still and focus in the typical classroom setting. Methods of drama seem to suit boys exceptionally well as can be seen in the classroom observations. Their need for movement is met and they enjoy performing and presenting their projects. As opposed to girls, boys are more likely to take the initiative and execute rather than spending time on discussion.

These conclusions are in harmony with international research (Bamford 2006; Baldwin 2004; Somers 1996; Podionzy 2000; Cruz 1995; Eisner 2002) on the usefulness of drama in various teaching situations. When teaching children with learning difficulties, immigrant children, and students with disciplinary problems, the use of drama has been found to be effective. The same can be seen in the answers from the participants in this study. The conclusions are useful for class teachers, special education teachers, school administrators and others working in the field of education. It is important that all parties draw attention to the research findings, take part in the discussion and promote drama in teaching.

It is clearly stated in the National Curricula that children have the right to be introduced to methods of drama in teaching and should have access to drama teaching either through an interdisciplinary approach or as a specific subject. However, the National Curricula do not guarantee the use of drama in teaching at all school levels. Therefore, there seems to be a need for a stronger directive in regard to drama teaching in schools.

The UNESCO Road Map for Arts Education aims to explore the role of Arts Education in meeting the need for creativity and cultural awareness in the 21st Century, and places emphasis on the strategies required to introduce or promote Arts Education in the learning environment. The assumption is that Arts Education is one of the best media for nurturing creativity (when the methods of teaching and learning support it), but the mechanisms for this are not well documented and the argument is therefore not well received by policy makers. Further research into this area is therefore needed. (UNESCO 2006/2007).

This lack of research on learning and teaching art and vocational subjects is limiting for the field of drama teaching. More research is needed on the use of drama in teaching. We, the authors of this article, felt it necessary to study the effect drama has on children's ability to learn in order to gather useful information for the field of education. At the same time, we decided to study the extent of drama in elementary and secondary schools to get a comprehensive overview. Research and development concerning drama in schools must be intensified. More emphasis is needed on in-service training in the use of drama in teaching along with support from school leaders and cooperation between teachers if drama in teaching is to become a recognized element of education. It is also important that drama be elevated in the National Curricula and receives an allotment of instruction hours in school schedules.

The last few decades have seen vast changes in children's environment, and schools must accommodate these changes. It is becoming more common that both parents

work outside the home and family compositions are becoming more complicated. Schools play a big part in children's upbringing and must adjust to this new role. Schools are now expected to teach students empathy and a sense of responsibility. Students must learn to take initiative, be independent and show tolerance. These aspects of learning can be taught through drama along with encountering and working with other people's problems to find solutions. Robinson (2009) points out those teachers tend to stick to the methods used by their own teachers. In other words, these role models are too strong. This explains why the arts, drama included, are not used to a greater extent in teaching. It is unfortunate that teachers shy away from using these methods since their use seems to fit well with our ever-changing society. They particularly benefit students with learning difficulties, immigrant children and boys with disciplinary problems (Wolthers 2005). If we are serious about school reform, we must enter the future instead of relying on the outdated methods of our own teachers.

Future society calls for students that are skilled in working with others, applying their knowledge, insight and creativity, and are critical users of information. To meet these expectations, schools must produce competent students who can take initiative and express themselves with confidence and creativity. They need to be open-minded and possess strong cooperation and communication skills. Empathy and the ability to resolve differences with others are key features of civil consciousness. Eisner (2002) maintains that drama can be used to develop these features of democratic societies.

It is our hope that the role of drama in education will be elevated in response to changes in our society and through supporting researches. All of us will gain from empathetic and inventive students who can approach tasks in diverse ways, offer a variety of solutions, and come to successful conclusions.

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