

Is Peter Slade's Drama Method Educational or Therapeutic ?

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ABSTRACT: There was a debate after the second world war about whether drama method was educational or whether it was therapeutic? (Peter Slade, 1958) This article aims to make a distinction between educational and therapeutic method, hence, to evaluate Peter Slade's drama method.

KEYWORDS: Drama-therapy, Educational Drama, Catharsis.

- Drama- therapy** Richard Courtney (1989: 13) defines Drama therapy as 'the use of dramatization for the purpose of students' learning'. It can, according to him, improve students' perception of life, their thought style, concentration, creativity, self-concept, problem identification and problem solving"._Drama therapy refers, therefore, to Drama designed for the achievement of catharsis, leading participants in the end to improve their social skills, to build their self esteem and their self-confidence
Courtney R. *Play, Drama and Thought: the Intellectual Background to Dramatic Education*. Canada: Simon and Pierre Publishing, 1989.
- Educational Drama** Educational drama has been part of the school curriculum. Although it reflects reality, it is most of the time fictional. When drama and theatre are allied to subjects inscribed into the school curriculum, they constitute educational drama.
- Catharsis** Catharsis is a state of emotional relaxation. 'Clients' can achieve catharsis through self-expression like crying, shouting, dancing...
Drama therapy might be of help to participants to express pent up feelings and to disclose negative cognitions, leading them in the end to feel better with life..Phil Jones (1996: 52) considers that Drama, mime, music and movement can help participants in Drama therapy to achieve catharsis too.
Jones P. *Drama As Therapy: Theatre As Living*. London: Routledge, 1996.

1 INTRODUCTION

Peter Slade was a post-second-world-British-drama-teacher. Based on the drama method he has established; he has eventually led intellectuals to reflect on the real functions of drama in general. The major problematic that arose was the following: Should drama be inserted into the school curriculum to serve educational or therapeutic purposes? Where drama is believed to be therapeutic, its main function lies in curing the emotionally damaged individual/learner. Should it be on the contrary educational, its main target is to help students to improve their knowledge of the world as well as their academic achievements. The educational aspect of drama is rather conceived by some intellectuals to be other than just alliance to subjects finding echo in the curriculum. Drama according to this trend should even be given its worth as an independent unit of the curriculum. Learners would consequently seek to assimilate theatre rules as such rather than think of drama just as a medium to improve major subjects in the curriculum like history and geography, maths.... They are in other words expected to target becoming play wrights and real dramatists.

It was common for people following the publication of Peter Slade's book *Child Drama* to wonder if the teaching of drama should focus on forming resilient students who are relegated the task of leading the British nation via the conquest of alien

territories in search for raw materials or on just helping British individuals to be subjected to therapy to overcome feeling emotionally damaged through creative self-expression. Indeed, Post-War British citizens were portrayed in books as emotionally stunted. 'The British strong and resilient and stiff upper lip attitude dating back to the colonial era which span from 1870 to 1945 weakened at that time. It gave way to emotion and to social equality education based on self-development through therapy.

Our objective consists, therefore, in probing into the nature of the drama-method devised by (Peter Slade, 1958) [16]. Has Peter Slade founded the ground work that could serve the need of educators to use drama therapy with those placed under their responsibility responsibly? Critics have highlighted the ability of (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] to structure a framework for conducting Drama lessons based on psychology. Vygotsky's zone of proximate development, and drama-therapy established by (Richard Courtney, 1989) [6], (Renné Emunah, 1994) [7], (Holmes & Marcia, 1991 [10], (Sue Jennings, 1973) [12], (Jones, 1996) [13], (Leveton, 1991) [14] and other drama-therapists are cases in points of psychology works that might have been in line with (Peter Slade's) 's [16] drama method. Thus, (Peter Slade, 1958) 's [16] approach to teaching drama will require that the following questions be posed and answered: Can the drama method used by (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] give any sustainable and long-lasting direction to teachers in their everyday dealings with the welfare of the British nation through education?

2 THE DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAMA METHOD DEvised BY (PETER SLADE, 1958)

Here are several extracts giving the reader an idea about Peter Slade's drama method. The first objective is to find out whether the so suggested method fits being incorporated into the school curriculum. The second be latent objective is to pave the way for a later discussion evolving around the choice (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] has made of children when he placed them in the heart of his drama method. Has Peter Slade patterned his method on the need of drama-therapists to help emotionally damaged individuals they called 'clients' to regress to childhood for the identification of faulty stages of development?

2.1 SPONTANEITY

The first extract from Peter Slade's *Child Drama* sheds light on how drama be used with children at school. Spontaneity is placed first in his drama method. If you probe into works published by the Sesame Group, you will realize that it is equally curative. Peter Slade (1958) [16] has once addressed this group saying: 'You use psychology to cure people. We use art. Art has the psychological effect'. So, we understand why spontaneity upon which psychologists rely to assess faulty stages of development is fundamental in Peter Slade's drama method. According to (Peter Slade, 1958, 23) [16] the drama teacher will have to remember that children at the age of five will continue to avoid theatre, stages and scripts. Therefore, the teacher will have to make the most of this phase where the propensity for showing off is not strong and where the tendency of children to play spontaneously is outstanding (Peter Slade, 1958, 23) [16].

According to (Peter Slade, 1958), Drama teachers will also have to stimulate five years old pupils to play spontaneously and creatively relying on sound. the drama teacher should take account of the fact that children take joy in sound and that joy is necessary for the best creation (Peter Slade, 1958, 23) [16]. "Thanks to the teacher, the child can be creative: adults will help him improvise movement, situation and language" (Peter Slade, 1958, 23) [16]. For the sake of motivating children to be creative, (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) manifests flexibility: "I do not criticize anything" (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16]. According to (Peter Slade, 1958, 33) [16]: "the teacher will be acting as a kindly and gentle guide" -"Encouragement and stimulation at this stage are needed (Peter Slade, 1958, 33) [16], so, the teacher has to respond to them." "If speech or play fails pupils, the teacher will learn to be sensitive about when to make a suggestion, what suggestion to make and when to make it" (Peter Slade, 1958, 33) [16]. Slade, 1958, 24) [16] wrote that he gave no directions but that he just altered the speed of the bells, slowing down when he judged it fit. Thus, the question to be posed here is the following: What lessons can a drama-therapist learn from this extract should he need to help 'client' regress to childhood to overcome the dreadful influence of faulty stages of development?

2.2 DANCING RITES

The second extract taken from *Child Drama* places the focus on dancing rites being part of art. This feature of drama being emphasized by (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] is reminiscent of primitive rites being used by the notorious drama therapist (Richard Courtney, 1968) [6]. Richard Courtney (1968) [6] advocated freedom from the constraints of civic life. He helped 'clients' achieve catharsis through taking solace in those primitive rites. 'Clients' wore masks like primitive men and instead of looking at the mirror, they had to concentrate on their bodies and on movement. They had to dance like dancing bears to enjoy life [6]. It is reported that (Richard Courtney, 1968) [6] has always dressed in green. So, we can understand why (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] paid heed to how children moved when they played. He wrote that they run in circles. He wrote that children were artists by their nature, a fact to which drama teachers should pay heed and encourage. Children were according to (Peter Slade, 1958)

[16] like dancing artists whenever they moved around. Usually, children entered the hall in circle-spirals, which are reminiscent of dancing rites, so commonly preponderant in primitive societies. In circle spirals, the children would at this age run with their hearts towards the centre (Peter Slade, 1958, 23) [16].

Peter Slade (1958: 23) [16] thinks that within this artistic ritual-based sphere, sound occupies a preponderant place. According to him, children love and they use various interesting noises that can be encouraged. Sound generated through instruments is a stimulus for learning, leading children to enter the hall with curiosity and pleasure (Peter Slade, 1958: 23) [16]. Sound must be a basic instrument for the stimulation of child-improvisation (Peter Slade, 1958: 23) [16]. The drama teacher should, according to (Peter Slade, 1958: 23) [16] start getting ready to work in the hall and to prepare the scene for the children before they get in. The availability of a whistle and of a bell can be stimulating. Bells are some of the items the teacher should dispose of and shake, should he mean to attract the attention of pupils (Peter Slade, 1958: 23) [16]. When the teacher blows a whistle, it results in shrieks of joy (Peter Slade, 1958: 23) [16].

According to Peter Slade, the drama teacher will have to operate using special tools during play. The teacher will, for instance, ask the pupils what the sound reminds them of (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16]. The answer they may provide for the question would be that the sound reminds them of Sleigh bells (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16]. The teacher would say: "Yes, look at the snow! Your sleigh would pull nicely. Are you ready? Pull!" (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16]. According to (Peter Slade, 1958) several children would begin to pull, all are creating, not just the little show offs picked out" (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16] (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16]. It is therefore a rule with children that sound provides joy and that they obey its dictates (Peter Slade, 1958, 24) [16]

2.3 DEVELOPMENTAL PSYCHOLOGY

The third extract taken from Peter Slade's *Child Drama* sets a correlation between drama and age. It somehow shows the impact that Jean Piaget (1896-1980) 's Developmental Psychology has exerted upon Peter Slade's drama method. According to Peter Slade (1958: 35) [16], the Drama teacher will have to continue with the same work done at the level of the infant school when he/she is placed in charge of children whose age vacillates between seven and nine. Spontaneous play based on sound for the sake of stimulating children and for enhancing their creativity should carry on being a hot point in the spot. However, at the age of seven-nine years old, pupils need to be given less guidance during the process of learning than before (Peter Slade, 1958, 35) [16]. The teacher, according to (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] is expected at this phase to avoid telling or showing children how to do things (Peter Slade, 1958, 35) [16]. Pupils and teacher would produce the play collectively and democratically (Peter Slade, 1958: 35) [16]. Peter Slade (1958) came with a tangible example relating to the process of production. According to him, pupils whose age varied between seven and nine should be allowed to suggest ideas for a story. Some pupils may suggest it be about a river, others may suggest it should be about a little boy, while the rest may suggest it be about a willow tree or a horrid mother (Peter Slade, 1958: 35) [16]. The scope of the intrusion of the teacher in the production process will be limited to the suggestion of a date when the play would be played (Peter Slade, 1958: 35) [16]. The teacher according to him should encourage the use of the projection technique like the "leafy humming of a willow tree (Peter Slade, 1958, 38) [16].

The following is an example of how a Drama lesson is conducted by Peter Slade:

-Self: Let us have some ideas

-A Child: A river

-Another: Little boy

-Another: Willow tree

-Another: Horrid mother

Self: Right, here is our story then! (Peter Slade, 1958, 35) [16].

Peter Slade suggests that stories produced by children whose age is comprised between seven and nine should be longer and more complicated than they were at the infant phase (Peter Slade, 1958, 35) [16]. Therefore, like Jean Piaget, (Peter Slade, 1958) believes that child-learning is cognitively pre-determined in similar ways for all children. Peter Slade (1958) [16] has also given the chance to -what Vygotsky- calls the zone of proximate development the chance to prosper under the effect of teacher intrusion. Henceforth, I mostly infer from the above extracts that (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] was influenced by psychologists. As it will be indicated, drama-therapists relied on spontaneity and on projection to help 'clients' achieve catharsis and self-development.

3 THE DISCUSSION OF THE ABOVE THREE EXTRACTS

3.1 WHY I PERSONALLY CONSIDER THE DRAMA METHOD ESTABLISHED BY PETER SLADE THERAPEUTIC?

As it was indicated earlier, following the examination of the subject matter of Peter Slade's drama-method, I reached the conclusion that it advocated the use of spontaneity with children at school. On this principle, the Spontaneous production of a script as suggested by (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] can present an occasion for any teacher to function as a Drama therapist. On this understanding, the teacher is supposed to rely on the spontaneous attitude of those placed under his/her responsibility to rework the faulty stages of development. This suggests that spontaneity can present an occasion for the teacher to assess and to probe into traumatic lived experiences in childhood. The reason is that a dialogic material produced through spontaneous expression can present a rich source of studying the past, the present and the future lives of those producing it. Based on such study, faulty stages of development can easily be identified and dramatically reworked, hence, this can eventually lead learners to become better achievers academically speaking. The Oxford English Dictionary defines spontaneity as a voluntary or unconstrained action or movement arising out of natural impulses. Therefore, spontaneous expression might reveal the true inner selves of adolescent students. In light of this definition, we can understand why (Peter Slade, 1968: 1) [16] believes that spontaneous expression can be released as an expression of a joyful or a sad experience. Spontaneous expression can echo in words, in dance, in music, and in everyday life situations. Therefore, based on how (Peter Slade, 1968: 1) [16] defines spontaneity, we infer that spontaneous expression is imbued with a sense of freedom from social constraints and conventions under whose guise the self might hide and be imbedded. Peter Slade (1968: 1) [16] believes that spontaneous expression can be released as an expression of a joyful or a sad experience. Peter Slade's (1968: 1) [16] belief is that spontaneous expression is a valuable source for liberation. Renée Emunah (1994: 35) [7] is a notable drama-therapist. She considers that spontaneous expression is the source of growth. The spontaneous person is able to act upon his innermost desires rather than conform to the expectations of others. Spolin (1983 cited in Renée Emunah, 2004: 35) [7] notes that spontaneity creates an explosion that liberates the individual from "handed down frames of reference as well as from memory chocked up with old facts".

Actually, we wonder if (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] encouraged children to produce drama spontaneously so as to furnish an environment convenient for collaboration. We take for granted the fact that the individual cannot collaborate with others unless he/feels at ease with those he/she has to collaborate with. According to a well know drama-therapist named Eva Leveton (1991: 2) [14], the role of the Drama therapist must be limited to enlivening the spontaneity of participants. He or she must be able to model the spontaneity she or he wishes to elicit and to find ways of showing the group what can be done. According to Eva Leveton (ibid, 1991: 6) [14], the Drama therapist might ask group members to portray their feelings as dramatically as possible, to yell if they want to (as children do so under the presence of Peter Slade). The Drama therapist might say for instance: "It looks like everybody felt pretty strongly about just what went on. Could we each finish the sentence "what really touched me was..." This statement is intended to generate as many responses as the adolescent participants in Drama can provide, the outcome of which can culminate in the production of a script based on real life situations This is reminiscent of how drama is produced by children when they are placed under the responsibility of Peter Slade, 1958) [16].

Peter Slade (1958) might have considered paving the way for the establishment of a harmonious environment through the release of spontaneity for many reasons. Every reason bears relevance to the production of drama. The production of spontaneous drama can benefit learners in many ways. The production of creative dramatics can contribute to building their self-confidence. The reason is that the production of spontaneous drama can lead participants to be positively bold and unafraid to suggest lines and ideas for a script. Eva Leveton (1991: ix) [14] is a dramatherapist. He believes that the Drama therapist is placed in charge of participants in Drama. He teaches them how to become spontaneous and unafraid during Drama therapy. This also implies that the role of the Drama therapist is less restraining. It is reduced and it is even minimized. Michael Fleming (2001: 49) [9] notes that to give the chance to spontaneous play to flourish among children and to personal growth to take roots, the role of the teacher during play should be minimized. The democratic principle is, therefore, an ever-present feature of spontaneous drama. It unfolds the happy truth that Drama therapy is indeed fit for use with learning children, hence, with individuals experiencing trauma no matter how old they might be. For this reason, Peter Slade (1952) [16] believes that in drama, there should be no writer, no script, no director, no stage manager, everyone does everything (David Hornbrook, 1998, 53) [11]. Teacher role is limited to providing guidance to pupils taking roles (David Hornbrook, 1998, 53) [11]. It is therefore apparent that (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] 's approach to drama method is primarily anchored in psychology. Moreover, it is grounded in psychodrama as the session-leader is supposed during a psychodrama session to establish a structure where all the clients/group members can be spontaneous in expressing their feelings during role-play (Eva Leveton, 1991: 2) [14].

All the above discussion leads me to wonder if the drama method established by (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] was convenient enough to be inserted into the school curriculum? There was an array of reasons why the drama method used by (Peter Slade,

1958) [16] was refuted by educationists in South-Wales schools after the Second World War. Thus, when (Peter Slade, 1958) and his pedagogical associate (Brian Way, 1958) tried to explicitly ally Drama to psychology, especially to drama-therapy, their endeavor as Drama teachers was directly challenged. The reason was that Drama therapy was perceived exceptionally in the context of emotional and mental health impairment rather than in educational settings. Sue Jennings (1987: 143) [12] relates that when she introduced her students to Drama therapy in 1948, the vicar told her "his voice quavering" that "NONE" in his parish were "MAD" and that "if they were, they would be locked away". He also said that "therapy" had no place in "his school" and that pupils were supposed to learn through "hard work" rather than "to play around". Sue Jennings (1987: 143) justifies the challenge she faced noting that anyone in therapy was called a lunatic because therapy used to be exclusively limited to individuals facing the challenge of mental health impairment and to those being locked up in 'asylums', far from public notice. Sue Jennings (1987: 143) [12] also explains that the use of the therapeutic method through Drama at school was met with resistance because it was just a "spontaneous" endeavor. Learners could not improve their achievements through it. Philip Taylor (2006: 52) [17], for instance, thought that (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] 's Drama method was deficient because it was based on "no end product in the mind that could be taught to students". David Hornbrook (1998, Vii) [11] wrote: 'It just seemed to me odd that a set of simple classroom techniques based upon spontaneous make-believe should be able to inspire such a fierce dedication among a small group of teachers'.

3.2 WHY I PERSONALLY BELIEVE THAT THE DRAMA METHOD ESTABLISHED BY PETER SLADE IS PURELY EDUCATIONAL?

However, the complexity of the world surrounding learners today poses a problem for educationists. It might force them to consider fusing education into a psychological mode, and it is to this prerequisite that the drama method established by Peter Slade seems to have responded. The literature on adolescents indicates that the young population of students might manifest the symptoms of emotional damage due to biological forces as well as due to the hidden negative forces of globalized culture. The literature on adolescents indicates that that school is the mostly frequent context of the explosion of negative emotions manifested by the sample of adolescent students. However, it seems to me that though youth justified their resort to aggression against teachers and management, saying that they experienced lower mood states because they got a bad grade on a test, because the teacher was a jerk, or because they were in trouble with school-authorities, the real motives lie beneath the surface of the world. Consequently, disruptive behaviour manifested by students might impact negatively on their academic achievement. According to well known drama-therapists, disruptive behaviour might urge teachers to control, to revenge and to punish those placed under their responsibility. Many teachers and indeed the whole educational system might take aggression at its face value and consequently they might resort to punishment as a means for redressing the behaviour of students. Furthermore, awarding learners low marks or placing them in lower ability groups could be some of the measures teachers may use to stimulate the motivation of those manifesting disruptive behaviour. Ironically enough, such measures would certainly undermine self-worth and self-confidence. They might prove to be dreadful at all levels.

Disruptive behaviour manifested by youth today leads me to believe that the alliance of psychology to drama is a prerequisite for successful education. For this reason, it seems obvious that (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] has devised a convenient drama method where psychology was allied to education. It is important to note that (Peter Slade, 1958) has recommended that drama should not be an empty shell on the curriculum but that it should rather be educational. Drama, according to Peter Slade, must rather be about something like racism, drugs, homelessness (David Hornbrook, 1998, 53) [11].

It is worth wondering, then, depending on this short definition why catharsis has gained gigantic proportions in the drama method established by Peter Slade. The answer is that records relate that (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] used to hate his teachers. It is also written that this fact was pivotal in the interest he manifested for drama, hence, for the establishment and the adherence to a club the members of which were pupils who performed 'street-drama' evolving around teachers, giving way to purgation from negative feelings. Richard Courtney (1968: 46) [5] explains why (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] thought as far as the nineteen thirties that the therapeutic method could be of benefit to students, noting that it was a medium resulting into "relaxation" and that 'dramatic play provided children with 'a great safety valve, and an emotional catharsis'. On this perspective, (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] used Drama with pupils at school, giving them the chance to produce it spontaneously so as to achieve and to prosper as individuals in the way it was produced by clients in clinics and in hospitals.

Furthermore, based on literary critics shedding more light on the drama method established by (Peter Slade, 1958) [16], it is apparent that therapy is moulded into education. Firstly, (Peter Slade, 1958) [16] 's drama is educational in the sense that it is anchored on themes that pupils elect like art, drugs, youth... (Peter Slade, 1958) [16]. Secondly, his drama method sought to tame behaviour. Moreover, the theme-elected trend was a common feature not only in drama-therapy but in education as well. The nature of the elected themes depended on whether drama is educational or whether it is therapeutic. Should drama be therapeutic, themes had to be relevant to emotions. Should it be educational, the elected themes had to be relevant to subjects for study, finding an echo in the school curriculum. However, Peter Slade was not a pioneer in the nature of the themes

the pupils placed under his responsibility had to make. Hurriet Finlay Johnson used the Dramatic method to illuminate facts about history and other subjects on the curriculum (Gavin Bolton, 1984, 12) [1]. Caldwell Cook (Gavin Bolton, 1984, 12) rather thought that the craftsman of the artist rather than a tangible body of knowledge should form the content of Drama (Gavin Bolton, 1984, 12) [1].

4 CONCLUSION

Was Peter Slade's (1958) [16] drama method exclusively therapeutic, hence unfit for being incorporated into the school curriculum? Almost all the ingredients of drama-therapy are identified in the drama method established by (Peter Slade, 1958) (1917) [16]. However, a closer study of this method would unveil the inevitable fact that the objective of Peter Slade was to nourish the propensity of school boys to achieve catharsis in order for them to develop the motivation to learn subjects inscribed into the curriculum. This is based on Peter Slade's deadly experience with school teachers when he was a boy. Records point out to the fact that Peter Slade hated his teachers because they unjustly prevented him from reaching his potential. Records relate that Peter Slade adhered to a club at a very young age to produce drama as an outlet for him to feel better with school life. According to some psychologists intrinsic motivation requires education be ground on the establishment of an atmosphere that is conducive to personal growth and creativity, free from emotional discomfort, stress, fear and replete with learning through fun and enjoyment rather than through stressful strategies. Here, the teacher acts like a Drama therapist in the sense that he or she does not distance himself or herself from students, nor does he frustrate them or forbid them from experimenting with joy. Therefore, as long as 'theme' was not discarded from the drama therapeutic method established by Peter Slade, it would be unjust to evaluate it negatively. On these grounds, It would also be vital to draw in a forthcoming theoretical research on the role that (Peter Slade, 1958) (16) played in attracting the attention of future drama teachers in particular to teacher role and to what ought to be inscribed into the curriculum. Furthermore, Peter Slade's child drama has proved he is a real genius in matters relevant to psychology. All the symbols he uses in the theory he has established are very complex and not easy to comprehend. It is a matter of Freudian and Jung psychology fused in Vygotsky's and drama therapy theories. Therefore, it would be false not to give the chance to (Peter slade) 's [16] drama method to be fully apprehended as long as it would doubly serve educationists. The reason is that it is archetypal because it places children in the centre of thought.

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