

# THE EFFECT OF DRAMA ON TEENAGERS' VALUE ORIENTATION

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## Abstract

The primary aim of the present project and my PhD research is the establishment of a safe, value-based school environment between teacher and student, and between student and student for quality education through a value-giving dramapedagogy. How does drama and theatre influence the teenagers' value orientation in the educational process? The topic of my dramapedagogical action research is the problem of value-giving at school. More precisely I would like to create a new value-giving drama project. In my opinion dramapedagogy is primarily a complex pedagogical and artistic method. Drama is an active, creative, productive learning process; it stimulates and provokes thinking through a story and practices.

## Research

The nine-month research started in September, 2007. It involves two Hungarian secondary school classes with totally different socio-cultural backgrounds, and the contextualised form of drama and theatre education appears in their learning process. The research focuses on possible changes in teenagers' value orientation, and their attitudes due to the effects of drama. The results of the investigation so far prove that the success and effectiveness of a drama project depend on the professional training, the change in the views and attitudes of teachers, and the application of pedagogical methods according to specialised educational needs. This experiment shows a teaching-learning process which improves students both emotionally and intellectually.

**Basic hypothesis: Drama and theatre applied in the educational process helps teenagers in value orientation and value acquisition.**

## City – the frame of the action research (WORKSHOP-TIME: 9X135 MINUTES)

The frame of the drama project was a dramatised series of scenes based on Alessandro Baricco's novel, City. The teenagers get involved in the life story of Gould, the main character of the book, who is a very problematic teenage genius. Firstly, after a short warm-up the actor-drama teachers perform some scenes from the story. Secondly, the students carry on by taking the story further under the supervision of the drama teachers. Thirdly, we collect reflections on connections between the contextualised and dramatised problems of Gould and the students' own real life situations. During the process we analyse the possibilities of how to fight against loneliness and extreme egoism through the acceptance of the other person and cultural diversity.

## School-1: Boronkay Secondary School in Vac

"As to their school results, most of them are good and some are excellent, which is due to the fact that they are clever and intelligent as well as hard-working and ambitious. They are mainly interested in arts subjects like literature, history and foreign languages, but some of them would like to become physicians, architects or economists. Some students have exceptional talents in fields like dancing, acting or sports. The family backgrounds are varied. Extreme views are not typical, and genuine values like honesty, loyalty, friendship etc are considered basic." (Form Mistress)

## School-2: 'Green Rooster' Secondary School in Budapest

"The students in my class are different in all ways. Some are creative, some are extreme, some are timid, some are talkative, some learnt the importance of learning, most still haven't, but all of them are lovable in different ways and for different reasons. They all come with a sad story... of a broken family, of an addiction, of many disappointments... they are drop outs.. they haven't only lost their schools, but their faith in themselves as well... I think we are here to give it back to them, and to teach them that they have to fight for a better life, but it's worthy." (Form Mistress)

## Main Topics (Based on Baricco's novel 'City')

"Mamy Jane"  
How to make friends

"Macky" On consumers' society,  
its culture and the victims of manipulation

"Chinese Chopsticks"  
Violence within the family

"The Reporter asks"  
On the world of the media

"Funny improvs?" On the social  
gap between the rich and the poor

"Are we a little bit crazy?"  
Norms, normality and abnormality

"Are you just watching or joining in?"  
How to make my own luck?

Alessandro Baricco, City. And all that is behind it.  
(End of project. Performing all scenes  
of the TIE project with students.)

## Keywords

Friendship  
Confidence  
Responsibility  
Peer pressure  
Trends and fashion  
Consumers' society  
Arguments for truth  
Supportive attitude  
Family peace  
Victims / Aggressors  
Oppressed of a situation  
Power of the media  
Influence  
Talent  
Social backgrounds  
Cultural backgrounds  
Power of money and status or rank  
Norms  
Normality  
Abnormality  
Responsibility for each other  
Freedom  
Generation gap  
Self-management  
Career  
World of work  
Jobs  
Our future  
Summary  
Feedbacks  
Reflections

## Further hypotheses

The value-giving pedagogy of drama and theatre results in positive changes in the educational process and students' attitudes. These are the following:

1. It helps in the value acquisition process.
2. It makes the value orientation functions of school more effective.
3. It improves social communication.
4. With the pedagogically relevant methods of the contextualised classroom drama, it can enrich further the students' indirect experiences during the learning process so that their perspectives widen.
5. The value orientation indicators of the observed groups develop during the nine-month period of the action research. They show significant changes in themselves as well as compared to the control group.

## The research is focused by following questions

- What does value acquisition mean for teenagers?
- What does value orientation mean for teachers of teenagers?
- Is there a value crisis in the value systems of Hungarian teenagers today?
- How does one particular theater in education model project influence the value orientation attitudes of teenagers?
- Due to the affect of the drama project, will the pre-observed advantages or disadvantages between the two groups remain or will it disappear by the end of the action research?

## What are the possibilities for a dramateacher?

- We do not wish to force 'correct' answers to our questions.
- We use 'learning through actions' in our workshops.
- The drama teacher has the opportunity to direct the creative process of the group and he or she can also direct attention towards the more important problems by remarks.
- The drama here must have a role in enhancing the peers' helpful attitude.
- Drama can be an effective and powerful tool if it is applied to ask questions about the quality of relationships at the school.

**Size of the Sample** The examined groups and control groups consist of 20-30 teenagers in secondary school classes.

**Target Group** Two secondary school classes of the same age group but with different social backgrounds, different cognitive competences and different socialization from two different cities (Budapest and Vac).

**Measuring** Questionnaires that can be analysed statistically, and other tests.



## Students' feedbacks

THESE ARE WORD BY WORD QUOTATIONS FROM THE STUDENTS' FEEDBACKS IN ENGLISH. I HAVE NOT CORRECTED OR MODIFIED ANYTHING IN THEM.

"First of all, we discuss/discussed topics that are present in our lives but can not be approached during any other lesson – by this I mean moral issues and things concerning our society."  
"Having to play along means we have to open up more to our friends which also helps our personal relationships."  
"It was really interesting to discover that there are many things we consciously or unconsciously do while talking to others that tell many things about our character and personality."  
"We discovered that different nations, groups act in different ways and sometimes you don't have to take offense because of their actions (which may mean something important to them and at the same time be offensive to others)."  
"It was a game, right, but we had to trust each other and rely on each other to accomplish it. It made our connection stronger, we're better as one."  
"It's all for us, not against us. We can only learn about each other and spend precious time together. If I had a chance, I'd certainly make some space in students' busy schedule to fit in a class like ours." (Dóri, 18)

"...this PROJECT MADE US work and think together and listen to everybody!  
I really enjoyed working together with those classmates of mine whom I didn't really know and listen their way of thinking!" (Barbi, 18)

"...sometimes students need to stop, peer inside themselves and think about how they could, how they should they live in the big World."  
"Along with the games we play, it's good to your creativity, makes you feel more self-confident in manifestation, and, as I mentioned, makes you think about what you actually live in."  
"On the lesson we tried to look into an insane boy's head by the help of the play and also by creative games, and I was amazed how rich my classmates' fantasy and soul is."  
"On the lesson we tried to look into an insane boy's head by the help of the play and also by creative games, and I was amazed how rich my classmates' fantasy and soul is. To answer the third question as well, I think this lesson was the one, that changed my relationship towards my classmates, and – although of course I respected them before as well- now I look up to them even more."  
"This lesson really shocked me. That lesson even made me cry, and I still cannot tell why..." (Anna, 18)

"It gives you the chance to express or even to try out yourself and to tell your opinions, ideas and thoughts about different kinds of issues."  
"Cooperation is essential during the meetings, so I believe that the project contributes to making closer relationships between students." (Berni, 18)

"It showed us a new aspect of life, although sometimes I found it rather tiring and occasionally even upsetting."  
"What I personally liked about this programme is that we could use our creativity in unusual topics and that we had to cooperate with each other. For me it was really important, because I tend to believe that my ideas are the best, and I refuse to accept other people's opinion." (Zsuzsi, 18)

"We're more comfortable acting and voicing our opinions, we know we don't have to be afraid that someone will laugh at our remarks or thoughts."  
"These are topics we don't usually discuss during breaks and it was interesting to hear others' opinion about these topics. We may have discovered things about classmates we wouldn't have found out otherwise." (Dóra, 18)



## Methods of the Research

- Qualitative methodological procedures;
- structured, semi-structured, unstructured interviews
  - interviews within a focus group
  - comparative and trend examinations
  - document analysis
  - quantitative and qualitative analysis (CA)
  - recorded audio-visual material (video recording of the workshops)

## Conclusions

Conclusions are yet to come. This poster shows the present status of the research. This empirical study can only present how effective the drama project is two months before the end of a nine-month project. The project is based on monthly events and at the moment we only have the students' feed-back as an evaluation. Thus the results will be clear for us when the empirical data has been analyzed. The analysing phase of the research begins in July 2008 by mixed methods of analysis. What the changes are in the attitude regarding value-orientation of young people due to the effects of our drama project, i.e. whether our hypothesis is proved or not will become clear as soon as the collected and hereby partly presented data have been analysed.