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TRANSFORMATIVE DRAMA AS A TOOL OF CULTURAL AND SOCIAL ACTIVITIES IN THE EDUCATIONAL PROCESS. UNIVERSAL STRUCTURE, CULTURAL CONTENT

ABSTRACT: According to theater anthropologists, the world history of theater dates back more than thousand years before. No less time has art been seen as a tool of education. Hunting pantomime was used by our ancestors for hunting, creating the equivalent of reality and teaching young men the art of hunting. Ancient Greek philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle, stressed the role of art in education. Furthermore, medieval church teachers appealed to the tradition of art education. It was already in the prehistoric times, followed by ancient and medieval period when the effectiveness of cultural activity in working methods in care centers was indicated and argued. There is still a considerable amount of reports, descriptions, case studies, research papers being developed which emphasize educational potential of art. With such a wide variety, there is no need to create new ones. The question that arises is whether this education holds any cultural value. This article is an attempt to answer the question of whether drama therapy successfully used in education is culturally intertwined.

KEYWORDS: transformative teaching, transformative drama, cultural value of education/drama, the educational process, cultural and social activities

INTRODUCTION

As Carmel Cefai and Paul Cooper wrote: „There is a growing number of children who live in a world marked by family break-ups, widespread fear of violence, rampant competition, excessive consumerism, increasing social inequality and decline in social mobility. Children and young people are being increasingly exposed to manipulation through the mass media

and stressed by competition in school” (Cefai, Cooper, 2011, p. 65). They also underline that these factors are associated with, and compounded by, emotional distress in the personal lives of many children. They also add that „peer pressure, bullying, relationship difficulties, anxiety and depression are some of the problems children are likely to experience in such context. This helps to explain the apparently paradoxical fact that in already affluent nations such as in Poland, Malta, and Turkey with „increasing national prosperity and material wellbeing is negatively correlated with both adults’ and children’s emotional and social well-being” (p. 65). Thus, there is a need for a creative art therapy as an effective educational tool in the classroom and the use of a special, thought-provoking methods designed to stimulate and sustain an experience of dynamic imagery.

There is an increasing interest in the use of art-based education and therapy to improve psychological (Kościelska, 2000) health and well-being of the pupils’ population. In recent years, there has been growing interest in the contribution of the arts towards the health of communities and individuals, together with a growing interest in the value of the arts in addressing significant social issues (Clift, Camic, Chapman, Clayton, Daykin, Eades, Parkinson, Secker, Stickley, White, 2009; Clift, 2006; Clift, Hancox, 2006). Still furthered, research must be conducted to prove the effectiveness of active methods, referring to art therapy, which enable students to improve and build relationships and social inclusion, raising their self-esteem and well-being. Thus, there is a need to conduct robust studies to provide evidence of the importance for using art, as a creative way of teaching on the basis of pedagogical transformative drama or drama at all. There is a broad range of resource materials that suggests that artistic activities improve the lives of pupils, enhancing health, quality of life and social function, for example, through gardening, music and dance (Batt-Rawden, Tellnes, 2005; Greaves, Farbus, 2006; Kilroy, Garner, Parkinson, Kagan, Senior, 2007). Health benefits have also been evidenced through the use of music and singing (Skingley, Vella-Burrows, 2010). More specifically, theatre performance has been used to stimulate discussion concerning problems depicted by adults and possible solutions suggested (Palmar, Nascimento, 2002). Yet, despite research interest in the value of arts for psychological health, a range of retrospective and prospective studies have gathered evidence capturing the perceived benefits of art programs. For example, through the use of dance among patients with chronic heart failures (Belardinelli, Lacialprice, Ventrella, Volpe, Faccenda, 2008) to examine the social and psychological wellbeing of children with

communication difficulties (Barnes 2013); through art to improve young people's wellbeing using a social capital approach (Hampshire, Matthijsse, 2010); in art work studied among patients on renal dialysis (Rowe, Jones, Seeger, Greaves, Holman, Turner, 2011), followed by people who use mental health services (Stacey, Stickley, 2010) as well as use of drama to engage children physically, emotionally and intellectually with a subject of tolerance and migration, as well as raise consciousness of cultural and social diversity. There is a lot of evidence showing that participation in the arts is just as valuable a human right as equal education opportunities, and that art brings possibilities to eliminate attitudinal barriers within the sphere of the art. It is a positive step towards breaking down discrimination. There is an advancement of the arts, including movement, visual arts, music, drama, storytelling and creative writing in developing, maintaining and expanding the creative, expressive, aesthetic, emotional, cognitive, physical, social and life skills of all people, including those with special needs.

Research shows that art projects, teaching, incorporating the elements of art therapy stimulate involvement of students, and allow them to express emotions, increase enthusiasm towards learning among the students and promotes staying at school. However, there is no word about using drama (tragedy) in daily teaching- especially pedagogical transformative drama. There is still not enough information about using drama (mean tragedy) in schools. The aim of the text is to focus on the project where transformative drama technique was used. It illustrates that drama used as cultural and social activities can be successfully implemented in educational process, considering that it possesses a universal form, and it contains cultural content.

TRANSFORMATIVE DRAMA

Working with students using transformative drama is aimed at solving everyday problems faced by students, enable them to realize the causes and consequences of action and above all, to understand themselves and their needs, define their identity and their other social roles. In some cases, it allow for a cathartic experience. It also makes students eager to focus on a given issue. During the course students work on transformative drama. This work may consist of analyzing and interpreting, working on the text, or may involve modifying the end, correcting parts of the existing drama, but also, (and perhaps above all), writing one's own dramatic texts. These

activities are primarily focused on creativity, imagination and express themselves through the analysis or writing of texts. They allow an individual to discover each other, telling their history expressed metaphorically, presenting oneself as a fictional character, developing communication skills, expressing thoughts and emotions. It appeals strongly to the storytelling. Students can experience their stories - stories that concern them or are narrated by them. The role of the teacher comes here to coordinate discussions, ask questions, and encourage students to work independently. According to David K. Carlson and Kent W. Becker (2004) we call this work model as a *creativity in counselling*. It must be stressed that although creativity in education is seen as a very effective method of knowledge transfer, learning competencies of both soft and hard, important in the process of educational and welfare research still does not belong to the mainstream. And even though the link between academia and creativity is seen as important in the formation of educators interested in creativity in counselling, there is still a gap in research and relationships between theorists and practitioners (Smith, 2011).

As noted by Debbie W. Newsome, Donna A. Henderson and Laura J. Veach (2005, p. 145) „expressive arts activities also can serve to increase group understanding and cohesion. The authors provide a rationale for using expressive arts in supervision, describe activities they have implemented, and share supervisees’ responses”. The authors of the text entitled *When lightning strikes: Reexamining creativity in psychotherapy*, research conducted in 2002 by Lorna L. Hecker and Jeffrey A. Kottler, who emphasize that creativity is the main component of treatment, and assume that there are three components of creativity in counselling: the people, the process and the product. And the process is defined as “way in which change and growth occurs, often involving novel, original or innovative methods” (Carson, Becker, 2004, p. 111). They also highlight that creativity is an activity, not a quality- hence they define it as a process (Hecker, Kottler 2002).

Among creative methods David S. Shepard (2002) mentions the technique of a scenario, which in his view, involves the creation of a reliable character and allows students to conscript into different roles. By writing a dramatic text, students can test consequences of different choices. Writing releases their creativity, develops their social skills, vocabulary and teaches empathy. Constructing the *dramatis personae* it represent different personalities, creates various identities and characters. As noted by Peter Slade (1995) in his book *Child Play: Its Importance for Human Development* dramatic stories

for children are an important element in developing their personality and identity. Dramatic scenes - Slade writes about the form of drama, but the results of his research can also be successfully applied to drama as a whole, it allows students to express themselves and open up to the world. It is an engaging method, referring to imagination, creativity, but also conscious and unconscious memory of students. What is important is that topics can be addressed to, by working with *transformative drama* - universal values, such as good and evil, youth and old age, health and illness, insight into ourselves, but also grasp individual and current problems. The essence of drama is usually elected by the whole group using brainstorming methods. It is sometimes signaled by the teacher when there is a significant need to talk on a specific subject and solve a specific problem. What is important is that these stories are closely related to the cultural circle of their creators, with their own tradition, religion, verbal and oral administrations, the civilizational development. Dreams and desires of children are dependent on culture. It is the culture which defines morality and social norms, the authors refer to in their texts.

Through involvement in the creative process, the building of the form, character, plot development of the analytical process, behavioral assessment of *dramatis personae* students learn critical thinking, imagination, understanding of difficult issues, valuation. Discovering the causes and consequences of choices his characters learn to understand other people's feelings, relationships, putting oneself in a situation of other, finding other points of view without criticizing otherness. Each time the students answer the question: What would happen if? Finding themselves in a new situation and expanding their horizon of observation and thinking. This all allows them to discover the difference, to change the existing patterns of perception of reality and understanding of the constantly changing world. And it is this change that seems to be the most important point of a dramatized history. The change, the climax, the hero of the dynamic are all implemented into all these stories. Thus, the transformation becomes the subject and purpose.

The name was created several years ago after consultation with Professor Erika Fischer-Lichte in Berlin. The original Polish name - drama therapy - stereotypically been rejected in schools by many teachers and students. Everyone thought that he does not require therapy. After discussion with Fischer-Lichte, discussing the advisability of drama, the name *transformative drama* was developed. However, once again its translation has become problematic, if only because that in post-socialist cultures, transformation

raises political connotations. Thus, in the English-language publications the name of *transformative drama* is used, and in Polish-speaking the formulation of *therapeutic drama* remained.

The adjective *transformative* for theorists of art therapy is associated with *developmental transformations* of David Read Johnson. The essence of *Developmental Transformations* is the transformation existing within meetings. Although it is true that Johnson focuses on meeting, but what is important from the point of these considerations, it is the definition of transformation, which is close to the approach of Jerzy Grotowski. For the director, transformation is a revolution, which takes place through action, that is, the search for personal and social change in itself. Johnson believes in the never-ending transformation and change of feelings, thoughts and ideas, and this is precisely this trend he makes references to. He writes: "A human being as a consciousness is always transforming, as the stream of inner life shifts, ebbs and flows" (Johnson, 1991, p. 285). The creative process is for him the process of differentiation and integration, to experience the freedom and limitations of what is possible for man. The aim of a transformation is the „depth of experience through catharsis of suppressed feeling and encouragement to live out previously disallowed aspects of life. Instead of rigidity in self-definition, the goal is to increase the person's flexibility in adapting to new feeling and situations, achieved by strengthening the capacity of self-observations, questioning and tolerating ambiguity. (...) The goal is to help (...) achieve acceptance of their history and current circumstances and to find forgiveness for their limitations and those of others" (Johnson, 1991, p. 287). For Johnson, transformation understood in this way can be achieved through „stream of consciousness writing" (p. 288), the verbalization of feelings, thoughts, stereotypes, canons, truths and errors, which can provide access to "I". Stages of aforementioned transformation are, inter alia, confrontation, interpretation, remembering and integration.

Transformative drama also assumes the above steps. Its transformational potential is based on the student's involvement in the process of writing, interpreting, analyzing. These activities treated as a process leading to socialization, allow the exploration of identity of pupils, solving problems in a calm way, by trial and error, with distance. Because in the end, students examine the choices and behaviors of *dramatis personae* and not their own. The dramatized tale allows for the transfer of real stories into the world of literature, hiding behind the characters of a dramatic tale (McCaslin, 2006). As writes Nellie McCaslin in her book *Creative Drama*

in the Classroom and Beyond: „Characters and their relationships to other characters are analyzed for insights into motivation for their action. Students are encouraged to express their own ideas and interpretations and to offer suggestions to the group” (p. 259). In another place McCaslin quotes a long passage of her earlier work *Children and Drama*, which is worth quoting here, because it explains the specifics of working with drama and tragedy. „The most important task in drama-in-education is the creation of a shared dramatic context, a fictional world, in which it is possible to explore and examine ideas, issues, relationships, and content areas. Like theatre, drama is a paradoxical activity. It is both real and not real at the same time. Both drama and theatre require an active engagement with the make-believe, a willingness to be caught up in and accept the rules of the imaginary world which is created on stage or in the classroom. (...) A central concept in my work is role-play. In both theatre and drama the participants adopt roles. They pretend to become what they are not. By taking on roles they transcend their everyday selves and get a glimpse of their own potential. Roles can be assumed, modified, elaborated, refined, and relinquished. But the result is not merely that the participants’ role repertoire is expanded. By exploring the different perspectives offered by fictional roles, students may come to recognize, and, if necessary, modify their habitual orientation to the world. (...) We are trying to release students into finding their own questions” (p. 264). Every time a transformative drama is used intentionally by a teacher as a cultural and social activity conducive to achieving the objectives of care and education. And at the same time, it enables the teacher insight into the psyche of the students, exposes the child or youth’s logic thinking.

The pedagogical transformative drama (also known as the pedagogical therapeutic drama) is based on the therapeutic creation of the subjective identity of the audience, or reader. Active, as well as passive, it can be applied during drama writing, when reading, and when using pedagogical transformative drama as a screenplay during drama workshops. Pedagogical transformative drama can be used preventatively as well, for example in schools where increase of violence or sexual problems can be averted. Pedagogical transformative drama is closely linked with the issue of identity and can be helpful in overcoming an identity crisis. This new category of pedagogical transformative or therapeutic drama – which might perhaps also be known as tragedy – deals with personal development and identity. It presents real, concrete problems. Its aim is to establish a dialog with readers and to encourage them in the process of interpreting the text. To

do this, it presents observations and experiences and provokes readers to express their opinions and emotions stimulated by the drama, as well as to discuss the attitudes and choices of *dramatis personae*. Readers of the transformative drama can be those in need of pedagogical and psychological support in the field of social attitude, self-realization, or the achievement of emotional maturity and self-knowledge. The way a drama is received by its readers is important. Active reading and internal commitment in the process of reading and then using the text should lead to the start of the transformative process. The process of transformation is defined by Erika Fischer-Lichte, a German professor of theatre studies, as the moment when art is on the same level as reality, leading to the experience of threshold. The notion of threshold relates to an experience of crisis which seems to be a climax, a moment when transformation becomes possible. In *The Transformative Power of Performance: a New Aesthetics* (2004), she presents the idea of transformation as a way of constructing or reconstructing identity. The process of reading is similar to the phase of threshold/transformation in the three levels of ritual of transition described by Victor Turner, a British cultural anthropologist. Turner himself was influenced by the folklorist, Arnold Van Gennep, who defined three stages of rites of passage: separation; threshold; and reaggregation. In interpreting Turner, Fischer-Lichte underlines the combination of the esthetic experience and reality which leads to the experience of threshold. In the process of reading, analyzing and interpreting the text (and the life described there) the reader moves to the liminal phase – an in-between state – between the old life and the new. Active analysis leads to transformation; art becomes life and life changes places with art. The aim of transformative drama is to prevent or treat psychological disturbances by rationalizing or stimulating the process of constructing a subjective personality and identity. It also sets in motion activities to recognize and try to strengthen self-acceptance, along with the process of self-definition. It is a habilitation practice and embodied pedagogy of work. This kind of drama can enhance self-esteem, well-being and social inclusion.

The transformative drama is in fact a special kind of clearly delineated model of literary, which is built on theatrical genres of rite and drama (especially classical and ancient drama). The form of the drama is constructed not on the basis of certain delineated *ad hoc* rules, but it is based on models that are reproduced not only allowing building therapeutic content, to teach, but also to think and maintain dialog. Its construction in every detail

has to be built in subordination to a practical purpose. And the aim has to be provided in a suggestive way, in order to change the psychical and psychological reactions of the author/reader. The drama requires lightness, freedom and power of expression, brevity, references to the mundane, which make it possible to reflect the individuality of the author of the problem. The content of the transformative drama has to be tailored to the reader in order to reflect the intellectual property and the emotional and volitional world of the reader.

MALTA CASE

In Malta, pilot research is conducted in B'Kara – the biggest school in Malta – in a normal class and in a Nurture Group. In the Maltese context, therefore, nurture groups are constructed as an early intervention strategy located within a multilevel framework, contributing both to the prevention and early intervention, as well as strengthening of respective schools' capacity to accommodate the needs of pupils.

The aim of the project was to prevent violence, teaching them to provide each other assistance and sharing, and the building of self-esteem. During six weeks, the students once a week partook in a 45 minute classes in drama, which were conducted by an actress, singer and teacher of initial education, Cristabelle Curmi. For the first three classes, students read drama with the teacher. The first dramas are adaptations of therapeutic story of Robert Fisher. His tales, similar to pedagogical drama therapy, can be included in the department of psychology developed by American psychologist Martin Seligman (1991; 1996; 2002) the so-called positive psychology, or the psychology which aims to build the well-being of the individual. Many theorists, including Fisher and Jonathan Barnes, suggests that psychology is based on the teaching of positive emotions, which incorporates creativity. As Barnes notes in the article *You could see it on their faces* (Barnes, 2005), creativity and activity provoke positive thinking. And it is creativity and joy that spur Fisher's stories. In addition, they teach kids to think, interpret and analyze providing them with practice. For this purpose, as Fisher notes in the introduction to one of the volumes of short stories, one should reflect the everyday world of children and in the form of people, animals, robots or magical creatures to talk about their dreams, needs, values, etc. Telling it in such a way that the child must have had a narrative story to his or

her reality. Thus, the story must be finished so as to constitute a coherent whole. What is important is it must be a contribution to the dialogue between students and the teacher and between children. This method Fisher calls the *community of enquire*, which allows students, by asking questions and conducting discussions, to become critical and creative reader. In the work *Talking to Think* Fisher (2006) describes this method also a method of philosophical discussion. And stresses that this method of interaction, which allows the skillful combination of reading with their own experience, to identify the most important themes and ideas and hidden meanings of a read history and evaluation, differentiating opinions and evidence and to address critical attitude. He further notes that the method of philosophical discussion expands and strengthens what Daniel Goleman calls emotional intelligence. Goleman identifies this intelligence with self-awareness, which for him “means paying attention to the emotions. In this state of self-reflexive awareness, the mind observes and investigates experience it self, including the emotions” And he further notes that “the self-consciousness seems to require stimulation of the cerebral cortex, particularly the areas of language, which they carry on discovering and naming excited in us emotions. Self-awareness is not attention you gain control over emotions, forcing her to exaggerate what we perceive and respond to these exaggerated perceptions. Rather, it is a neutral state which gives the possibility of self in moments when we are torn by strong emotions” (Goleman, 1997, p. 49). It is therefore important for Fisher to arouse positive emotions and reflection in a reader. Fisher emphasizes the fact that the intelligence includes those categories that are so important in his stories, and which are stimulated by dialogism, communication, questionability, and philosophical nature of his texts. It is about self-awareness, and about knowing what are realistic skill of an individual; self-regulation and thus control of one’s own emotions; an overload, or the motivational stimulus consisting of perseverance in the face of setbacks; empathy and social skills, namely the ability to read social situations through persuasion and negotiation.

In the context of the dialogue-oriented nature of these texts, it can be inferred that drama has a certain advantage over prose text, which stems from its genre structure. The starting point of drama and its advantage, to paraphrase Andrzej Stoff, “is the aesthetic concretization of the work. (...) As part of concretization, situational values can take shape[e, which then (..) will find their reflection and develop their artistic establishment” (Stoff, 1992, p. 123). Therefore, drama by itself favors dialogical communication of

the text. It is also worth mentioning drama's structure, which promotes an emotional reaction to literary events. Stoff addresses this issue between the lines, writing: "the climax of the process is especially emotionally saturated, the moment in which the already constituted and experienced value now radiates on a life situation making sense of it, explaining it, restructuring it" (p. 133). Children therefore have a much easier time identifying with the *dramatis personae*, which presents a certain point of view, a different perspective regarding other characters than the narrator. It is also easier to associate with a hero who we can become, interpreting his problems by playing them. Drama used in the B'Kara school in Malta, which became the basis of Fisher's texts talk about violence and its deterrence (drama about a girl who was teased by her schoolmates), or about sharing (exemplified by a story about cats, who did not want to share a pancake insidiously eaten by the monkey). In addition, the last text written by Agnieszka Kusza, a Polish playwright who works every day with young children, addresses self-esteem (as illustrated by a story about a girl who had two left hands, and who did not believe she could play the piano) .

According to the initial aims of the project, Polish and Maltese children were to simultaneously focus on Agnieszka Kusza's (2013) drama entitled *Adele two left hands*. Kusza, a theater instructor, Polish teacher and playwright, writes her dramas for children. They are intended for the youngest school age children. Its subject matter deals with the problems most always facing children are treated seriously, but are illustrated in a form of a fairy-tale. These texts can be treated as a dramatized fairy tale. Not only are they possess an educational component, they are also therapeutic - as part of therapy through drama and fairy-tale therapy - allowing each child to become aware of the causes and consequences of his or her actions, as well as the actions of other characters, thereby enhancing a child's self-esteem and their ability to embrace difficult situations. Drama-fairytales talk about dreams that can have positive or negative effects; about choices and the ability to resist peer pressure by for example, opposing a group in order to do good. Moreover, drama-fairytales encourage a child to overcome sorrow and evil through simple skills – often trivialized and referred to as childish - or about difficult journeys which a person sometimes must conquer in order to achieve happiness. Although the characters within the fairy-tale are disguised, their suggestions are nonetheless real and address serious problems - even issues which can even be difficult for adults. A mouse in such a fairy-tale may tell of fears caused by her small size; a dragon may

talk about the fact that we should not underestimate those smaller and seemingly weaker than us, who in turn can be innovative and helpful.

Agnieszka Kusza, writing a fairy tale adjusts her subject matter and level of difficulty to a group of kids with whom she works. Her work could usefully be called a work in progress. Moreover, her writing is likened to the work of playwrights who focus their texts for an adult audience, for example the work of a German playwright John Neumann. Kusza treats her minor actors very seriously. At a meeting with young actors she comes with a dramatic exercise which undergoes a transformation as a result of working with a particular group of children. Therefore, the playwright talks about her work with a tailoring metaphor. Thus, the kids become co-authors of the dramatic stories of knights, dragons, stars, winds, etc. The idea for the dramatic fable must be tailored to specific groups of children - their acting abilities. Kusza cared that each actor had a specific task suited to his personality and creative potential. Each task makes each child more than just an amateur actor or a simple extras. Every child in fact is placed in a specific role to which he or she must relate to. In addition, a fairy tale corresponds to all characters and actors, and it must be clear and easily understood, and therefore, should be adapted also to the intellectual capabilities of a group and individual reader-theater's experiences of children.

Kusza's drama entitled *Adela two left hands* is about a girl, who cannot retain anything without letting objects fall from her hands, and who seems to always break things because "she had a hole in her hands." She was very clumsy and thus ridiculed by her classmates. Children laughed at her and mocked her dreams, because they knew that Adela attends music school and learns to play the piano. They did not believe in her talent, and she was always teased that she might break the piano. The girl was obviously very hurt by such comments. She began to visit her Madame, whose task was to convince her that she in fact is exceptional and to teach her to appreciate this uniqueness. She wanted her to believe in herself and to be loved. She took Adela to a gala dinner hosted by a wind named Antonio. There, Adela gave a concert playing an enchanted, green piano. Throughout the evening she also managed to help others. She helped a deer made it possible to find his wife because his voice was hoarse and could not call her name. Adele's music helped her find a way. She also composed music for Neptune so that sirens could dance during the feast of the ocean. The previous composition, which he received from a snail turned out to be dismal and dull. Adela's concert revived the celebration. Following these experiences, the little girl

came back to school confident and convinced that she has “two very nice hands.”

Kusza’s drama about a lack of faith in oneself and one’s dreams was written specifically for the project. Similarly to a second text entitled *Peter and Boulder*, which raises the question of anger. It tells the story of a boy and girl who are annoyed with a friend who stood them up. Peter angrily kicks the stone that cries out in pain. The larger stone friend, Boulder, takes the boys with the wind Antonio to cape Bum, where children learn to rid themselves of anger. Together, they help Lalabombi eliminate anger who is constantly irritated at everything (angry at a shoe that is on too tight or a handle that keeps falling off a cup - and consequently wanting to declare war on countries-producers of these items). Similarly, they assist Volcano who is upset by the buzzing of insects followed by silence. In doing so, they learn to control their negative emotions. Composure and serenity help them forgive a tardy friend, and make it so they all end up having a great time playing together.

These dramas are written in a very simple way. The action is short and swift. The text refers to one characteristic; it is consistent, single-threaded, and it happens in a short period of time. The playwright clearly indicates twists and plot changes. Moreover, the characters within these stories represent certain personalities, which are usually dynamic. Dramas have been very enthusiastically received by children in Poland. All the problems presented in the drama were easily diagnosed by Polish children. They were sincerely committed to reading the stories and willingly commented on the exhibited behavior of characters. Moreover, they were able to put themselves in a given situation. Meanwhile, children in Malta had problems with understanding Adela. For this reason, the second drama was not used when working with them. The teacher working with children in Malta remarked: “In my opinion a fairy tale or a fable appeals more to children like a script of *Adela two left hands*. At first I thought they would not understand the story but they really did. What they didn’t come up with was that Adela had low self-esteem. I had to help them out with it by explaining that when Madame told Adela that she had great hands, Adela believed her and started to play the piano beautifully. (...) The children love all the stories and they really look forward to Wednesday when we do drama. They love drama. When I adapt the stories I always try to do short sentences, like I did with Adela-two left hands. I always highlight the name or else they will get mixed up. This time with your script I involved the audience (the other children) so not to

get bored to do sound effects and movements like the mermaids and fishes dancing and the sound of Antonio the wind and the piano playing tune. I use props we find in the room, nothing is ever prepared beforehand”¹.

For children in Malta, the difficulty was not the formula of the drama itself, in fact they willingly participated in drama exercises. The problem was understanding the message contained within each story. Only the clues given by the teacher enabled them to understand the sense of drama. This difficulty stemmed from cultural differences. The text was written by a Polish playwright, despite appeals to universal values and traditions - even mythology - the problem was presented from the a culturally Polish point of view.

Universal values thus are understood in a different way due to cultural factors. For example, in Polish schools reading Polish classics such as *In Desert and Wilderness* by Henryk Sienkiewicz, these values were explained in the following manner. Staś, the main character of the novel, asks a black man, what does he consider good and evil, and he replies: “If someone take Kali’s cows (...) this is a bad thing (...). Good is when someone takes Kali’s cows”. Kali’s statement shows that every culture in a different way argues and presents its own values. Staś’ answer, a fourteen year old son of a Polish engineer employed in the construction of the Suez Canal, would be completely different. This fictional scene proves that values and therefore the content of the drama and its interpretation are culturally determined. Many scientists like Hofstede, Edward T. Hall, Richard R. Gestald, Fons Trompenaars and Charles Hampden-Turner have examined the differences between national cultures. Peter B. Smith, Mark F. Peterson and Shalom H. Schwartz (2002) underline that culture is defined by shared meanings assigned by cultural members to things and persons around them. This type of definition would include Hofstede’s much-cited phrase, the ‘collective programming of the mind’. Others assert that culture entails not just shared interpretations of behaviors, but also actual differences in behavior.

Geert Hofstede (2010) – a Dutch social psychologist – created the so-called cultural dimensions or cultural scales in order to describe the differences

¹ Note the project drawn up by Christabelle Curie. See the conclusions of the experiment contained in the thesis Curmie, Ch. (2015), *Transformative Drama as a therapeutic intervention for pupils with SEBD*. A dissertation submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BPhil in SEBD (Social, Emotional and Behavioural Difficulties) in the School of Education Victoria Lewis 1st September, 2015 School of Education, University of Birmingham.

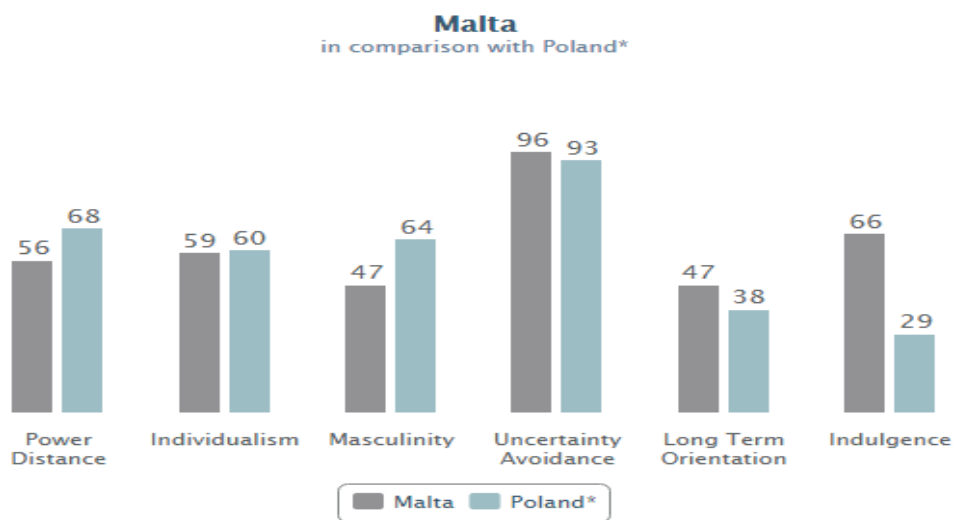
between cultures. He assumes that people distinguish themselves from each other as a result of cultural programming, and that this is the cause of all misunderstandings, problems and sometimes mutual dislike. He further asserts that cultural programming depends on the group of cultural socialization or indoctrination. He claims national differences between representatives of nations can be reduced to differences in the collective cultural programming. Most importantly, he explicated the difference between society or cultural groups rather than individual persons (Schwartz 1994; Hofstede, 1984). The comparison of national cultures was made possible in part due to these dimensions. Shalom H. Schwartz, a Hebrew psychologist, writes in his article *A theory of Cultural Values and Some Implications for Work* “cultural values represent the implicitly or explicitly shared abstract ideas about what is good, right and desirable in society” (Schwartz, 1999, p. 25). And then he underlines: In particular, according to Hofstede, the cultural programming refers to four dimensions: power distance, individualism-collectivism, masculinity-femininity, and uncertainty avoidance. In 1991 Hofstede’s student, Michael Bond, added the fifth dimension, the so-called Confucian dynamism: Long-Term Orientation.

INDULGENCE VS. RESTRAINT

Hofstede’s (2011) cultural dimensions are the main way of distinguishing intercultural differences and are sufficient to illustrate differences in the reception of the drama between Polish and Maltese children. In 2010, to the list of existing dimensions a Bulgarian researcher, Michael Minkov, added another, sixth dimension: Indulgence vs. Restraint. Indulgence society is conducive to the realization of desires and needs of enjoying life and having fun, focused on a unit’s sense of happiness and well-being. Leisure is seen as important; there is greater freedom among citizens. Meanwhile, restrained societies believe that self-fulfillment should be limited and subordinate to standards and positive emotions are rarely expressed. Happiness is an individual matter and not subject to public discussion. Leisure is considered less essential, entertainment in the social hierarchy holds the lowest level. Society aims to control and limit the fulfillment of desire. Citizens believe in freedom of speech. They have an easier time to retain positive emotions, attach more importance to the way they spend free time, for example by playing different sports activities. In the meantime, within restrained socie-

ties fewer people feel happy and fulfilled. Many have a sense of helplessness in life and place the burden of blame for their failure on others. Leisure activities, pursue of dreams are not seen as important, but rather more focus is spent on negative emotions or on complaining, while positive emotions are often overlooked. When you divide the globe according to restrained or indulged cultures, indulgence tends to prevail in the Americas, Western Europe, Sub-Saharan Africa and restrain in Eastern Europe, Asia and Muslim countries. Most Mediterranean countries are mentioned as those who represent the division.

The dimension regarding indulgence vs. restraint is a challenge for rehabilitation. It shows how children learn to control their desires and impulses. It is also a dimension that clearly distinguishes Polish culture from the Maltese, and which confirms the above division of the world.



Source: <http://geert-hofstede.com/malta.html> (retrieved: 15.02.2016).

It is worth mentioning that this is the only dimension that differentiates these two cultures. For other cultural dimensions, these seem to be very similar. This particular difference is enough for the text addressing realization of dreams, fighting for the fulfillment of desires or spending free time to become unreadable for Maltese children. This is because Maltese society is an indulgence society. Though not a high value, it is however sufficient enough to describe its inhabitants as individuals eager to implement, and

without encountering resistance in realizing themselves, as well as lacking malicious comments or understanding. This is because they live in a society where fun, enjoying life and developing is socially acceptable. They are generally positively oriented toward life and tend to be optimistic. Meanwhile, Polish children grow up in a society which, according to this dimension, is described as cynical and pessimistic. Free time it is treated with neglect. Members of such societies are convinced that their actions are constrained by social norms with a sense that indulging in realizing desires is erroneous. Therefore, they are able to understand Adele the heroine, who must believe in herself and acquire wisdom of what she was doing outside of class. They are able to identify with the girl who has to fight for respect for what she does in her spare time, and on what gives her joy and self-fulfillment.

CONCLUSION - UNIVERSAL STRUCTURE, CULTURAL CONTENT

The idea of transformative teaching refers to the educational process which has led to changes in students from a psychological perspective - understanding each other or with regards to the system of beliefs and values (Clark 1993). As noted by M. Carolyn Clark and Arthur L. Wilson in their article *Context and Rationality In Mezirow's Theory of Transformational Learning* (1991), development of the student is based on experience, action and critical reflection. Hence, understood in such a way, science aims to transform the student by expanding his or her awareness, deepening his or her worldview and equipping students with the skills necessary to define the world and themselves. Paulo Freire (1970), a Brazilian educator, already in 1970 described transformative learning as the *conscientization or consciousness-raising*. This awareness has to rely on the understanding of meaning of the experience, the interpretation of that experience or through the metamorphosis of dramatic personae. This science of analyzing is based not only on existing stereotypes, judgments and beliefs. It is therefore the science leading to the transformation of the student - whether ideological or dealing with openness towards others. That change becomes critical and purposeful. Although the idea of transformative teaching / learning is usually recognized in adult education (Dirkx, 1998; Taylor, 1997; Nohl, 2015; Calleja, 2014; Banks, 1995), it may well be, in my opinion, also transplanted to teaching of children and youth.

Effective transformative learning requires much more than just a transfer of hard knowledge, but must also stimulate the powers self-directed

at students, thus motivating them to be open to criticism and self-analysis, noting different perspectives regarding creative education. Education through art also leads to transformation of the aesthetic. The authors of the text *Promoting creativity in teaching drama* illustrate essential elements of this education. Exchange: accepting ideas, tolerating mistakes, changing direction, giving up control, creating space for students' views and ideas, sharing, sensitivity, etc. This is because education is trying to adapt to the modern world. As noted by Nellie McCaslin: „Increasingly evident forces are attempting to change the direction of education from a purely intellectual emphasis to one that recognizes latent potential and therefore includes the arts as a basic component” (2006, p. 277).

Effective use of transformative drama within creative teaching, its educational character and participation in the processes of education no longer requires confirmation. For McCaslin it can be presented as a “contribution to their cognitive, social and emotional development” (p. 270). Writing and analyzing of a dramatic text, which favors multiple perspectives and polyphony, relies on dialogue and illustrates the performative effects of conversation, in which the action is transferred to the foundation of expression, stimulating discussion and providing opportunity to address difficult issues. Even focusing on those issues about which no one wants to talk about openly. Hence, the use of drama is very effective in schools in many cultures. For example, a dramatic fictional character can discuss the regulation governing the world, the importance and consequences of the choices we make. The model using education through transformative drama is universal and unchanging. Additionally, the construction of these tragedies – a classic look of the division of roles, their ancient structure: the division exposure, explication, culminating point of trials and tribulations and the solution, as well as dynamism of the characters remains the same. Typically, within the issue is presented within the initial phase, and the student becomes familiar with the topic, such as for example, the rejection of Adele by children in the classroom. Within the explication, which is an essential phase, the story of the characters is told, so that throughout the vicissitudes a twist occurs. Adela begins to understand that the game has a healing power not only to others, but to herself. Finally, during the climax a creation of a balance at a different level takes place. Adela returns to school confident, facing her classmates head-on. She sits down in front of a green, enchanted piano and proud of her achievements begins to play, arousing admiration among her peers. It is important here to point out just

how immutable and universal is this construction, the content of the drama must be adapted to the cultural dimensions of students.

The project in Malta proves that research regarding the use of drama in education and educational process should focus now not so much on the method, but on the cultural content of texts - in this case on drama. It turns out that education through art is a culturally conditioned act. Introducing the aspect of cultural studies to the study of changes in cultural activities in the processes of self-development and education seems to be very important. Erika Fischer-Lichte, a German theatralogist, in her book *History of European Drama and Theatre* notes that the actor, but also the drama-oriented denunciation of the "I" becomes self-realizing, and that this act of self-awareness is a cultural act. Likewise, it is an act of students' cultural transformation. Awareness is always carried out in a particular culture, nation, ethnic group, religious community, social class or family. Fischer-Lichte writes that in different times and different cultures, the act of self-awareness looks and looked different. It emphasizes therefore the differences in the historical and cultural forms of expression, which are adapted to the condition of the viewer and determined by the historical and cultural order. It refers to the American anthropologist, Milton Singer. In the 1950s, he introduced the concept of cultural performance, bearing in mind all the artistic and ritual performance, ranging from concerts, through lectures, festivals and ending with religious ceremonies. They can be read as cultural forms of artistic expression. And although Singer dealt with Indian culture, his considerations seem to be universal.

Singer stresses that the form and structure of cultural performance always depends on the culture and is defined by cultural identity. In this sense, a form of speech is articulated by culture of the time and place. At the same time, it co-creates and sustains the culture. As noted by an American anthropologist: „performances became (...) the elementary constituents of the culture” (Singer, 2003, p. 61). In addition, he noted that statements based on the patterns of culture are often a way to celebrate „the successive stages of the individual life cycle (...) (the *rites de passage*)” (p. 62). In an article entitled *The Great Tradition in a Metropolitan Center: Madras* he writes that examining changes in the structure and trends of cultural performances can reveal all relationships between the cultures and traditions. He further writes: „Then by tracing the linkages among these structures and organizations it is possible to arrive at more comprehensive and abstract constructs of cultural structure, cultural value system and a Great Tradition” (Singer,

1958, p. 351). Fischer-Lichte makes a similar conclusion. He argues that history of drama is the history of identity and transformation of identity, as well as studies the dependencies between cultural changes, cultural identity and the structure of the work. He writes that drama and theater „represent a genre of cultural performance concerned with the creation, self-fashioning and transformation of identity, then this opens a whole new perspective on the study of history (...)” (Fischer-Lichte, 2002, p. 4). He simultaneously emphasizes that formation and transformation of identity in western culture is experienced as a type of liminal space described by Arnold van Gennep and Victor Turner. He however, understands transformation as a phase when „the person is brought into a condition ‘between’ all possible states which allows him/her to make new and in part disturbing experiences, and enables him/her to try on or act out different kinds of identity” (p. 4). In this process, only the form of *rites of passage* is universal, and all possible states are culturally conditioned. Similarly universal is, according to Fischer-Lichte, the structure of drama, which is built on the basis of dialogue and spoken text, proclaimed by specific individuals who retain the names of the speaker. She further writes: „Dramas from European tradition can be read as outlines or sketches of identity. (...) It is likely that every change to the structure of the drama has carried out a correlative change in the concept of identity”. Furthermore, she writes: „Drama is able to design the identity which the spectators can neither agree to in the present nor in any foreseeable future, let alone adopt” (p. 5). In her book she explores the relationship between drama, identity and socio-cultural-historical reality. It also points to the desirability of the dramatic statements that may relate to the identity of the individual, but also relating to collective identity.

From the perspective of this text what is important is to look at the structure of the drama. It seems that the universal process of transformation is the structure of the ancient drama. This is because the texts describes the process of constitution of identity on the journey of battling oneself and about making of tough choices, and all along an act of speech. Ancient heroes, writes the teatrologist, „deserted by gods and mankind, that which remains and will never be lost in his consciousness of his self and his sacrosanct human dignity” (p. 24). And of course over time, dramas and their characters undergo changes, increase their independence in action, and are portrayed in different ways by different playwrights. Aristotle in *Poetics* states that Sophocles presented people as if he wanted to see them and the way they should be, while Euripides as they really were. Sophocles’

heroes were looking for the causes of their situation, while Euripides' heroes struggled with that situation, the first ones to struggle between speech and body language, others between their desires and physical fulfillment. But the structure of the drama and the ritual self-constitution became constant, each time showing a process of self-definition. While a form of drama today called classical has survived, its content varied with time and place. The same thing occurs in the case of transformative drama - its structure takes the form of a classical form of drama from exposure to its climax, to the trials and tribulations, and lastly to its explication. The content however, remains readable only in a given culture.

Research carried out simultaneously in Malta and Poland has shown that an educational potential of art has its own cultural content value. Education through art, its participation in the processes of development and education depends on the content, and not necessarily on form, or cultural and artistic message, and is fully understood only in the context of one's culture. Therefore a universal method of working with students, such as the use of the principle of analyzing dramatic texts, writing their own plays or enhancing lessons through the use of drama can be created. But it is impossible or it can be very difficult to construct a universal dramatic text which can be used in schools in many countries. Lastly, there is also another matter worth pondering about which addresses the question whether the use of drama in transformation of canonical references to fairy tales, such as Andersen's fairy tales remains independent of cultural dimensions, or must it also have a cultural context and be appropriately presented in a given culture.

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