School Theater for Ecocitizenship and Justice

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Abstract

This paper presents a theater-based creative participatory research action with students from culturally diverse higher secondary schools in Oslo. This project is situated within the science education research program Local Culture for Understanding Mathematics and Science (LOCUMS), which involves The University of Oslo, the Norwegian University of Science and Technology and The Artic University of Norway. The potential of applied drama is explored as an empowering and transformative pedagogy for ecocitizenship construction and socio-scientific issue teaching. Drawing among others on political philosophy, environmental education, applied drama, ecocriticism and critical global citizenship education, the concept of ecocitizenship is framed within thick perspectives: it is anchored in socio-ecological justice, emphasize collective forms of identification and action, and integrate cooperation as well as creative and critical thinking. Ecocitizenship is also performative and therefore enacted privately and in all the gradations of the public sphere. Theater is approached as a way to create a culturally-responsive and safe space where learners can among others 1) deconstruct and experiment with other worldviews and other ways of relating to others and to the environment; 2) break away from fixed

and essentialized conceptions of identities and cultures; 3) navigate and experiment with diverse forms of citizenship and 4) develop empowerment and agency. This paper will dwell on ecocitizenship and its links with theater, both in theater and in practice, and will discuss a theater collective experimentation with Ibsen's play, An enemy of the people, that students are appropriating and transforming, integrating socio-ecological issues that are significant for them.

Keywords