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**FACULTY OF THEATRE AND TELEVISION**  
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**THEATRE AND PERFORMING ARTS FIELD**

**ANALYSIS OF DRAMA DIDACTICS THROUGH**  
**PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PEDAGOGICAL METHODS**

**(summary)**

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## KEY WORDS

*Drama pedagogy, psychology – pedagogy, education, teenagers, vocational arts-high-school, practical experimentation, drama teacher, drama, drama in education, cognitive - emotional development, drama teaching, alternative teaching methods.*

## SUMMARY

The topic of the present paper may be included in the domain of the applied sciences of psychology and pedagogy, because it uses the theoretical and methodological principles that are specific to these areas, thus aiming at the discovery of new information and strategies meant to contribute at improving the educational process in general, specifically the drama teaching methods used in vocational arts high-schools.

The present research had in view certain objectives that could be considered as guidelines. The first was to demonstrate the hypothesis according to which the drama teacher as a practitioner can manage a research work in order to improve his own teaching methods. The importance of this attempt is obvious due to the vast context offered by drama pedagogy and to the heterogeneous areas in which it operates. The entire research shows this hypothesis to be correct. The drama teacher can and must conduct psychological and pedagogical research in view of balancing, developing and shaping the teaching process.

Starting from clearly set objectives focused on a theoretical and practical investigation of drama teaching, the present study developed two directions, covering both theoretical fundamentals and practical experimentation.

The investigative approach of the theoretical part of the paper has succeeded to present in a detailed manner the drama pedagogy phenomenon. The beginning of the first chapter marks the historical progress of the joint activity in education and drama. This activity has crossed history, undergoing several changes caused by the continuous interaction with society and other arts, being at the same time influenced by philosophical and political trends, by morals and religion. After a thorough analysis of bibliography, we noticed a repositioning of the studies conducted on the efficiency of alternative pedagogy.

The philosophy of education has reached a unique stage in its development, due to the pressure coming from the extreme evolution of the post-industrial society. The new views on the educational systems value personal development, the development of emotional intelligence and above all, the development of creativity. This has determined the new direction in the educational process – teaching with the help of drama means.

The present study then focuses on a parallel between the Romanian institutions of drama education and the French, British and American models. The analysis pointed out a complex configuration of professions in the artistic area within the pre-university educational systems of these countries. The existence of these high-schools is legally coordinated by educational policies that encourage the early professional guidance of teenagers. An important factor in developing these forms of education is the economic one. The vast area covered by the entertainment industry of a certain cultural environment directly influences the development of such high-schools that offer a professional degree in this field.

When analysing the Romanian system in comparison with the characteristics of the other mentioned systems, a series of similarities and differences were signalled. Thus, from the point of view of the aimed result, the Romanian system, the same as the British system, focuses on offering its students a professional certificate of competence. The difference between the two may be noticed on the diversity level. The British system offers a wider range of professional possibilities and degrees in various areas of the entertainment industry.

In what the syllabus is concerned, the Romanian system mainly focuses on theoretical classes, as compared to the other systems, where the emphasis lays on practice. None of the systems under study offers such a diverse area in the theoretical approach of entertainment as the Romanian system does. Generally speaking, curricula comprise theoretical courses of drama history, of understanding cultural management and career management in arts. None of the analysed curricula include subjects such as drama aesthetics or drama theory.

Having in view the same perspective of the final goals of education, there is a clear distinction between the French graduation exam, where one can notice a clear opening towards drama and the total exclusion of artistic subjects in the same type of exam in Romania. The most significant distinction, one with dramatic consequences for the quality of teaching, is to be noticed in the management process of educational partnerships that are developed with the local cultural institutions. All the analyzed systems prove a real symbiosis with the professional artistic environment, with the exception of the Romanian educational system. The partnerships with cultural institutions materialize in meeting professionals, in access to workshops, shows and exhibitions, and so on. Unfortunately, the Romanian educational system is denied access to the realities of the artistic environment.

The section dedicated to the conceptual delimitations aims at organizing and explaining the nature and the wide range of meanings of the specific terminology of drama pedagogy. Research has identified the new meaning of drama pedagogy and of education by drama means. Nowadays, drama pedagogy is not necessarily connected to drama as a stage product, but more likely to drama as a process of knowing and behaving in an artistic manner. Drama pedagogy represents a method, a way and does not necessarily refer to a product.

Thus, drama pedagogy requires a facilitator who can build a teaching concept which should suit all context, individuals or groups. Teachers are no longer conditioned by the drama methods ha had studied or practiced, his goal being something else than implementing an established method. Currently, the drama teacher must be able to adapt his method to the realities of the group under his guidance.

The drama teacher's most important objective is to find the most suitable way to develop and improve the creative abilities of the members of the group. The drama teacher does not resemble the regular educator, he is in fact a trainer and a companion at the same time for the ones under his guidance. He must have a thorough knowledge of the craft, of the principles and methods, of the specific exercises and procedures. He also has to master theory and most of all, to possess reflective, analytical and synthetic abilities. The basic principles of drama pedagogy require a person who is prepared to perform complex theoretical and practical research so as to improve teaching in the manner suggested by the general hypothesis of this research.

Nowadays, drama pedagogy is used in extremely diverse types of activities with varied purposes. Drama exists as singular educational activity conducted by specific means. It is at the same time used as a teaching method in different areas, from mathematics to literature. The convergent point of the two exploratory methods of drama is their origin and legitimacy in the philosophical sense "Die Philosophie des Als Ob", published by the German author Hans Vaihinger in 1911. This concept was then included in the drama specific activities under the generic term of "here and now".

Furthermore, the present paper analyses the results of the most illustrative investigative studies regarding education by drama means, published over the last few years. We have identified and analysed studies that have implemented various research designs, most of which using means specific to psycho-pedagogy and sociology. Studies such as

DICE and *Playing a part- the impact of youth theatre on young people's personal and social development* are quite impressive from the point of view of the investigated population, but are less thorough from the point of view of their proposed design which is not very articulated or well defined. In the same respect, the investigative and experimental study presented in *Applicability, usefulness and effectiveness of drama pedagogy in practical research* is under question from the perspective of the small investigated population and of the duration of the investigation.

The results of the DICE study and those presented by Anna Podlozny in her study *Strengthening Verbal Skills Through the Use of Classroom Drama - A Clear Link . A Summary of a Meta-Analytic Study*<sup>1</sup> have shown the potential of the educational activities based on classroom drama in the area of language competence. The results of three studies we have analysed ( Teaching ecosystems and matter cycles with creative drama activities, The impact of drama on pupils' language, mathematic and attitude in two primary schools and Classroom Drama Therapy Program for Immigrant and Refugee Adolescents - A Pilot Study, have pointed out the existence of real improvement potential for the level of understanding and learning science and mathematics.

Other studies, such as DICE, *Playing a part- the impact of youth theatre on young people's personal and social development*, or the experimental and investigative study *Applicability, usefulness and effectiveness of drama pedagogy in practical research* have demonstrated substantial results in areas such as personal development, creativity, civic awareness and social integration. This direction has pointed out the effectiveness of educational drama-based methods of teaching, meaning that innovative and relatively recent discoveries in the area of psycho-pedagogy have been used. When connecting this potential to the present social realities, one can aim at changing education by drama means into the avant-garde of the social and professional integration policies.

Not all the results are relevant from a mathematical point of view, but all of them suggest significant tendencies in the direction given by the hypothesis. None of the analysed studies was applied on a population belonging to a specialized high-school aiming at getting a degree in arts and entertainment. The research was based on studying educational activities

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<sup>1</sup> Podlozny, A. - *Strengthening Verbal Skills Through the Use of Classroom Drama - A Clear Link . A Summary of a Meta-Analytic Study. Beyond the Sound Bite – What the Research actually Shows About Arts, Education and Academic Outcomes*, pp. 99-107, Los Angeles



based on drama means, exploring Drama from two separate points of view – both as a teaching method and as a singular activity.

The last chapter of the theoretical section of the paper presents a descriptive and critical analysis of the structure and realities of drama means in education in the context of Romanian high-schools, mostly emphasizing the study of acting in vocational arts high-schools. After studying the specific documents issued by the Ministry of National Education, we identified several elements that show a real intention to provide a legal framework for the introduction of classroom drama in the educational system. Thus, we have come across subjects that use drama means in other areas than the specific artistic ones. We consider this to be a clear sign of the wish to steer the Romanian educational system towards the innovative pedagogies that characterise the present-day European education.

Regarding the study of the subjects specific to acting and drama in the Differentiated Curriculum, we cannot see a systematic approach. We could not see a coherent and rational attempt carried out according to clearly set objectives. The general declared aim of this speciality is legally represented by the methodology regarding the professional certification of the students, which is in opposition to the goals established for the earlier years of high-school, where the study of drama is enclosed in the curriculum with the purpose of contributing to the personal development of the student. However, this goal is followed along the published Annual Planning of the teaching activities. These documents (the Annual Planning) have to be seen in the proper light of their true value, which is their actual function – to finalize the stages of structuring the curriculum, thus offering the needed balance to class activities. Therefore, they are not general, having a guiding and optional character. A logical step to be taken should then be the creation of a syllabus dedicated to the upper stage of high-school studies, which should make the proper transition from the personal development perspective of drama studies in the first two years to the professional perspective of drama study.

Our progressive study has revealed an anachronistic approach in publishing the specific documents by the Ministry of Education, without following the right steps of structuring and balancing the curriculum, without the right coordination between the contents of the primary published documents. We could not identify a singular and continuous perspective regarding the educational trajectory of high-school students. Neither could we see a coordination between the different parts of curricular structuring and their specific goals.

None of the analysed school subjects has a text-book, an alternative workbook, methodological guides or other auxiliary materials.

This situation corroborated with the entire investigation we conducted in the theoretical section of the study generated the coordinates for the practical research in the second section of the paper.

Having in view that educational success and proficiency is largely determined by the contents presented at class and by the methods and means used in teaching, we consider that in order to apply them and make them accessible, it is very important to study their efficiency and to understand the inner underlying mechanisms.

First of all, in order to determine the efficiency of the methods, a case study was conducted. Its results demonstrated that the educational process can be adapted to the psychological and cognitive traits of teenagers. We also demonstrated that teaching means a continuous adaptation of methods, means and procedures, according to the context. As a sequel of this case study, a teaching construct took shape and was analysed in an experimental study.

The experimental stage of the present thesis had as main objective conducting a scientific analysis that should allow us to understand the methods of drama teaching from the point of view of the positive evolution of diction, long-term memory and voluntary-distributive focus. We also aimed at determining the measurable changes in the attitude towards drama and in the ability to empathise, as a result of specific teaching methods. Last, but not least, our intention was to identify the most efficient way of teaching drama in the direction given by the psychological and social development frame mentioned by the syllabus.

In order to conduct this research, we used an experimental design with independent samples. This format allowed us to conduct a complex psychological and pedagogical investigation which had in view a parallel analysis of three specific drama teaching methods. As part of the experiment, we worked with already existing groups of students, the 41 participants being organized in three groups. The teaching activities for each of the groups were conducted according to the existing syllabus that suggests the use of the Viola Spolin method. For the first experimental group, composed of 15 subjects, the activity was based on the Stanislavsky method, because it is generally associated with shows as a final part of the

teaching process. For the second experimental group, we used the *Original Project* method. This method was chosen because it represents the expression of the results obtained in the previously presented case study.

The first aim of the research was to investigate the drama teaching methods from the perspective of their influence on the positive evolution of diction, long term memory and voluntary-distributed attention.

The results of the research have shown that all the tested drama teaching methods have a positive effect on diction. We have also proved that when applying the Stanislavsky or the Original Project methods, we generally get better results in the case of diction than with the Viola Spolin method.

The investigation of the results in the long-term memory testing confirmed the positive and statistically significant effect of the three types of intervention. The results show that teaching drama by using any of the three methods presented in the study may have positive results on the students' ability to retain content. We also noticed certain differences between results, which suggests the more effective character of the Stanislavsky and the Original Project methods, but these are not relevant, statistically speaking.

The third general aim suggested identifying the most efficient drama teaching method in the context of the psychological and social development specified in the syllabus. To be more exact, the focus was on finding the method that should result in the most significant positive outcomes in the performed tests. Moreover, this aim focused on building the best strategy towards the objectives of the syllabus in the case of the first two years of high-school. This aim cannot be attained because the test results showed that each method only works for certain segments of the previously mentioned psychological and social development. The conclusion of our research is that such a comprehensive method does not exist, but it is up to the drama teacher to choose the best possible strategy in order to reach the aims set according to the syllabus.

The fourth general aim of the experimental study was to identify the theoretical pros and cons for the use of certain methods in drama teaching in vocational arts high-schools. This aim was actually followed throughout the entire research. The experimental results, together with the results of the theoretical study merge towards the conclusion that shows the

inexistence of an ideal drama teaching method in vocational arts high-schools. Each of the methods we have studied proves both strong points and weak points.

Our experimental study showed that each method possesses an area of maximum efficiency. If we look further into the matter, we can understand that it is important to identify a singular strategy to suit a certain objective. For instance, our study showed that when aiming at improving diction, the recommended strategies to be used are the Stanislavsky or the Original Project methods.

The conclusion of the present research is that the success of the teaching process does not necessarily depend on a certain method or on a given formula. Success is conditioned by the typology of the drama teacher. Whatever the context in which drama education is used, its efficiency is determined by the drama teacher's qualities. Thus, successful teaching means that the educator should not only master drama, but should also be proficient in educational science and psychology. The drama teacher should prove mastery of his art, but most of all, he should be able to create new teaching methods that could each time provide the aimed results according to the particularities of each of the groups he addresses.