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Performative Professionalisation in the Context of Teacher Training: First Experiments with the Use of Drama-Based Pedagogies Across the Curriculum [1]

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1. https://doi.org/10.33178/scenario.13.1.6

Opening up performative spaces in Swiss teacher education — Is there room for performative teaching and learning in Swiss teacher education? Staff and students at the University of Teacher Education Zug (PH Zug), Switzerland, are actively exploring this question and finding ways to create space for performative approaches in a densely packed three-year teacher education programme. The university is small, with approximately 370 student teachers working towards a bachelor's degree in primary education (from kindergarten to grade six). The "all-rounder" programme (graduates will teach all ten school subjects, including math, music, physical education, German, and either English or French as a foreign language) includes several hands-on teaching internships in local elementary schools.

Drama in Education (DiE) is a teaching and learning methodology that uses performative elements in a classroom setting, where the focus is not the final product but the learning process. It has a long history in the anglo-saxon tradition, dating back to the 1950's. The recent introduction of DiE in several courses at PH Zug has opened up performative teaching and learning spaces across the curriculum. The integration of DiE in a variety of courses has students and staff reflecting on the impact of *performance* on teaching and learning. Drama is being used not only for teaching subject specific content, such as English as a Foreign Language, but also for personal and professional development. The basic premise of DiE is to access learning through kinaesthetic (body), cognitive (mind), and affective (heart) channels, often in an imagined setting where the participants (students and teachers) are in-role as performers. Drama in Education has featured at PH Zug in several English methodology classes since 2017, as well as in a French language elective (since 2018), in a research and development class (since 2016), and in an intensive drama and theatre education elective course (since 2017). In addition, students may choose drama and theatre education topics for their bachelor's theses. However,

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DiE is not a systematic part of either the university curriculum, nor of teacher education in Switzerland. Nor is Drama a teachable subject in Swiss public schools. It should be noted, however, that although DiE is relatively new in Switzerland, theatre education (with a focus on a polished product, usually a play) has a long tradition in the Swiss school system, where it continues to flourish.

The interest in DiE at PH Zug was sparked by two pilot projects: The first was a PhD study, which I began in 2017. I asked an experienced drama and theatre pedagogue to facilitate a semester-long training for a group of volunteer student teachers. Twice a month, eight young women, all enrolled at PH Zug, attended 2.5-hour DiE training sessions after their regular lessons. The DiE training aimed to give the participants a working understanding of drama-based pedagogies: They focused on the application of basic drama conventions in the classroom (Neelands & Goode 2015), on process drama (O'Neill 1995), and on the basics of improvisation as developed by Keith Johnstone (2016). Through improvisation exercises, process dramas, and drama games, the group was made familiar with the basic principles of Drama in Education and how to facilitate drama activities in the elementary school classroom. In addition to the many ice breakers and basic improvisation techniques taught to the group, some of the drama conventions and techniques introduced included *teacher-in-role* (the teacher engages in the drama work in role, for example as a character from a story or as a historical figure), *hot-seating* (when one character is placed on the "hot seat" and questioned by the group), *still-images* (frozen pictures focusing on a moment or detail in a story), and *thought-tracking* (adding a voice to a still-image). For a more detailed description of the drama conventions listed above, please see Neelands and Goode (2015).

Fels (2004: 85) reminds us that;

> For participants engaged in role dramas, an opportunity for debriefing and reflection is a critical and necessary component of the research/learning experience. Participants explain why they chose to do or say the things they did; they reveal the motivations and hidden agendas that influenced their choices of action; and together, they reflect on the imaginary world they co-created.

There was, therefore, a strong emphasis on reflective practice throughout the training sessions described above: The student teachers regularly discussed their experiences as a group and shared their experiences with me. Furthermore, the participants were encouraged to experiment with DiE in their own practice and to reflect on the process throughout. I was also able to observe some of their DiE lessons in various elementary school classrooms. In addition, after the training, four of the eight students chose to write a bachelor's thesis on a DiE related topic. Their research presentations at the university's annual research fair, as well as their bachelors' theses, have inspired other students to engage with the methodology.

The second pilot project, the *Drama Days @PH Zug*[2], took place in 2018. The Centre for Oral Communication (Zentrum Mündlichkeit) and the International Office at PH Zug invited eight international DiE specialists who worked in teacher education, for four days of talks and workshops. The Drama Days @PH Zug were open to staff and students, as well as to the general public. The one-off event was a platform for an in-depth discussion with DiE specialists about performative best practice: How and where to integrate drama, music, and arts education into teacher training. Participating drama specialists were: Egon Turecek and Erika Klonner from the University College of Teacher Education Vienna/Krems; Tomáš Andrášik from Masaryk University, Brno; Radka Svobodová from Charles University, Prague; and Elke Brys, Said Dnoub, Simon Wemel and Ann Steverlynck from Artevelde University College Ghent. The specialists were joined by PH Zug staff members who represented specialisations as far apart as music, artistic and technical design, theatre, and foreign language teaching.

The Drama Days @PH Zug sparked an interest in Drama in Education among university staff members, resulting in the incorporation of DiE in various English methodology modules at PH Zug (for a more detailed account, please see Göksel & Nadig 2018). For example, as of 2018, the Spring Study Week (English Methodology 2), which introduces first year students to various English language teaching methodologies as well as various English-speaking cultures, includes a 90-minute process drama exploring Canadian culture and the acquisition of new vocabulary. The goal of this and other DiE sessions taught at PH Zug, is to share a tool kit of drama techniques with the student teachers. As Jonothan Neelands (2018) phrases it, the idea is to lay out a palate of colours for teachers to use; "How they choose to paint with it is up to them" (Neelands in Göksel 2018: 13).

In addition to the projects discussed above, since 2016, PH Zug has hosted a range of international DiE experts, including: Nicola Abraham from the Central School of Speech and Drama, University of London; Šárka Dohnalová from Masaryk University, Brno, Monica Prendergast from the University of Victoria, British Columbia, Canada; and most recently, in July 2019, Jonothan Neelands from the University of Warwick; and Patrice Baldwin, Past Chair of National Drama, UK. The latter are both keynote speakers at the Drama in Education Days 2019[3], hosted by PH Zug, with a focus on best practice and research in DiE in second and foreign language teaching. Inspired in part by these exciting events and workshops, students and staff at PH Zug continue to explore the potential of performative teaching and learning methods, with an interest in integrating drama into both teacher education and primary school classroom lessons in a variety of subjects. In fact, one of the student teachers from the 2017

[2] https://www.zg.ch/behoerden/direktion-fur-bildung-und-kultur/phzg/ph-zug/aktuell1/drama-days-ph-zug-learning-to-teach-through-drama [last accessed May 19, 2019]

[3] https://dramapaedagogik.de/en/drama-in-education-days-2019/ [last accessed May 19, 2019].
The Drama in Education Days are organised by Stefanie Giebert and Eva Göksel.

drama training session reflected on her experience as follows: "Drama belongs in the classroom. ... Not only because it activates the students and gives the lesson a rhythm, but also because it encourages the students to work together and it creates a positive class spirit". Thus, although Drama in Education is not officially part of the Swiss curriculum, there is a growing interest among staff and students at PH Zug to explore performative teaching approaches and to facilitate learning with the heart, body, and mind.

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