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### Dialogue of Cultures - Culture of Dialogue: from Conflicting to Understanding

# THEATRICALIZATION IN EDUCATION: DIALOGUE OF CULTURES

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### *Abstract*

This article describes the educational benefits of theatricalization in work with students including creation of co-existence of children and adults as a space of dialog and mutual understanding. The following issues are considered: the tasks of education, entering the field of socio-humanitarian practice focused on the formation of students' values. Theatricalization is understood as the use of theater means in the educational process, the organization of joint activities of children and adults based on reading and staging a literary work, the creation of conditions for emotional involvement and for sharing beliefs and values. The article presents a historical view on the issues of theatricalization in education as a dialog between the past and the present, uncovers the relevance of the ideas of the past for modern socio-cultural practices in education. Views on the role of theater in education are reflected by John Dewey, S. Hall, Célestin Freinet, Y. Komensky, Plato, Alexander Sutherland Neill, Rudolf Steiner, and others. From the standpoint of education, it presents historical facts in an easy-to-understand form and gives insight into the worldview heritage of mankind. Theater enhances emotional development in children when they empathize with characters and feel their emotions thus gaining experiences inaccessible in real life. From the standpoint of children's development, theater creates a dialog between the child and other people (the external world) where the co-existential unity of children and adults is formed based on important team activities; thus the children gain the valuable experience for their personal development.

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**Keywords:** Education, theatricalization, child-adult community, co-existence.



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## 1. Introduction

Education as a field of socio-humanitarian practice should seek new conditions and ways to organize the educational process, focused on mutual respect and open communication of all participants, dialog of cultures. Education is always the space "between" an adult and a child, the space between the world of a child and the world of an adult, which is accompanied by their mutual enrichment, a dialog of culture and subcultures of adults and children (Alieva et al., 2017).

It is difficult to overestimate the possibilities of theater in education; theatricalization provides the greatest opportunities for the formation of a student's personality. Theater is a child's path to culture, to moral values, and to self.

It is important to consider the nature of interaction in theatricalization, which generates the emergence of a child-adult commonality (Kruglov, 2017). Since it is here that the most favorable conditions for its formation arise: the space of openness and dialog in interaction, common interest, informal and unregulated relationships, common emotional experiences (from the fictional text and the life of the characters, dramatizations and improvisations, expectations of an overall result, etc.), there is an intersection of beliefs and values of participants in the interaction, the formation of a common value-semantic space.

Researchers have been using theatrical means for pedagogical purposes (S. A. Amonashvili, P. P. Blonsky, A. A. Bryantsev, N. F. Bunakov, E. I. Ilyin, Y. A. Komensky, A. S. Makarenko, S. G. Rozanov, G. L. Roshal, V. N. Soroka-Rosinsky, V. A. Sukhomlinsky, S. Shatsky, G. Vineken, Y. Korchak, A. N. S. Fresne, R. Steiner, etc.).

A large number of studies addresses various aspects of the role of theater in education: aesthetic education (L. M. Nekrasov, E. V. Janovicky, etc.); moral education (S. D. Nikolova, etc.); humanistic education by the means of theater (G. F. Pokhmelkin, R. K. Serezhnikov, etc.); educational influence of a theater group on an individual (L. V. Danilova, T. G. Fine, V. N. Kharkin, etc.); (A. I. Averyanov, etc.); the use of theater as a means of identity formation (T. N. Polyakov, I. V. Prugova, J. A. Khalfin, I. V. Justus, etc.); development of creative potential and activity by means of theatrical art (V. M. Bukatov, I. A. Generalova, A. p. Yershova, L. D. Strelkov, etc.); emotional development of students by means of theater (L. L. Pilipenko, etc.).

## 2. Problem Statement

Nowadays, the gap between generations separates children from adults; they have less and less common interests and shared activities. However, education as a socio-humanitarian practice should create an environment for mutually interesting activities of children and adults and for their shared experiences, making possible the dialog of cultures and building the child-adult community (Selivanova, Stepanov, & Shakurova, 2016).

Issues concerning education of schoolchildren in the light of humanistic ideas have currently gained a considerable relevance (Tagunova, Selivanova, & Valeeva, 2016). The goal of the theory and practice of education is to understand and use socio-humanitarian practices in education, thus providing the interaction with students in meaningful activities resonant with their values, where the best human

qualities and humanistic values, shared and personal, are manifested (S. A. Amonashvili, R. A. Valeeva, I. D. Demakova, V. A. Karakovskiy, S. D. Polyakov, N. L. Selivanova, P. V. Stepanov, I. V. Stepanova, I. A. Tagunova, M. V. Shakurova, etc.).

This approach brings to pedagogical science and practice the ideas of co-existence and dialog (polylogue), revealed in the works of N. M. Borytko, D. V. Grigoriev, Y. V. Gromyko, I. D. Demakova, I. A. Kolesnikova, N. B. Krylova, L. I. Luzina, A.V. Mudrik, N. L. Selivanova, I. Y. Shustova, etc.

Recently, theatricalization has been considered as a complex method of using all the expressive means of art (O. V. Olshansky, T. I. Labelkov); a general socio-cultural, socio-pedagogical method (D. M. Genkin, A. I. Chechetin, V. G. Shabalin, etc.). However, currently there are almost no works devoted to a holistic view of the role of theatricalization in school education as a way of forming an educating child-adult community, which determines the relevance of the research topic and its problematics.

### 3. Research Questions

The first question is education. Education is always the formation of values. Values and meanings appear in different ways, and life creates situations when a person discovers a "long-known truth" as a personal meaning. An adult cannot set the value "from above", without the child's personal experiences and experience of comprehension, they will not take root (Demakova et al., 2019). It is necessary to model and create educational situations where values are manifested, experienced and acquire a personal meaning for students (Demakova & Shustova, 2018).

Karakovskij (2008) noted:

Therefore, we can ... create a subjective reality... that exists within a large society, but lives and evolves following its own rules and laws... Our gatherings are a foundation of our community, and we bring what children like about the camp to their school life. And this life is built on the laws of humanity, honesty (we try not to lie to each other), respect for human beings, friendship, fraternity. We organize a kind of "otherness" in the school compared to what is done outside the school walls. This is not a struggle with society. This, I repeat, is one of the options for living life, an experience of social, human interaction, which is not enough in that reality, and it is absolutely necessary for children by nature. And we immerse them in this reality, they are imbued with it (pp. 46-47).

At present, it is necessary to introduce the category of child-adult co-existence community in the theory and practice of school education. Co-existential child-adult communities have a special significance for education (Shustova et al., 2019). This sense of community with other people as a subjective experience makes an individual sympathize with another person's thoughts, feelings, and values and involuntarily absorbs them, making them their own (Kruglov, 2017). This mechanism underlies the process of education: if there is no feeling of unity between the teacher and the student or it is destroyed, there is no education.

The second issue is the dialog. Dialog is not possible without Co-existence, co-existence cannot happen without dialog. Bakhtin (1996) considers the "event of being" as a meeting point where it is possible to comprehend being in General and the subjective being of a person. Subjects are "the being itself that speaks and communicates", where being is twofold: "this is the convergence point of two

minds, the zone of their internal contact" and it is carried out only in the interaction of two consciousnesses (the self and the other) (Bakhtin, 1996).

The thoughts of Buber (2013) are still relevant:

This reality, whose disclosure has begun in our time, shows the way, leading beyond individualism and collectivism, for the life decision of future generations. Here the genuine third alternative is indicated, the knowledge of which will help to bring about the genuine person again and to establish genuine community (pp. 154-155).

Buber introduces the concept of "between": "... the examples of the true "between", which substantiates itself neither in the participants nor in the real world where they abide alongside with things, but in the most literal sense between them both, as if in some shared dimension" (Buber, 2013, p. 154 – 155). This is a space of a true co-existence where all the things – dialogs, lessons, duels – are true and embraces are real and not ritualized.

The dialog of cultures in education is a meeting in the cognitive world, the culture of the past (knowledge, experience, cultural achievements, life scenarios, historical figures) and the present (modern life interests and orientations, developed traditions and ways of life, new heroes and priorities), which occurs in and outside the classroom in various types and forms of activity.

The third issue is theatricalization: here this word means using theater as a part of the educational process, because here the creation of a performance is not a goal, but a means of nourishing and developing the emotional sphere of the student, a means of his spiritual development, a platform for the formation of communication skills and trying new social roles.

It is important to create conditions where children can analyze, experience and internalize a work of fiction and get into an internal dialog with it. Moreover, a literary work that is stated in curriculum should be studied in a different way: not just by reading, but by referring to it as a material for practical activity. And it is better if the analysis is presented not as an essay, but as a game.

Play, dramatization and theatricalization are a powerful instrument of education and personal development. Theater being the most ancient art generously shares its methods with teachers.

The use of non-traditional methods of development, training and socialization of the individual in a bright, effective form has a long history. And theatricalization is given a special role, since this method is based on the participatory nature of humans. This is due to the fact that the theater is aimed at the development of the emotional and value-based attitude to the world, to oneself and other people rather than at the rational comprehension of the reality. So, in primitive society, the initiation of a teenager, the recognition of his part of the tribe, in fact, was a real theatrical action, built on a certain scenario, with a collective game, fixed texts, use of make-up, costumes and scenery. As Evreinov (2011) notes, "...a prehistoric man, as well as a man of the later culture, made a dramatic performance out of everything: birth of a child, hunting, war, trial and punishment, religious rites including funerals" (p. 9). Apparently, only a life filled with theatricality gained meaning for him, became something that you can really love.

#### **4. Purpose of the Study**

In addition to the educational function and to emotional development, theatricalization at school makes it possible to form the skill of interaction between all participants in the framework of dialog,

openness and trust. That is why experienced teachers used theatricalization in order to form a community between people: teachers and students. It is important to see the role of theatricalization in the formation of a co-existing child-adult community, as a space of dialog and mutual understanding between adults and children.

The purpose of the article is to reveal this topic and show the history of the issue. The article presents a historical view of the problems of theatricalization as a dialog between the past and the present, revealing the relevance of the ideas of the past for modern socio-cultural practices in education.

## 5. Research Methods

The following research methods will be used to solve the tasks and test the hypothesis: analysis of philosophical, psychological, pedagogical literature on the problem under study; analysis of documents, pedagogical observation, analysis of the products of creative activity of students, experimental work on the formation of a child-adult community in the organization of theatrical performances with adolescent students.

## 6. Findings

As an independent art form, the theater was formed in the times of antiquity. According to the sources, the ancient sages in their "schools" used theatricalization extensively. For example, Plato (V century BC) argued that education should be designed in accordance with the "natural capabilities and future activities of the child", and games should be carefully selected, since " ... the nature of games very seriously affects the establishment of laws and determines whether they will be strong or not».

In the Roman rhetorical schools of the I-II centuries BC, theatrical techniques were also widely used. Ovid, Seneca, and Cicero mentioned in their writings that teachers improved the oratorical skills of their students by making them re-create and stage the disputes that had been held by famous historical figures. These disputes often turned into real dramatic scenes.

In the middle Ages, school examinations were held in the form of performance in the Latin language. Students took part in performances held in city squares. In addition to entertaining comedies, farces, and jokes, moralities were also played – dramatic performances on religious topics that had a didactic and moralizing character. At the dawn of the medieval school theater students played for themselves and for their own development, but shortly afterwards the didactic message of such performances was replaced by entertainment. Special attention is paid to solemn performances on service days. These performances are beginning to be attended by representatives of the aristocracy.

The Czech humanist teacher Y.A. Komenskij (1592-1670) was actively involved in the educational process of the theater. He called school "a place for educational fun", where "... learning for both teachers and students is in itself pleasant and attractive and is (or at least should be) like a game or fun" (Komenskij, 2000, p. 258). Komenskij supported his theory with a system of textbooks, and his play "School-game" became a real illustration for his encyclopedia "Open Door of Languages". He was the first to introduce the performing arts to schoolchildren and to involve them in stage performance thus creating an educational environment at school.

At that time, Western European school theater came to Ukraine. It was from there that Tsar Alexis I brought Simeon Polotsky, a theater organizer, to Moscow and entrusted him not only with the education of his children, but also with the directorship of the Zaikonospasskaya school, where future officials studied. Thus, Polotsky becomes the founder of the school of dramatic art in Russia. Having realized the educational value of school performances, he instilled in his followers an interest in them. School theater under Alexis I (1629- 1676) was aimed at transmission of the cultural values to youngsters in a vivid and easy-to-understand form so that these values were internalized.

Therefore, in the 17th century, the history of school theater began in Russia, which led to the appearance of classical repertory theater in the 18th century, and in the 20th century presented a whole galaxy of teachers whose educational systems were based on the use of theatrical means.

At the time of the reign Peter I, S. Polotsky's ideas were implemented at the Moscow Slavic-Greek-Latin Academy and the Medical Academy on the Yauza river. Shortly thereafter both spiritual and secular educational institutions included the performing arts in their curricula. The theater helped children learn foreign languages as well as the Russian literature, poetry and declamation. New plays written in the Russian language were introducing children to historical and modern-life events; the plays were created by teachers (F. Prokopovich) and staged by students. All this creates a special educational atmosphere that unites all participants in the educational process and even affects school life. So, for instance, for school performances, which are usually very sumptuously furnished, separate rooms are assigned. These performances are attended by representatives of the aristocracy – so gradually the school theater turns into a public theater. Despite the fact that the moral and religious character of these ideas remains, they become more secular and more modernistic. During this time, the school theater helps to popularize the ideas of social transformation.

During the reign of Anna Ioannovna in the Land-gentry corps – a closed educational institution for nobles – the theater was primarily used for learning, e.g. in order to master the French language the students staged Voltaire's tragedies. Cadets took an active part in court festivals where they excelled to such an extent that the next ruler, Elizabeth, issued a decree on the Foundation of the Russian Cadet and Court Theater. Under the leadership of A. P. Sumarokov, the founder of Russian drama, a former cadet of the corps, 32 performances were played over 2 years (1750-1752). They were written in the Russian language. I.I. Betskoy, the head of the cadet corps, encouraged theater classes in his institution, as he believed that it created "a humanistic educational environment that promoted the encyclopedic nature of education" (Selivanova et al., 2016, p.6).

Moscow soon catches up: in 1755 the first Russian University was founded, where an educational theater was created, directed by another Russian playwright, M. M. Kheraskov. Students of the University's gymnasium stage performances on a regular basis; their plays are not religious anymore, but rather based on everyday stories. Sometimes these performances are performed on the stage of the Italian comic Opera.

At the end of the XVIII century, the moral "school drama" ceases to exist in its pure form, but stage performances remain in educational institutions. What are the goals of using theatricalization?

The primary goals were educational: learning spoken Latin and other foreign languages, acquiring a certain "ease" in conversations, learning the skill of public speaking.

Nevertheless, we should not forget about the educational component: encouraging creativity in students, forming an idea of moral values, developing interest in their native language and native history.

We see the same trends in the first half of the nineteenth century. For example, in the Tsarskoye Selo Lyceum (1812), during all the years of study, theatrical plays are composed and performed by students and teachers.

In the second half of the XIX century school theaters become a widespread educational tool, but they do not serve a didactic function anymore. Most often, performances in educational institutions are being staged from time to time, without any objective in mind; thus the educational value of the theater decreases.

In the first quarter of the XX century, a number of pedagogical theories appeared that have an impact on Russian pedagogy. For example, the pedocentric revolution according to which the child is the center of the educational process, and the goal of education is to discover and develop the personality through "doing". Another "theory of play" (Young, 2016), based on the "dramatic instinct" hardwired in the child's growing body and in his very nature with his desire to play a role. Yet another theory is Evreinov's (2011) theory of the theatricalization of life emphasizes that everything in the life of an individual is determined by their 'dramatic instinct': when a child acts constantly, the objects around him become objects of his adventurous theatricalization.

At this stage of the use of theatricalization in the school educational process, the interpenetration of domestic and Western European humanistic educational systems increases, and a common vision of educational functions of theatricalization is built. This phenomenon is characterized by the following trends:

*The absolute value of childhood should be appreciated.* Education must prioritize the child's interests above all and adapt the school to the child, and not the child to the school. It must be acknowledged that the school deprives children of their basic right – the right to play; it strips them of their innate creativity and of their childhood itself; it "puts old people's heads on young shoulders." The goal of the educational process is to bring up a happy person who can fulfill himself in the world and find the joy in communicating with others (Goodchild, 2012).

*The following principles emphasize the importance of open subject-subject relations* and creative and practical collaboration of a teacher and a child: the principle of mutual respect between teachers and students communicating in the form of a dialog facilitated by the inspiring atmosphere; ensuring the respect of the child's personality and trust for him; the principle of negation of direct influence on the will of student; the principle of equality in all matters (from the interpretation of the role prior to the approval of sketches, and costume design) and commitment jointly taken decisions.

*Art education* creates an environment that promotes the child's self-realization and self-improvement. This is the reason for appreciating creativity as "one of the utmost means of nurturing the humanitarian spirit; and the theater is an instrument for transformation of the individual's potential, and theater and theatricalization actions as a means for self-expression and realization of the child's creative abilities and potential (Freinet, 1990). Experiences, knowledge and feelings acquired by the child in the process of theatricalization become a means of his development (Dewey, 2013).

*Special attitude to freedom and responsibility in creative activity.* The proponents of humanistic educational systems see freedom as non-interference in the development of a child and elimination of any pressure (Humes, 2015). They believe that the true essence of a human consists in creative freedom as the highest expression of the human being (Steiner, 2013). On the other hand, much attention is paid to the formation of a sense of responsibility, not only for oneself, but also for others (G. Vineken, S. T. Shatsky). In some pedagogical systems, freedom and discipline (A. C. Makarenko), creativity and freedom are being discussed as interconnected phenomena.

*The predominance of sensory experience over intellectual experience.* The main method of artistic perception is not only emotions, but also thought processes (Hobson & Neill, 2016). Drama is interpreted as a way of thinking based on the ability of everyone to "enter into the personality" of another, to put themselves in the other's shoes, to look through the eyes of another person, to think their thoughts and feel their feelings. Hence, the goal of education is to develop children's ability to solve problems and choose the best ways (Y. Korchak). The influence of feelings on mental development is revealed. In turn, their development is closely linked to an active life position, with creativity (Neill, 2013). Therefore, the essence of humanistic educational systems looks like this: first the artistic, and then the intellectual. In child's development there are three stages of thinking: 1) grasping the meaning through mimicking purposeful behaviors of adults and actualizing it through his own actions; 2) thinking as metaphorical and symbolic understanding of world events; 3) thinking as a personally motivated question (Steiner, 2013).

## **7. Conclusion**

To conclude, we outline the pedagogical potential of theatricalization. 1) The educational potential: due to theater in an accessible form, we learn historical facts, get acquainted with the worldview of mankind; 2) the developing potential: thanks to theater, we get emotional development, sympathize with the characters, experience the emotions they experience; we get experiences that are often unavailable to us in ordinary life; 3) the pedagogical potential: due to theatricalization, we enter into dialog with others, with the world (understanding other people as well as the life and events of different periods of the history). A co-existential child-adult community is formed between the participants on the basis of joint meaningful activities, where the students receive valuable experiences necessary for the development of their personality.

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