

Educazione alla teatralità come forma di didattica destrutturata

Theatral Education as a unstructured didactic form

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Abstract

This article is the basis of a research which aims to address the correlation between Theatrical Education and the possibility of improving children's learning skills, stimulating the development of Emotional Intelligence and TOM. UNESCO has promoted, through the global conferences on artistic education, educational and training objectives, concerning the educational value of experiences with artistic performances, relied on by the studies of the Faculty of Education. This step has committed the Member States, and therefore Italy, to design and execute high-level programs to meet the educational needs of children and young people in an appropriate manner with the reality in which they will have to fit in. The H.E.R.A.C.L.E. research laboratory has recently carried out a work program called LATE, ("Learning and activation through experience"), aimed at identifying a framework capable of bringing into dialogue evolutionary and educational perspectives, to detect the possession of fundamental skills and knowledge for the development of "Cross-modal skills" a sample kindergarten's student of Roman territory. We wanted to investigate how important a multilateral and transversal didactic path since in the preschool age could be, to enhance the potential of the child in function of a practical access to primary school, being able to reach the goal of realizing appropriate didactic paths for the qualification, the strengthening and enhancement of the child's abilities through experiential and bodily training in teaching processes. The research is developing in Milan's district analyzing the influence of theatricality in the kindergarten. The sample involves several kindergartens for a total of 150 children between 3-6 age. the project involves the experimentation of dramatic play, a training and educational activity, which aims at the global development of the individual. The aim of this experience is to bring the child to develop of his creativity, through the use of imagination but, at the same time, it also allows him to favour his integration into the group, the knowledge of himself and of the others and building one's own way of seeing reality.

Questo articolo è la base di una ricerca che mira ad affrontare la correlazione tra l'Educazione Teatrale e la possibilità di migliorare le capacità di apprendimento dei bambini, stimolando lo sviluppo dell'Intelligenza Emotiva e della TOM. L'UNESCO ha promosso, attraverso le conferenze globali sull'educazione artistica, gli obiettivi educativi e formativi, riguardanti il valore didattico delle esperienze con spettacoli artistici, invocato dagli studi delle Facoltà di Scienze della Formazione. Questo passo ha impegnato gli Stati membri, e quindi l'Italia, a progettare e realizzare programmi di alto livello per soddisfare le esigenze educative dei bambini e dei ragazzi nel modo appropriato con la realtà in cui dovranno adattarsi. Il laboratorio di ricerca H.E.R.A.C.L.E. ha recentemente realizzato un programma di lavoro denominato LATE, "Apprendimento e attivazione attraverso l'esperienza", finalizzato all'individuazione di un quadro capace di portare in

dialogo prospettive evolutive ed educative, per rilevare il possesso di competenze e conoscenze fondamentali per lo sviluppo di “Abilità cross-modali”. Lo studio è stato realizzato su campione di bambini frequentanti una scuola materna del territorio romano. Abbiamo voluto indagare quanto sia importante un percorso didattico multilaterale e trasversale fin dall’età prescolare, per valorizzare il potenziale del bambino in funzione di un accesso pratico alla scuola elementare essere in grado di raggiungere l’obiettivo di realizzare percorsi didattici adeguati per la qualificazione, il rafforzamento e la valorizzazione delle capacità del bambino attraverso la formazione esperienziale e fisica nei processi di insegnamento. La ricerca si sta sviluppando nella provincia di Milano analizzando l’influenza della teatralità, come modalità interdisciplinare, nella scuola materna. Il campione coinvolge diversi asili infantili per un totale di 150 bambini tra 3-6 anni. Il progetto prevede la sperimentazione di un gioco drammatico, un’attività formativa ed educativa, che mira allo sviluppo globale dell’individuo. Lo scopo di questa esperienza è di portare il bambino a sviluppare la sua creatività, attraverso l’uso dell’immaginazione ma, allo stesso tempo, di favorire la sua integrazione nel gruppo, la conoscenza di se stesso e degli altri e di costruire il proprio modo di vedere la realtà.

Keywords

Teatro, Didattica, Programmi Destruutturati, Intelligenza Emotiva, TOM

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Introduction¹

UNESCO has promoted, through the global conferences on artistic education, educational and training objectives, concerning the educational value of experiences with artistic performances, relied on by the studies of the Faculty of Education. This step has committed the Member States, and therefore Italy, to design and execute high-level programs to meet the educational needs of children and young people in an appropriate manner with the reality in which they will have to fit in.

Law 107/2015, (the subsequent “Strategic guidelines of the educational use of theatrical activities for the 2016-2017 school year”) and the Memorandum of Understanding of 4th February 2016 (signed between MIUR and Mibact, on the theme “Theatre and Cinema for the School”), promote Theatre Education at the center of planning in schools.

- The guidelines are intended to provide schools (of all types and levels) with macro indications on the methodological strategies on educational values in relation to the introduction of theatrical activities in the teaching methods of schools, working in relation to a common theoretical-pedagogical and didactic anthology.

According to the “Strategic Indications”, education in theatricality has a fundamental pedagogical relevance, if it is used as educational function, its effectiveness will correspond to the awareness of schools about the reasons why this choice is due to historical evolution and new needs educational results for pupils of different levels and school levels.

Indeed, theatre allows students to “discover and share values and interact with peers and adults, and they also need to listen to others, even if different, as a resource.”

The Ministry hopes that this possibility be appropriately constructed and enhanced to become an integral part of the Educational Offer. In summary, the text the “Strategic guidelines for the educational use of theatrical activities for the 2016/2017 school year” comes to life by

1 Il manoscritto è il risultato di un lavoro collettivo degli autori, il cui specifico contributo è da riferirsi come segue: Stefania Morsanuto i paragrafi 1,3; Elèna Cipollone paragrafo 2, Francesco Peluso Cassese paragrafo 4, Introduzione e Conclusioni

law 107, which propose to:

- • Make children and young people aware of the educational and cultural values of the theatre;
- • Provide schools with concrete indications for introducing theatrical activity in a stable way in teaching procedures;
- • Bring the good practices, already widespread in many institutions, in the system and make them systematic on a fundamental theme for Italian cultural identity.

The document is divided into two parts. The first contains “Theoretical indications for the promotion of theatrical activities”, while the second is “Operational guidelines for the management of theatrical experiences”.

In literature there are numerous studies which report how making of music, dance and theatre activate a multitude of brain structures involved in cognitive processes such as memory, sensorimotor functions and emotional processing (Koelsch & Siebel, 2005; Koelsch, Siebel, & Fritz, 2010; Zatorre, Chen and Penhune, 2007). Recent scientific research suggests and supports the idea that the value of theatre play can become a means for developing social skills (Copeland, 2011; Doenyas, 2016; Kamps, Mason, and Heitzman-Powell, 2017).

In general it is emphasized how the creative arts provide and enhance the developmental phases of the process of growth, inasmuch as they enable children to emotional literacy and to understand and manage their emotions, both to help them understand the desires and emotions of others (Camilleri, 2007).

In this context, the present study aims to study and analyse whether the influence of “deconstructed” educational programs can stimulate the development of emotional skills and mentalization in the developmental age.

The H.E.R.A.C.L.E. research laboratory has recently carried out a work program called LATE, (“Learning and activation through experience”), aimed at identifying a framework capable of bringing into dialogue evolutionary and educational perspectives, to detect the possession of fundamental skills and knowledge for the development of “Cross-modal skills” (body-emotional-empathic) in nursery school students in the Roman territory.

We wanted to investigate how important a multilateral and transversal didactic path since in the preschool age could be, to enhance the potential of the child in function of a practical access to primary school, being able to reach the goal of realizing appropriate didactic paths for the qualification, the strengthening and enhancement of the child’s abilities through experiential and bodily training in teaching processes.

The research confirmed the initial hypothesis, highlighting how «defining the importance of a multilateral and transversal educational path since pre-school age, is useful to enhance the potential of the child in function of an early and / or functional access to primary school».

Through play, the favourite channel of children, behaviours belonging to the macro category of non-verbal communication are acted out and cognitive processes, such as memory and language, are enhanced. The results, (derived from studies that compare structured teaching with unstructured one), point out that the interconnections between perception, action, emotion and cognition, produce molecular changes with a relative improvement in the learning process, finding that experiential learning, the neuro - didactics, enactive learning and activity based intervention move on different but heterogeneous aspects and lead us to consider the body as a mediator of the acquisition and development of individual and pro-social skills.

This research project wants to be the evolution of the previous work, investigating the interaction of the dramatic play activity, elaborated in the project of Education for Theatricality, carried out within the school time (kindergarten), with children from three to six years old.

All the Theatrical Educators, who collaborate in the research, apply the same methodology under the Scientific Direction of Prof. Gaetano Oliva, Professor of Animation Theatre at the Catholic University of the Sacred Heart of Milan, Piacenza and Brescia.

In details, the specific objectives proposed consist in the evaluation of linguistic, emotional and social competences in children aged from 3 to 6 years, with the aim of supporting the

importance that mentalization emotions and competences play in the evolutionary sphere, in influencing directly cognitive processes and learning. Furthermore we want to confirm the importance of educating, through deconstructed educational interventions, the recognition and management of the emotional, mentalization and personality components of the child in a temperament of pro-sociality.

1. Scientific context and reference literature

As already mentioned, there are numerous researches that in recent years have been focusing on these aspects, highlighting how the creative arts are able to enhance the developmental phases of the growth process of a child.

In recent years, theatrical play is seen as a relatively new educational approach within the school system and is used as an alternative teaching method to promote social skills in students with different disabilities, considering how the impact of theatre can promote development of social skills also in students with autistic syndromes within an inclusive environment (Brandalise, 2015; Kasari, RotheramFuller, Locke, & Gulsrud, 2012).

Within the Social Cognition, or rather the branch of psychology which deals with understanding the processes of elaboration of social information that are at the base of our behaviours and our perceptions, we can define both “hot” processes, with which the ability to know how to share the other’s emotional states (emotional resonance or empathy), as well as “cold” processes, identifying the ability to know how to assume the perspective of the other through the reading of his mental states, wishes and beliefs (cognitive-mentalization empathy or Theory of Mind).

Since there is no cognitive experience that is devoid of emotional colouring, we want to emphasize that the synergy between cognitive progress and social interaction, especially in pre-school age, is fundamental, arguing that social exchanges in which children participate play a significant role in the growth of their understanding of the other (Peluso, Bonfiglio, Torregiani, Melchiori, 2018).

The child, for his healthy development, needs to live everyday communicative situations which are stimulating, gratifying and above all clear. In fact, right from attending kindergarten, the child comes into constant contact with peers and adults with whom he spends a great deal of time and with whom he establishes solid and meaningful relationships, communicating regularly, transferring and receiving information (Peluso, Bonfiglio, Torregiani, Melchiori, 2018).

In this way emotional education becomes an indispensable dimension, which sees children as protagonists in relation with the educators, whose primary task is to implement strategies and to find suitable tools and methodologies for the development of these skills. New professional skills are therefore required for educators, based on neuroscientific and neuro-educational knowledge, in order to work on the cognitive, emotional and relational level (Di Giacinto, 2012).

Through an emotional training there could be an improvement in the child’s ability to perceive, understand, express and manage emotion, in order to become an individual able to face an environment in continuous evolution, an individual that emerges as adapted, motivated and confident .

2. Teaching and programming

The dramatization

The project “Education to Theatricality”, conceived by Professor Gaetano Oliva, leads the subject to train oneself through personal experience, self-discovery, of his own possibilities and limits, in order to express himself and communicate.

In the 3-6 age group, the project involves the experimentation of dramatic play, a training and educational activity, which aims at the global development of the individual. The aim of this experience is to bring the child to develop of his creativity, through the use of imagination but, at the same time, it also allows him to favour his integration into the group, the knowledge of himself and of the others and building one's own way of seeing reality.

The dramatic game is a space that makes the child aware: "the child-actor must not limit himself to imitating the reality that surrounds him, but must reinvent, design and give it life in work group". Through this experience the child begins to become aware of himself and of his expressive abilities such as gesture, voice, movement and of his own narrative abilities. Creativity allows the freedom of the individual, thanks to the enhancement of all the languages of the person, so that it can express himself. Furthermore, through interaction with the group, the child can improve interpersonal skills.

According to this methodology it is essential, for the purpose of the integral development of the child, to support the moments of curricular activities with spaces and times to face one's own individuality, through the experimentation of a multiplicity of languages that stimulate the child to be always "different" and not classifiable within fixed patterns.

"The dramatic game, in fact, relates different aspects of the person: the cognitive aspect, since the playful activity is a useful tool for learning content; the aspect of the relationship, as a trial of positive relationships with others; the emotional aspect, since it touches the field of feelings and emotions; the cultural aspect, as the learning experience of sufficient theatrical contents generates a change in the heritage of knowledge, guaranteeing some tools to live one's reality with awareness; the value aspect, since it is an experience that could and should provide the meaningful answers ". Dramatic play is therefore seen as a means of achieving greater self-awareness, greater knowledge of one's abilities, from early childhood.

The aims of the experimentation of the dramatic game include personal, psychophysical and social growth, the development of relational skills that favour experiences of inclusion among peers and the enhancement of the potential of each child.

In the project there are spaces dedicated to verbal and non-verbal language and the manipulation of materials, which will be divided into three main phases:

- first phase: consists of a welcome moment;
- second phase: during which the activities are carried out
- third phase: characterized by moments of sharing experiences and reflections on the activities carried out.

"Each meeting will aim to be a playful and an educational moment in which, for each participant, techniques and work materials will be made available to stimulate the imagination." The child will then be placed in a group of peers, where the adult can collaborate dynamically, becoming a playmate himself.

The project will be carried out in different schools where each Theatrical Educator will follow the guidelines of the project conceived by Professor Oliva, but having the possibility to modify and shape the teaching on their own knowledge and children's needs.

3. Programming

As previously mentioned, the various Educators for Theatricality can modify and adapt the program of the lessons, having a basis the project of Education for Theatricality. Below is an example of programming, which will be applied in this study, divided into sixteen 45-minute meetings, during which children will experience the dramatic play in order to acquire the basic elements of theatre grammar, which will end with the setting up a small performance. During these meetings verbal and non-verbal language will be tested.

The project is constituted in three phases: a first phase in which there will be a moment of welcome, a second phase in which the various activities will be carried out and finally a third

phase in which the experiences will be shared with families. The themes will be different for each meeting and the final objectives will lead children to know themselves and to use their bodies as a means of communication, to have greater mastery of their emotions and their own experience in order to be able to express it and share it with others and to be able to manage relationships with peers. The last meeting will be an open meeting with parents, where children will let them experience the experience they experienced during the workshop.

4. Tools

During the course of the project, two tests will be administered in order to assess whether there is actually a strengthening of skills. The two tests chosen are AEPS® and NEPSY-II.

1. AEPS® is a criteria-based assessment, covering all domains of development and encompassing many aspects related to various standards. AEPS® (as a system) aims to counter practices that generate scores or results that are:

- Not valid for small children;
- Inappropriate to be used with small children with disabilities;
- Difficult to use for the development of significant goals and contents of intervention.

AEPS® is a complete system that links together assessment, goal development, intervention and continuous monitoring and evaluation. The components of the AEPS® test provide relevant information from a didactic point of view, significant and functional. It will be used to investigate the social area.

2. The NEPSY-II is a battery of tests, which provides a neuropsychological evaluation of the cognitive abilities of subjects from 3 to 16 years of age, in relation to specific cognitive domains. The tool allows both a global assessment and a survey aimed at one or more domains, and is able to ascertain cognitive abilities or typical disorders generally diagnosable for the first time during childhood. The NEPSY-II therefore enables accurate diagnosis and planning of the interventions necessary for recovery for full functionality at school and at home.

For this project four tests will be administered that will evaluate the phonological elaboration, narrative memory, the theory of the mind and the recognition of emotions. The tests will be administered before the start of the activity and at the meeting session ended, to see if this working method has positively influenced the development of the areas indicated. The hope of a gap in the repeatability of the test, in relation to the national average (of Nepsy validation), could indicate the potential of this methodology.

- L4 is composed of two exercises designed to assess the child's phonological awareness: it is required to repeat a word and then to create a new one by omitting a syllable or a phoneme, or replacing one phoneme with another.
- M6 evaluates the narrative memory in three conditions, based on a free re-enactment, guided and on the condition of recognition: a story will be told to the child and he will be asked to repeat it, after which questions will be asked about what he did not remember.
- S01 assesses the ability to understand mental constructs such as beliefs, intentions, deceptions, emotions, fantasy, fiction as well as the ability to understand that others have their thoughts, ideas and feelings that may be different from ours: the child listen to various scenarios or observes different figures, then he is asked to answer several questions which require an understanding of the other's point of view.
- S02 consists of four tests that assess the ability to recognize emotional states from pictures of children's faces: in the first test the child declares if two faces in two different photos represent faces with the same emotion; in the second test the child chooses two photos with faces that express the same expression between three-four faces; in the

third test the child is shown a page with five faces and the child must choose between four faces which represents the same emotion as the face placed at the top; finally in the fourth test the child is shown briefly a face and by memory he must choose two photos that represent the same emotion of the face presented previously.

As can be seen from the graph, one of the first steps in this research project focused on a path of homogeneous training for all teachers, in order to make clear what the basis were and to share the method to be applied.

Subsequently, the focus was on choosing the sample of children that corresponded to the required characteristics, accompanied by the parental authorization to participate to the project. Subsequently, the necessary tests were then researched and the teachers trained in the proper use of the equipment; in this phase, the technical and pedagogical supervision of the “Educ actors” was fundamental. The final phase will instead focus on the collection and processing of the data obtained.

Articulation of the project and realization time (GANTT)

		2019																																						
		DECEMBER				JANUARY					FEBRUARY					MARCH					APRIL					MAY					JUNE					JULY				
PROJECT	ACTIVITIES	48	49	50	51	52	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30				
THEATRICAL EDUCATION	Planning	█																																						
	Definition of teaching method	█																																						
	Convention with educational agencies						█																																	
	Personalized timing of activities						█																																	
	Project presentation "Education to Theatricality"						█	█	█	█																														
	Sample identification						█	█	█	█	█																													
	Presentation to families						█	█	█	█	█																													
	Test processing						█	█	█	█	█																													
	Initial administration test											█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
	Activities											█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█			
	Final administration test																																							
	Pedagogical supervision of the "Educ actors"																																							
	Data processing																																							
	Drafting conclusions																																							

Conclusions

The present research project intends to evaluate whether a deconstructed didactic activity of this type, which allows the child to express himself freely without limits and without impositions, actually helps him in the development of skills, particularly linguistic, motor, expressive and emotional.

Through the application of Theatrical Education the child experiences a whole series of activities aimed at his education as a complete individual, who knows himself and is able to relate to others.

Given the close correlation between emotional expressiveness and learning, it is hoped that this type of teaching can therefore enhance the child’s learning: if the results were congruent with the expectations it would be interesting to apply this teaching in a transversal manner, inserting it in the normal training pathway of children, in order to make the most of their potential and the functionality of theatrical education.

From this point of view, a preliminary training and teacher training course would be necessary, based on a study of the basics of theatricality, so as to provide him with guidelines for “interpreting” his teaching.

The criticalities of this research are mainly related to the timing of administration, since, the sample, is conspicuous and difficult to obtain spaces during school time.

A second issue is instead linked to AEPS, since providing teachers with a tool that provides a different and very accurate type of observation of children, requires them to modify the formamentis which in some cases may reveal resistance and in others may result in a facilitating element.

It will be interesting to analyse the underlying cause of this dichotomy of behaviour.

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