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KIDS ON THE CAMPAIGN TRAIL:
PROCESS DRAMA, SOCIAL STUDIES, AND ASSESSMENT
IN THE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM

DISSERTATION

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for
the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Graduate
School of The Ohio State University

By

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* * * * *

The Ohio State University
1998

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ABSTRACT

Teachers are faced with the challenge of individualizing district courses of study in order to meet a diverse range of student interests and abilities. They are expected to ensure that all students successfully meet a comprehensive uniform list of pupil performance objectives, and yet individual student abilities, background and experiences are often quite diverse. Compounding this challenge is the increasing need to prepare students to pass an ever-expanding battery of standardized tests. This study describes how this challenge was addressed through the use of process drama in a third grade social studies class. The study describes how process drama was used in the classroom to help make the social studies curriculum content more meaningful and more accessible to students. This study also considers ways in which process drama experiences in social studies might support improved performance on standardized proficiency tests. The narrow range of standardized assessment was also considered. The types of student growth and development which are not typically reflected on standardized assessments are also described. Some possible assessment options for evaluating student progress in lessons supported by process drama are suggested.

Dedicated to my mother and father

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Finally, I would like to thank my family, whose love, support, and encouragement have helped me continue on this path. A very special thank you goes to my parents who have always supported me in whatever I have attempted to do. They will always serve as a very special source of inspiration to me.

Thank you all for being a part of my journey.

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FIELDS OF STUDY

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This study explores how process drama can be used to teach social studies in the elementary classroom and how process drama experiences in the classroom might support improved performance on standardized social studies proficiency tests. The study considers the diversity of learning experiences that occur in drama education and explores categories of learning experiences that are not typically assessed in standardized student performance evaluations. The study suggests some possible assessment options for evaluating student progress in social studies lessons supported by drama. The theoretical framework for this study combines three areas: Vygotsky's social constructivist learning theory, theories in Drama Education, and education in the primary classroom.

Statement of the Problem

One of the most daunting challenges that teachers face is the task of individualizing a district-wide course of study so that it meets a diverse range of student interests and abilities. Teachers are expected to ensure that all students successfully meet a considerable list of pupil performance objectives, and yet individual interests, background,

and experiences often present considerable challenges as teachers attempt to make the curriculum relevant and meaningful to the students' individual lives.

Teachers are also faced with the increasingly difficult challenge of meeting those individual student needs while ensuring that virtually all of their students are similarly prepared to pass the battery of standardized tests which serve as benchmarks for student achievement and promotion. Teachers have come under increasing pressure as public disappointment with student achievement has led to increasing criticism of the schools and more vocal and frequent calls for accountability in the schools. As the criticism has intensified, a proliferation of standardized assessments has occurred. Teachers are faced with meeting two very different goals. Sound educational theory and practice dictate that learning is highly individualized and that students incorporate new information within their own individual schemas or frameworks of accumulated knowledge. Therefore, one goal of the teacher is to provide learning experiences which are highly individualized and enable students to make sense of new content by incorporating it into their own framework of experience and knowledge. However, teachers must also meet the additional goal of preparing each student for a singularly non-individualized standardized assessment of their learning. These somewhat oppositional goals present a very complex and challenging problem for classroom teachers.

This study addresses these conflicting demands within the framework of the social studies classroom. It addresses the following questions that challenge us as social studies teachers:

1. How can we make the social studies curriculum more relevant and meaningful to each individual student?
2. How can we facilitate social studies content learning through process drama in a way that will support improved performance on mandated standardized assessments?
3. How might we promote and evaluate development of social, emotional and higher-level thinking skills, such as decision-making, reasoning, and metacognitive skills within the social studies drama education experience?

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to explore and reflect upon ways in which teachers might make social studies more relevant to students' lives and more closely aligned with their individual interests and abilities through drama education. Additionally, it considers the impact of drama experiences on their performance on standardized assessments. More specifically, the question for me as a social studies teacher was: "How can I make the study of government and the election process more interesting and meaningful to the lives of my third graders?" This study also examines student growth and development in areas other than social studies content. Social studies is a very broad-based discipline and yet current social studies assessment measures remain quite narrow. In both drama education and social studies, there is significant potential for student growth in areas such as critical thinking, problem solving, perspective taking, negotiating, and interpersonal relations. Examples are drawn from my classroom experiences to illustrate student growth and

development in these areas as well as in social studies content areas. This study also explores connections between the social studies content contained within the context of the drama and the content assessed on the social studies proficiency tests. Finally, some suggestions for assessment and evaluation are offered for social studies lessons using drama.

An Overview of Methodology and Philosophy

The collaborative nature of the classroom teaching arrangement I was engaged in as I approached this project was a significant factor in its development and progress. I was fortunate to serve as a member of a team of teachers who were committed to collaborative teaching as a means of providing support for both identified and non-identified learning disabled students in our classroom. This unique teaching arrangement provided me with invaluable support and feedback, as well as multiple perspectives on many drama events as they evolved. The insight and questioning of my teammates always prompted me to deeper reflection and constantly challenged my assumptions.

As a teacher-researcher, I have been collecting teaching and learning data for a variety of projects for a period of three years. Although the data that I gathered for this particular project occurred over the course of one year, the observations I have conducted and insights that I have gained on learning and development over the course of these last three years has significantly influenced both my teaching and researching. I have observed that children make sense of their world and incorporate new knowledge into that world through experience and reflection. I have learned that my role as teacher is more

accurately defined as that of a facilitator, as I serve rather to support the children in their quest to discover and make meaning for themselves. Although I have often wished that I could “teach” a specific skill or concept, it has become all too apparent that it is not possible for me to do so. The best that I can do is to provide continuous support and guidance to help the children discover and construct the meaning for themselves.

The writings of Vygotsky and Dewey significantly impacted my development as a teacher-researcher, and I have analyzed and drawn upon their theories throughout the course of this study. The theory and practice of drama educators Dorothy Heathcote, Gavin Bolton, and Cecily O’Neill have also significantly influenced my teaching and research practice and I have reflected upon and utilized their theories and writings throughout this project.

This project, intended as an exploratory study, developed and evolved through an on-going process of reflection. My intent is to describe not only the learning processes of the students but my own learning processes, as well. I have assumed a reflective practitioner-researcher stance in the study which honors the intuitive and emergent processes inherent within this research endeavor.

Data collection for this study utilized a variety of methods, which included video and audio taping, field notes, journal reflections, planning records, and classroom work samples, formal and informal assessments, and interviews.

The analysis of data was not a separate final entity of this project, but rather was ongoing and interwoven throughout the project. Data analysis significantly influenced the emergent nature of the study. Analysis of data was conducted at three levels. First, data

was analyzed by content. This was an ongoing process which occurred throughout the project and continued after all classroom drama work had ended and data gathering was complete. As I gathered and reviewed notes and tapes, I noted patterns and categories that emerged, and considered how the drama structure or interactions might have influenced these occurrences. Second, I engaged in a comparative analysis in which I developed categories and looked for relationships among the categories. I attempted to scrutinize the data in more detail and explore questions and issues which emerged. Third, throughout the course of the study, I continued to revisit the social constructivist and drama education literature as a means of deepening my reflection and reshaping my practice. I believe that some description of what I mean by reflection might also be helpful. The term “reflection” can be perceived as a primarily introspective activity which requires a more inward type of thinking and contemplation of self. However, the type of reflection to which I refer is a more “interactive” type of reflection which demands not only discovery of oneself and one’s philosophical and theoretical groundings, but also a “recognition of how one interacts with others, and how others read and are read by this interaction” (Taylor, 1996, p. 27). Throughout the course of the study, my teammates served as active partners in my reflection, and through discussion and ongoing analysis of the project, this reflection influenced and shaped the emergent design of the drama and research. Donald Schon’s concept of reflection-in-action (as opposed to the more traditional reflection-on-action) helps to illustrate the value of a more emergent inquiry which is shaped by reflection.

When someone reflects-in-action, he [sic] becomes a researcher in the practice context. He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case. His inquiry is not limited to a deliberation about means which depends on a prior agreement about ends. He does not keep means and ends separate, but defines them interactively as he frames a problematic situation. . . .Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry. . . . (Schon, 1983, p.268)

Origins of the Study

The study of the structure of the United States government and the election process was included in our third grade social studies curriculum. We developed and taught a unit which covered these curriculum topics through a variety of projects and activities. As we worked our way through the unit, we observed that the students did not appear to be highly engaged or enthusiastic about the material. They were also struggling with the difficult and unfamiliar vocabulary. We attempted to more carefully explain new vocabulary words and included more “real-life” events from the current presidential campaign in an effort to raise their level of interest. However, the students continued to demonstrate little interest or enthusiasm. Upon completion of the unit, many students demonstrated significant misunderstandings about the structure of government and the election process. Their lack of interest and misunderstandings indicated that a new approach to teaching this material was clearly needed. Thus, it was the teaching of this unit that served as the springboard for this study.

The study is a description of the drama-centered social studies unit which was developed to teach students about the election process and the structure of government.

I will describe the drama experiences in we participated and my observations and analysis of those events. I will also consider how drama experiences might support improved performance on standardized assessments, and how multiple dimensions in learning and development might be promoted and assessed.

To clarify the beginnings of the study, I will begin with a description of the initial social studies unit. Our initial unit involved the following learning activities:

1. Each student selected a president to study. The students selected biographical material to read, and then prepared a written report on their president.
2. Each student constructed a three-dimensional representation of their president from a variety of materials which included nylon, metal coat hangers, yarn, felt, buttons, and assorted other materials.
3. A collection of literature was assembled which explained the election process, political conventions, the electoral college, and the branches and duties of the government.
4. A daily lesson was presented which explained the “Steps on the Road to the White House.” The information was presented, charted, and discussed with the class. One “step” was presented each day. The steps that were covered were:
 - (a) Candidates announce that they want to run for president.
 - (b) Candidates campaign to convince their party members to vote for them in a primary election.
 - (c) Primary elections are held. Voters of each party pick the candidate they want for president.

- (d) Each political party holds a national convention. People at the convention choose their candidate for president and vice president.
- (e) The candidates hit the “campaign trail” again. They ask people to vote for them.
- (f) The candidates of the major parties debate. Some debates are seen on TV.
- (g) Voters go to the polls to vote on Election Day. Election Day is always the first Tuesday after the first Monday in November.
- (h) In each state, the candidate who gets the most votes wins the popular election. The candidate with the most electoral votes is the new president.
- (i) The president is inaugurated on January 20. The new president takes the oath of office from the chief justice of the United States.
- (j) Examples were provided by both teachers and students of the various “steps” that were occurring in the actual presidential campaign, which included President Bill Clinton, Senator Robert Dole, and Jack Perot.
- (k) The duties of the president were also charted and discussed.

5. Each student learned a vocabulary word and presented it to the whole class. Then each day the students added a page to a vocabulary dictionary.

Our ongoing assessments indicated that students were experiencing difficulty in some areas of this curriculum. Several factors seemed to influence this. First, the reading material related to this content was considerably higher than a typical third grade reading level. This made it difficult for the students to read independently and gather information for their president report. The type of biographical material also tended to be somewhat “dry” and primarily factual, rather than anecdotal, so students seemed to experience difficulty in sustaining interest. The students expressed high levels of enthusiasm and interest in designing and constructing their three-dimensional presidents, and many were successful in crafting representations which did indeed include physical features of their particular president.

However, observations and discussions with the students indicated that few students seemed to be engaged or even interested in how a candidate becomes president. Our observations also indicated that the students were experiencing considerable difficulty with all of the new vocabulary. We redoubled our efforts to more clearly explain words like convention, candidate, delegate, and primary. We also attempted to make the entire electoral process more interesting and relevant by sharing more “real-life” examples from the current presidential campaign, which was in full swing. Despite these efforts, the students continued to demonstrate little enthusiasm or understanding of the topic.

We discussed the students’ lack of genuine interest through much of the unit, and re-examined our efforts to generate enthusiasm. We discussed possible reasons for their low levels of engagement with the topic, and considered the possibility that the entire

election process was simply too far removed from the lives of our third graders to really matter to them. After all, no matter which candidate was elected in November, their day to day lives would change very little, if at all.

This suggestion opened up further discussions among our team as to how the unit might be presented differently so that their lives *would* be impacted by the election process. Drama seemed the most likely option for providing the students with genuine opportunities to experience the election process. I offered to “reteach” the portion of the unit which covered the election process, since that seemed to be the material that the students had the most difficulty comprehending.

This opportunity to revisit an area of the social studies curriculum in which students had experienced difficulty seemed to be an especially useful opportunity in which to gather data regarding drama experiences in social studies. It was at this time that I seriously began to consider the research possibilities available in this situation. The potential for inquiry regarding comparison of student drama experiences with more traditional social studies learning experiences was evident. I was also extremely interested in exploring the use of drama in teaching social studies content to students. I broached the topic with my teammates, and so we began . . .

Significance of the Study

A comprehensive study of research in drama education was recently conducted by Betty Jane Wagner. The results of her study indicate that there is a “paucity of doctoral dissertations in educational drama. . . . [There were] a total of 17,671 dissertations

reported in reading and 16,542 in writing since 1989, [and yet there were only] 71 in educational drama” (1998, p. 2-3). Of those 71, most were quantitative studies which attempted to measure learning of specific skills and knowledge with a “battery of reliable but all-too-often inappropriate or invalid instruments” (1998, p. 3). Few attempts were made to describe the learning processes that occurred during drama or to examine the range of learning which occurs but is not reflected on typical standardized assessments. In contrast, this study attempts to describe and document a range of learning processes that were observed and recorded during the course of the drama education experiences. Student understandings underwent significant change as they experienced different aspects of a presidential campaign. Dewey reminds us of the significance of experience in learning and development, “Development does not mean just getting something out of the mind. It is a development of experience and into experience that is really wanted” (1934, p. 9).

There are a variety of issues related to using drama education in the curriculum. Parents and administrators often consider drama education to be an “extra” to be included in the curriculum if there is time after the “basics” have been mastered. In these times of public demands for more “rigor” in the classroom, drama activities are often perceived to be less rigorous and therefore, less valued than more traditional classroom methods. This study seeks to expand that perception and illustrate how drama might serve in all areas of the curriculum as an effective means for students not only to master the “basics” but also to enhance social and cognitive development as well.

Definitions of Terms

In the literature there are a variety of terms which refer to a wide range of drama activities. *Role play, sociodramatic play, creative drama, creative dramatics, process drama, role drama, educational drama and drama in education* are all terms which are used to describe various drama experiences.

Role play is a term that is widely used to describe many classroom drama activities, such as those in which students assume a role to discuss or solve a problem, improvise a simulated situation, or pretend to be a character in a story. Role play does not typically involve a deep level of belief or “personal investment” on the part of the student; rather, it tends to be more of a short-term pretense that fulfills an immediate need for an imagined situation to illustrate a point, practice a skill, or experiment with an interaction.

Sociodramatic play, also called *symbolic play* refers to the spontaneous type of dramatic play which occurs frequently throughout early childhood. *Sociodramatic play* is typically self-directed and involves imaginative transformation of the participants into other persons, objects, situations and events.

Creative drama and *creative dramatics* are usually used to describe drama experiences which focus upon a story or poem as its pretext. A variety of drama techniques such as improvisation, pantomime, and role play may be included in the exercise.

For the purposes of this study, these terms will not be applicable. Rather, in this study, the nature of the dramatic experiences are more appropriately described as *process drama or drama in education*. *Process drama* is distinguished from role play and creative

dramatics in several significant ways. In process drama, there is no written script or predetermined story to be presented. Although texts may be used as a starting point in process drama, but there is “less emphasis on story and character development and more emphasis on problem solving or living through a particular moment in time” (Wagner, 1998, p. 7). Process drama more typically involves a series of episodes or experiences which enable a more complex dramatic world to be created and explored, whereas role play tends to be more limited to brief episodes or scenes. In process drama the aim is “to explore a particular experience through a nonlinear layering of episodes that cumulatively extends and enriches the fictional context” (O’Neill, 1994, p. 408). The episodic nature of process drama “instantly entails structure, because it implies a more complex relationship between parts of the work than the linear connections of sequence or narrative, where the segments of the work are strung together like beads on a chain rather than being part of a web of meaning” (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvi). Process drama is also distinguished from role play by its inclusive nature. Role play usually involves only a few participants who “perform” for the remaining members of the class. However, in process drama “the entire group will be engaged in the same enterprise as a playwright and participant. The work is not undertaken for any outside audience, but the participants are an audience to their own acts” (O’Neill, 1995, p. xvi). In summary then, the complexity of this approach which involves “an absence of script, an episodic structure, an extended time frame, and an integral audience, is best indicated by the term *process drama* (O’Neill, 19995, p. xvii).

Assumptions

In a description of any research study, it is important to delineate any researcher assumptions. As a teacher-researcher, I assumed that it was possible to be both a participant and a researcher. I believe that these dual roles provided me with both access and insight into classroom drama experiences, in a way which was unique and different from either solitary role. As a teacher, I knew each student well and was aware of individual areas of strengths and weaknesses. This perspective enabled me to take particular note of growth and development which emerged during the course of the study. For example, if a particular student who typically had difficulty understanding the perspectives of others demonstrated growth in this area, I was careful to make note of it and analyze the surrounding circumstances carefully.

Yet this teacher perspective was also problematic for precisely the same reasons. As a researcher, my observations were undoubtedly impacted by what I “expected” to see. Therefore, it is likely that in attending to individual strengths and weaknesses, I likely failed to make other observations. It is never possible to be a completely neutral observer, and I am certain that my attention to numerous academic matters influenced my researcher perspective.

I also experienced difficulty with the conflict that arose between prioritizing “good research practice” and “good teaching practice”. Early on (to my dismay) I realized that sometimes one would be in direct opposition to the other. At times when it may have been more appropriate to intervene and process events or interactions with the students, I often found myself wanting to allow the events or interactions to continue on in order to

observe what would happen. My awareness of this conflict between teaching and research emerged as a significant issue for discussion and reflection.

Organization of the Study

This study was designed to explore how process drama can be used to teach social studies in the elementary classroom and to consider how process drama experiences might support improved performance on proficiency tests. The study examines the diversity of learning experiences that occur in educational drama and explores a variety of learning experiences that are not typically assessed in standardized assessment instruments.

Chapter 1 provides an overview of the study. Chapter 2 describes the related literature for this study. It provides the theoretical and philosophical background for the study. Chapter 3 explains the research methodology which guided the study. Also included in this chapter is an explanation of data collection methods and analysis. Chapter 4 presents the drama activities, with detailed descriptions of day to day events and interactions in the classroom and analysis of those events and interactions. My interpretation of the data is included in this chapter, as well. Chapter 5 presents an overview of standardized assessment and assessment in drama education. It also provides suggestions for assessing higher level development in drama. Chapter 6 presents conclusions and provides a summary of the findings, implications, and suggestions for further areas of study.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Can drama experiences influence social studies learning? Can drama experiences promote development of higher level thinking skills? How might drama experiences support better performance on social studies proficiency tests? What kinds of learnings are not being assessed on the state proficiency tests? For what purposes is learning being assessed on the proficiency tests and do the current tests accurately address this need?

This chapter, a review of the literature, examines a number of topics related to these questions. Because this study explores the use of process drama in social studies education, this chapter will include an overview of current social studies curriculum development and teaching philosophy. This study will consider how process drama experiences in the social studies classroom connect to the philosophy of the National Council for the Social Studies. A brief history of drama education will be provided to help situate this work in a historical context, and connections between drama education theory and several current learning theories will provide a basis for discussion about learning and assessment. Assessment issues in drama education, and current assessment issues in public education, particularly related to the state of Ohio proficiency tests will be discussed.

Social Studies Education

The National Council for the Social Studies (NCSS) has identified citizen education as the primary purpose of social studies education. In 1992, the NCSS House of Delegates overwhelmingly approved the following definition:

Social studies is the integrated study of the social sciences and humanities to promote civic competence. With the school program, social studies provides coordinated, systematic study drawing upon such disciplines as anthropology, archeology, economics, geography, history, law, philosophy, political science, psychology, religion, and sociology, as well as appropriate content from the humanities, mathematics, and the natural sciences. The primary purpose of the social studies is to help young people develop the ability to make informed and reasoned decisions for the public good as citizens of a culturally diverse, democratic society in an interdependent world. (Social Education, 1993, p. 213)

Although there exists widespread agreement within NCSS regarding a definition of social studies, there continues to be a considerable difference of opinion with regard to curriculum. There is no universal agreement within the social studies community as to how social studies should be taught or what constitutes the “best” scope and sequence for developing curriculum. For example, the “National Council for the Social Studies recommended three alternative models and the Bradley Commission suggested three possible scope and sequences for the elementary grades and posited four alternatives for the secondary level” (Ohio Department of Education, 1994, p. 10). However, despite the diversity in perspectives related to curriculum, there *is* agreement among the reports that social studies education must be more than presentation and memorization of factual

information. Students must learn to think critically, and they must have opportunities to utilize the factual content in ways “that make sense to them so that the content has real meaning” (Ohio Department of Education, p. 10). There is also agreement that social studies must provide for more in-depth instruction rather than superficial coverage of a wide range of topics (Ohio Department of Education, p. 10).

The NCSS 1993 position statement complements the “Social Studies Curriculum Planning Resources” document, and shifts the focus from content to method. The principles of teaching and learning social studies are summarized in this statement: “Social studies teaching and learning is powerful when it is meaningful, integrative, value-based, challenging, and active” (p. 214). The NCSS emphasizes that instructional methods and activities should be planned to “encourage students to connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and experience, to think critically and creatively about it, and to use it in authentic application situations” (p. 215). The NCSS cautions that learning activities need to be more than just “hands-on”; they need to be “minds-on” activities that engage students with important ideas.

The NCSS position statement on teaching and learning reflects current constructivist and critical learning theories. Educational drama is also firmly grounded in contemporary constructivist and critical learning theories. Unfortunately, in many classrooms today, curriculum design and teaching methods still reflect the more traditional philosophies that have been guided by behaviorist theory.

Social Constructivism

Constructivist theory as developed by Jean Piaget (1928, 1952, 1959, 1970, 1972, 1980), asserts that learners construct their own knowledge from their own experiences. Piaget believed that children are not just passive receivers of information but instead actively seek out and experiment with information to understand and make sense of their world. Lev Vygotsky (1962, 1978, 1981) also believed that children actively construct their own knowledge, but his approach, termed social constructivism, focused more on the social conditions that facilitate cognitive development. Three particularly significant concepts of Vygotsky's learning theory involve the importance of social interaction for cognitive development, the concept of scaffolding, and the interrelationship between language and thought.

According to Vygotsky, cognitive development is facilitated through the child's interactions with more advanced and capable individuals such as parents, teachers, or more highly skilled children. The range of tasks that a child cannot yet perform independently, but can perform with assistance and guidance from others is known as the zone of proximal development (ZPD). Vygotsky proposes that children will learn very little from working on tasks that they can already do independently. Rather, cognitive development will occur primarily by children attempting tasks which they can accomplish only in collaboration with a more competent individual. As children process verbal instructions or demonstrations, they organize the new information into their existing mental structures so they can eventually perform the skill or task independently.

Vygotsky also suggests that the actual mental structures qualitatively change as a child acquires knowledge. In other words, through learning, development occurs which fundamentally changes the individual's abilities and thought processes. Learning is considered to be an active process in which the learner "constructs" knowledge, modifying present knowledge, rather than merely "adding to" existing structures. Vygotsky argues that as the child learns, not only does he accumulate new facts or skills, but the child's thinking gradually becomes more structured and deliberate. In the Vygotskian framework, there is a complex, nonlinear relationship between learning and development, in which each impacts the other. In this framework, learning can hasten and even cause development. For example, a three-year-old child is trying to classify objects but she continually confuses the categories. Her teacher then provides her with two boxes, each marked with a word and a picture. One box has a large teddy bear and the word "big" in large letters. The other box has a small teddy bear and the word "little" in small letters. The teacher has supported or "scaffolded" the child's development by giving her boxes to help her keep the categories straight. Soon the child is categorizing other objects without needing to use the boxes. She has mastered the concepts of "big" and "little". The learning of "big" and "little" will foster the child's development of categorical thinking (Bedrova & Leong, 1996).

Vygotsky also believes that culture and social interactions influence both the content of thinking and the way the information is processed. Vygotsky believes that the social context shapes cognitive processes, while it is also part of the developmental process. Social context includes everything in the child's environment that has either been

directly or indirectly influenced by the child's culture. The social context is comprised of three levels: the immediate level, which would encompass the individual(s) with whom the child is interacting at the moment; the structural level, which would include the social structures that influence the child, such as family, church, school, etc.; and the general cultural or social level, which would include features of the society at large such as language, numerical systems, and the use of technology. Vygotsky maintains that all of these social contexts significantly influence the way a person thinks. For example, a child whose mother emphasizes language learning by engaging her in tasks such as learning the names of objects will think in a different way from a child whose mother refrains from frequent talking. Not only will the first child have a larger vocabulary, she will also think in different categories and use language in different ways (Luria, 1979; Rogoff, Malkin, & Gilbride, 1984). The social structures influence a child's mental processes, as demonstrated by Russian researchers who studied children raised in orphanages. They researchers found that the orphanage children had different levels of planning and self-regulatory skills than children who were raised in families (Sloutsky, 1991). The general features of the society also impacts the ways in which thinking develops. For example, Asian children who used an abacus had different concepts of number than children who did not (D'Ailly, 1992).

In addition to content and form of knowledge, the very nature of the cognitive processes themselves are shaped by the social context. For example, children in Papua, New Guinea will not only learn different types of animals than children in the United States, but they will also use different strategies to remember the animals. Children who

attend school and learn scientific categories for animal classification will group the animals in a different way than children who do not attend school. Luria's study (1979) of a herding community in central Asia found that illiterate adults used situationally based categories, and placed saw, hammer, log and hatchet in the same category because they are all needed for work. Adults with varying amounts of schooling grouped the objects into two categories, tools (saw, hammer, and hatchet) and objects to be worked on (log). In Vygotsky's view, a child does not just become a thinker or a problem solver; rather, a child becomes a special kind of thinker, rememberer, listener, and communicator, all of which is a reflection of the child's social context.

According to Vygotsky, a child's mental or cognitive structures are made of connections between mental functions. The connection between language and thought is considered to be especially important. Vygotsky believes that thought and language initially develop independently of each other, but eventually begin to merge between the ages of two and three. Language is considered to be an actual mechanism for thinking, and enables thinking to become more abstract, flexible and separate from the immediate object or stimulus. When children are able to use symbols and concepts to think, they no longer need to have the object present in order to think about it. The child becomes able to imagine, manipulate, create new ideas, and share those ideas with others. Thus, the role of language is two-fold: it is instrumental in the development of cognition and is also itself part of cognitive processing (Bedrova & Leong, 1996).

Once the merger occurs, Vygotsky believes that the processes of speech and thinking are permanently and fundamentally altered. Thinking becomes verbally-based and

speech becomes intellectual because it is used in thinking, and it's use expanded for purposes other than communication. Vygotsky and Luria (a colleague of Vygotsky's) (1984/1994) concluded that:

1. A child's speech is an inalienable and internally necessary part of the operation (of problem solving), its role being as important as that of action in the attaining of a goal. The experimenter's impression is that the child not only speaks about what he is doing, but that for him speech and action are in this case *one and the same complex psychological function* directed toward the solution of the given problem.
2. The more complex the action demanded by the situation and the less directed its solution, the greater the importance played by speech in the operation as a whole. Sometimes speech becomes of such vital importance that without it the child proves to be positively unable to accomplish the given task.

For example, six-year-old Jason is involved in a movement exercise pattern of one jump and two hops. He says the pattern out loud, "Jump, hop, hop" as he does each step. But when he is asked by his teacher to stop talking because his chant is confusing the other children in the class, he is unable to move. Only when the other children have finished and Jason is permitted to resume his chant is he able to finish (Bodrova & Leong, 1996).

Vygotsky also stresses the importance of metacognition in mature thinking and problem-solving. Metacognition refers to both the knowledge and beliefs that an individual has about his/her own cognitive processes and to their attempts to intentionally use certain cognitive processes to facilitate learning and memory. As children develop, their metacognitive skills and knowledge improve as they become increasingly aware of things they do and do not know, become increasingly knowledgeable about effective learning strategies, and become more aware of the limitations of their memories (Ormrod, 1995). According to Vygotsky, metacognitive processes are deliberate in that they are controlled by the individual and they are used *on purpose*. For example, a child who searches for a hidden figure in a systematic and deliberate way is using metacognitive processes. A child who is counting out the steps to a movement pattern to facilitate remembering the steps is deliberately developing and using a metacognitive process. As learning is occurring, Vygotsky sees comprehension as an interactive process or “dialogue” in which the “child communicates with the teacher or author of a text to build new meanings rather than simply copying existing ones” (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 31).

In the following section, I will review the basic tenets of behavioristic learning theory. It is readily apparent that social constructivist learning theory is fundamentally different from the behaviorist learning theory, and many of the behavioristic notions once deemed educationally sound have been discredited by contemporary research.

Behaviorism

Behavioristic theory maintains that the learner is relatively passive, acquiring knowledge as a result of associations strengthened through reinforcement. Learning is viewed as simply cumulative, and the learner is considered more knowledgeable but not qualitatively changed as a result of the learning. Behaviorist theory also stipulates that the relationship between stimuli and behavior is essentially the same for all organisms, failing to account for individual critical thinking abilities. In behaviorist theory, cultural or social influences are not considered to be factors in learning. Behaviorism fosters the “empty vessel” approach in the classroom, in which students are viewed as passive entities to be “filled” with knowledge by the teacher. Students are expected to acquire knowledge individually by receiving knowledge as it is dispensed from the teacher.

Behavioristic theory continues to significantly influence both curriculum and classroom practice. Skinner (1954) explained, “The whole process of becoming competent in a field must be divided in a very large number of very small steps, and reinforcement must be contingent upon the accomplishment of each step” (p. 94). Behavioristic theory does not account for any processes in which the learner must engage in order to conceptualize the discrete bits of knowledge into a complex useable “whole”. The fallacious assumptions of “decomposibility” and “decontextualization” (Resnick & Resnick, 1990, Stallman & Pearson, 1990) suggest that complex understandings can be broken down into carefully delineated skills that can be learned and practiced in isolation, and eventually reconstructed into an integrated whole. The pedagogical implications for this theory result in a “reductionist” view of learning which isolates learning tasks from

any meaningful context. The sequential nature of behavioristic learning theory postpones the use of higher-order thinking skills until “basic” skills have been mastered, thus denying the learner opportunities to “think” until they have mastered the more simplistic basics.

This theory has had a widespread and enduring impact on curriculum design. Basic skill mastery and behavioral objectives are the norm for curriculum structure and design. Skills based instructional materials are also rooted in behaviorist learning theory. Many current assessment practices are entrenched in the simplistic behavioristic procedure of measuring the “discrete bits” of knowledge that the learner has acquired, as “evidence” that learning has occurred.

The influences of behaviorist theory are also quite widespread in current classroom practice. In these classrooms, the teacher’s role is typically that of the “expert” and the students are “receivers” of information. These classrooms are often characterized by teacher lectures, textbook based activities, note-taking, fact-based questioning, and limited opportunities for student discussion. Student participation is frequently limited to providing answers to teacher-directed questioning. Freire aptly named this traditional model of education the “banking” model of education, in which “deposits” of information were made into the empty minds of the students. He maintained that the banking model served to promote the interests of the dominant culture by inhibiting creativity and critical thinking (1970, p. 64). Freire advocated a critical approach, a “problem-posing” model of education to stimulate creativity and true reflection. Knowledge, he asserted, emerged through “invention and reinvention,” not through memorization and repetition. In contrast to the behavioristic notion that education is permanent, concrete information which is

bestowed upon the learner, Freire viewed learning as unfinished and ongoing, and education as continuously changing and evolving--always in a state of "becoming": "Education is . . . constantly remade in the praxis" (1970, p . 65).

John Dewey emphasized the importance of educating the "whole child." This meant that education needed to address the spiritual and emotional needs of the child as well as the intellectual needs. Dewey argued that the focus in the classroom needed to shift from the teacher to the student; "The child becomes the sun about which the appliances of education revolve; he is the center about which they are organized" (1921, p. 35). He maintained that experience, rather than rote memorization was essential to learning.

Drama Education

Progressive Education, the name given to the new educational movement of the early 1900's, emphasized the importance of process rather than product. Drama education philosophy and in particular, process drama philosophy, shares the viewpoint that process is more important than product. Drama education theory also emphasized the importance of creating learning experiences that were meaningful and constructed by the child. Imagination and creativity were seen as central to learning and development. Drama experiences were viewed as a means to provide the learner with opportunities to build upon personal knowledge and experiences and explore meaningful connections within a safe environment. Problem-solving and decision-making experiences engaged the learner in complex social interactions, and were believed to provide multiple opportunities

for social, linguistic, and cognitive development. This philosophy helped to foster the development of drama education. A historical context for drama education may prove to be helpful for the reader to understand the many types of drama education and to more easily understand where “process drama” theory fits within the broad spectrum of educational practices that are included within the drama education field.

A Brief History of Drama in the United States

In the 1920's, the Evanston Illinois Public Schools superintendent invited Winifred Ward to develop a program of dramatics. Ward believed that the process of working was more important than the presentation of performances, and she developed an approach to dramatic learning that she called creative dramatics. Her book Creative Dramatics, published in 1930 marks the official beginning of the field in the United States. She developed a training program at the School of Speech of Northwestern University in Evanston, and “was responsible for training the majority of drama leaders until the 1950's. . .”(Rosenberg, p.20). Ward acknowledged that her work in creative dramatics was “rooted in John Dewey’s pragmatic idealism” (Wagner, 1998, p. 6).

Creative drama flourished throughout the thirties and forties, but the fifties marked the most expansive era for the movement. In a political climate that was favorable to the arts, the White House Conference on the Arts declared that drama should be considered an important component of a total education package. University programs in child drama grew, and as a result, research studies on creative drama began to appear in the literature.

In Great Britain during the sixties, Peter Slade and Brian Way developed drama education methods that contrasted with Ward's sequential, story-centered dramatization approach. Although they agreed that educating the "whole child" was essential, Slade and Way emphasized the *process* of drama over the performance of it. Slade concluded that drama was an extension of child's play, and the focus was on the child's personal experience of the drama, rather than the presentation of it. Way believed that dramatic learning should foster learning and personality growth, rather than to train performers for the stage. For both way and Slade, drama consisted of experience and personal exploration, with little emphasis on performance.

Also during the seventies, drama leaders in the United States discovered an approach that presented drama as a means to discover and reflect upon the universal human experience, pioneered by noted British educator Dorothy Heathcote. Heathcote focused on drama as a medium or way of learning, bringing "into the present the distant time or space, making it come alive in participants' consciousness through imagined group experience." In her approach, the drama leader often worked "in role" assuming a character entirely different from him/herself. Imagination, experience and reflection were at the heart of the learning experience, although not necessarily as separate entities. "I have struggled to perfect techniques which allow my classes opportunities to stumble upon authenticity in their work and to be able both to experience and reflect upon their experience at the same time: simultaneously to understand their journey while being both the cause and the medium of the work" (Heathcote, 1980a, p. 11).

In England, Gavin Bolton built upon Heathcote's emphasis on reflection as essential in order for learning to occur. "Experience is neither productive nor unproductive; it is how you reflect on it that makes it significant or not" (1979, p. 126). Heathcote's "mantle of the expert" method and philosophy is unique in that it is "always an approach to the whole curriculum, not a matter of isolating just one theme" (1995, p. 16). According to Heathcote, "Any one thing you want to teach must become meshed within broad curriculum and skills" (1995, p. 16). O'Neill further develops this notion of "connectedness", particularly as it relates to classroom drama and traditional notions of drama. She argues that there is a necessary connection between "process drama" and the basic characteristics of the theatre event. While many of the approaches suggest a dichotomy between drama process and drama product, O'Neill discerns the explicit links and connections inherent within both forms. "In fact both process and product are part of the same domain. Like theatre, the primary purpose of process drama is to establish an imagined world, a dramatic "elsewhere" created by the participants as they discover, articulate and sustain fictional roles and situations. . . .the process will contain powerful elements of composition and contemplation, but improvised encounters will remain at the heart of the event as the source of much of its dramatic power. . . ." (1995, p. xvi).

Although each area of drama education impacts the learner in significant ways, it is the work of Heathcote, Bolton and O'Neill that most closely fits within the learning theory and classroom practices to be examined in this study.

The theory and practice of process drama in the classroom as defined and developed by Heathcote, Bolton and O'Neill are firmly rooted in social constructivist

learning theory. As mentioned previously, three especially significant concepts of social constructivist learning theory involve the importance of social interaction for cognitive development, the concept of scaffolding, and the interrelationship between language and thought. In this section, I will examine the relationship of drama theory and practice to each of these important concepts.

The Importance of Social Interaction for Cognitive Development

In the Vygotskian framework, cognitive development is considered to be an outgrowth of the “social situation of development” that is specific for each age (Vygotsky, 1984). According to O’Neill, “drama is essentially social and involves contact, communication and the negotiation of meaning” (1991, p. 13). Drama is created and shared collaboratively within a group. It draws on the collective strength, experiences and emotions of the group members, and derives its meaning from the contributions of its members. The social development includes both the social context and the way that the child interacts with the social context. Drama education is inherently social and requires that the participant “take in” the other participants actions and responses and respond to what is occurring. In order for the drama to exist, all participants agree to sustain the drama and share in the belief, and to share their ideas and interpretations with the entire group. By beginning with the individual participants and their own experiences and perspectives, the drama can move the students into a mode of growth and change by structuring the drama for reflection.

Heathcote's aim is to "build on the pupils' past experience and give them a deeper knowledge not just of themselves but of what it is to be human, as well as an understanding of the society they live in and its past, present, and future" (Johnson & O'Neill, 1984, p. 12). What Heathcote is actually advocating is moving students into their zone of proximal development, and then scaffolding their growth through intervention and reflection. Indeed, a common criticism of Heathcote is that she often stops a drama at its most intense moment, to engage the students in reflection. Critics suggest that the drama should be permitted to emerge and wane under its own power. However, Heathcote argues that she has "not merely a right but a responsibility to intervene" (1984, p. 92-93) in order to structure the discussion and reflection needed to challenge the students beliefs and opinions. It is from this challenge and close reflection that social and cognitive growth and development occur, as well as improvement in school-related skills.

Dramatic action can provide a way for the student to begin to think about the significance of events and emotions and begin to synthesize and analyze through reflection their experiences and knowledge. This process begins to shape the way they think, creating those new mental processes to which Vygotsky refers. "Unifying imaginative thought and dramatic action, drama produces positive changes that transform the way we think, the way we learn, and our moral and ethical attitudes" (Courtney, 1990, p. 164).

As Vygotsky asserted, learners construct their own knowledge from their own experiences. Likewise, in drama,

The role-taker draws upon all previous relevant experience, all information, factual and subjective, abilities, failings, blind-spots and skills, character and personality. Thus when studying and seeking

to understand the “pretend” situation the role-taker draws all relevant information to the surface and forefront and puts it into action but interacting with others who are also in the same situation.
(Heathcote, 1971/1984, p. 69)

Thus, drama enables students to draw on their own experiences and by sharing and reflecting upon those experiences, construct new and deeper understandings about themselves and others. For example, by participating in a drama about the pilgrims settling in the New World, students will call upon their own experiences of traveling, or leaving home. For young children studying the pilgrims, the fear of spending the night away from home for the first time can be called upon to more deeply understand the implications of permanently leaving family and familiar surroundings to go to a new and unfamiliar land. Drama experiences provide a safe arena for students to explore those fears without fear of ridicule because while “in role” they may safely examine their “character’s” fears publicly, and yet maintain a safe “public” distance from their own personal fears.

The Concept of Scaffolding

In drama experiences, scaffolding (Vygotsky’s notion of a support mechanism provided by a more competent individual) occurs within several dimensions by moving the children into their zone of proximal development. The drama requires group effort and socially oriented decisions. The teacher can provide scaffolding from within the context of the drama by participating “in role” or from outside of the dramatic action by stopping the drama at key points for reflection. The teacher will also likely provide additional

scaffolding by offering guidance, perhaps through questioning to help focus the group's efforts, or by subtle suggestions either through dialogue or artifacts. Within the actual construction of the drama, the students often scaffold each other, with more competent students sharing personal expertise or providing support for their peers. Vygotsky believes that the zone of proximal development is established for the child who is "behaving beyond his [sic] age, above his usual everyday behavior. . . as it were, a head above himself . . . (1933/1978, p. 74). Drama experiences create precisely those opportunities.

Process drama experiences closely correlate to the cognitive conditions that are created in dramatic play. According to Vygotsky, in dramatic play children begin to separate thought from actions and objects. "The child sees one thing, but acts differently in relation to what he sees. Thus a condition is reached in which the child begins to act independently of what he sees (Vygotsky, 1933/1978, p. 97). For example, in a drama experience, a rolled up sheet of paper may "become" an ancient scroll. The children begin to "see" the scroll and its significance within the context of the imagined situation. This ability to separate meaning from object is preparation for the development of abstract ideas and abstract thinking (Berk, 1994). In process drama, the teacher is scaffolding the child's ability to act in accordance with internal ideas rather than external reality. Development of symbolizing and problem solving are taking shape. According to research summarized by Smilansky and Shefatya (1990), examples in growth related to dramatic play include growth in "verbalization, vocabulary, language comprehension, attention

span, imaginativeness, concentration, impulse control, curiosity, more problem solving strategies, cooperation, empathy, and group participation” (p. 220).

Reflection is a critical part of the developmental process. Heathcote (1984) has consistently argued that dramatic experience is not enough to enable learning to occur; rather, reflection is essential in order for the students to truly discover the meaning of their experiences. Reflection upon the drama experiences further scaffolds the development of analytical and critical thinking. Careful questioning and examination of decisions made in the course of the dramatic action create a new zone of proximal development for the participants. Heathcote reminds us that “Drama is about shattering the human experience into new understanding. It uses the facts but, in addition, it fuses the new understanding all the time” (1984, p. 122). This new understanding has fundamentally altered the participants way of thinking, rather than merely added new information to an existing schema.

There are a variety of perspectives on how reflection might take place. Heathcote suggests that reflection in action might be useful for a variety of purposes. She states,

I have struggled to perfect techniques which allow my classes opportunities to stumble upon authenticity in their work and to be able both to experience and reflect upon their experience at the same time: simultaneously to understand their journey while being both the cause and the medium of the work.
(1980a, p. 11)

The act of simultaneously holding the imaginary world and the real work in the consciousness and reflecting upon both consciously serves to develop and facilitate the metacognitive abilities of the student. And yet O’Neill (1988) reminds us of those

occasions when there is a need to distance oneself from the dramatic action in order to engage the learners in a more detached type of reflection:

Where involvement in the action predominates, the reflective element is necessarily weakened. With too intense an involvement, the sense of control which is so important a part of the spectator's pleasure in theater and drama, is weakened. A truly engaged yet detached aesthetic response is in fact more demanding than total involvement.
(p. 15)

Heathcote also acknowledges that drama students sometimes are able to reflect more closely on events if they are "asked to comment on the action" rather than directly participate in it "at life-rate" (1980b, p. 168).

Edmiston, (1991) also influenced by Heathcote, provides us with a framework for structuring reflection in four ways. The first is reflecting outside of the drama at the end of the session, and this reflective mode provides a summary of the events and related thoughts, decisions, and emotions. The second is also occurring outside of the drama but only for a brief time before stepping back into the action. In this reflective mode, the students may think about what has or is or may be about to happen. The third mode of reflection occurs in role, but after the primary action of the session has taken place. For example, the participants might be meeting around a campfire or at a town meeting to reflect on the day's events. The fourth mode of reflection enables student to be reflecting and experiencing simultaneously. Bolton suggests that this is a more powerful form of reflection because "as things are happening and as words are spoken, their implications and applications can be articulated legitimately as part of the drama itself" (1979, p. 127).

The Interrelationship between Language and Thought

Vygotsky believed that children construct meaning through shared activity, and that children become capable of thinking and solving problems as they talk. He argued that in some cases, external speech helps the individual to formulate ideas and clarify and focus thoughts. Thus, language serves as a powerful component of learning. Drama immerses students in language of all types. "Language is the cornerstone of the drama process and the means through which the drama is realized" (O'Neill, 1990, p. 18). The very nature of the drama experience demands language interaction. O'Neill and Lambert (1982) suggest that there are crucial categories of language in which students actively engage while participating in drama activities: describing past experiences, both real and imaginary; instructing and explaining; logical reasoning, convincing, and persuading; and planning, predicting, and deciding. Constructivist theory would also consider these to be cognitive development categories in which particular types of thinking skills are developed.

Talk within the child's zone of proximal development helps children to explore the relationships between their previous knowledge and perceptions and the new ideas and understandings which they are encountering. According to David Booth, "the child in drama is inside language, using it to make meaning, both private and public, in the "here and now dynamic", with the potential of abstract reflective thoughts at any given moment" (1985, p. 4). The child is also immersed in metalinguistic language as she negotiates the roles, setting, and actions in the drama. Wagner reminds us that:

cognitive development means not only learning information about the world, but also learning *how* to think, *how* to communicate, and *how* to get things done in the world. It depends on growing in an understanding of connections and relatedness, it means an understanding of understanding and a knowledge of knowledge. (1998, p. 28)

Discussion

The Heathcote-Bolton-O'Neill approach seems to hold the most promise for developing approaches for meeting the complex combination of goals and objectives developed by the NCSS. For example, according to NCSS, "facts and ideas are not taught in isolation from other content, nor are skills. Instead, they are embedded in *networks* of knowledge, skills, beliefs, and dispositions that are structured structured around important ideas and taught emphasizing their connections and potential applications" (1993, p. 216). This complements Heathcote's approach to drama relating to the "whole" curriculum, rather than isolated themes. Heathcote is also concerned with ensuring that the learning experience be authentic and purposeful, that children are genuinely experiencing and not just "showing". According to NCSS, "because what one learns is intimately linked to how one learns it, powerful social studies programs feature learning that is both social and active. . . . Powerful social studies teaching emphasizes authentic activities that call for using content for accomplishing life applications" (1993, p. 219). Dorothy Heathcote defines education as ". . . a continuous process of assimilation of incoming data together with a constantly developing ability to respond" (Wagner, 1976, p. 192).

Assessment Issues

There are a number of issues which complicate the issue of learning social studies through drama. One of the most significant is that of assessment. There remains a huge discrepancy between the NCSS goals and the 'real world' reality of assessment measures. The NCSS curriculum guidelines (1990) call for "systematic and rigorous assessment of social studies instruction" (p. 220). Although the guidelines suggest using data from many sources, only the traditional paper and pencil tests seem to "qualify" as rigorous in the eyes of most district level administrators or legislators. Alternative assessment measures are not perceived as useful or practical for state and district level norm-referencing needs. Also, there is an increasing trend nationwide for students to pass statewide proficiency tests. The tests require a prescribed body of knowledge to be demonstrated, which is wholly unrelated to the "prior knowledge" or "personal experiences" of individual students, thus positioning the assessment in direct opposition to the learning experiences advocated by NCSS.

The NCSS also calls for "sustained examination of a few important topics rather than superficial coverage of many" (1993, p. 216). This concept, while acknowledged as desirable by many professionals in education, has yet to be genuinely accepted by many in the communities or even those in district-level education administrative positions. Unfortunately, Hirsch's (1987) view of cultural literacy which maintains that individuals must have at their command a body of propositional knowledge prescribed by the dominant cultural group, is still widely accepted in many communities. This philosophy is

manifested in virtually every standardized assessment in which students must demonstrate proficiency (i.e., state proficiency test, CAT, ITBS, SAT, ACT, GRE, LSAT, etc.)

If self discovery, critical thinking and learning as experience are to be considered essential to the new social studies guidelines, then efforts must be made to educate the larger community, administrators, and legislators as to their importance in citizenship education. The current standardized assessments will need extensive modification or replacement and the educational community will need to carefully re-examine its incongruent academic “benchmarks,” perhaps by incorporating more comprehensive assessments (such as portfolios).

Drama education faces similar challenges with regard to assessment. Although there is widespread agreement about the value of drama as a learning medium, there seems to be considerable disagreement over what can and should be measured. There are many within the field who question what should be evaluated in the artistic-aesthetic experience? Is there anything “measurable” within the physical, emotional, and cognitive experience of drama? If so, then how should measurements be designed?

The current political agenda further complicates these areas of concern. According to Philip Taylor, “In England, dance and drama have been eviscerated from a core arts entitlement, in the US there is voluntary curriculum in arts education which emphasizes standards. . . and in Australia the multi-million dollar attempt to formulate a national arts curriculum. . . ” has a questionable future. “In each case, a political agenda formulates the context in which an arts education curriculum either does or does not exist” (1996, pg. 3). Although Goals 2000 (in the US) advocates the integration of the arts into

the core curriculum, district level decision-making, public misconceptions, and decreased funding all serve to diminish rather than increase the significance of the arts in education.

Further compounding this dilemma is the widely held belief that qualitative research studies of learning are not as “valid” as the more empirically based studies. The methodological “status hierarchy in science ranks ‘hard data’ above ‘soft data’ where ‘hardness’ refers to the precision of statistics. Qualitative data, then, carry the stigma of ‘being soft’” (Patton, pg. 478). This narrow perspective complicates efforts to demonstrate the value of drama in education.

What cannot be rationally or scientifically articulated has no truth. . . the standard empirical model is pursued at all costs. Control groups are established, treatment groups offer counterbalance, statistical measurements become the popular advocacy tool for determining validity. (Taylor, 1996, p. 9).

Drama educators argue that the learning experiences that occur through drama are not so easily measured. According to Agre, “The problem with data is that its dead. We should bring it back to life by thinking through all the relationships it participates in” (p. 94). Drama can not and does not exist in a vacuum. O’Neill suggests that we no longer need to “apologize for drama’s subjective character, the complexity of the activity and the multi-layered experience to which it gives rise.” She reminds us that like scientific research, drama research:

. . . demands careful observation, generalization, and the expression of results in a community of scholars and educators. Like science, the study of drama requires detail and precision and will emphasize

certain fundamental processes. Thinking creatively and critically, solving problems, constructing knowledge, 'reading' results and developing productive theories are as essential for development in the arts as in the sciences" (Quoted in Taylor, p. 138).

There is currently a trend in drama education research, indeed, in the education research field as a whole, to view "measurable" as somehow at odds with the "artistic/aesthetic." The "paradigm war" as this dialogue is sometimes referred to, I believe presents a very real threat to the future of drama education and research.

There is a long history of debate and disagreement between the qualitative and quantitative research communities. There is at present an "oppositional component" which states that "any paradigm inherently implies an opposition to alternative paradigms" (Gage, 1989, p. 7). Smith characterizes this as a fragmentation of the educational research community and a balkanization of the entire educational profession. Edelsky claims that there can be no compatibility at the level of deep or fundamental underlying beliefs. The "skills-based imperialism" she claims, prevents anything like a "neutral" research agenda and concludes that the traditionalists' "imposed agenda does not acknowledge its own paradigmatic bias" (1990, p. 10). Traditionalists, such as McKenna et al, respond that the "incompatibilists do not understand the epistemological issues involved" (1997, p. 5).

I agree that there may be no compatibility at the level of "fundamental beliefs," that in fact, those beliefs guide how we see the world and how we perceive the learning process. Unfortunately, the positivistic research camp is firmly rooted in the behavioristic notion that only that which is observable (behaviors) can be trusted or quantified. Thus, much of the research in drama education is entangled in what Bruner described as the

“conventional aims of positivistic science with its ideals of reductionism, causal explanation and prediction” (Grady 1995, p. 2, citing Bruner, 1990, p. xviii).

Taylor dismisses the standard empirical model with the assertion the “we learn little of the learning processes experienced by the treatment group but rather we are provided with convoluted statistical analyses of the learning. Apparently my concern regarding this model have not been heard as studies of the neopositivistic kind continue to be conducted with great frequency” (1996, p. 9). I concur that far too often, statistical results provide us with little useful information. But I disagree with the notion that there is nothing about the research of the learning process that can be measured. Furthermore, by subscribing to the notion that there is little of value that is measurable, we as teachers and researchers do a considerable disservice to our students. We are, in effect, choosing to ignore the very measurable outcomes by which our students are judged. If we chose to ignore the “product,” by focusing only on process and dismissing the content in which our students must demonstrate proficiency, we have in effect disempowered our students. If we have ensured that they have meaningful aesthetic experiences at the expense of acquiring the proficiency of content predetermined for “success,” then we have seriously neglected our responsibilities to our students.

If we view education as a means of empowering our students, we must remember that access to the power structure is dependent on successful passage through successive quantitative measures. By choosing to ignore this reality and only focusing our teaching and research on the “aesthetic experiences,” to the exclusion of “measurable” outcomes related to content learning, we have disempowered those very students we claim we want

to empower. I would disagree with Taylor's claim that quantitative data yields little useful information and "convoluted statistical analyses." I would argue that measurement and prediction are not only useful, but necessary if we are going to adequately prepare our students for the *quantitative* assessments they will be forced to endure. While I am unsupportive of these standardized assessments as they are currently utilized, it is an unfortunate fact of life that our students must be empowered to successfully negotiate them until we as a profession are able to modify their use.

I want to emphasize that I am by no means denying the value of the aesthetic experience. On the contrary, I embrace it as long overdue in our classrooms. But by allowing ourselves to be swept up in the current argument that the "real" value lies only in the aesthetic experience is to ignore the very real possibilities that lie within drama education as a powerful vehicle for change.

The Ohio Proficiency Tests

In the state of Ohio, all students are required to pass a standardized proficiency test as part of the requirements for graduation from high school. (There are some possible modifications permitted for special education students, but the scope of this discussion will be limited to "regular" education students.) Students are tested in reading, writing, mathematics, citizenship and science at each of four grade levels: fourth, sixth, ninth, and twelfth.

The notion of developing state-wide proficiency tests seems to have been a well-intentioned but misguided effort that began with State Senator Eugene Watts. Senator

Watts was concerned that students in less affluent, urban districts might not be receiving adequate instruction or instruction comparable to that which students were receiving in more affluent districts. He therefore introduced legislation in 1985 to create educational testing which was intended to ensure that districts be accountable for providing adequate and comparable education across districts in the state of Ohio. However, during the 1985-86 legislative year, a state savings and loan crisis occurred which consumed considerable legislative time and garnered extensive media attention. Thus, the educational testing issue was put aside and did not resurface again until 1987. At this time, employers in the state were also becoming more vocal about the skill levels of graduates who were entering the workforce.

Up through 1986, the State Board of Education opposed any sort of state testing program. But in the election of 1986, the composition of the Board changed enough that in 1987, the Board came out in favor of a test. In March of 1987, the State Board of Education publically recommended a graduation test. This now made for a difficult position for those legislators who had previously opposed the state test because the State Board and educators were vocal in their opposition to such a test. Now those legislators were faced with a State Board who was now recommending the adoption of just such a test.

The test that the State Board recommended was a "graduation" test, however, debate erupted over when the test should actually be administered. There were two separate and distinct "camps" which emerged from the debate. One camp felt that if students were to be given a test that would demonstrate the breadth and depth of the

knowledge they had acquired during their high school careers, then the test should be administered as close to the end of their high school experience as possible, which would be their twelfth year. However, the opposite camp argued that if the test was administered in the twelfth grade and would be a requirement for graduation, that there would be few opportunities for intervention. Thus, they argued that the test should be administered as early as possible, which would be in the ninth grade. The compromise that was finally reached resulted in two tests, the ninth grade test and the twelfth grade test. The ninth grade test was designated as the “graduation” test, so that students would have multiple opportunities for intervention and retesting. The twelfth grade test was designated as part of an honors diploma program, in which students could opt to take the test as part of many other criteria that could be used to qualify an honors graduate.

Simultaneously, the General Assembly also enacted for the elementary grades an achievement and ability test program, in which children would be tested every other year to determine if the students’ achievement was keeping in line with their ability. Many districts were already using some type of testing program which presumably had been selected (among other considerations) on the basis of content/curriculum match for their particular district. Concerns surfaced over several issues. The early testing (the achievement/ability testing) did not seem to correlate well with the later (graduation proficiency) testing. Critics pointed out that there were efforts to include higher level, critical thinking skills on the graduate tests, and that students were not being assessed on these skills until they reached high school. Other critics argued that students should have

opportunities for prior experience with these types of higher level and critical thinking testing situations prior to taking the “high stakes” graduation test.

So in 1992, the General Assembly amended the 1987 legislation to phase out the achievement and ability testing program and replaced it with a fourth and sixth grade proficiency test. The original purpose of this testing was intended to be only diagnostic, so that educators could get feedback on their students’ performance and to help prepare the students for the ninth grade graduation test. Unfortunately, the design of the new tests provided very little useful diagnostic information, as they provided primarily an overall view of student performance with little specific information on each performance outcome. These tests were *never* intended to be the criteria for student promotion to the next grade level, but merely a guide towards successful completion of the ninth grade graduation test.

However, Senate Bill 55 (passed in 1992) has dramatically altered the purpose and intent of those tests. The fourth grade reading test has now been designated to be an essential test to be passed in order to qualify for promotion to grade five. The requirements have also been rewritten so that a student must pass three of the five test sections in both the fourth and sixth grade tests or they may be retained in their current grade level.

How did this legislated convulsion of testing purposes and results occur? Around this same time period, the state legislature was also wrestling with a court-mandated order to develop a more equitable funding system for education in Ohio. Because of the court order, the legislative members were anticipating a need to go to the voters for an

increase in taxes for education. Therefore, they felt that more “accountability” was going to be demanded by the voters. Senate Bill 55 was part of that accountability plan. The bill increased the “stakes” of the proficiency testing program by requiring passage for grade level promotion, increased the credit unit requirements for graduation, and instituted a set of “performance standards” for school districts. Rating criteria for districts includes standards for student performance on the proficiency tests.

The Test Development

How were the tests developed? Who decided the content on the tests? What were the processes involved?

Once the General Assembly passed the legislation which initiated the tests, they delegated the responsibility for test development to the Ohio Department of Education. The ODE contacted each school district in the state of Ohio and asked for representatives for the assessment committee. The ODE also contacted professional organizations (for example, the Ohio Council of Social Studies) for representatives, as well. The process for developing the reading and writing portion of the test, however, was significantly different from that which occurred for development of the social studies section. The reason for this difference is related to the development of a state model curriculum for each subject. By the time the decision was made to implement a state testing policy, there was already in place a state model curriculum for reading and writing. The committees that were formed to develop the proficiency tests in these two areas were able to develop an assessment that emerged logically from the state model curriculum. However, at this time, there was no

state model curriculum for social studies, so the task of developing a state test had to literally begin from nothing. Ironically, there were two social studies committees operating simultaneously and totally separately, one to develop a state test and the other to develop a state social studies curriculum model. The end result was that there is now a statewide assessment in use that is *not* based on the state curriculum model. In other words, the state has developed a state social studies curriculum model which it has requested districts to adopt, but then is *testing* students on a *different* social studies curriculum.

The diversity of the committee members contributed largely to the discrepancy. There was an extremely diverse group of people serving on both social studies committees, with widely varying opinions on what students could and should be able to learn. For example, there was a contingent of members who did not believe that critical thinking skills could be taught before high school! Further complicating the task is the large number of disciplines included within social studies. There were a variety of people on the committees with a variety of understandings and depth of knowledge about particular content areas. Therefore, some individuals became involved in writing portions outside of their particular areas of expertise and were not particularly well-qualified to be making some of the decisions that arose. Another issue which resurfaced was that of timing of the test. This assessment was supposed to be a measure of a student's understanding of high school social studies curriculum, although in actuality, the student

was expected to have mastered all of the content before the end of ninth grade. There is some speculation within the social studies community that the test will eventually become a tenth grade test.

The actual “test questions” were constructed by a national test development firm. The tests have been reviewed, field tested, and reviewed for bias. The current social studies test includes both multiple choice and a few open-ended questions. I will be discussing more about particular aspects of the test and how they relate specifically to this study later in this paper.

In summary, in this chapter current issues in social studies curriculum development and teaching philosophy were presented and discussed. Social constructivist and behaviorist learning theories were presented and related to drama education theories. Assessment issues in drama education and current assessment issues in public education were addressed, with special attention given to the state of Ohio proficiency tests.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The central purpose of this research is to explore possible ways in which student learning and understanding in drama would improve social studies learning experiences for students and support better performance on state proficiency tests in social studies. From this study, suggestions for assessment have been developed to help address the complex task of evaluating student learning within drama experiences.

Design Choice

Bogdan and Biklen (1982) defined a case study as a “detailed examination of one setting, or one single subject, or one single depository of documents, or one particular event.” Case studies are especially useful when a particular situation needs to be studied in depth and the aim is to capture individual differences from one program experience to another. My intent in this study was to carefully examine the experiences of students who were engaged in drama experiences in an elementary social studies classroom. A case study “seeks to describe that unit in depth and detail, in context, and holistically” (Patton, 1990, p. 54). Robert Stake argues that good case studies “provide more valid portrayals, better bases for personal understanding of what is going on, and solid grounds for considering action” (1981, p. 32). This case study provides a “detailed examination”

of a drama education experience in social studies and from that case study, I draw examples to illustrate issues related to assessment, particularly with regard to the Ohio proficiency exams.

Research Setting

This study took place in a third grade suburban classroom in Ohio. There were 19 students in the class, and the class included 4 “special needs” students (including one autistic student) and 3 students identified as “gifted”.

The classroom in which this research took place is unique in many aspects. The most significant aspect of this uniqueness is the development of a collaborative teaching partnership which has evolved over three years. This partnership was comprised of four teachers. There were two regular classroom teachers who each taught half of each school day. Lisa, who taught mornings, had primary responsibility for teaching social studies and language arts. I taught afternoons, with primary responsibility for teaching math and science. I occasionally taught lessons in language arts and social studies, especially when a particular lesson seemed especially suited to a classroom drama experience.

Our classroom was also an inclusion classroom in which “identified” children with learning disabilities were provided support within the classroom, rather than being “pulled out” for remediation services. So our collaborative teaching partnership also included Julie, the special education teacher and Caroline, the speech pathologist. In creating our

“alternative service delivery model,” through our collaboration with Julie and Caroline, we have developed a collaborative ownership in our inclusion classroom, as well as a deep sense of trust and professional respect for one another.

Through Lisa’s participation as a Clinical Educator in the OSU Professional Development School (PDS), we also were fortunate to have two student teachers placed in our classroom. Elaine and Caryn were two graduate students participating in the PDS M.Ed. Program, and they were in our classroom for two days per week from September through February, and five days per week from March through May.

Because of our shared commitment to collaboration, we believed in the importance of making time to talk and listen to one another, so we met together almost daily during lunch times to discuss many different issues. Among the issues we discussed were: development of a strong sense of community in the classroom, providing continuing opportunities for student decision making and critical thinking, student social, emotional and academic development, individual student learning successes and difficulties, theoretical bases for particular lessons, cognitive development and its impact upon individual student learning, teaching and learning styles, home and parental influences upon learning and social development, remediation strategies, factors which supported or detracted from our collaborative teaching partnership, assessment issues, development of IEP’s, teacher education programs, support for our student teachers, administrative issues, current issues and assignments in outside course work, research possibilities, classroom research and its impact upon instruction, and personal issues and dilemmas.

Because of our deep level of trust and respect for one another, these daily meetings served as a basis for continued self-reflection and development. According to Deborah Meier (1995) trust “is the most efficient for of staff development” (p. 130). We have spent many hours listening to one another’s thoughts and ideas. We did not always agree on every issue or perspective, but we viewed this diversity of ideas as a strength and a source of growth. Many of our most meaningful insights have come about as a result of impassioned discussions.

The following example is illustrative of those types of discussions:

When we initially began our discussions to create our inclusion model, Julie, our special education teacher, felt very strongly about the need for special-needs students to have highly consistent school “scripts.” She was concerned about placing special-needs students in a “two-teacher classroom” where everyday routines might happen differently. She believed that the identified students were especially in need of consistent classroom structures which could provide them with extra “cues.” For example, she believed that it would be important for all of us to give directions in the same way, or perhaps from the same place in the classroom, so students would know to “tune in” when they saw the teacher standing in the “directions area” and heard the teacher announce “You need to listen now. I’m giving directions.” She believed this consistency would provide extra support for those students who might need it.

Lisa and I had a different perspective, however. We believed that if our larger goal was to prepare students for real life, then perhaps the nature of our support should look different. Rather than “modifying” our classroom practices to reflect an artificial

consistency, perhaps we should use these opportunities to teach the special-needs children how to adapt to changing environments. We debated and discussed this issue at length, passionately at times, and from our discussion we all grew in our understandings about learning, about the special needs of our students, and about each other.

Our daily discussions often challenged our accepted beliefs about our classroom practice and provided opportunities for us to critically examine and explain the reasons for our pedagogical decisions. This environment of professional challenge and support provided an extremely exciting and stimulating opportunity for personal reflection and growth. This also served as an especially supportive environment for conducting classroom research, as there were so many opportunities for discussing and analyzing observations and insights. These discussions also served to help me remain aware of the sometimes conflicting roles between teacher and researcher. Lisa, in particular, would sometimes question me about a decision I had made in the course of the drama. This caused me to examine more deeply the decisions I was making that might be good for my research but perhaps not so good for teaching. For example, when the students embarked upon a trend toward negative campaigning, I chose not to comment upon it initially; rather, I was interested in observing how the campaigns would be altered and how the students would respond to these new campaign tactics. Lisa, however, thought that this turn of events provided an important opportunity stop the campaign and process what was happening in discussions with the class. We debated the pros and cons of stopping the

campaign drama in process verses reflecting upon events after they had played out. This type of challenge throughout the project helped me to maintain an awareness of the impact of my research upon my teaching.

Data Collection

This study used a variety of data collection methods, but I retained an emergent design overall which allowed me the flexibility to take advantage of opportunities as they arose. Emergent design is appropriate in naturalistic research because “what emerges as a function of the interaction between inquirer and phenomenon is largely unpredictable in advance” (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p. 41).

The data collection methods included participant observation, student interviews, teacher interviews, interviews with participants in the development of state curriculum model for social studies; interviews with participants in the development of the Ohio proficiency test for social studies; student written assessments, historical documents, videotaping, audio taping, journal entries, and field notes.

Observations

Classroom observations were conducted 3-5 times weekly for four weeks to gather data on specific drama activities. I assumed the role of a participant observer, which enabled me to record events as they evolved. Both planned and unplanned participant observations occurred, as events warranted.

Planned drama sessions occurred daily during the first week, and three days per week during the second, third and fourth weeks. Unplanned drama observations included student activities that were connected to the drama events, but were conducted entirely independently and at the students' discretion. These activities typically included students who were making campaign signs, hats, bumper stickers, etc., posting campaign materials, discussing events in the various campaigns, and discussing possible campaign strategies.

Formal Written Assessments

Formal written assessments were conducted in my classroom and in another third grade classroom in which a similar unit had been taught. This assessment of another third grade classroom helped me to develop a baseline for comparison, to compare the types of understandings that the students had developed through a more traditional study, to compare the type of information that was retained over a longer period of time, and then to examine the changes in understanding after the drama education experiences.

Each class was assessed four weeks after completing the initial unit, to evaluate what information had been retained. Each class was assessed a second time 18 weeks after completing the initial unit. These assessments consisted of three questions: What are the qualifications necessary to be President of the United States? What are the duties of the President? What steps do you have to go through to be elected President?

I also conducted a brief, written assessment with only my class, which required the students to name the three branches of government. I did not do this assessment with the

other third grade classroom because this was not an objective covered in their unit. I conducted this assessment three times, once in December, once in February, and once in June.

Student Interviews

I conducted both formal and informal interviews with students. I have categorized them into three groups: formal assessment interviews, informal follow-up interviews, and spontaneous interviews. I felt that it was important to do interviews in a variety of settings, because I observed that some students seemed to be more likely to merely concur with the comments of others in their group, in some of our more formal, group interviews. However, if I questioned them in more informal, spur of the moment settings, they seemed quite willing to talk freely and share their own ideas. Sometimes I would call a student aside to ask what he/she might be thinking or planning. The student would then have the opportunity to answer without influence from his/her peers. Thus, these multiple interview settings helped to ensure that each student had many different opportunities to share their thoughts and ideas.

All of the assessment and follow-up interviews were audio taped, because I found it much easier to engage the students in a conversation if I was not copiously scribbling notes after each response. The students appeared to be far more comfortable in answering my questions when I could maintain eye contact and listen and respond as a conversation partner, rather than as a note taker. When I first attempted to conduct the interviews with note taking, the students seemed somewhat distracted by my constant writing, and

frequently tried to read what I was writing. They seemed to be more interested in what I might be writing, and tended to lose their focus on the questions that I was asking.

Prior to beginning each recorded interview, I explained to each student that I could not write as fast as they could talk, and asked if they would mind if I used a tape recorder to record their answers. I showed each student the “stop” button and explained that at any time they could turn off the recorder. All students gave permission for recording. The students did not appear to be distracted by the recorder, and seemed to talk freely. However, oftentimes at the end of an interview, a student wondered how he/she had sounded on the tape, so we would rewind the tape a little and play it back. The students seemed to enjoy hearing their voices on tape.

Formal Interviews

Twelve formal assessment interviews were conducted as a follow-up to the written assessments. Three students representing a range of ability levels were selected from each classroom. The three students were interviewed immediately following each formal written assessment. The interviews were conducted to provide the students with the opportunity to add any additional information to their answers that they might not have written on their formal assessments. This was particularly important for the students who were less proficient in writing. These interviews also provided me with an opportunity to question the students about their written responses to enable them to more completely articulate their understandings.

Formal Assessment Interview Series #1.

Both second grade classrooms studied the election process through more traditional types of social studies instruction. Typical classroom activities included discussion of vocabulary, reading and discussion of non-fiction books about the presidency and the election process, discussing literature about campaigns, elections, voting, etc., discussion of current campaign events, and student reports about individual presidents. From each class, three students were selected to discuss what they had learned about the election process. The students were selected to represent three different ability levels. During the interview, students were given the opportunity to discuss and expand upon their answers on the written assessment and also to discuss additional questions designed to elicit more information about their understanding of the election process. Each student was interviewed individually and the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Formal Assessment Interview Series #2.

Interviews were held with these same six students approximately 18 weeks after completing their social studies unit on the election process. The purpose of these interviews was to assess how much the students remembered about the election process and to provide the students with an opportunity to discuss any new understandings or insights about the election process. Each student was interviewed individually and the interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Informal Follow-Up Interviews

I also conducted four follow-up interviews in small groups of 3 to 4 students who had participated in the classroom drama experiences. The purpose of these interviews was

to question the students about their learning and to ask them their thoughts about learning through drama. The questions in these interviews were very open-ended; for example: What do you think is important for kids to learn about the election process? Why is that important? What did you learn about government? What did you learn about the election process? How was it different learning about campaigns and elections by doing drama than how you learned it about it the “first time”? Many questions in these informal sessions were generated from the student responses. These interviews were tape recorded and transcribed.

Spontaneous Interviews

I also conducted almost daily informal “spontaneous interviews” throughout the course of this study. Informal interviews were unplanned, “spur of the moment” interviews which frequently involved questions about events that I might have observed or discussions that I had overheard. For example, one day I heard a small group of students discussing their strategy for making bigger campaign signs to deal with the problem of opposing campaign workers posting signs in the same “prime” locations. I stopped to question the students on why they thought that might be happening, and how their response to it might be received.

Because of the spontaneous nature in which these interviews occurred, these interviews were not tape recorded. I recorded these interviews at the end of the day in my journal.

Audio taping

In addition to recording interviews, audio taping was also used (4-5 times) to record student campaign speeches during classroom drama experiences.

Also, on several occasions, our lunch time meetings or professional consultation day meetings were audio taped. Interviewees were informed that at any time they were free to push the stop button on the recorder. The recorder was always placed on the table within reach of the participants. Transcriptions of these interviews provided additional opportunities for follow-up, in-depth review and analysis. These meetings were transcribed, reviewed and analyzed.

Videotaping

Classroom videotaping was utilized 8 times over three weeks to record various classroom drama education experiences. Most of the time, the video camera was simply placed upon a tripod and placed in a location where the primary “action” could be recorded.

Occasionally, I would hold the camera and videotape in order to capture students in the planning stages of their activities. After an initial period of curiosity, most students did not seem to be affected by the presence the video camera. They usually wanted to wave at the camera or come up to the camera for a “close up” shot, as soon as the camera was turned on, but they quickly seemed to lose interest, and appeared to forget about the camera as they went about their business in the context of the drama. After the initial “camera awareness” faded, the students seemed to behave in a similar manner, whether they were being recorded or not.

The videotapes provided me with an opportunity to observe the unedited behavior of students and teacher. As Hopkins (1985) notes, videotaping allows for the review and analysis of events from both within sessions and over time (p. 71).

Journal Entries

I kept a journal throughout the project to record my thoughts, feelings, and observations. I also recorded in my journal my plans for all lessons, and my post-session notes. I also kept extensive notes about my changing understandings about the classroom drama experiences and my connections of those experiences to issues that I was reflecting upon, such as development of critical thinking skills, decision-making, curriculum content, standardized assessments, and my theoretical readings on learning and assessment.

Field Notes

I have kept field notes in a journal to record my observations of classroom events and videotapes. However, most of my observations as a participant observer have been recorded in my journal.

Proficiency Test Interviews

In addition to the interviews previously described, I also conducted four separate interviews with three individuals regarding the history and development of the state proficiency tests, particularly related to the social studies portion of the test. I believed that it was important to understand the purpose of the test, the development of the test, and multiple perspectives regarding its design and use. Thus, these interviews, were not directly connected to the data gathering on the social studies and drama education experiences, but were conducted in support of this study.

These interviews were audio taped, with the permission of the participants. These individuals all represented different perspectives and were selected because of their diverse perspectives: one interview was with a university professor, two interviews were with an administrator from the Ohio Department of Education, and one interview was with a member of the proficiency test development committee. These interviews were also a rich source of historical documents related to the history and development of the state proficiency tests.

Analysis of Data

Content analysis of data were used to identify, code, and categorize patterns in the data. Categories were developed by looking for “recurring regularities” (Patton, 1990, p. 403) in the data, and the appropriateness of the categories were determined by “internal homogeneity” and “external homogeneity” criteria. Internal criteria were established so that the “data hold together in a meaningful way” and the external criterial were established so that there are clear and distinct differences between the categories (Patton, 1990, p. 403). Categories were then prioritized according to heuristic value, credibility, uniqueness, and relativity.

A constant comparative analysis, devised by Glaser and Strauss (1967) was also utilized. In this method, I developed general descriptions (“theoretical properties” of the categories), modify the categories as needed, and look for relationships among the categories. Evaluation and interpretation of data was contextualized within a framework of emergent questions.

A final aspect of my data analysis is more personal. As I gathered data throughout this study, I often jotted down thoughts and comments about their significance. These served as a continual source of reflection and ongoing analysis throughout the study. I attempted to connect what I was seeing with my students to my ongoing theoretical readings. I also continually analyzed how what I was seeing in my classroom connected to the state proficiency assessments that my student would soon be encountering in the future.

Establishing Trustworthiness

To establish trustworthiness in this study, I am using five criteria suggested by Lincoln and Guba (1989). These criteria include: prolonged engagement, persistent observation, peer debriefing, progressive subjectivity, and member checks.

The first criteria, prolonged engagement, has been established since I have been an active part of this classroom since the beginning of the school year, in my role as teacher.

Persistent observation, the second criteria, has been achieved through a daily presence in the classroom and an active role in planning, teaching, daily meetings in which discussions take place regarding the students and our teaching.

Peer debriefing, the third criteria, has proven to be a valuable source of new insight. A friend who is familiar with this particular classroom arrangement (collaborative teaching partnership) has been able to point out some alternative theories from those which I have suggested, as possible areas of inquiry. She is disinterested enough to be able to view the picture from a different perspective than mine, but she is familiar enough

with drama education, the Ohio proficiency tests, and with the shared teaching arrangement, that she understands clearly what I am talking about. She is always willing and able to challenge my assumptions and interpretations.

The fourth criterion, progressive subjectivity, refers to the “process of monitoring the evaluator’s own developing construction” (Guba and Lincoln, 1989, p. 238). This involves recording my a priori construction (what I expect to find) along the way, and periodically recording my developing and evolving construction. This helps to challenge my assumptions and forces me to look deeper to find what I did not expect to find.

The fifth criteria, member checks, are the “single most crucial technique for establishing credibility” according to Guba and Lincoln because they provide a means for verifying the “multiple constructions with those who provided them” (1989, p. 239). Most member checks thus far have been informal, and have occurred during the course of our discussions, as I explain my recording of events or situations that occurred and check it against the recollection and interpretation of the other teachers. However, I have shared several actual transcripts with them to ensure that they were accurate records of what had transpired. Our informal checks have proven to be an important part of ensuring that I am recording multiple perspectives.

Generalizability

In the positivistic paradigm, generalizability means that there is a sufficiently large sample size (number of subjects) so that the results of the study could be reliably applied to a different and perhaps larger group, if the site and subjects were similar. However, in

qualitative research, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that generalizability should be a non-concern and that “transferability” is instead the issue. In naturalistic studies, the researcher needs to “provide thick description to enable someone interested in making a transfer to reach a conclusion about whether +transfer can be contemplated as a possibility” (p. 316). Geertz (1973) asserted that within interpretive research, the primary responsibility is “not to codify abstract regularities but to make thick description possible within them” (p. 26).

Therefore, the reasonableness of applying this research to other times, places, or persons will depend on the reader to find in the thick description a sufficient number of similarities for his or her own contextual understanding.

Researcher Subjectivity

It is important to recognize that it is impossible to be objective in the role of researcher, and therefore it is incumbent upon the researcher to recognize her own subjectivity and the ways in which that subjectivity influences the study. One’s personal values and preferences “have the capacity to skew, shape, block, transform, construe, and misconstrue what transpires from the outset of a research project to its culmination in a written statement” (Peshkin, 1988, p. 17). Peshkin characterized each personal quality or preference as a “subjective I”. For example, my role as researcher (the “Researcher I”) might influence my interpretation and portrayal of interactions differently than my “Teacher I”. Peshkin emphasized that it was not enough to recognize the researcher

subjectivity; rather, it was important that researchers “systematically identify their subjectivity throughout the course of their research” (1988, p. 17).

Therefore, I have attempted to identify the “subjective I’s” (in no particular order) that were a part of this study:

- the “Teacher I”
- the “Researcher I”
- the “Graduate Student I”
- the “Co-worker I”
- the “Friend I”
- the “Anti-Institutional I”
- the “Political Activist I”
- the “Female I”
- the “Mother I”
- the “Dramatist I”

As I collect, categorize, analyze, and interpret the data, I will reflect upon how my subjectivity may be influencing those processes.

Ethics

All participants involved agreed to be a part of this study. All parents signed permission slips for audio and video recording in the classroom. Before each formal interview, I asked each person for permission to audiotape the conversation. I explained that at any point in the conversation, the participant could opt to stop the recording.

Many of our daily meetings were audio taped. All of the participants agreed to the taping, and all were free to turn off the recorder at any point in the meeting. Occasionally, this happened. The recording equipment was always in the center of the table so that all participants could see it.

CHAPTER 4

PROCESS DRAMA IN THE SOCIAL STUDIES CLASSROOM – A CLASSROOM BASED INQUIRY PROJECT

This study evolved as a result of my observations of student engagement and student performance on traditional assessment measures, following a study of the presidential election process in the US. Levels of student engagement seemed to be quite low, according to my observations and the observations of the regular social studies teacher and the special education teacher who were also both teaching in the classroom. Although there was the benefit of an actual presidential campaign in progress from which to draw authentic examples, there seemed to be little genuine interest on the part of the students. The assessments also indicated considerable “misunderstandings” in the students’ learnings. For example, one of the questions on the final assessment was: What are the requirements to be President of the United States?

Some of the students’ answers included:

You have to have a dog and a cat.

You have to be married.

You have to live in a white house.

You have to be very, very old.

Although they had spent over 4 weeks studying a classroom unit which covered the “steps on the road to the White House” and had drawn many “genuine” examples from the presidential election campaign which was in full swing, it appeared that many of the students did not gain any real understanding of the election process. Furthermore, few students demonstrated any understanding of the concept of government, its structure, or its function.

The teachers and I reflected upon the class discussions related to how an individual becomes president and about the ongoing events in the Dole and Clinton campaigns that had been shared in class in an effort to relate the unit to actual campaign events. We also thought about the careful explanations of the new vocabulary words—convention, candidate, delegate, primary, etc., words which we reluctantly admitted had little real meaning to the students. In spite of all these efforts, it was painfully evident that the students had not developed any real understanding of the election process, nor how it was related to the governmental structure. It was clear that a new approach was needed if the students were to develop any genuine understanding of the election process. As we considered incorporating process drama into the social studies class, we discussed our understandings of drama.

[In drama] teachers set up imagined situations which student and teacher enter together, in role, to explore events, issues, and relationships. . . . It is a powerful method of teaching that aims at promoting a change of understanding or insight for the participant. . . exploring the thoughts and feelings of another person by responding and behaving as that person would in a given situation. (Tarlington & Verriour, 1991, p. 9)

I believe that drama can provide students access to a world where they can experience firsthand that which we want them to learn. My partner teachers and I agreed that learning is a socially interactive process, and agreed that we wanted to provide the students with opportunities to experience government in action, rather than merely to read and talk about it. As David Booth explains:

As an act of learning, reading is basically a private experience and drama generally a shared one. When children read, they . . . react and respond personally, free from outside intervention, to enter as deeply as they decide into this new world of meaning. The interactive, participating model of the drama experience helps children grow in a different way, moving them forward toward new, collective understanding. . . it is, on its own, a powerful medium for helping children make learning happen. (1985, p. 193)

Drama experiences fit well with the NCSS guidelines encouraging social studies to be taught through meaningful “authentic activities which . . . engage the students in applications of content” (1993, p. 216). According to O’Neill, et. al.:

Drama is no longer seen only as another branch of art education, but as a unique teaching tool, vital in language development, and invaluable as a method in exploration of other subject areas. (O’Neill, Lambert, Linnell & Warr-Wood, 1976, p. 7)

Deciding to Re-Teach

The decision to re-teach the unit seemed to present an interesting opportunity for classroom based inquiry. A comparative approach would enable me to examine some of the differences between the more traditional social studies learning experience and a

drama-based learning experience. I was interested in answering the questions: How can process drama be used to teach social studies content related to government structure and the election process? Can students make sense of the content through process drama in ways that are meaningful to them? Can drama serve to enrich the learning experience in social studies? Can process drama support improved student performance on more standardized types of assessments?

I was interested in documenting and comparing levels of student engagement, enthusiasm, meaning-making and problem-solving experiences, so a descriptive approach was required (Marshall & Jackman, 1995, p. 41). I utilized a field study strategy which included a variety of data gathering techniques, such as participant observation, interviews, document analysis, audio and video recording, field notes and journal entries. I was also interested in assessing mastery of content which would be required for future proficiency tests. Student answers on the initial follow-up assessment (both written and verbal) indicated that they had not made sense of the content in ways that would be useful to them on such future mandated standardized assessments, so I administered pre- and post-drama written and verbal assessments, to compare outcomes.

A Brief Description of the Project

This project took place in a third grade classroom of 19 students in a suburban school. The social studies unit included topics in U.S. government, its structure and function, and the U.S. election process. The class spent four weeks participating in

numerous political processes through various drama experiences. Each drama experience was structured to provide the students with opportunities to explore a variety of roles, responsibilities, and perspectives.

The Classroom Drama Experiences

I will describe selected examples in terms of a “drama context,” a description of the actual drama activities, an overview of the setting and tasks assigned. A discussion and analysis of those activities will follow each drama context description. I will present ten drama contexts in the same chronological order in which we experienced them in the classroom. They include:

1. Creating a New Government
2. Representatives of the People
3. The Legislative Branch
4. The Judicial Branch
5. The Executive Branch
6. The Primary Election
7. Preparing for the Convention
8. The Convention
9. The Campaign
10. The Electoral College

My original intention for this study was to re-teach the part of the social studies curriculum that dealt with the election process. However, discussions with the students

indicated that they did not have a clear understanding of what “government” actually is. During our initial discussion, several students actually asked what government meant and one student asked where the government was. Many students believed that the job of the president was to make the laws for the country. I believe that a clear understanding of government and its role and structure was central to the students’ ability to develop a comprehensive understanding of the election process. So I decided to redevelop our starting point to provide the students with some experience in the structure and responsibilities of the three branches of the government. In order to provide the students with a sense of ownership, we began our drama with the formation of a new government.

Drama Context One: Creating a New Government

I asked the students to imagine that they had fled from an oppressive homeland in search of a new land in which they could live together in freedom and happiness. We imagined that we had “discovered” a large, uninhabited, unclaimed land mass, and decided to settle there. We imagined that we were settled in our new country, and then I posed the following question: “Well, since we’re now free we probably don’t need any laws. After all, if you’re free, that means that you can do whatever you want, doesn’t it?” At first, some children began to nod their heads in agreement, but as the discussion continued, many seemed to have second thoughts about what freedom really meant. For example, Patrick initially said, “Well, it [freedom] just means that you can do what you want.” But Matthew disagreed, “No it doesn’t. I just can’t come over to your house and

take your stuff.” Maggie added, “Well, I think that, like, if you want to do something and it doesn’t hurt anybody else then that could be okay. Like that would be freedom.”

Analysis

In this drama context, the students began to think more deeply about the concept of ‘freedom’. Although initially they accepted the notion of freedom somewhat simplistically, as ‘non-limited behavior’ their discussion and reflection in role led them to think more deeply about the implications of such an interpretation. They reflected upon a number of possible meanings of freedom, and how freedom is constructed within a larger social context. They discussed the concept of “rules” or “laws” and how laws impact the needs of individuals verses the needs of the larger community. For example, Aaron connected it to the community meetings that the class held to discuss issues and solve problems. “It’s sort of like how when we do our meetings when somebody has a problem and then everybody has a say in how we do [solve] it. It’s not just one person’s [ideas].”

The students were beginning to think about personal freedom and how that related to the freedom of the larger group. They were beginning to understand that citizenship within a community must necessarily have boundaries, and determination of those boundaries should consider both the needs of the individual and the community as a whole. The students were discovering John Dewey’s (1921) notion that “the ordinary good citizen is as a matter of fact subject to a great deal of social control. . . .” They were

realizing that the “social control” of the group could and did help define freedom. The class ultimately decided that they would develop some laws “so everyone will know what’s allowed.”

This is an example of a problem-posing approach, which Freire (1970/1993) advocated as a means of stimulating creativity and reflection. The students’ knowledge about the concept of freedom was emerging through “invention and reinvention.” As the students talked and listened to one another, their initial ideas about freedom were changing and evolving into a new level of understanding. They were thinking critically about their initial understanding that freedom meant there were no rules for anyone, and reconstructing a more complex understanding of the term. They were also relating this to their own lives as they evaluated one another’s interpretations and giving examples why a particular interpretation would or wouldn’t fit into their particular framework. For example, one student who initially suggested that laws would be unnecessary said later in the discussion, “Well, if there’s no laws, then anybody could just come along and take my stuff. We’ll probably need a ‘no stealing’ law.” She was constructing the concepts of ‘freedom’ and ‘law’ in ways that fit into her personal understanding or schema. This is an example of active construction of meaning, which is a fundamental concept of constructivist learning theory. The students were engaging in higher-level thinking skills as they debated and defended their ideas about freedom and ‘how much’ freedom is too much or not enough when considering how one’s interpretation of freedom might impact the freedom of the group.

Drama Context Two: Representatives of the People

In this drama context, the students were reflecting in role about the types of personal qualities that would be needed in order to be a fair and true representative of the people. The students imagined they had been selected by their respective villages and towns to help create the laws for our new country. While in role, the representatives gathered together for a meeting in which they shared their thoughts on important qualifications for the job of representing their people. As we were seated in a large circle, each representative told the group why he/she had been selected by the people in their village.

Analysis

The students shared their thoughts and ideas about important qualities for persons serving the interests of a larger community. This involved utilizing meta-cognitive and reasoning skills, because the students had to think about the thinking and decision-making of their fellow villagers. This is a complex process which involved the students in multiple perspective-taking, as they had to construct the thinking processes from the perspective of the villagers as it related to the selection criteria.

Geoffrey decided that he was selected by his village because he was honest; Maura said it was because her villagers liked her ability to see both sides of a situation. Jeff's people had chosen him because they knew he wouldn't be easily persuaded to go along with the group if he believed he was right. Eve said her village trusted her to do what was best for everyone, not just what she might want individually.

This drama context served to build belief in their roles. Students began to speak more formally as they shared their village selection criteria. They spoke seriously about the importance of the job and the level of trust that their villages had demonstrated in them. Their ownership in the role provided a safe basis from which to proceed into their new responsibilities. Belief in their own competence was critical to their success.

The students worked within a context described by Dorothy Heathcote as “mantle of the expert.” She described this context as a way in which “the class is set upon a task in such a way that they function as experts” (1984, p. 205). By working within the “mantle of the expert” we had begun to tap into the personal, social, societal, and epistemological aspects of the curriculum (Heathcote, 1995, p. 31). We had expanded our field of learning to connect with both personal knowledge and with a broader spectrum of knowledge. The students had connected their understandings of “important qualities for a village representative” (personal, social, and societal aspects) to the very real task of developing legislation (social, epistemological and experiential).

Drama Context Three: The Legislative Branch

The legislators divided into committees and spent some time discussing proposals for new laws. I explained that their ideas were only proposals (called “bills”) until they had actually been voted on and passed into law. Congress was scheduled to convene that afternoon and the different committees could then present their bills.

When we reconvened that afternoon, I briefly explained the structure of the Congress, the House, and the Senate, so we would have a shared understanding of the

structure in which we would work. As we proceeded, it became clear that this legislative meeting would be a very time consuming endeavor, as the students were discussing in detail the advantages and disadvantages of each proposed bill. For example, one student had submitted a bill which stated that “we will only use weapons in war.” This bill initiated considerable discussion on law enforcement officials and hunters who need to use weapons. I asked the committees to prioritize their bills and select only one proposal to present to the Congress.

Analysis

This legislative endeavor was particularly interesting because of the previously established democratic nature of this classroom. My intent in creating this particular drama context was primarily to provide the students with an opportunity to think critically about what laws might be needed in a community, and to participate in the process of proposing and passing legislation. Because this was actually preliminary “ground work” for building an understanding of government structure, I had not planned to spend a great deal of time on it.

However, our classroom was organized and operated within a democratic framework in which students often held community meetings and proposed and debated solutions at length. Lisa, in particular, had fostered an atmosphere of openness which promoted in depth critical thinking, by teaching the students how to conduct and facilitate their own community meetings. Thus, the students were accustomed to lengthy debate and discussion of classroom problems and issues and the exploration of possible solutions. Their well developed skills in discussion and negotiation served them well in

their day to day classroom life. However, for my purposes of attempting a “quick and easy” overview of the legislative process, the students’ desire and willingness to debate every minor aspect of every legislative proposal meant that we were progressing at a snail’s pace. Because they were so accomplished at considering issues in depth, ensuring that every member of the group had an opportunity to be heard, and then summarizing “what they were hearing”, each “bill” was taking an extraordinarily long time to even come to a vote! It soon became clear that at this pace, we could end up spending all of our time on the legislative branch of government and never even get to the election process.

This is what ultimately led to my decision to ask the legislative committees to select only *one* proposal to submit for a vote. Some of the groups had a clear priority, but others struggled with having to decide on a single proposal. The intensity of the discussions that occurred within the groups indicated that the students were highly committed to their beliefs and responsibilities.

One group submitted a bill which stated “You had to be nice to people and treat people with respect.” This proposal generated considerable discussion in Congress, as most members agreed that in spirit, this was a good idea, but many argued that just because it’s a good idea, it shouldn’t necessarily be a law. The debate brought forth considerable discussion related to the amount of intervention the government should have on the lives of its citizens. For example, Brett said, “You shouldn’t get arrested just because you weren’t nice to someone.” Matthew added, “We can’t have police everywhere interfering every time two people have a disagreement.” Again, their

conceptual understandings of personal freedom were being challenged, and their need to articulate their reasoning to defend their position further advanced their thinking. The need to discover a balance between personal freedom and intrusion upon that freedom for societal control was a significant challenge.

Discussions of these types of issues is particularly important for students because they begin to construct an understanding that rights and responsibilities in a society are consciously designed and regulated by people in government. This seemed particularly significant because I believe that students need to develop an awareness of the power structures within the government and how they impact our lives. They need to develop an understanding not only of how the government “works” but how those workings may be influenced. (Ultimately, the students passed a resolution, rather than a law, stating that respect for others and kindness were important values in our country.)

After extensive debate, discussion, and numerous modifications, the Congress finally succeeded in passing five laws. Even after reducing their proposal to just one per committee, this process took almost two entire days. After Congress adjourned, we reflected upon how difficult it is to develop bills in committees with everyone in agreement, and how much more difficult is to get them passed in Congress.

The students were faced with the difficult task of developing “legal guidelines” for the country and then further challenged by the need to select only one out of many that they had deemed necessary. They had to consider a multiplicity of viewpoints within their committee as they struggled to define their priorities. There was considerable discussion on each bill that was presented to Congress, and the legislators were then put in the

position of both observer and participant. They observed the reactions of their classmates as discussion ensued, and also needed to respond to the criticisms of their bill while articulating their defense.

We talked about what how that experience felt and how difficult it was to listen to what people were saying and trying to come up with arguments to present at the same time. (One student compared it to how he tries to win arguments with his older brother.) Several students suggested that this experience might be similar to what “really” happens when Congress has difficulty coming to agreement.

Some students thought it might be helpful to have another perspective on proposed bills from someone outside the Congress, especially when there was considerable difficulty in coming to an agreement. This suggestion served as the basis for further discussions related to the office of the presidency. During those discussions, several students suggested that it might be helpful to have one person who could represent our country on visits to other nations, because, as Jeff said, “Everyone in Congress can’t go. We have work to do writing all these laws.”

From a social constructivist perspective, children are active constructors of their own knowledge. During this period, students were engaged in learning activities which provided them with authentic contexts in which to construct knowledge about boundaries which are socially constructed. Social constructivist theorists also suggest that language plays a central role in mental development. These drama experiences were rich in language, and entailed the use of reasoning and critical thinking skills, as students discussed and debated ideas with their “Congressional colleagues.” They were also

building on their own knowledge about the types of actions that should or are regulated by the government and analyzing how those regulations impacted the notion of freedom.

Drama Context Four: The Judicial Branch

Our Congress had just passed a law which specified very strict penalties for stealing. Virtually all of the members of Congress were in agreement that stealing was wrong and should not be tolerated in our country. Their assumptions seemed to indicate that there could only be one “correct” perspective on this obvious “wrong-doing.” I wanted the students to understand that legal issues are not always so clear cut; that proper use of laws sometimes requires additional interpretation. I read a fictitious newspaper account of a young boy who was arrested for stealing food from a local market. He had no money and was in desperate need of food because his mother (who was very ill) and his infant sister were nearly starving. According to our recently passed law, the boy would be sentenced to 25 years in jail.

Analysis

The students expressed shock and concern over the plight of this boy, and began to question their “no stealing” law. Most students felt that the penalty was too harsh, given the extenuating circumstances, and considerable discussion ensued. Heathcote suggests that groups involved in drama are sometimes able to reflect more closely on the events if they are “asked to comment on the action” rather than participate directly in it “at

life-rate” (1980b, p. 168). Through their discussion, the students discovered the importance of having some means to interpret the intent of the laws and consider individual circumstances.

The students’ response to this situation was especially significant, because it demonstrates how drama can empower students to “discover” the curriculum for themselves. In this case, the students decided to intervene and created the role of a judge who might allow the boy to plead his case. This is an especially useful example of “guided discovery” in which the students “discovered” the need for a new function of government. The Judicial Branch of government is, in fact, part of the curriculum content the students must learn. In this case, the students saw a need for this particular function of government, connected it to their own background knowledge (some students had very quickly suggested “a trial”), and then built further connections as to how this judicial branch of government was related to the legislative branch. Given the proper structuring and support, students can be empowered to discover for themselves essential aspects of the curriculum.

The students asked if I would serve as the judge for the trial. At first I was reluctant about taking on this role as I thought that they might be expecting me to provide them with a “right answer” to this problem. Then, as I reflected on the possibilities, I decided to assume the role of judge in order to help ensure that complexities of this issue were explored.

One interesting (and unexpected) outcome of the “trial” was the response of the “townspeople” to the owner of the market. During the trial, the boy explained that he

had gone to the shopkeeper and asked for food. The shopkeeper had turned him away, with the explanation that he couldn't stay in business by giving food away. After the trial, the townspeople decided that they no longer wished to patronize the shopkeeper, as he had shown little compassion in dealing with the boy. Their decision emerged from their discussion (in role) about the trial, as they debated the moral and ethical issues involved. A few students argued in favor of the shopkeeper, saying that he couldn't in fairness, give food to some people and not others. They also defended him by arguing that the townspeople could have donated money or food to the boy. However, others argued that the shopkeeper had an obligation to at least let the townspeople know that the boy was in such dire need, rather than simply turning him away. After much discussion, the townspeople agreed to organize a "boycott" of the shopkeeper's market.

This could be described as an example of cognitive moral education (Kohlberg, 1969). Advocates of this approach argue that when moral standards are imposed—as in a direct instruction approach—children do not completely integrate and fully understand the moral principles which underlie them. Lawrence Kohlberg, noted educational theorist, suggested that moral development is based primarily on moral reasoning, as individuals struggle to resolve the complex issues inherent in moral dilemmas (1969, 1976, 1984, 1986). Kohlberg believed that children construct their moral reasoning in qualitatively different ways as they pass from one developmental stage to the next, rather than passively accepting the norms of morality that exist within their culture. He believed that by challenging the moral reasoning of individuals, that higher levels of moral development could be promoted. By challenging children to become aware of the limitations in their

moral judgments by facing increasingly complex moral dilemmas, they are pushed into an uncomfortable state of “disequilibrium.” By struggling with these challenges, children begin to restructure their thoughts about morality, and gradually move to a higher level of moral reasoning and development. Research by Turiel 1966, Rest, Turiel, & Kohlberg 1969, Walker 1982, and Berkowitz & Gibbs 1983, and Lapsley & Quintana 1985 indicates that moral development in children’s reasoning can be encouraged through exposure to models or discussions that are more advanced than the child’s current level of reasoning.

In this case, the students were challenged to re-examine their “no stealing” law by facing the more complex moral dilemma of the boy providing food for his family, who was in desperate need. The students had initially developed the position that stealing was unacceptable and could not be tolerated. However, now the students were faced with a conflict between their original moral decision and their current moral dilemma about the severe consequences that the boy would suffer. Through experience and discussion, the students were empowered to think through and evaluate multiple possibilities and perspectives. They also had the added “safety” of being in role, so that they could freely debate and explore perspectives which might not necessarily be “popular” or even their own.

Drama Context Five: The Executive Branch

In discussions about the responsibilities for the leader of the country, some students suggested that the “President” travel to other countries to “tell about our new country” or “be the one who makes decisions that have to be made fast, like if someone

was attacking us.” Several students argued that the President should have input on which laws get passed for the country. Initially, many students volunteered for the role of “President.” We discussed important qualities for a president, and how students might decide if they wanted to be a candidate for the job of president. Ultimately, five students decided they would campaign for president. We divided the class into five campaign groups. Each group had five roles: a campaign manager who arranged the candidate’s speaking schedule; a press secretary who talked to reporters and presented only favorable information about the candidate; a reporter who gathered information, both positive and negative, about the candidate; a speech writer, and a volunteer who prepared hats, signs, bumper stickers, banners, etc. (Each group member helped generate campaign materials as a volunteer.)

Analysis

Because the students were creating their own concept of “president,” I did not intervene when student suggestions for presidential responsibilities were different than they are in “real life.” I had not planned to include the duties of the president as a part of this particular drama context; rather its intent was twofold: to provide the students with the opportunity to learn that there is an executive branch of the government with separate duties from the legislative and judicial branches; and to introduce the beginnings of the election process. However, as I review the data, I see that I may have missed a useful opportunity to build in this information and clear up some of their misconceptions. I am still reflecting upon possible ways in which this could be handled. One possibility might be to create, in role, situations which require presidential action in those authentic situations

(i.e. vetoing legislation or appointing an ambassador); another possibility might be to take a “break in the action” to step back and discuss the actual responsibilities. I would need to create an additional drama context to do this, however, because at this point in our drama, we don’t yet have a president elected.

At this point in the drama, the students had not yet discovered the concept of “voter blocks.” Their speeches were somewhat generic and unfortunately, all somewhat similar, as they spoke mostly in generalities about the candidate being “good for our country” and the “best person for the job.” It wasn’t until later in the campaign when we structured our roles as audience that the students began to realize the importance of addressing issues that were important to a specific audience. Later on, for example, we conducted an imaginary “Candidate’s Night” where the students were in role as candidates and audience members at an imaginary school. Several of the candidates addressed issues related to education, (ie. more money for library books and supplies, higher pay for teachers, etc.).

One student expressed surprise at learning that teachers actually received a salary. This proved to be a particularly interesting example of a student who was beginning to acquire some basic knowledge in economics. It was also an interesting example of a student acquiring background knowledge and putting together the “bigger picture.”

This incident occurred as we had begun to process as a whole class the issues which the candidates had addressed during their “Candidate’s Night” speeches.

Teacher: Why do you think that some of the speeches we heard
talked about things like more money for books and higher pay
for teachers?

Jeff:(incredulously) “Higher pay??!! You mean, you guys get paid for
doing this?!”

Teacher: Well, yes!

Jeff: You mean; this is like a *job* for you?!?

Robbie: Well, sure it’s a job. How do think they get money? Like, how
do you think she got money to buy those nice shoes? (I happened
to be wearing new shoes that day and apparently Robbie noticed!)

Jeff: (looks at the shoes) (pauses) Well, yeah. . . (pauses) (shaking his head)
Well, I just, like, always thought that you guys were just always here.
Like, a long time ago, when my mom first brought me to school,
like for the very first time, you were all, well, all the teachers were just
already here.

Matthew: Well, why do you think they were here? Did you
think they lived here?!?

Jeff: Well, I don’t know. It’s just, well, I guess-- I just-- thought they
were here.

Robbie: Well, they gotta get money. How are they gonna live? They
have to get food and stuff. How are they gonna pay for it
with no money?!

Matthew: Well, its just like when, well, think about when your mom
or dad gets up and goes to work in the morning. They
probably go to their office or somewhere, like wherever
they work. Well, the teachers, like Miss B. and Mrs M.,
they just come here, for their work.

Jeff: (smiling and shaking his head, pensively) Well, I just didn't
think that--well, like--wow, a job. . .

Although Jeff had undoubtedly been exposed to the notion of careers in the career education curriculum that begins in kindergarten and is continued each year, it was particularly interesting that he had not “connected” that to his own knowledge and experience related to school. He was genuinely astounded to learn that teaching was a job for which teachers are paid. In our discussion, as he heard this (for what seemed to be the first time for him), his eyes grew very large and his mouth dropped open. He blurted out with genuine amazement his question-statement “You mean you guys get paid for doing this?!?” Matthew (who lived in a home with two working parents) assumed that Jeff would see his parent(s) get up each day and “go to work.” However, Jeff lived in a single parent family with his mother who did not work outside the home. His father (whom Jeff visited every other weekend) worked varying shifts at a local automotive plant. So Jeff's experience was quite different than Matthew's, as Jeff did not see a parent get up in the morning and go to work each day. Jeff also seemingly had not connected the notion of employment as a means of paying for living expenses, as Robbie had.

Robbie clearly connected the concept of “job” with the concept of “purchasing power.” He connected my ability to purchase new shoes with having a job, as well as the ability to purchase food.

During this discussion, Jeff appeared to be making some important connections. He began to understand that there is a connection between employment and means of support for basic living expenses (such as food). He may also have begun to understand that there was a connection between having a job and having purchasing power, as in purchasing “goods” (such as shoes). He may also have discovered that teaching is included within the concept of “employment.” He seemed to begin to be able to purposely make a distinction between the personal lives and professional lives of the teachers, and yet connect the “whole.” This was particularly interesting because each of us teachers had purposely shared family and personal interest information with the class at the beginning of the year in a portfolio, and throughout the year had continued to share personal and family experiences. For example, one of the teachers had recently gotten married, and had shared wedding information with the students. Although Jeff had been a part of these types of discussions, he apparently had not really developed a schema for fitting together both the personal and professional aspects of his notion of “teacher.” Rather, he assumed that “you guys (the teachers) were just always here.” However, in the course of this discussion, he seemed to be actively “putting it all together.”

The Minimum Wage Issue

When the “candidates” (in role) imagined they were visiting a university, they discussed jobs, student tuition loans, and raising wages in their speeches. The rest of the

class were in role as students. Out of role, we talked about what the “minimum wage” is and how that might be important to students who were working their way through college. Many students had older brothers and sisters who were working and going to school (both high school and college), so this was an issue with which they were quite familiar. They were quick to come to the conclusion that a higher minimum wage was a good idea. Virtually every candidate professed their belief that the student workers should be able to earn more money at their jobs to get more money to pay for college. After discussing the minimum wage, the candidates were quick to make promises to voters to raise the minimum wage.

Economics and Multiple Perspectives

This proved to be a valuable lesson in economics for the class. The students had been so quick to consider the notion of a higher minimum wage as a good idea that they had not stopped to consider any other perspectives. At this point, the students had not demonstrated an awareness or understanding of where the money for salaries comes from.

We began to explore this concept by taking on the role of pizza business owners who were meeting to discuss the “problem” of the new minimum wage proposal. Because the concepts of cost of production and profit and loss were new to most of the students, I drew a large “pizza pie” graph on the chalk board and we began estimating our costs to prepare and deliver pizzas. At first the students seemed to focus on the cost of ingredients (like cheese, pepperoni, etc.) but with a bit of guidance, we eventually got around to consideration of other types of expenses such as salaries. By being in role as

business owners who now had to pay higher wages and thus, have less money for left over for themselves, the students were forced to consider a very different perspective. Now they were clearly facing a dilemma.

Out of role:

Teacher: So now you are thinking that the higher minimum wage is maybe *not* such a good idea? What do you think?

Dennis: So what's the right thing to do, Miss B.?

Teacher: Do you think that there is a "right" thing to do?

Dennis: Well, I don't know. . .

Brooke: Well, if I'm trying to get money for college, I need a lot. My mom said that some of the books cost a hundred dollars. And it costs a whole bunch just to go there. So I think they should.

Teacher: Should raise the minimum wage?

Brooke: (nods yes).

Aaron: Well, yes, but if I'm the owner (of the pizza shop), then I won't want to pay you that much, because what if I need the money? I might want to go to college too, and if I give you all the money then there won't be any left for me to go.

Matthew: I think it depends on who you are. If you're the owner, then you won't want to pay more, but if you just deliver the pizzas then you'll want more money 'cuz you need it to pay for stuff.

(Continued discussion and debate. Eventually Russ introduced a new idea.)

Russ: Just make people pay more money for the pizzas. Then there'll be
lots more (money) for everybody!

Patrick: Yeah, make 'em like fifty dollars.

(Numerous students immediately agree with this idea.)

Karah: (sarcastically) Yeah, right!

Maggie: Nobody would pay fifty dollars for a pizza.

Teacher: What would happen if you decided to sell your pizzas for fifty
dollars?

Timothy: Nobody would buy 'em.

In this discussion, Brooke was clearly connecting her knowledge of college expenses to her classroom drama experiences. Brooke lived in a single parent home and her mother was struggling to complete her college education while working part-time to meet their living expenses. It seems likely that Brooke might have favored a higher minimum wage because of her personal awareness of both college expenses and her mother's experience with the difficulties of "making ends meet." (Earlier in the school year, Brooke had to leave our school to go live with her father, until her mother was able to restabilize her financial situation.)

Matthew was a student who already had well developed perspective-taking skills. Early on in this discussion, he was able to articulate both sides of the issue. I considered building on Matthew's response because it was precisely what I had wanted the

students to understand, but instead decided to say nothing and let the discussion continue. I wanted to push the students to think for themselves, and not just accept Matthew's idea so readily.

Russ's idea to raise the price of the pizzas eventually emerged and there was a chorus of "yeah's" in the room. For a brief moment, many of the students seemed to feel that the "right" answer had been discovered. But Karah and Maggie were able to look at that suggestion from the consumer's point of view and then challenged their solution. Maggie's statement that "nobody would pay fifty dollars for a pizza" was typical of her practical and grounded approach to reasoning. She was accessing her background and experience and was evaluating the proposed price against her prior knowledge and experience. Timothy, always pragmatic and direct, assessed the "solution" of higher prices and pointedly explained why that wouldn't "work."

The decision-making experiences of the students indicated that they appeared to be quick to "jump onto" a quick and easy "solution" as soon as they encountered one. For example, they were quick to embrace the idea of a higher minimum wage. Then they were quick to turn against that very same idea when in role as business owners. And again, many were quick to embrace the notion of a fifty dollar pizza, until several students pointed out the difficulty with that "solution."

It was apparent that the students needed time to explore many conflicting options in order to arrive at a solution. Dewey reminds us that:

Any significant problem involves conditions that for the moment contradict each other. Solution comes only by getting away from

the meaning of terms that [are] already fixed upon and coming to see the conditions from another point of view. (1971, p. 3)

The students were beginning to experience difficulties in attempting to find a quick and easy “solution.” One student, Dennis, wondered aloud about the “right answer.” We never came to any real resolution about the issue of the minimum wage. However, it seemed that from our discussions the students were beginning to confront the complexities of these types of issues and were beginning to develop an awareness of the many different perspectives which must be considered.

This lack of resolution, however, seemed especially difficult for one student, Jack, who tended to view the world from a very concrete, right and wrong perspective. At times, Jack demonstrated a sense of frustration at the uncertainty and lack of a clear cut solution and pressed me for a decision on the “right choice.” It was especially difficult for Jack to understand that there are many different perspectives and each one may be “right” in the eyes of that individual. He occasionally “demanded” that I tell him “the right thing to do.” Later on in our drama experiences, Jack demonstrated some increased awareness of multiple perspective taking, but he continued to demonstrate a need for “clear cut” solutions.

The earlier promises for a higher minimum wage came back to haunt the candidates later in the campaign when the candidates had to address an audience of business owners. Some of the business owners took several of the candidates to task for promising higher minimum wages to the workers. This proved to be quite enlightening to the candidates (and the rest of the class), who hadn’t realized the complexities of trying to

make campaign promises that would satisfy a wide range of voter interests and needs. They were beginning to experience first-hand how promises to one group of voters can alienate another group of voters. They were faced with the problem of either making the workers happy by increasing the minimum wage or making the business owners happy by not raising the minimum wage. Interestingly, in our discussion, several of the students connected this experience with that of their experience as legislators, and the difficulties they had encountered in trying to reach agreement with all members. They were thinking at a different level, and drawing comparisons about their very different and yet similar experiences. At this point, I believe that they were beginning to “discover” for themselves the complexities of the political world through their experiences.

According to Heathcote, “Part of the compelling nature of drama is the potential for students’ “lived through experiences. . . . Out of these we can build reflective processes” (1984, p. 97). Through reflection, the students were discovering new knowledge that had not been evident to them earlier. Their “reflection-in-action” provided them with opportunities to analyze their decision-making from within and from outside of their roles. This metacognitive “thinking about their thinking” represented a new level of reflection for many of the students. In addition, some students were now beginning to apply what they were learning to actual events they had observed in the “real campaign” (The Clinton -Dole - Perot campaign). For example, Matthew explained that he had heard his father complain about the believability of one particular candidate, who

according to his father, “says whatever he thinks people want to hear.” As he was telling me this, he said “Now I think I know why [candidate’s name] is always saying something different.”

I asked the students to think about how they would make informed decisions, knowing that candidates are careful to say what they perceive the audiences want to hear. “How will you know what to believe, when it comes time for you to vote?” This was a question we discussed in more depth at the end of our drama experiences. I will consider their ideas on this later on in this chapter.

Reflection is essential to learning and development. In a sense, reflection serves as a bridge between experience and learning. The students’ shared discourse provided them with many opportunities to reflect upon their thoughts, beliefs, understandings, and decision-making processes and those of their classmates. They were able to bring many of their assumptions to the foreground for examination, but yet within the “safety” of their roles. As Gavin Bolton has noted, “Dramatic activity is a process of engaging with something outside oneself. . . . It is not merely gaining a knowledge of the world, but an investigation of oneself in the knowing” (1988, p. 19).

Drama Context Six: The Primary Election

We conducted a primary election. Election returns indicated that Analyn and Brett were clearly the “front-runners” and that the three other candidates had received only marginal support. Out of role, we considered possible reasons for the uneven primary results. We also discussed what a “dark horse” candidate is, and reasons why a candidate

might decide to “drop out of the running.” We also discussed how some candidates will decide to withdraw from the race and “throw their support” to another candidate.

However, at this point, none of the five candidates wanted to drop out.

Analysis

The development of new cognitive processes seemed to emerge for some students as we processed these events. For example, Geoffrey had throughout the school year demonstrated considerable difficulty in perspective taking. He tended to see the world from only his perspective, and this had caused him difficulty in many areas, such as in interpreting literature. His difficulty with perspective taking had also caused him significant problems with social interactions, as he would frequently attempt to interact with others by doing “annoying” behaviors, seemingly unaware of how this impacted in a more “long-term” way on his classmates’ willingness (or unwillingness) to work or play with him. However, in our discussions, Geoffrey began to demonstrate an understanding of how his interactions (as a candidate) could impact how the voters responded to him later on in the primary election. One day it seemed as though he had finally made sense of how it all might come together as he said:

Ohhh, I get it! If I’m nice to her and say good stuff in my speech, like what she wants me to do, then she’ll probably vote for me!

This seems to be an example of Geoffrey’s developing ability to understand the perspective of another individual, in this case, the voter, and perhaps more importantly, his role and how that might impact that individual’s developing perspective. By examining

these interactions at a distance (out of role), Geoffrey was able to construct a connection between his candidate's actions and the response of the voter.

I was concerned, however, with Geoffrey's difficulty in being able to distinguish between himself and his "pretend" role as a candidate. While each of the students who became a candidate had "invented" a "pretend" last name for themselves, and seemed to be able to make the distinction between the pretend candidate and who they really were, Geoffrey struggled a great deal with this. He tended to take campaign "mudslinging" personally and I constantly worried that his feelings were being hurt or that his self-esteem might be suffering. We talked about this many times during the course of the campaign, but he still seemed to struggle with the distinction. He genuinely seemed to enjoy the attention that he received as a candidate and took great pride in the campaign signs that were posted which bore his name and proclaimed his fine qualities. He also seemed to enjoy being "courted" by the many delegates at the convention who were trying to convince him to pledge his support to a different candidate. But still he seemed hurt when he did not "win" in the final ballot. I still worry about whether the attention and positive interactions outweighed his disappointment over his loss.

Drama Context Seven: Preparing for the Convention

We discussed the purpose of a political convention and we began our preparations. Each group was to prepare a nominating speech for their candidate, a television commercial, a cheer or short chant of support, an acceptance speech for their candidate to present at the convention, and a short biographical video about their candidate.

Analysis

The students' speeches indicated that they were developing an understanding of multiple points of view. Their early speeches tended to center around one or two major issues (or sometimes, none at all), but as they had gained experience in campaigning with different voter "blocks," the students seemed to develop a more thorough understanding of the breadth of issues and interests that a candidate must be able to comprehend and articulate. For example, one of Geoffrey's early speeches (written by his campaign group) addressed few specific issues:

Vote for Geoffrey for president. He will work hard and be a good president. You will be glad you voted for him. He will try to help everybody, so he will be a good president. Vote for Geoffrey!

This same group produced a very different speech later in the campaign. Note the wide variety of specific issues that are addressed in this speech:

This is Geoffrey Zachary. In the past, he was a boy scout. He earned all the badges and helped keep the community clean by picking up trash. He volunteered at the animal shelter, feeding, cleaning, and caring for the animals and also volunteered to help the elderly by cheering them up, reading stories and walking and talking with them and Geoffrey also helped keep the environment clean by recycling.

Vote for Geoffrey Zachary. He can help the world.

The students' early efforts tended to lack focus and specific issues were omitted. There were no clear reasons for voters to select the candidate based upon the speech. The

early speech did not provide any evidence that Geoffrey would be a “good president”. The later speech illustrates several changes in thinking. First, we begin to see how the students are evaluating candidates and how they perceive their “audience” to evaluate them. They see issues such as caring for the community, volunteer service, concern for the elderly, and working to improve the environment as issues of importance. The students are also beginning to understand the need for the candidate to “connect” with the voters through certain issues. This group has included community service, kindness to animals, care for the elderly, and environmental issues as “evidence” that their candidate is committed to these concerns. There was no such “evidence” presented in the earlier speech.

Another more subtle change is the shift in focus from the candidate to the larger community (or world). The early speech primarily centered on Geoffrey (for example: “He will work hard. . . .He will try to help everybody. . . . he will be a good president. . . .”). The focus of the later speech has shifted to the community and how they have benefitted from the candidate’s effort (for example: . . . he helped keep the community clean *by* picking up trash . . . helped the elderly *by* cheering them up, reading stories and walking and talking with them . . . helped keep the environment clean *by* recycling . . .). The early speech ended with the focus upon Geoffrey, “He will be a good President.” However, the later speech ended with a focus on the world, “He can help the world.”

The group was also developing a sense of “presentation” for their speech. On the top of the paper on which the speech was written, there was a reminder for the speaker.

In large, neat letters, encircled within a neat box, was the word “Smile”. Again, this indicates a clear sense of audience, and multiple layers of understanding about not only what the voters needed to hear, but also what they needed to see. This group of speech writers were working at a metacognitive level, by considering the thinking of their audience and how their message needed to be received. The speech writers had developed an appreciation for conveying a message through multiple modalities.

This group also progressed in the actual formatting of their speech. Their early effort was written in a single spaced paragraph form. The later speech was written in a format in which each point was numbered and doubled spaced between each point. Early speech making attempts often resulted in the speaker losing his or her place in the course of the speech, especially if they were trying to maintain some eye contact with the audience. They were encouraged to try to “say” the speech and not just “read” it. This new speech “format” enabled the speaker to easily go down the list, point by point, with much less chance of losing his or her place on the page.

The Commercials

One of the most interesting aspects of this overall drama experience was the significant amount of development that occurred in the students’ use of language. Geoffrey’s group of campaign workers were not particularly strong writers when we initially began this study. Perhaps that is why their progress seemed so striking. I observed that their group was developing an understanding of how conventions such as repetition can impact a message. This growing understanding might have been a result of observing speeches by some of the other groups. When the class was given the task of

creating a television commercial for their candidate, their group began with some discussion time to talk about how the commercial would “look and sound.”

One member of this group, Eve, said that she thought that the candidate should “have a saying, like Nike does. They say ‘just do it.’ ” There was considerable discussion by the other group members about making this into a slogan for Geoffrey. Suggestions included “Just vote for Geoffrey” and “Geoffrey will just do it.” Two students demonstrated an awareness of the importance of originality, and they responded to these “do it” slogans: Brandy observed, “No, that’s too much like the Nike’s” and Kristin added, “We should make our own.”

This incident proved to be a good example of children starting at their own level of knowledge and experience and building upon it to create a new level of knowledge. As Heathcote reminds us, “Education is a continuous process of assimilation of incoming data together with a constantly developing ability to respond” (1976, p. 192). The students have assimilated the concept of advertisement, and also to some extent, the concept of originality. They took what they knew about advertising mottos and what they knew about issues that voters want to hear about and “re-constructed” in all. In other words, they are relating their task to their knowledge and are pressed to remake it in a more complex way. This group ultimately utilized rhythm, repetition, and a physically structured arrangement to convey their message. The three girls stood in a line (their profile to the audience). Geoffrey began by standing in front of the first girl.

Brandy: We need a President that will support our schools.

Geoffrey: (Shaking hands with her.) You can count on me!

(Geoffrey now moves in front of the second girl.)

Eve: We need a President to help our communities get better.

Geoffrey: (Shaking hands with her.) You can count on me!

(Geoffrey now moves in front of the third girl.)

Kristin: We need a president that can help our environment.

Geoffrey: (Shaking hands with her.) You can count on me!

Geoffrey: (turns to face the audience.) Vote for me—Geoffrey Zachary!

Another interesting aspect of the campaign was the discussion about the “negative” commercials that were developed. The “Brett” campaign presented the following:

All four group members (Aaron, Matthew, Timothy, and Brett) are in a straight line across the stage. All four are speaking these lines in unison:

Grant Henry would make a bad president. In the campaign, he was lazy and only made seven signs. The other candidates made at least ten!

This shows that truly he is lazy. He could slack off and sleep on the job.

Please don't vote for Grant Henry. He is a lazy bum!

At the conclusion of their speech, the class laughed and then we proceeded to discuss the advertisement. I asked the class: “How do you think the voters will react to that kind of a commercial?” Eve responded. “I'd better not vote for that person [Grant Henry]. Several students nodded in agreement. I asked, “What else could happen?” Analyn answered, “Well, I wouldn't vote for them [meaning Brett].” “Why not?” I asked. “Well, because it's not very nice.” Through further discussion, many students reached the

conclusion that a negative commercial might reflect poorly upon the candidate who made the commercial, as well as on the candidate being criticized in the commercial.

Others argued that if the statements were true, then it would be acceptable to talk about them in their advertisements. The type of talk required to analyze both action and reaction or cause and effect can be regarded as development in the functional sense. As Vygotsky reminds us, "Thought is not merely expressed in words; it comes into existence through them. Every thought tends to connect something with something else, to establish a relation between things" (Vygotsky, 1986, p.218). The students begin with one thought or belief and through questioning and discussion begin to rethink and reshape those thoughts and consider new perspectives. This type of experience also requires consideration of complex multiple levels of thought, as the students must consider the thinking of the makers of the commercial and their thinking about the message's effect on the voters.

Drama Context Eight: The Convention

In this drama context, the students were in role as delegates to the convention. We determined the representatives for each state by a random drawing. The name of each state and its corresponding number of delegates were written on slips of paper and placed in a box. Then each of the students drew a slip of paper indicating the name of the state they would be representing. One campaign member from each of the campaigns presented a nominating speech for their candidate to the audience of delegates. Following each nominating speech, the candidate then presented an acceptance speech. After all of the

speeches were presented, the delegates were given 5-10 minutes to “work the floor” to try to convince other delegates to support their candidate. Then the delegates cast their votes and the votes were tallied. The election results were announced we began the process of selecting a running mate for the winner. Out of role, we talked about how a candidate might choose a running mate and what qualities and characteristics might be important. Finally, the candidate and his campaign workers decided to ask the “first runner-up” in the voting to be his running mate.

Analysis

This lesson proved useful in helping the students to understand the significance and impact of larger, more populated states in the election process. Prior to beginning this lesson, we talked briefly about why some states would have more delegates than others, (i.e., more people lived there) and how that would translate into more votes. Each student then drew two slips of paper from a box, each of which contained the name of a state and the number of delegates.

The students demonstrated a clear understanding of the significance of the “high-stakes” states, as they drew their slips and reacted to what they had drawn. For example, they were actively comparing their states and delegates as they drew.

Kristin: Hey! I got Missouri—it’s 22! What did you get?

Eve: Oooooow! I got Massachusetts—24. And Vermont, but its only 6.

Patrick: Oh no, I only got 8 with New Hampshire. And 14 for Iowa. Let’s see,
how much is that?

Early on in the process as the students began drawing their delegate slips, they seemed primarily interested in the number of delegate votes they had drawn as individuals, and initially seemed unaware of how that related to their larger goal of getting their candidate elected. Their language demonstrated a primary concern with the number of votes each individual drew, (i.e. “I got”). However, as the drawing continued, the focus shifted more to how their “campaign group” as a whole was doing. This change in focus appeared to begin with the two front-running campaign groups, both of whom were keenly aware that if their supporters drew “big states”, they were in a better position to win the vote at the convention. One student, Matthew, actually began tallying the delegate votes for his candidate as their supporters drew their delegate slips (in essence, counting “their” votes, before they were actually cast).

Matthew: What’d you get, Timothy?

Timothy: 46 for Pennsylvania! And Texas-it’s 64!!

Matthew: Yessss! Brett, that gives us over a hundred and sixty, so far.

Maura: Maggie, what is it?

Maggie: (holding it up so Analyn and Maura can see). We’ve got Michigan -

36 more! And Oklahoma - add 16 for Oklahoma!

Maura and Analyn: Yesss!

Karah: (jubilant) (yelling) California!! Hey !! Look—we got California! 108!!

(A chorus of cheers from Maura, Analyn, Maggie, and Karah.)

As the drawing continued, the campaign groups continued to actively monitor their progress. By the time everyone had drawn their delegate slips, most of the students had a

sense of which campaign groups were ahead. The candidates with the fewest number of supporters were actively lobbied to withdraw from the race and pledge their delegates to a frontrunner. This “negotiating period” was brief (approximately 10-15 minutes) and fairly intense. The students’ negotiations were creative and involved various incentives for a candidate to withdraw. For example, Geoffrey was offered extra lunch box treats if he would pledge his delegates to Analyn. Robbie was promised the quarterback position at recess in exchange for pledging his delegates to Brett. Finally, the votes were cast by the delegates and tallied.

One difficulty which we encountered at this stage of the drama was the problem of what to do with the eleven “left-over” delegate slips. After the students had drawn their state-delegate slips, there were eleven slips remaining in the box. Julie, our special education teacher and I struggled with the decision of what to do with the “left over” slips. We finally decided to use the votes to put toward the candidates who were not receiving very many votes. We agreed that we would not use the votes to change the actual outcome of the students’ election; that is, the results would still reflect the students’ choices for first place, second place, third place, etc. However, we were concerned with self-esteem issues for the less popular candidates and thought that at least with a few added votes, their campaigns would reflect a more respectable show of votes. Although most of the students were able to distinguish between their role as a candidate and their own identity, we continued to be concerned about Geoffrey, in particular, who struggled with understanding this distinction. Because he experienced difficulties with both social

interactions and self-esteem, we were concerned that if he received very few votes, he would likely translate that into a very personal type of rejection. Therefore, we decided to use the left-over votes to help “soften” the loss a little.

Julie and I tallied all of the votes and Brett was declared the winner. We stepped out of role to discuss some of the events at the convention. We discussed how the particular states and their relative numbers of candidates were quite significant in the outcome of the balloting. Analyn actually had gathered more class members to vote for her than had Brett. She also had won the biggest state, California. However, Brett’s supporters had drawn more “big” states overall (such as New York, Florida, Texas, Pennsylvania, Ohio) than Analyn’s supporters, which ultimately gave Brett the advantage when the votes were finally tallied.

We then turned to the task of finding a running mate for Brett. Out of role, we discussed characteristics and qualifications that might prove useful for Brett and his campaign. The discussions that centered around the selection of his running mate served to illuminate the thinking of many of the students. The class discussed at length who might be the best running mate. Some students felt that the running mate should be someone who was ‘like Brett’. One student, for example, suggested that Matthew should be Brett’s running mate because “they both think that the army is really important.” Another student suggested that Dennis should be his running mate because “they’re really good friends, so they’ll get along good and won’t argue about what’s good for the

country.” Another student suggested that Analyn would make a good running mate because “she had a lot of people who voted for her, so they’ll probably vote for her again.”

Through their discussion, the students seemed to reach the understanding that there were many “good” reasons to choose a variety of different persons for the position of running mate. However, more importantly, they seemed to arrive at the more complex understanding that their final choice had to support their larger goal of getting Brett elected, which meant that they needed to consider the number of votes that Analyn and her supporters could attract. Thus, after considerable discussion, Analyn was selected as the best choice for Brett’s running mate.

The convention culminated in a “balloon drop” in which we released many balloons which had been suspended from the ceiling in large plastic bags. The idea for the balloon drop came from the students after they observed many pictures of the balloon drop that occurs at the “real” conventions. The covers of several of the books about conventions featured colorful photographs of the famous balloon drops. The pictures never failed to elicit enthusiastic comments from the students. “Wow! Look at all those balloons. Can we do that at our convention, Miss Barnes?” During the week prior to the convention, as students finished up their work, they would blow up balloons that we stored in large plastic bags. I was a little concerned that the balloons would go flat before the convention, but they held up amazingly well. We had two very large bags full of inflated balloons by the date of our convention. We played a tape of the song “Happy Days are Here Again” and released the balloons onto the convention floor.

Drama Context Nine: The Campaign

We now created two additional roles, that of an opposing presidential and vice-presidential candidate. This proved to be a useful option because there were many students who were anxious to “try out” the candidate role, after the convention. The students arranged themselves into groups of three and presented short stories for the evening news about the new candidates. In each group of three, there were one or two candidates, a reporter, and occasionally an anchor person. Their interviews covered a wide range of topics, and included questions about the candidates campaign promises and intentions, as well as questions of a more personal nature, such as what the candidates liked to do in their spare time and who were their favorite baseball and football teams.

Out of role, we discussed the interviews and the types of information the candidates had shared. The students drew conclusions about these new candidates, based upon the interviews and stories we had seen. Then they decided which candidates they were going to support for the office of the presidency.

Now the students once again assumed the role of campaign workers. They developed many types of advertising materials for their candidates, as they busily designed bumper stickers, hats, signs, and buttons. For one week, the campaign workers also had the opportunity to “stump” for their candidates, to convince others in the class to vote for their candidate.

The campaign culminated in an election day. The election was held by secret ballot. We set up a polling location in one corner of the room where the students came

one at a time to cast their private ballot. After they all voted, the votes were tallied and the election returns were announced. Brett and Analyn were the winners in the election.

Analysis

This drama context enabled students who had not yet had an opportunity to experience the more high-profile role of candidate to “try out” that role. Many students who had not been interested in assuming the long term candidate roles were eager to pretend that they were a candidate for a brief event, such as a news interview.

I was especially pleased with the fact that two students (Jack and Brian) who typically did not venture into such high-profile roles were willing to do so now. By this time in the campaign, it is possible that the difference may have been that they had observed enough “candidate behavior” in order to feel confident enough to attempt it themselves.

In this scene, Russ, who had previously been a candidate, opted to take on the role of interviewer. Prior to the interview he had told me that he was going to ask them about “a lot of different issues so everyone watching the news will know a whole lot about them.” Russ was interviewing candidate Brett O’Neill and President Chipper Dale (the incumbent).

Russ: Good evening. Welcome to CNN. Tonight we have Brett O’Neill and Chipper Dale to interview. So Brett, how does it feel to be a candidate?

Jack: (in role as Brett O’Neill) It feels great. I can’t wait I’m looking forward to beat[ing] Chipper Dale in the election.

Russ And President Dale?

Brian: (in role as President Chipper Dale) It feels great! I'm looking forward to winning the election.

Russ: How do you guys think you'll change all this violence that's been going on?

Jack: Whether you have a job that needs guns or not, you have to sign a waiver and promise not to do it [promise not to be violent].
But if they lie [on the waiver form], don't worry.
We check about them to see if they went to jail before and ever did some violent things.

Russ: And President Dale?

Brian: I think owning guns – that only policemen [sic] should only have guns. And if other people have guns, they should go to jail.

Russ: How do you think you'll beat President Dale?

Jack: I'll lower taxes to forty-nine cents and I have another thing.
Every house will have an alarm system for a free bonus.

Russ: And President Dale?

Brian: I'll lower taxes to forty-nine cents and every office will give each worker a hundred dollars every day.

Russ: And how about recycling and pollution that's been polluting the air?

Jack: I would just start using natural gas or helium instead, and
clean all the pollution up. I'll also tell people plant more trees.

Russ: And President Dale?

Brian: Well, I would plant trees and keep signs up a lot about it and
whoever pollutes this world would be in jail and we would make
sure they're in jail.

Russ: And what about the greenhouse effect?

Jack: They should stop using chlorofluorocarbons – unless if they really need it,
but factories shouldn't make it as much.

Russ: And President Dale?

Brian: I have nothing to say about it.

Russ: Well, that's it. Thank you for joining us this evening.

As they were leaving the front of the room, Jack was evaluating their performance in the interview. He said to Brian and Russ, "It seems like I will win 'cuz you said nothing about the greenhouse effect and I also said everyone's gonna have an alarm system for their house. Brian seemed to be in agreement with Jack's assessment of the interview, replying "Yeah, I know." They were both assessing their speech at a relatively simplistic level; that is, suggesting that whoever had the "right answers" in their speech would win the election. However, this type of experience is particularly valuable for children because as they gain more experience in analyzing their experiences, they will become able to think about things more complexly.

Jack and Brian were also clearly drawing on their previous ideas from when they had been in role as legislators and were attempting to incorporate those ideas into their role as presidential candidates. For example, in the legislator role, Jack had introduced a bill that was intended to deal with the issue of crime and violence. At the time, he appeared to have connected the issues of crime and gun control. His proposed law would have required all citizens to sign a waiver stating that they would refrain from using guns or engaging in any violent behavior. (His proposed law was debated and ultimately was not approved by the Congress. The Congress remained unconvinced that signing a waiver would actually prevent violent actions. Many students argued that some people would sign the waiver and then later on, when they became angry, become violent anyway.) Jack, however, remained convinced that this would be a viable solution to the crime and violence problem, and shared that thought in his interview.

It is interesting that Jack did not make the connection that his waiver idea had not been popular in Congress, and therefore would likely not be popular with this audience. It was not unusual for him to become “fixed” on a particular idea and have difficulty moving on. He typically viewed the world from a very highly structured, dichotomous perspective, and so if it were not possible to completely disprove his waiver theory, he would likely have difficulty considering other possibilities. The following brief transcript demonstrates his unchanged position on the waiver issue.

In this interview, it also appears that both Jack and Brian were incorporating their real-world knowledge about gun control that had appeared in recent news reports. One student, Matthew, was especially interested in weapons and was knowledgeable about the

recent waiting period that had been proposed locally. Matthew had talked about this issue in class, and possibly Jack and Brian were attempting to integrate this into their interview.

Jack was also extremely interested in science and was often prone to demonstrating his considerable range of knowledge on scientific topics to the rest of the class. It was interesting to observe how Jack was able to weave into his interview a little of his scientific expertise.

The class had also discussed the “cheerleading” aspects of campaigning. Many students in the class participated in team sports such as hockey, soccer and baseball, and were therefore familiar with the whole notion of “getting up for the campaign”. As their earlier campaign teams had worked together more closely, most developed a sense of team spirit, and often demonstrated their confidence with loud cheers such as “We’re number one!”. Many students (particularly those who participated in team sports) talked about the importance of believing that you can win, whether in a game or in the campaign. However, neither Jack or Brian were currently participating in team sports, and earlier had exhibited little confidence or belief in their ability to win. However, that had markedly changed by the time they participated in this interview. Jack commented that he was looking forward to beating his opponent, Chipper Dale, and Brian stated that he was looking forward to winning the election. Both students were demonstrating a new level of understanding about the importance of confidence.

Drama Context Ten: The Electoral College

Out of role, we discussed the origins of the electoral college and its purpose today. Then each student randomly drew slips of paper which stated the name of a state and the number of electoral votes assigned. The students cast their votes in role as representatives of the various states. The results were tallied and they “confirmed” the popular vote.

Analysis

This was a very brief drama experience and was presented primarily as a means of bringing closure to the experience and to provide students with a reason for learning about the electoral college. During this session, I emphasized to the class that even though the people had elected Brett and Analyn, the candidate would need to be successful in winning the ballot in the Electoral College in order to be sworn into office. We also discussed occasions in history when the Electoral College vote was different than the popular vote. The students were decidedly united in their belief that if the people vote for a certain candidate, that the Electoral College should not change that decision.

Problems Encountered

Although I believe that drama experiences are invaluable as a means to make the curriculum more meaningful and engaging for students, there are certainly problems which arise in the course doing classroom drama. In this section, I would like to discuss some of the problems we encountered, present some of my reflections on those issues, and discuss some options for dealing with them.

The Negative Campaign

An interesting turn of events occurred when the campaign took a somewhat negative turn. One day Dennis came up to me, obviously disturbed, and said, “Miss Barnes, Patrick came up and said something bad about my candidate.” I asked what Patrick had said. “He said, don’t vote for Grant Henry because he won’t be a good president.” Dennis’s sense of fair play and notion of right and wrong had clearly been offended. Dennis was firmly convinced that a candidate would never *really* say something bad about another candidate. We talked about the possible reasons that Patrick might have for saying something negative about another candidate. We also talked about the possible impact that those type of statements might have on his own campaign and those of the others. Dennis was quite surprised to learn that there is actually a name for this type of campaign tactic (mudslinging) and even more surprised to learn that it *really* happens.

Interestingly, the entire tone of the campaign seemed to change after this incident occurred. The campaign dove into a tail-spin of “anti-campaigning” in which the goal of the candidates changed from trying to convince the voters to support their candidate to that of trying to convince the voters *not* to vote for another candidate. One student who overheard Patrick’s comments responded by making a campaign sign that said “Don’t vote for Russ Lawrence. He will not be good for our country.” (Russ Lawrence was the candidate Patrick had been supporting.) Students from the Lawrence campaign then responded in kind by making signs for their candidate and placing them over the negative signs. This negative campaigning grew quickly, as campaign workers began drawing signs

portraying rivals with a red circle and slash through the picture (similar to the 'no smoking' symbol). This quickly degenerated into a sign producing campaign with the primary goal of covering up their opponents' signs. A flurry of activity ensued with workers all rushing to make more and more signs, both proclaiming their candidates virtues and criticizing their opponents. The campaign workers covered over their opponents signs with larger and larger signs.

I was also concerned because as this turn of events evolved, the students were thinking and talking much less about genuine issues, such as health care, taxes, and education and were increasingly engaged in strategy sessions which were focused on making their opponents look bad.

This negative turn was quite problematic for me, as I was somewhat unsure how to deal with it. Because negative campaigning is quite characteristic of campaigns in the "real" world, I initially felt that the experience might be valuable as a learning experience. A common complaint of the voters during election time is that the candidates do too much mudslinging and talk too little about the real issues. So I initially responded to this turn of events by saying little, thinking it would run its course and then we could reflect as a group on the entire process. However, it escalated rapidly and seemed to change the nature of the campaign. The students' focus seemed to shift to making as many signs as possible to always stay "one up" on their opponents. In the race to generate signs, the quality of their work declined significantly, as quantity became more important than quality. There was little thought or creativity involved in creating the signs, only size and quantity were considered. I was also concerned about the waste of paper that was

occurring. I initially attempted to deal with this problem by increasing the number of tasks that the students needed to complete in their various roles, so that they wouldn't have time to keep making signs. However, some students spent their recess times making signs so that still didn't solve the waste of paper problem.

The students were also taping signs virtually everywhere, with little regard to the appropriateness of the sign location. For example, campaign signs appeared taped across the front of file cabinets so that the handle and drawer latch were covered. Signs were also taped across cabinet doors and handles, preventing access. I eventually had to talk to the class about this problem, and asked them to stop making the signs. I am not particularly satisfied with how this was resolved. I'm still reflecting upon better ways that this might have been handled.

I was interesting in hearing what the students thought about this entire scenario. In my post-drama discussions with the students, several students initiated a discussion of their concerns related to this issue.

Aaron: I liked making the signs and taping them up. Except there's one thing I didn't like about it because people were wasting paper. They were just writing vote for whatever President there on a huge blank sheet of paper and then taping it somewhere.

Teacher: How could you fix that problem, that problem of wasting paper?

Aaron: Tell them they have to draw detailed signs.

Teacher: Okay.

Aaron: Because I saw that Geoffrey, he did have—he only had like seven signs but they were all really detailed.

Teacher: So his campaign workers did a nice job of not wasting paper.

That's a good idea cause that bothered me too, Aaron. I kind of didn't quite know how to handle that one...

Maggie: I think there's a big problem in the paper because some people were really like—you know those *really* big pieces? They were taping them together and like sticking them there. And they were putting them in like not so good places because the teachers need to open the cabinets.

Teacher: Yes, that's true.

Maggie: And they put like only "Vote for Analyn" on all that paper and that wasn't really worth it.

Jeff: And there was like one big sign and it said "Vote for Analyn" and it was in little letters and they like didn't put nothing else on it and they just like wasted the paper.

Teacher: Do you think that really happens? Do you think the candidates put lots of campaign signs in places where actually they don't belong? Or maybe their workers might?

Jeff: Yeah. They put them like—sometimes they put them like in trees or sometimes they put them on cars.

Aaron: I know what Maggie's talking about. Matthew, he did a banner.

It was like he printed it out on his computer (at home) that said "Vote for Brett", and then he drew little pictures around it. Uh, and then he taped it like underneath the chalkboard and that was a good place. But then Analyn's group copied and they took three of those big pieces of paper and wrote "Vote" sort of small in the middle of one, "For" sort of small in the middle of one, and "Analyn" sort of small in the middle of one, and then taped them together and taped it up on the cabinets.

I was pleased that the students had an awareness of this problem and were thinking of ways to solve it.

In our post-drama discussions, the students indicated that this negative aspect of the campaign had especially captured their interest. One student recognized the somewhat manipulative aspect of this type of campaigning. When asked why candidates engage in negative campaigning, she responded, "Well, I think they might do negative (campaigning) because maybe they want themselves to be elected and so they might kind of twist it a little bit and say "If you choose them you're not going to be happy with your experience with them, and if you choose me, then I'll make your life better." Another student evaluated the values of the candidates by their responses to the "mudslinging": "I think the President should be respectful . . . I wouldn't vote for a candidate who says bad things about the other people . . ."

Upon further reflection, I think that I probably should have attempted to deal with the problem in role. In role, the students would likely have generated a number of possible solutions, and this might have more closely reflected the similar situation which occurs in actual campaigns.

Management Issues

Management became a problem at times when the groups were assuming a variety of roles. For example, in drama context five, there were five campaign groups and each group had five roles: a campaign manager who arranged where speeches would be held, a speech writer, a press secretary who talked to reporters and presented the candidate in a favorable manner, a reporter who gathered information about the candidate, and a volunteer who prepared signs, bumper stickers, banners, etc. Even though we began this drama context on a day when there were two students teachers and Caroline, our speech pathologist in the room, this was still too many roles and tasks to deal with. Most of the speech writers and sign makers were able to get right to work. But there were two groups with struggling speech writers, and they required considerable assistance.

Also, the tasks of the campaign manager were somewhat unclear in the drama setting. How did the campaign manager arrange speeches? And where were speeches typically held? The students had arranged themselves together in their campaign groups and the adults then went from group to group, trying to answer questions and help students. This proved to be an inefficient structure for providing students with assistance. In retrospect, it might have been useful to group all of the campaign managers with an adult to help guide them, and then all of the press secretaries together with an adult, etc.

Another possible and more logical solution would be to structure the drama so that fewer “new” roles are introduced at one time. For example, we could begin the campaign with only speech writers and sign makers, and then slowly add new roles as the need arose. In retrospect, I’m puzzled that I didn’t see the logic in doing it this way at the time.

Drama as a Leading Activity

Vygotsky (1977/1978) used the concept of a “leading activity” to specify the types of interactions between the child and the social environment that lead to developmental accomplishment. Heathcote’s insistence that each drama must begin with precisely where the students are and then move them forward through meaningful reflection is consistent with Vygotsky’s notion of a “leading activity”, which specifies the types of interaction that lead to developmental accomplishments. A leading activity is the only type of interaction that will:

1. produce major developmental accomplishments
2. provide the basis for other activities (interactions)
3. induce the creation of new mental processes and the restructuring of old ones

(Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 50).

In preschool and kindergarten aged children, Vygotsky considered play to be the leading activity for both mental and social development. He believed that language became the means for development because play allows children to explore both real and invented situations. Through play, Vygotsky believed that children develop imagination, symbolic function, and the integration of emotions and thinking. Imagination is

considered to be a generative function that allows children to generate many ideas, from which many more ideas emerge. Through imagination, children build and recreate new ideas and concepts. Symbolic function is another developmental accomplishment that enables children to substitute objects, words, actions, or people to represent something or someone else. Integration of emotions and thinking is a developmental accomplishment in which the child experiences thoughts and emotions based upon past experiences. This was described by Vygotsky as “emotions becoming thoughtful” (Vygotsky, 1984, p. 377).

As children enter the primary grades, more abstract thinking and logical thought begins to develop. Language in all of its forms (written and spoken) enable the beginnings of theoretical reasoning to develop. “Language enables children to reflect on their inner thought processes and makes a major contribution to the emergence of higher mental functions” (Bodrova & Leong, 1996, p. 60).

The political drama experiences of the students seem to clearly fit into the realm of the leading activity concept. They are based in imaginative settings in which the students’ activities and interactions emerged from their choices within the drama. Their way of perceiving the political world and how that world impacted their own real life world changed significantly. This change in perception represents a change in the mental processes of the students, as they now have a fundamentally different view of the political view as a result of their experiences. Many are now able to process new information from a political perspective, which did not exist previously.

Developmental accomplishments seemed to occur for many students. Examples of some of these occurrences are as follows:

During their political drama experiences, the students experimented with language in new ways and then were able to reflect on their choices much after the fact. For example, during the political convention, the students discovered the power of good public relations and efficient use of the media to their advantage. At the time of our political campaign, a very popular toy was the Beanie Baby, a small stuffed animal that was available in a wide variety of designs (i.e.; dog, cat, whale, giraffe, etc.). Many students incorporated their Beanie Babies into the campaign materials, and signs and buttons were designed and prominently displayed on multitudes of Beanie Babies throughout the room. Beanie Babies also figured prominently in media interactions, as candidates often posed for “photos” with “campaign Beanie Babies.”

The “integrative” aspects of drama and language were evident during the campaign. The authentic use of writing and connecting the writing to the campaign through the imaginative use of the Beanie Babies was described by one student :

“Before I brought them [Beanie Babies] to school, I thought of things that would make sense to go with the animal. Like for Hugh, he’s an owl, I hung a sign around his neck that said ‘It would be wise to vote for Brett’ and then with my three cats I wrote ‘Vote for Brett, he’s purr-r-r-r-fect.’ I did stuff like that.”

Reflection

In social studies education, we often hear that teachers must help their students to become “active thinkers.” An active thinker is defined as one “seeking, probing, processing data from [the] environment towards a variety of destinations” best suited to “individual characteristics” (Carpenter, 1969, p. 154). Students who are active thinkers raise questions, share ideas, pose problems, and generate solutions. They are actively encountering and experiencing the social studies curriculum in ways that seemed to matter to them.

I agree that active learning is critical to authentic teaching and learning. However, I believe that “active learning” can more effectively drive the cognitive development of our students to higher levels if the students are able to integrate and connect all the related parts to a newly created and constantly evolving “whole.” I believe that knowledge must be examined, explored, and experienced before the students can truly build it into their existing schema, ultimately creating an entirely new schema in the process. Even if students are raising questions, posing problems and generating solutions, if the knowledge that they are generating does not connect to their individual center of knowledge through experience, then their learning remains merely an intellectual exercise which only creates new categories for knowledge. While new categories are certainly useful and provide one means to make connections, that type of learning experience falls far short of the potential for entirely new developmental growth, which comes from personal experience.

This perception of learning is supported by Dorothy Heathcote’s work. Heathcote reminds us that without experience, “There is no *center* to the knowledge. There is only a

title and many subdivisions...The interconnectedness between one aspect and the whole is *unquestionable*....knowledge is to be *operated on*, not merely to be taken in” (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995, p. 32).

As I reflect on the students’ experiences and my learning, I find that drama in education theories and social constructivist learning theories share these basic tenets::

1. the connectedness of learning (categories are not merely *added*)
2. the gaining of new perspectives (ways of thinking and perceiving are fundamentally altered)
3. centers on the learners, who build on their individual schemas
4. experience and reflection is at the center of learning

During the four weeks that our class used drama to experience different roles and perspectives, my students began to develop a genuine understanding of what government is and how some of its processes work. They began to understand and use the vocabulary that is unique to the political world, words such as “mudslinging”, “campaigning”, and “delegation”. They began to think critically about how and why campaign decisions are made, and used those critical thinking skills to make decisions regarding their own campaigns. They discussed political campaign involvement from several perspectives, both from within and from outside the campaign. The drama experiences provided the students with access to new political experiences and extended their thinking far beyond what they had previously encountered in their study of the election process.

In our discussions several months after the drama, I asked students about what they had learned and what they believed would be most important in their decision-making

about a presidential candidate. Several cited concern over the poor in our society, and indicated that the candidate should demonstrate an awareness of their needs and have some ideas for helping them. Jeff suggested maybe the candidate could work toward setting up “humongous Kinder Care for the kids [so] the moms can go out and work.” He also thought that “poor people should be able to get houses like the other people who already have houses.” Maggie said, “I think it would be very important [that the candidate] tell the truth.”

When reflecting upon what they had learned about the election process, their answers indicated a different level of understanding from their previous answers. For example, Analyn said, “I learned that it’s really important to campaign in certain states, like California and Ohio and Florida. That can make the difference between winning and losing the election.” Robbie answered, “I learned that it’s a lot of hard work to keep everything organized, like making sure your campaign manager is putting your signs up in the right places, or setting up lots of speeches.” Maura observed, “I learned how hard it is to write all those speeches to get people to vote for you.” Russ said, “I learned how it feels to have people saying that they shouldn’t vote for you, that you won’t do a good job.”

The students’ ability to discuss campaign issues of trustworthiness, honesty, and evaluation of campaign tactics seemed to me to be convincing evidence that they had acquired a more comprehensive understanding of political issues than they had acquired in their previous learning experience. In contrast to their initial understandings, they were demonstrating an understanding that a “campaign” is not a “definition” to be learned but is

a series of choices and actions directed towards a specific goal. They had arrived at this understanding through their experiences. Dewey argued that information can not be “presented in external, ready-made fashion.” He claimed that by “presenting a fact as something known by others, and requiring only to be studied and learned” that students do not find meaning or connections with their other learnings, so it “remains an idle curiosity to fret and obstruct the mind, a dead weight to burden it” (1921, p. 25). Through the drama, the students were able to construct a context for their learning experience, and through reflection, were able to interpret and reinterpret their impressions and experiences.

The students also shared their thoughts on their learning relative to the drama activities. I asked them to reflect back upon how they had initially learned about the election process and to compare it to their drama experiences. Brian said “It [drama] was real fun. It was more active. More physical.” Patrick said, “I think it was fun doing it and not reading about it. Sometimes if I read, I can’t remember all of it.” Eve explained “If you read it from a book, you think it’s like this, but when you actually do it, it might be different.”

Their thoughts on the value of “really doing” the campaign help demonstrate the importance of Dewey’s words: “There is an intimate and necessary relation between the processes of actual experience and education” (1938, p. 20). The students are engaged in thinking and talking about their learning and making connections for themselves about how experience impacted their learning. The students also reflected upon other aspects of the experience.

For example, Brett added “I think it’s like, for people who can’t read too good, you could kind of keep up, so everybody could keep up together.” His comments demonstrate the ‘inclusive’ aspect of drama education. The curriculum information was accessible to *all* of the students and was not dependent upon specific skill levels. Students who were not strong in reading or writing were not given “modified” tasks. Rather they were empowered to seek out for themselves those tasks that would enable them to build upon their strengths. Interestingly, I often observed students who were not particularly strong writers eagerly engaged in writing speeches and campaign slogans for their candidates. These were often group endeavors with animated discussions about what “sounded right” or how to say something that would convince a particular group of voters. I also observed that students who typically were unenthusiastic about classroom writing assignments, such as journal writing, seemed to enjoy and participate much more in this more collaborative type of writing.

I am aware that I also “pushed” the students at times to a level of discomfort. For example, when we began addressing the minimum wage issue, I knew that some students were making decisions somewhat simplistically. Their approach to the problem was simply to tell the voters whatever they wanted to hear. I wanted them to experience a bit of discomfort at having to face an audience that was clearly in opposition to what they had promised, so they would begin to develop a deeper understanding of the complexity of the issue of satisfying multiple perspectives. From their experiences, a new level of perspective taking emerged.

In conclusion, it appears that their drama experiences enabled the students to use and develop higher level thinking skills. As they acquired new information, they had reasons to apply it. They gained experience in analyzing, interpreting, evaluating and synthesizing campaign information and applied it to their decision-making. They appeared to be making connections between what they were experiencing and what they had observed in the real world.

Summary

In this chapter, I provided a description of the study, and a description and analysis of ten drama contexts. These provided a variety of experiences for students to learn about the election process and the structure and responsibilities of the three branches of government. I also discussed problems that were encountered and some options for dealing with them. I closed with some reflections on learning through experience.

CHAPTER 5

ASSESSMENT

We are reminded by Derek Rowntree that the truth about any education system is revealed in its assessment procedures:

How are its purposes and intentions realized? To what extent are the hopes and ideals, aims and objectives professed by the system ever truly perceived, valued and striven for by those who make their way within it? The answers to such questions are to be found in what the system requires children to do in order to survive and prosper. The spirit and style of student assessment defines the *de facto* curriculum. (1977, p. 1)

Rowntree's words urge us to consider carefully the discrepancy between what we as educators profess to believe and what our practice truly demonstrates about our educational values. Reflecting upon his words reminds me of the constant conflict in which I find myself regarding state and district assessment requirements and the "hopes and ideals" that I hold for myself and my students. By exploring new perspectives on assessment, perhaps it may be possible to begin to bridge some of those gaps.

* * * *

Because this study considers ways in which process drama experiences might support improved performance on standardized assessments, in this chapter I will consider some issues related to assessment and evaluation, and present my own perspective on these issues. I will give a brief overview of assessment and evaluation needs of parents, teachers, administrators, students, and the general public. The trend towards an increasing amount of testing and the impact of the state mandated proficiency tests in the classroom will be discussed. Assessment options related to process drama will be presented. Some considerations for assessment and evaluation of educational drama utilizing Vygotsky's evaluation of higher mental functions will also be suggested.

An Overview of the Assessment Dilemma

The issues regarding assessment are complex and frequently debated by persons both within and outside of the education profession. Despite years of research and study, there is little agreement about assessment and evaluation among all interested parties, which include parents, teachers, administrators, students, and the general public (includes legislators, media, and employers). While an in-depth examination of these issues is beyond the scope of this paper, two aspects of the assessment issue are especially significant to this study. These two areas are the design and intent of standardized tests (i.e. the state proficiency tests) currently in use in education and the underlying theories of learning which guide the design of assessment measures.

The wide spread practice of administering large-scale standardized tests for assessment is driven by a diverse number of assessment needs. First of all, it is important

to understand that although many groups (parents, teachers, administrators, students, and the general public) need information about student performance, each group is in need of *very different types* of information. Part of the problem with current standardized assessment practices lies in the fact that “generic” assessment instruments are used in a futile attempt to meet the needs of all groups.

For example, the general public and school administrators are in need of both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced referenced reports. The norm-referenced reports provide broad-based information on how students perform in comparison to other schools and other districts. This type of information provides feedback to these groups on the effectiveness and accountability of their schools. The criterion-referenced reports provide information that measures and compares student performance against a specifically defined curriculum. This type of feedback helps provide information to determine the effectiveness of the curriculum and materials. These types of assessments are usually only needed once or twice per year. Because most districts use a national test in an attempt to satisfy these assessment needs, there is often a considerable mismatch between the testing instrument and the district curriculum. It is also important to remember that because the assessment instrument used is designed to give broad-based generalized information on performance trends, it is not useful or even particularly valid as an indicator of individual student progress or performance.

Parents will also need this type of broad -based information in order to be well-informed about their school’s and district’s performance. However, they are also in need of more frequent and more individualized information about their child’s progress. Thus,

the assessment instrument for this type of feedback needs to be of a fundamentally different nature. The instrument should be designed to measure the individual progress of their child and will need to be specifically matched to the curriculum that is being taught in the classroom. Parents also need smaller-scale norm-referenced and criterion-referenced information of a very specific nature (grade level) so that they are informed about the progress of their student both individually and in relation to their grade-level peers. Most parents need this type of progress information periodically through the year (typically provided 4-6 times per year), and perhaps more frequently for some students.

Teacher and students require very specific information that is primarily criterion-referenced. This information helps teachers in planning and developing intervention strategies for each student that are needed on a day to day basis. Teachers must be able to assess the individual developmental progress of their students. Students require this type of information to monitor their learning and to identify strengths and weaknesses, in order to build on their strengths and seek additional help where needed.

The assessment needs of these groups are dramatically different and in some cases, even contradictory. A quite serious and all too common situation has developed in which single, large scale assessment results are routinely being used not only as a basis for policy direction and decision making, but also as definitive measures of individual student progress. Roger Farr, a distinguished educator and recognized expert on assessment writes:

No single assessment can serve all the audiences in need of educational performance information. Yet developments in standardized tests have attempted to do so...At the same time, the increased investment in

assessment time and money has tended to give these tests even more importance in determining school accountability and in making high-stakes decisions. (1992, p. 26)

In the state of Ohio, this trend has resulted in the inappropriate use of state-wide assessments. These assessments were designed for one specific purpose and have been appropriated for an entirely different purpose. The original intent and design of the state proficiency tests was to provide a means for assessing and comparing overall district performance in meeting state educational standards. The resulting test design was a standardized, norm-referenced test which would provide broad-based data on district-level performance.

However, the results of the state proficiency assessment have been distorted to serve a fundamentally different purpose. Fueled by public criticism of the schools and the resulting political outcries for “accountability,” the political officials sought out a quick and easy “solution.” Their “quick fix” to the accountability issue was to mandate that the proficiency test results be designated as a statewide standard for measuring individual student progress. Ohio schools will be required to make individual student grade level promotion and retention decisions based on the results of this test performance.

Unfortunately, there was no consideration of the limitations of the test results. In other words, there was virtually no consideration given to the inappropriateness of using a large-scale standardized testing instrument for this distinctly dissimilar and highly individualized assessment purpose. Unfortunately, ill-advised decision-making of this sort provides striking testimony to the seriousness of the misunderstandings that remain prevalent within our policy-making institutions.

However, the assessment waters are muddied by more than just inappropriate policy making and poorly utilized assessment instruments. Many of the misunderstandings and misconceptions about assessment and standardized assessment instruments are based upon flawed assumptions about learning and cognitive development. First, the scientific ideas about learning on which most standardized tests are based have been largely discredited. The notion that learning can be assessed by measuring the retention of discrete bits of information in a decontextualized format is rooted in outdated behavioristic learning theories. Current advances in knowledge about learning and cognitive development through constructive learning theory have not been appropriately incorporated into the policy-making or assessment arena. According to Howard Gardner,

There is in the country today an enormous desire to make education uniform, to treat all students in the same way, and to apply the same kinds of one-dimensional metrics to all of them. To my mind, this trend is inappropriate on scientific grounds and distasteful on ethical grounds. (1988, p. 83)

Rather than searching for a “new and better test,” there is an urgent need to reconceptualize the very nature of assessment practices to recognize and accommodate the complex and highly individualized process of learning.

Assessment practices must be rooted in current scientific understanding which has developed from the cognitive, neural, and developmental sciences. This means that assessment should ideally be multi-dimensional, encompassing a wide variety of learning styles, ongoing, and embedded within the individual learning process as often as possible.

As a teacher, however, I am keenly aware of the pressures upon both teachers and students for students to perform well on highly quantitative measures, such as the CAT, SAT, and the state proficiency tests. Although I question the usefulness of these types of assessments and believe that these assessments do not necessarily measure what they purport to measure, it is an unfortunate fact of life that our students must perform well on these types of assessments in order to be successful in school. Because our state legislature has mandated that *all students must pass these standardized quantitative measures or face retention*, it is incumbent upon us as teachers to ensure that our students are well prepared.

Unfortunately, in Ohio this pressure has given rise to a propensity of new district “curriculum revisions” which have been designed to help teachers and students prepare for “the test.” I have heard this phenomenon recently referred to as “the assessment tail now wagging the curriculum dog.” Indeed, there is a considerable emphasis placed upon “helping” teachers to prepare students for proficiency testing. A plethora of test preparation materials has hit the market and countless hours are now spent in helping students “memorize” the required curriculum content. As a result, the curriculum is becoming (like the tests) decontextualized and devoid of any real meaning for the students. The goal for both teachers and students is to master the facts needed to pass the tests, rather than foster development through critical thinking, perspective taking, reasoning, and making connections which enable the transfer of knowledge and skills.

While well-intentioned, these efforts by teachers and administrators to “help” students pass the tests are focusing increasingly more valuable time and energy on

accumulating many small and discrete “bits” of knowledge which are difficult for students to integrate into a useful, discernable “whole.” This disturbing trend brings to mind Dewey’s arguments against this very type of education. He reminds us that when material is presented to the students in an:

. . . external, ready-made fashion . . . the really thought-provoking character is obscured, and the organizing function disappears. . . . The subject matter is evacuated of its logical value, and though it is what it is only from the logical standpoint, is presented as stuff only for “memory.”
(1902, p. 18)

By focusing primarily on memorizing testable facts, the students struggle with organizing the information and making meaningful connections.

This almost manic obsession with “preparing for the proficiencies” is part of what prompted me to reflect more deeply upon the learning that occurs when students are engaged in educational drama. It also prompted me to reflect upon how difficult it is for teachers to find time for more experience-oriented learning activities when they are engaged in extensive test preparation. This practice undoubtably puts us in conflict with all that we know about the true nature of learning.

However, upon further reflection, I considered the possibility that it might be possible to structure learning activities in a way that meets the need for students to acquire a “predetermined” body of knowledge needed for the tests while ultimately respecting the individuality of the learners who must each construct the knowledge for themselves. I believe that process drama can provide a means for teachers to accomplish this multi-dimensional challenge.

It was this belief that led me to explore the possibility of embedding social studies content material within the drama contexts while providing the students with the opportunity to learn through their experiences and connect the content to their lives.

The election process and the three branches of government are part of the content material that is assessed on the government strand of the citizenship section of the proficiency test. This content material was embedded within our classroom drama experiences, so that the students could explore and experience for themselves the meaning of government and the election process.

Because I was using a methodology which differed significantly from the more traditional methods of teaching social studies, I also was reflecting upon assessment practices which are used in drama education. I wondered how these might complement or contradict other assessment methods in use. I considered ways in which I might document other types of student learning that are not assessed on standardized tests, but are certainly no less indicative of a student's growth and development.

Assessment in the Arts

Meeting a diverse combination of assessment needs is in itself a complex endeavor. Assessment of process drama lends an additional challenge to assessment efforts because of the multi-dimensional nature of the drama experiences. Assessment in the arts has always invited controversy, and educational drama falls within the boundaries of the dispute. There has never been a consensus on the purposes of the arts in education, which has led to divisiveness even within the ranks of the arts proponents. For example, among the many positions in the drama arena are proponents of its use for vocational purposes, to

prepare students for a future career in theatre. There are also those who favor a drama curriculum which emphasizes the aesthetic nature of the art. Others promote drama education from a more product-oriented approach, which draws on the presentational aspects of theatre, while a more experiential emphasis is suggested by more process-oriented proponents. A united front to promote art in education has therefore proved to be somewhat elusive and no consensus on practicable methods of assessment has so far been reached.

The arts tend to be “devalued” in education because of a perception that they are less rigorous, lacking in uniform standards and evaluation. The aesthetic, interpretive, and individualist nature of the arts defies efforts to quantitatively evaluate them by means of standardized, formal assessments. Because assessment in the arts is not readily quantified, critics suggest that those areas of curriculum assessment are somehow less “rigorous” than the more “basic courses.” Gardner criticizes this narrow perspective:

To these individuals I would respond, perhaps surprisingly, by unequivocally endorsing the importance of rigor. There is nothing in an “individual-centered” approach which questions rigor; indeed, in any decent apprenticeship, rigor is assumed. If anything, it is the sophomoric “multiple-choice-cum-isolated fact mentality which sacrifices genuine rigor for superficial conformity. (1988, p. 86)

There is certain level of “credibility” bestowed upon the more quantifiable areas of the curriculum. Gardner criticizes this propensity in education to value certain subjects more than others, simply because some subjects lend themselves more readily to uniform, one-dimensional testing:

The most important subject matters are those which lend themselves readily to such assessment, like mathematics and science; the aspect of other subject matters which can be so assessed are correlatively valued (grammar rather than “voice” in writing; facts rather than interpretation in history) and those disciplines which prove most refractory to formal testing, such as the arts, are least valued in the uniform school. (1988, p. 9-10)

Certainly, this preoccupation with “the measurable” has positioned the “back to the basics” proponents in a fundamentally different philosophical position from the arts in education advocates. However, in the arts the reflective and interpretive nature of assessment is embraced as a means to make evaluation more meaningful for the student. Michael Parsons (1992) suggests that a “reflective awareness” be cultivated among both students and teachers, and comments on the usefulness of interpretive assessment: “. . . assessment itself would have to be heavily interpretive, and for this reason would probably be used as much for diagnostic as for summative purposes” (p. 89). Thus, rather than perceiving the interpretive nature of arts assessment as problematic, it is seen as an integral and necessary component of comprehensive assessment.

Assessment in Process Drama

Much of the work that has been done in process drama assessment has focused on evaluation in different dimensions of the dramatic work. The following are some of the aspects of process drama that have been suggested by Larry Swartz (1995) as useful for assessment:

1. communication: articulating ideas, asking questions, turn-taking, accepting of others' ideas

2. participation: engagement, attentive, followed instructions, contributed ideas,
collaborative
3. problem solving: negotiation, collaboration, argue, question, persuade,
brainstorm, hypothesize
4. dramatic skills: language, gesture, develop character, understand and identify
with attitudes of role, reveal ideas and feelings in role
5. interpretation: gesture, movements, improvise dialogue, work effectively in
role to interpret

Swartz has developed a collection of checklists that can be quickly completed by rating students in each category as “always, sometimes or never” exhibiting those qualities or characteristics. The strengths of this model of assessment are its quick, convenient format and its range of categories, which include both social and emotional consideration, as well as consideration of dramatic conventions. What seems to be lacking however, is consideration of more complex, higher level development potential of drama, such as metacognition and transfer of learning.

I recognize that social, emotional, and cognitive development are processes which occur within the child, thus making external “measures” of development tenuous. O’Neill suggests that in evaluating drama:

. . . it is the quality of the experience which is important. . . At every stage of the lesson, the teacher will be judging the group’s level of interest in the theme, the effectiveness of the strategies which are being used, and the engagement of the pupils with the developing meaning of the work. (1982, p. 145)

She suggests that higher level development can be evaluated and that the students' developing insight and understanding may be judged partly by their "capacity to see wider implications and to draw parallels between the dramatic situation and the real world" (1982, p. 145). The students' developing ability to interpret and analyze events, as well as their increasing capacity to utilize the elements of the theatre can also serve as evidence of development.

Observation as Assessment

As we move toward a more in-depth mode of assessment in which the development of thought processes are evaluated, it is essential that we examine our observational biases. Observers (usually the teacher) must develop a keen awareness of the *type* of observations they are likely to make and how that might impact what is observed. For example, in drama some teachers will "retire or withdraw in order to see their classes at work, others intrude. Some identify, others enquire" (Heathcote, 1984, p. 67). *How* observation occurs will influence *what* is observed. While there is no single best method of observation, it is imperative that observers develop an awareness of the impact of their data gathering methods.

The observers must also reflect upon their assessment priorities and consider how those values might "color" their observations. For example, an observer who values cooperation and negotiation will likely observe and evaluate through those "lenses," and thus be more likely to observe those characteristics more frequently than would an observer with different values. Thus, the capacity for overlooking evidence of development in different areas may be increased. The notion of the reflective practitioner

is a common one. I would suggest that the concept of the reflective observer might be useful in improving our assessment and evaluation of student development.

Vygotsky's work might serve to help us focus our observations, when we attempt to evaluate higher level cognitive development. Vygotsky reminds us that higher level development cannot be directly observed. Rather, the development of higher level intellectual processes and concept formation, which are not merely attainment of a higher level of thought, but a fundamentally *new type* of thought, must be *interpreted* by the observer:

The process of concept formation, like any other higher form of intellectual activity, is not a quantitative overgrowth of the lower associative activity, but a qualitatively new type. . . The investigator must aim to understand the intrinsic bonds between the external task and the developmental dynamics . . . which affects not only the content but also the method of his thinking. (1934/1996, p. 108-109)

Thus, the teacher must carefully observe the developmental operations of the student and note changes in the manifestation of higher level thinking skills.

Vygotsky's work might prove to be helpful for observers who are attempting to determine changes in developmental levels. He suggests that all of the higher level functions have in common three qualities:

1. reflective awareness
2. abstraction
3. deliberate control

Vygotsky's (1934/1996) general law of development says that reflective awareness and deliberate control appear only during the very advanced stages of development of a mental function, after it has been used and practiced, both unconsciously and spontaneously (p. 168 and p. 179).

Therefore, I am suggesting that developmental assessments of process drama experiences might be more focused if the observation and interpretation considered the students' actions in relation to these qualities. How might this look? Let's consider an example in which student problem solving abilities were being assessed and evaluated. As a third grade teacher, I can assume that nearly all of my students have some problem solving abilities, as evidenced by their ability to negotiate the experience of "school." There are a host of problems, both simple and more complex, that are encountered by the average third grader in the course of an average school day (i.e., broken pencil, lost crayon, disagreement with peers, etc.). The students will all be at developmentally different levels of problem-solving, however. I might wish to explore more deeply their levels of problem-solving ability, through an experience which is more complex than those problems typically encountered in the course of a school day. It is possible to create a dramatic situation which deals with a more complex problem and then focus my observations not only on the types of problem solving skills that are utilized but how those relate to the students' level of abstraction, awareness, and control.

I will provide an example of how I might apply these concepts in evaluating a group of students in our "election" drama. The concept for this observational assessment is perspective taking and the issue before the students is the minimum wage. The

students' comments indicate that they are indeed able to assume a variety of perspectives. They assume the perspective of the working students in their earlier role and reflections, when they are in favor of the higher minimum wage. They assume a different perspective both in role and out of role, when they encounter the problems of the pizza shop owners. So they are at least at a beginning level of development of perspective taking. However, they appear to demonstrate different levels of insight into this problem. Dennis, as he asks, "so what's the right thing to do, Miss B.?" indicates that he is likely still at a beginning level. He does not demonstrate an ability to think of this situation in abstract terms, but rather focuses on the "right and wrong decision" for this particular situation. (Most of the students seemed to be at this level, as evidenced by their rapid change of opinion, as their roles changed from student to business owner). Dennis was "nudged" into a state of awareness by the conflict within the drama, although a state of reflective awareness would more likely be indicated by his own ability to discern the conflict among the different perspectives. Deliberate control has to do with his ability to stay focused on the task, which he was able to do at varying levels. The drama context provided him with valuable experience in "practicing" the higher mental function of perspective taking which Vygotsky sees as central to development.

In this drama context, Matthew exhibited a slightly higher level of development in perspective taking. Matthew was able to discern a more abstract perception of the conflict and apply it more widely. "I think it depends on who you are." Matthew also exhibited the ability to maintain deliberate control over his thinking, staying focused while in role and making insightful comments during our discussion. Based on previous observations

of Matthew, it appeared that he was able to reflect upon his perspective taking, although he did not demonstrate that ability in this particular instance.

As I continue to search for ever more useful and appropriate ways to evaluate student development in educational drama, I have found Vygotsky's perspective on evaluating higher mental functions to be invaluable. By utilizing the concepts of abstraction, reflective awareness, and deliberate control, I find that my observations, diagnosis and assessment are more focused and my evaluations more concise.

Summary

In this chapter I have presented an overview of diverse assessment needs and briefly discussed some issues related to assessment and evaluation. I have discussed the increasing proliferation of standardized testing and the inappropriate use of specific testing instruments. I have discussed the discrepancy in the social constructivist learning and behaviorist assessment models. Also presented are assessment issues in arts education, and challenges in drama assessment. Some options for drama assessment were also discussed..

CHAPTER 6

FINDINGS AND IMPLICATIONS

The relation of word to thought, and the creation of new concepts is a complex, delicate, and enigmatic process unfolding in our soul” (Tolstoy, 1903, p. 143).

The purpose of this study was to better understand how process drama can be used to teach social studies in the elementary classroom. The study considers how social studies content material might be acquired through experiential learning by means of process drama experiences. In addition, the study also considers how social studies drama experiences help the teacher to accommodate a wide range of diverse talents and abilities within the classroom. Because of the increasing pressures upon students and teachers for improved performance on standardized assessment measures, the study also considers how process drama experiences might support improved performance on such measures. The study also considers the diversity of learning experiences which children encounter in process drama and explores categories of learning experiences that are not typically assessed on standardized testing instruments. Some assessment options for evaluating student development in social studies drama lessons are suggested.

The study was grounded in social constructivist learning theory and theories in drama in education. The research process included the observation and interpretation of student experiences in process drama social studies lessons, in an attempt to understand how students make sense of the social studies curriculum in ways that are personally meaningful. I also considered issues of standardized testing and how process drama experiences might support improved performance on such measures.

This study is also presented to help fill gaps in the literature regarding the use of process drama as a means to teach social studies curriculum content material. Currently in the literature, there are few studies in educational drama (Wagner, 1998, p. 2). Of these, most are related to using process drama in the language arts. In my search of the literature, I found that the studies on social studies and drama were primarily focused on role play, rather than process drama. When drama is used in the social studies classroom, it usually is in the traditional form of small theatrical productions or small dramatizations (Jarolimek, 1990). Research within the domain of process drama in the social studies classroom is virtually non-existent, with one notable exception. Philip Taylor (1992) did an action research project describing a process drama structure in his social studies middle school classroom. His study considered what happens as a teacher and his students experience a social studies drama structure, how drama structure evolves, the characteristics of cycles of action research in the drama structure, and what can be inferred about the experiences related to the teacher's and students' understanding of social studies, drama, and themselves (p. 14-15). His research describes how student engagement and inquiry were positively impacted during drama experiences, and how

cognition and feelings were mutually supported during drama work, and how drama positively influenced group dynamics. Our studies are somewhat similar in our goals of situating experience at the center of learning, and in utilizing drama as a means to make curriculum content more meaningful to students. However, in contrast to the Taylor study, this study seeks to examine more closely the connection between drama and curriculum content learning and development of higher level thinking skills.

Repeatedly, researchers emphasize the need for more studies in educational drama (Wagner 1998, Conrad 1998, Taylor 1996) to document its effects in the classroom. Thus, a careful look at the drama experiences of an elementary social studies classroom may help to bridge that gap. This descriptive account may also hold implications for teachers who are searching for new ways to connect social studies content material in meaningful ways to the lives of their students.

Summary of Methodological Details

The primary participants in this study were the students in my third grade classroom and myself, as a participant observer. Additional participants included the two teachers and the speech pathologist who taught in this collaborative inclusion classroom, and two student teachers from The Ohio State University College of Education Professional Development School.

The study took place in a suburban school in a third grade inclusion classroom. For the first week of the drama experiences, I was teaching in the classroom for the entire day (rather than half-days) because Lisa was away for the week. We spent the first three

days of the week engaged in social studies drama experiences and half days on Thursday and Friday. We continued to engage in drama experiences 2-3 times per week for the next three weeks.

I recorded classroom observations and reflections in field notes and journal entries. Formal interviews were recorded on audio tape and campaign events were recorded in field notes, journal entries, and video tapes. Two formal assessments were conducted (pre- and post-drama) and informal assessment was ongoing throughout the course of the study. Documental data were collected which included written copies of speeches, campaign signs and artifacts used in the drama.

Interpretation and reflection on events and data continued throughout the course of the study. Discussions with the teachers and student teachers about observations and interpretations were ongoing throughout the study, and provided me with an invaluable form of member checking and triangulation.

Findings

As previously stated in the introduction, the primary purpose of this study was to consider the following questions:

1. How can we make the social studies curriculum more relevant and meaningful to each individual student?
2. How can we facilitate social studies content learning through process drama in a way that will support improved performance on mandated standardized assessments?

3. How might we promote and evaluate development of social, emotional and higher-level thinking skills, such as decision-making, reasoning, and metacognitive skills within the learning experience?

I will begin by discussing findings of this study in terms of each of these questions and then will consider additional findings that seem relevant to these and other issues.

How can we make the social studies curriculum more relevant and meaningful to each individual student?

During our initial study of the election process, we made many attempts to help students find meaning in the process by encouraging them to share what they knew about the current Dole-Clinton-Perot campaign that was currently going on. The students also brought in newspaper clippings about the campaign. However, that seemed to be the extent of their personal involvement. Upon careful reflection, we teachers conceded that their levels of involvement were not only minimal, but artificially contrived. For example, it is highly unlikely that many of our third graders would have been reading newspaper accounts of the presidential campaign of their own accord. Rather, the teachers had created a “need” for the students to do so, by asking students to bring in the articles. Some students dutifully brought articles but their understanding of the information conveyed in the articles seemed to be quite limited.

We also observed that the students seemed to find the unfamiliar vocabulary related to the election process confusing and difficult. We observed few attempts by the students to utilize this new vocabulary in their everyday conversation

Therefore, in this study one of the goals was to provide a means in which the students could engage with the curriculum in ways which were genuine and meaningful to them. By raising their level of engagement, I hoped to provide a means and incentive for the students to construct a new framework of knowledge about the election process. I have observed that students who are engaged in experience with the unfamiliar find ways to construct new frameworks or schemas in which to operate.

We began by entering into an imaginary world in which students could begin to construct those new schemas with minimal risk. In role, there is a level of safety provided for the child because it is the character who is making the “mistakes,” not the student. The students also have the safety and security of being able to draw on all of their past knowledge and experience. This process of engaging past and present knowledge in order to “interact” with new knowledge and experience is fundamental to making the curriculum become relevant and meaningful to the students. This process enables the students to construct new schema which are supported by and interwoven with their existing frameworks, thus providing valuable personal connections which enable meaning and relevance to emerge.

For example, in role the students connected the qualities needed to be a “good representative” of the people with personal qualities that they themselves either possessed or valued. It was not necessary or ever desirable for these qualities to be uniform or

similar from one student to the next. Rather, it was important for them to begin to reflect upon important qualities that they valued individually and then decide if some of those values might also be important for a representative to hold. This is an example of “starting with where the child is” at present and building from there. I have heard teachers express concern about attempting to begin from so many different “starting places” but in fact, the diversity of starting points only enriches the entire learning experience.

This range of “starting places” also demonstrates the accessibility of the learning experience to children of *all abilities*. Because this was an inclusion classroom, all of the teachers were extremely sensitive to the need to meet a considerable range of abilities in all of our classroom endeavors. We attempted to do this in ways which did not seem out of the ordinary or focused only on certain children. Because drama experiences *depend* on individuals bringing their individual abilities and experiences to the fore, we felt that it was extremely useful in eliciting the considerable strengths of our learning disabled students. Student who were well below grade level in reading or writing were very capable participants in the drama. Their creative thinking and artistic talents were often in the forefront. Jeff, who was one of our identified learning disabled students, was identified as significantly behind in linguistic development. In everyday conversation, Jeff often had difficulty in expressing himself clearly and coherently. However, in the course of the drama, there was considerable emphasis placed on the importance of clear, concise public speaking. Jeff did extremely well in presenting his prepared speeches and introductions in the course of the drama. When he was interviewed by students in role as reporters, he

also seemed able to articulate his thoughts and ideas more easily. (I have speculated that perhaps the constraints of the role limited his speaking options to such a degree that they became more manageable.)

While it is not reasonable or even expected that all children will arrive at the “same” understandings, it is possible for the children to grow and reach understandings at their unique and individual level. In other words, all of our students did not necessarily engage in the same types of complex levels of thinking, because some were simply not developmentally ready. However, this did not impact their ability to participate fully or to make valuable contributions to the work. I also believe that through continued exposure to higher level thinking activities, we gently nudge these children toward higher developmental levels. Vygotsky reminds us that “the only good kind of instruction is that which marches ahead of development and leads it; it must be aimed not so much at the ripe as at the ripening functions” (1934/1986, p. 188).

In this study the level of safety in role provided opportunities for students to try out new ideas with minimal risk to their self esteem. For example, when Dennis’s proposed bill that “people have to be nice to each other” did not pass the legislature’s vote, we were able to process that defeat later in terms of “the legislator that Dennis was pretending to be.” When we talked later about how it felt to have a bill turned down, Dennis said, “Well, my guy [his role as legislator] didn’t get [understand] that you can’t have the police just at every little argument or when somebody calls somebody else a name.” Dennis had rethought his proposal based upon the debate over his bill in Congress, as these were precisely the points that the class had brought up in their

legislative discussions. However, the responsibility of the bill failing to pass muster in the Congress

was distanced from Dennis by the distinction that the bill was actually the product of the imaginary character, not Dennis himself. Dennis was able to talk in third person about his “guy” who didn’t quite “get it.”

The opportunity for personal choice also appeared to be significant in the student levels of engagement. The students exercised a considerable amount of control over the roles they assumed, which seemed to lead to higher levels of involvement and commitment. For example, the students decided for themselves if they would assume the role of a candidate, and they also decided for themselves which candidate they would support. Upon choosing these roles, they exhibited considerable levels of commitment. Many students opted to engage in campaign activities during their free time (e.g. at home, at recess). I observed students planning campaign strategies at recess and many students brought in decorated “Beanie Babies,” signs, and hats that they had produced at home. I also observed that students who tended to be somewhat quiet in the classroom now had authentic reason to engage in conversations with their classmates. For example, Patrick was a student who had moved into our school district midway into the school year. Although at recess Patrick frequently engaged in sports activities with the other children, he usually did not choose to actively participate in many social interactions in the classroom or participate in many class discussions. However, when we entered the campaign phase of the drama, I often observed Patrick discussing campaign events with his campaign partners.

As I explored the data, I searched for indications that the students were connecting the curriculum to their daily lives. Their widespread inclusion of the very popular “Beanie Babies” was one indication of how they were bringing their personal interests into the experience. Some of the boys found ways to include their sports interests in the campaign, by scheduling speeches at sporting events where they could get in their “plugs” for their favorite teams. For example, Brett was a devoted fan of the Atlanta Braves, so in role as candidate, he was always anxious to talk to the fans in the stadium before the ball game. He began the campaign by including the Atlanta Braves logo on all of his signs. Matthew, his campaign manager, seemed to be endowed with a considerable amount of “political savvy,” and was quick to point out to Brett that people who don’t like the Braves might not want to vote for him.

Matthew was an ardent supporter of the military and demonstrated considerable interest and knowledge in military matters. His father and grandfather had both had lifetime careers in the military. So in role as campaign manager, Matthew managed to schedule speeches to military personnel at various bases. For one campaign visit, he developed a detailed map of a military parade route and layout of where the troops would be reviewed by the visiting incumbent president.

I believe that because the students were able to make use of their interests and knowledge, that they were able to make connections between those interests and their new experiences. For example, we talked about whether or not making an appearance at a ball

stadium would be a good idea for a political candidate. We also discussed the implications for a candidate who appears to support a particular team. Brett then had to rethink his original perspective.

It was interesting that after Brett had come to the conclusion that publicly demonstrating his support for a single team could hurt him in the long run in the campaign, he still was committed to including *something* about sports in his campaign. This is the text of a speech he made after he was taken to task by the class for promoting the Braves in his speeches:

Police need to be firmer. They need to increase security measures and increase. [sic]. We will gradually help increase our police system if you vote for us. Increase security measures and get more people in jail. Help our country be a safe place! Vote for Brett!

I will make managers and owners, and also players pay less for sports equipment. I will get more extra players and give money to them so they can build better stadiums, dirt and more grass or turf.

Aaron worked on his campaign as a speech writer and had prepared this speech for him, dealing with crime. However, Brett added his own “addendum” to the speech which included his sports focus. He was again taken to task, first by Aaron who was irritated that he had altered the speech in such an inappropriate way, and then by many of the students, who also recognized the unlikeliness of a “real” candidate making those types of sports related promises.

These example demonstrate the students' efforts to connect the social studies drama experiences to their personal interests and areas of knowledge, it is important to move beyond this level to a deeper level of connection. It is important that students begin to discern connections between the *processes* that are occurring. In other words, it is important that they begin to see the "bigger picture" and how these events are similar, different, or connected. For example, Aaron demonstrated an ability to see the connection in the processes which involved solving problems in the classroom community meetings and the processes involved in trying to pass legislation. Geoffrey began to see the connection between what he said and did and how that related to getting someone to vote for him. For a child who exhibited considerable social difficulties (as Geoffrey did), that was a big step for him. I want to emphasize that it certainly takes more than this one "revelation" for him to change his behavior patterns and it would be simplistic and unrealistic to expect otherwise. However, I believe that this one revelation at least provided him with a valuable connection that then begins to be part of his schema for dealing with people. It also provided me with a basis for a connection in later incidents throughout the school year to refer back to, when Geoffrey and I discussed other "cause and effect" issues in social interactions.

In an interview with a small group of students after we had finished all of the drama experiences, we were talking about what they had learned about the "real world" of politics from their experiences. Timothy observed ". . . actually, almost always they don't write the speeches because someone—their speech writer writes the speeches and they just read it, so it's actually the better speech writer wins." Timothy's observation about the

value of a good speech writer in the real world of politics demonstrated a significant level of insight, and an ability to connect what he had experienced to what he has now applied to his knowledge of the real world. His criteria in evaluating a candidate has now broadened to include a conscious awareness of the impact of a good speech writer. He is also able to distinguish the words of the candidate from the words of the speech writer. He has transferred his knowledge from one situation and applied it in another.

The empowerment of students to discover aspects of the curriculum for themselves is also significant. Students are continually “presented” with curriculum material from the first day that they enter school. The implication of this is that the students begin to see the truly “important” information is that which is determined by the teacher and the district. In a sense, what the students bring to the curriculum is somewhat “devalued.” By guiding the discovery process, we can help students begin to develop a sense of what is significant by empowering them to seek out that which *they* find to be significant. For example, the students discovered for themselves the significance of having a Judicial branch of the government. They were faced with the uncomfortable reality of seeing the unforeseen consequences of a law they had previously wholeheartedly endorsed. Thus, the Judicial branch became quite significant to them, not because it happened to be a part of the social studies curriculum, and not because it happened to be a branch of the government on a test, but because they experienced a genuine need for it to exist. I am finding that drama enables me to provide more of these valuable moments of discovery for my students.

How can we facilitate social studies content learning through process drama in a way that will support improved performance on mandated standardized assessments?

As discussed earlier, all students in Ohio are required to pass state mandated proficiency tests. The structure of the United States government and the election process are both content areas included on the citizenship portion of the proficiency test. One of the challenges in this study was to discover ways to “build” this content knowledge into the drama experiences, so that students would “connect what they are learning to their prior knowledge and experience, to think critically and creatively about it, and to use it in authentic application situations” (National Council for the Social Studies, 1993, p. 215).

As I considered the direction of this study, I was also keenly aware that my intention to purposely structure and direct the drama experience to specifically match curriculum content placed me in philosophical opposition to many drama education advocates. Many educators who advocate the use of drama in education do so primarily for its aesthetic, creative, and interpretive value. “Drama in education focus[es] on the *process* for the purposes of enlarging perspectives and developing understanding” (Wagner, 1998, p. 8). Heathcote (1976) advocates the use of drama to help students clarify values, develop tolerance for a variety of attitudes and perspectives, improve social interactions, help make abstract concepts more concrete, to challenge their thinking and assumptions, and to press students to reflect on their experiences and learning (p. 226-227).

While I certainly am in agreement with these all of these goals for educational drama, I believe that in this age of prolific testing, it is important for teachers to find ways

to unite these goals with curriculum content. There should not be a dichotomy between aesthetic-creative-interpretive goals and subject matter content. Sadly however, many teachers perceive there to be one, and thus see little time “left over” for drama. Stewig’s (1986) study indicated that most teachers saw “too much curriculum” as their chief obstacle for using drama in their classrooms. My personal observations also indicate that this is still a very common perception among teachers. I am advocating that the curriculum be *mobilized* as a vehicle for drama in education, and that its powerful capacity for engaging learners be utilized to help students *master the curriculum*. In an era in which our students are faced with the reality of extensive mandated testing, they are under increasing pressure to demonstrate their mastery of the curriculum. Drama experiences provide them with a means for experiencing the curriculum in ways which not only help prepare them for the assessments, but also help students connect their learnings within aesthetic, creative, and interpretive contexts.

Arguments about the inappropriate and positivistic nature of “influencing” or “measuring” student experiences in drama become disconnected from the real world of the classroom in an era in which our students are faced with an overwhelming number of high-stakes standardized assessments. Thus, I believe that in drama education, one of the challenges lies in trying to capture the aesthetic, creative, and interpretive nature of the arts *within* content-based drama experiences. Rather than perceiving drama primarily as an enrichment experience, I suggest that drama should be recognized as a powerful means for students to acquire content knowledge.

However, it is important to recognize that simply “building” the content into the drama is not enough, in and of itself. Because there is a considerable gap between the learning modality (experiential within process drama) and the testing modality (formal, written), oftentimes students experience difficulty in retrieving the content information when they encounter it in a test format. For example, I have often observed students in my class who are able to tell me an answer to a test question that they were unable to answer during the formal written test. I have observed that students often “know” material that in testing situations they are unable to access.

I believe that there are several reasons for this. Some students seem to develop an organizational framework that enables them to easily recognize what they have learned in an experiential modality and transfer it to many different types of modalities. However, some students do not seem to do this naturally and need to “reshape” what they have learned experientially into a specifically organized format that more closely matches a testing modality. For example, although all of the students experienced all of the steps in the election process, without specifically discussing those steps and talking about how their experiences *connected* to those “steps,” they might not recognize them on a standardized test.

Richard Courtney suggests that drama transfers effectively for long term learning because it is meaningful to the student, it has immediate application as a synthesizing activity, stimulates insight, and assists students in learning how to learn. He believes that

drama can help provide students with certain transfers, but he offers some insight on how teachers can help students learn how to transfer learning more effectively from their drama experiences. He states:

There are some generalized principles when teaching for transfer: the similarity of tasks must be maximized; there should be adequate experience with the original task; a variety of examples should be provided when teaching concepts and principles; important features of the task should be identified; and general principles must be understood before expecting much transfer. (1989, p. 105-106)

As I reflect upon this, I realize that I did do this throughout our study as we talked about the three branches of government. I had drawn a tree trunk with three large branches and we labeled each (legislative, judicial, and executive) as we completed each related drama experience. We referred back to it occasionally during our four week study, as a quick review. When I did our final post-drama assessment, most of the children reproduced that drawing on their papers for the answer to that question. It is possible that this “formatted” bit of information was more readily available to them for the test.

However, I unfortunately did not make a very concise effort to help the students transfer what they had learned about the election process to any type of test format. If I were to do this again with students, I believe that it would be very important to incorporate this into the experience. During our post-drama interviews, it seemed to me that many of the students were able to talk knowledgeably about the election process, and their experiences with it, but did not demonstrate that knowledge on the written post-

drama assessment. At the time, I wondered about this discrepancy. I remember thinking, “I know they know this. They just talked about it with me. Why didn’t they put it down?” After further reflection, however, I believe that a large part of the problem was my failure to recognize the importance of helping them restructure this new information into a format that more closely aligns with a written test format.

In the future, I will make a more focused effort to help students purposefully connect what they are learning through their experiences to a variety of ways in which they might encounter that information in the future. This might be done in a wide variety of ways. For example, I could have the students list the steps after they have encountered them. After all, from the students’ perspective, their experience of waving a campaign sign, listening to speeches and casting their votes might not translate into the test language of “political convention.” Even though we referred to it as a convention during the course of the drama, it is likely that some of the students will retain the memory of the experience without permanently connecting it to the phrase political convention. I believe that it would be helpful to have the students begin to translate their experiences into new formats, as well. It might be useful to use more graphic organizers (like the tree). There were many of these graphic organizers hanging in the room when the unit was first taught (without drama) but the students didn’t seem to make sense of them. That was part of the reason that I didn’t bother with them during our drama experiences. But after further reflection, I am thinking that perhaps when coupled with their drama experience, those

types of organizers would begin to have more meaning for them. They might provide a means for some students to begin to build and organize new schemas which would support their performance on the very structured formal assessments.

Another difficulty with test performance is that some students, particularly students with reading difficulties, don't understand "test language." They may read a question but they don't completely understand it. Complicating this problem is the fact that sometimes they don't even realize that they didn't understand the question, and thus proceed to answer on the basis of their "misunderstanding." They also may not recognize that they know the answer because the question is worded in unfamiliar terms. For example, a question on the Grade 4 proficiency practice exam (1995, Ohio Department of Education) reads:

One purpose of local government in Ohio is to provide for a system of justice. Name two places or people provided by local government to make sure we are all treated fairly.

This verbiage does not easily translate to all students, who may be confused by terms such as "to provide for a system". They may not translate that to "pays for" or "Name two people *who work for the local government* to make sure we are all treated fairly."

This difficulty with test language can and should be addressed in social studies drama education experiences. I am considering ways in which we might explore this in process drama experiences, perhaps with the students in role as test writers. I will continue to reflect upon how this gap can be more effectively bridged.

At this point, it might be useful to look at the results of our pre-drama and post-drama assessment. I begin with a brief rationale for conducting the assessment.

Rationale for the Pre-Assessment

Approximately four weeks after the class had finished its initial unit on government and the election process, I administered an assessment to the students in my classroom and to the students in another third grade classroom who had completed a similar social studies unit. The assessment consisted of three questions, which were decided upon after discussions with the teachers who had taught the initial social studies units. The three questions were: What are the qualifications necessary to become president? What are the duties of the President? What steps do you have to go through to become President? The questions were written on the chalkboard and the students wrote their answers on sheets of paper that I provided.

The purpose of the assessment was to provide me with baseline information about how many of the initial teaching objectives had been successfully attained. I decided to assess the other third grade classroom primarily to determine if our classroom's performance seemed significantly different in any way. I want to stress that is *not* a comparative study. It was never designed to be a comparative study and so the possibility for comparison between the other classroom and our classroom is extremely limited. Again, my reasons for assessing the other classroom were to determine if our class performance was *markedly different* in any way from another third grade classroom. The assessment results of the two classes were similar although not identical.

Results of the Pre-Drama Assessment

Question 1: What are the requirements to be President? The correct answer to this question consisted of three parts (i.e. 35 years or older, reside in USA for last 14 years, and natural born citizen). However, due to the free-write response format of the assessment, there were also a number of responses that the students wrote that did not fit in these three parts. I have listed those additional responses below the three correct responses.

	<u>Correct Answers</u> <u>My Classroom</u>	<u>Correct Answers</u> <u>Other Classroom</u>
	N = 17	N = 15
Must be 35 years or older:	76%	79%
Live in USA for the last 14 years:	76%	79%
Must be natural born citizen:	59%	57%
Additional responses:		
Gives speeches	7%	0%

Question 2: What are the duties of the President? The answer to this question consisted of four parts.

Commander in chief of armed forces:	12%	21%
Appoints Supreme Court judges and ambassadors:	7%	0%

Issues emergency executive orders:	0%	0%
Vetoes and Introduces legislation:	0%	14%
Additional responses:		
Make speeches	12%	7%
Make laws	7%	7%
Lower taxes	12%	0%
Make life better for people	12%	7%
Travel	0%	21%
Declare war	0%	21%
Make decisions	7%	7%
Plans what his room will have in it	0%	7%
Helps the environment	7%	0%

Question 3: What are the steps an individual must go through to become President? This answer to this question had six parts:

Primary election:	18%	43%
Nomination at convention:	0%	0%
Campaign	24%	21%
Popular election:	0%	14%
Electoral College election	7%	0%
Inauguration	7%	7%

Additional responses:

Must become a state senator	0%	7%
Must be in a party (D, R, I)	7%	0%
Not tell lies about the other person	0%	7%
Make appearances	7%	0%
Make signs, posters, and bumper stickers	7%	0%
Live in the White House	7%	0%

Because so many students seemed to indicate a lack of understanding about the structure of the government, I administered to *my class only* a very brief written assessment asking them to name the three branches of government. The results were as follows:

N = 17	
Legislative	19%
Executive	50%
Judicial	0%

Rationale for the Post-Drama Assessment

I administered the post-drama assessment for several reasons. I wanted to compare how the students did on the assessment after their drama experiences. I was interested in finding out if the curriculum content had made any more sense to them after

they had experienced the election process. I was also interested in their retention of the material. Each group was assessed four months after completing their study of the election process.

Again, I want to emphasize that this is not a comparative study, but I was interested in assessing the other third grade classroom again to see if there were any significant differences between their demonstrated retention. It is not possible to directly compare these two groups, because our class had the added advantage of an additional four weeks experience with the content. However, I believe this information might be helpful in designing future studies which do compare retention levels in drama and non-drama classroom.

Results of the Post-Drama Assessment:

Assessment Results:

Question 1: What are the requirements to be President? The answer to this question consisted of three parts.

	<u>Correct Answers</u>	<u>Correct Answers</u>
	<u>My Classroom</u>	<u>Other Classroom</u>
	N = 16	N = 17
Must be 35 years or older:	88%	64%
Live in USA for the last 14 years:	31%	50%
Must be natural born citizen:	13%	43%

Question 1 discussion: What are the requirements to be President?

There was a slight increase in the percentage of students who correctly answered that the President must be at least 35 years old. This may be because during the course of the drama, many students demonstrated an awareness of the need for a more mature demeanor, and so age may have been more consciously attended to by the students. For example, Jeff always asked to borrow my coat (a long, grey double breasted wool coat) when he was about to make a public appearance or speech. He explained to his partners that it made him look “more older.” When involved in “public appearances,” Analyn was always careful to sit very erect and cJacked her legs at the ankles in a very “proper-looking” pose with her hands folded neatly on her lap. One day I asked her to talk to me about how she had decided to present herself when she was in front of the public (her posture, voice, manner of speaking, etc.). She explained that a candidate “wouldn’t just sit like a kid” and would sit more “straight up in the chair.” I asked her why she thought that might be important, and she explained that she thought it “just looked better, more like this is really important.” The girls who were working on Analyn’s campaign began to assume similar postures and manner of speech, particularly when they were in a presentational mode. During this group’s planning segment for a biographical video about their candidate, there was discussion about when her birth date would need to be so that she would be “old enough for run for president.” They did some mathematical calculations and decided on a date. This was their opening line: “This is Analyn on the day she was born. She was born on April 21, 1962.”

I closely observed their group as they worked together on Analyn's biographical video, that was to be presented at the convention. In one sense, they were working on a "play within a play," as they were in role as campaign workers working on a video to be presented at the convention. As a group, they were developing a keen sense of what might appeal to the voters. They discussed at length what they thought should go into the video, and at last decided that Analyn's willingness to try new challenges would be important to the voters. So they designed their video to emphasize her lifelong history of always attempting new challenges and her history of success. Their biography video began with Analyn as an infant. Their next scene began with "Analyn started wanting to try things out *all by herself*, so then she decided to try eating by herself." The video shows her crawling down from her mother's lap, and attempting to eat on her own. Their next scene: "Analyn decided she would start walking," shows Analyn trying to walk, falling down and trying again with the help of her mother. After the preschool scene, "Analyn decides to go horseback riding," and she demonstrates her riding ability (on a chair). "Analyn receives a scholarship for horseback riding." Then she is shown with her three daughters, and the final line is "*Now* Analyn's going to run for president!" Her final scene is Analyn standing behind a podium giving a speech.

There was a significant decrease in the number of students who correctly answered that a requirement to be president includes living in the United States for at least the last 14 years, and being a natural born citizen. Although these requirements were never specifically addressed in our drama, I have since given a good deal of thought as to how they might be incorporated into future dramas to increase student retention of these facts.

One possibility might be to negotiate a “news leak” about a particular candidate who is forced to abandon his campaign because it has been discovered that he was not living in the United States for the entire previous 14 years. Another approach might be to tackle the issue of an upstanding citizen who has performed countless hours of service to her country and is imminently qualified to be president, but is not permitted to run for office because she was not born in the United States. These assessment results are useful in identifying content areas that have been missed in the drama.

Question 2: What are the duties of the President? The answer to this question consisted of four parts.

Commander in chief of armed forces:	25%	0%
Appoints Supreme Court judges and ambassadors:	0%	0%
Issues emergency executive orders:	0%	0%
Vetoes and Introduces legislation:	7%	7%

Additional responses:

Makes laws	7%	29%
Keeps people safe	12%	29%
Protects community and country	7%	14%
Makes people pay taxes	0%	14%
Lowers taxes	7%	0%

Travels	0%	14%
Makes deals with other presidents	0%	7%

Question 2 Discussion: What are the duties of the President?

The post-assessment results demonstrate an increase in student awareness of the duties of the president. One group in particular was especially interested in military toys and props, and in their speeches referred to the President as being “in charge” of all the military. There was also a slight increase in awareness of the President’s role with regard to legislative issues. This was somewhat surprising because there were only peripheral references to this during the course of our study, as none of our drama situations dealt specifically with this particular aspect of the presidential duties. In structuring drama for social studies content, I believe that it would be advisable to develop some drama structures that include more aspects of the presidential duties.

Question 3: What are the steps an individual must go through to become President? This answer to this question had six parts:

Primary election:	31%	14%
Nomination at convention:	31%	0%
Campaign	38%	29%
Popular election:	25%	29%
Electoral College election	13%	0%
Inauguration	7%	7%

Additional Responses:

Make commercials, bumper stickers		
and pins	7%	0%
Must be brave and really want to do it	0%	7%
Must do tests to see if you will be		
a good president	0%	7%
Must go to the country	7%	0%
You tell congressmen	0%	7%

Question 3 Discussion: What are the steps an individual must go through to become President?

The post-assessment results demonstrate a significant increase in student awareness of the steps involved in the election process. It seems likely that because the focus of many of the drama experiences were on campaign and election issues, that the students were able to develop a more complete understanding of the process, and thus were able to demonstrate their newly acquired knowledge on the assessment. However, because the very nature of the assessment requires a particular type of response, there were many types of learnings that were not demonstrated, which will be examined in the next section.

The most dramatic difference demonstrated on the written assessment was on the assessment in which the students were asked to name the three branches of government.

The results were as follows:

	June	December (Initial Assessment)
	N = 16	N = 17
Legislative	75%	19%
Executive	81%	50%
Judicial	81%	0%

It is with some feelings of reluctance that I include these tabulated results of the pre- and post-drama assessments, because of the tendency of some individuals to focus only on the “figures” as definitive “evidence” of learning or the absence of learning. These assessments serve the very limited purpose of providing students with only one of many possible ways to demonstrate some of what they have learned about a very narrow slice of a very large topic.

Discussion of Post-Drama Assessment Results

There was a significant increase in student ability to name the three branches of government. When we initially began this study, it was evident from student conversations and questions that they did not have a clear understanding of what a “government” is, nor how it was structured in the United States. Because an understanding of this is fundamental to any study of government processes and issues, we invested time and energy in exploring exactly how our government is structured and what each branch does. Most students initially believed that in our country the president “makes the laws.” So we set about to the task of “discovering” and experiencing government through educational drama experiences. The students wrote bills, argued for

their passage in Congress, participated in a trial in which one of their laws was tested, and organized and ran campaigns to elect the chief executive. Their understandings slowly emerged as they gained experience in each branch of government. I believe that what set this learning experience apart from their initial encounter was their engagement in activities over time that enabled them to gain experience and sort out appropriate and inappropriate impressions. Children need time to make connections between what they know and the new information that they are encountering.

3. How might we promote and evaluate development of social, emotional and higher-level thinking skills, such as decision-making, reasoning and metacognitive skills within the learning experience?

Contemporary educational theory indicates that learning is essentially change through experience. In other words, we learn by doing. Dewey describes learning as the “reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience” (1938, p. 89-90). Dewey did not view learning as an end product or mastery goal, rather, learning in itself is the means to new goals, new concepts, and a new view of the world.

Vygotsky provides considerable insight into the inherent connection between learning, development and the learner’s experience:

The tasks with which society confronts an adolescent as he enters the cultural, professional, and civic world of adults undoubtedly become an important factor in the emergence of conceptual thinking. If the milieu presents no such tasks to the adolescent, makes no new demands on him, and does not stimulate his intellect by providing a

sequence of new goals, his thinking fails to reach the highest stages, or reaches them with great delay. (1934/1996, p. 108)

Richard Courtney also provides insight into the relationship between learning, experience, and change: "Learning is a change of the organism within experience[which] affects future patterns of action" (1989, p. 217). Dorothy Heathcote defines education as "a continuous process of assimilation of incoming data together with a constantly developing ability to respond" (1976, p. 192). Thus the notion of *ongoing* change through experience is at the heart of learning.

As we reflect upon the inherent connection between learning and experience, the complexities of the learning process become more apparent. As drama educators, it is helpful to distinguish between the different types of learning when we are planning, observing, and evaluating drama.. There are two main kinds of learning, according to Courtney (1989). Social learning and "learning to learn" is intrinsic and aesthetic and it "*changes who we are through what we do*" (p. 217). Conceptual and informational learning is extrinsic and cognitive and it "*changes what we can recall*" (p. 217).

In this study, both types of learning were considered. The process drama experiences were designed to involve the learners in situations that moved them into both social and conceptual modes of learning.

Social Learning and "Learning to Learn"

Cecily O'Neill reminds us that:

Drama is essentially social and involves contact, communication and the negotiation of meaning The most significant kind of learning

which is attributable to experience in drama is a growth in the pupils' understanding about human behaviour, themselves and the world they live in. (1982, p. 13)

Process drama by its very nature engages children in the process of assimilation and response. Students engaged in drama must make judgments, anticipate outcomes, hypothesize, plan strategies, and seek out implications for specific and broad contexts. In this study, the students engaged in many types of social interactions throughout the course of their social studies drama experiences. Both within and between their campaign groups they engaged in discussion, problem-solving, negotiation, presentation, and analysis. They used language to shape their ideas and to synthesize their impressions and experiences.

Their drama experiences fostered an atmosphere in which the children talked to each other about more than just the events of the campaign; rather, many of the conversations I observed were on a different level. The students talked to each other about their multiple viewpoints and about their *interpretations* of what they were encountering. They engaged in conversations in which they considered "what if" possibilities. For example, one of the campaign groups (Robbie's group) made far fewer signs than the rest of the groups. I observed Eve, Kristin, and Brooke (from Geoffrey's group) engaged in a discussion in which they considered multiple reasons to explain why the other group made so few signs, if they could use that fact to their own advantage, how they could use that fact to their advantage, and what might happen if they did.

I believe that it is especially significant that this conversation was generated *by the students*, with no input or questioning from me. Thus, the students were “pushing” their own thinking by considering multiple perspectives, weighing and considering consequences, and planning possible actions. Eventually, they opted to make a speech in which they stated that Grant Henry (Robbie’s campaign name) would not make a good president because he had demonstrated that he was not a hard worker, because he had only made seven campaign signs. Robbie responded by making a speech in which he ardently defended his modest sign-making efforts, arguing that it was wasteful and environmentally unsound to generate so many signs. Robbie then added his active concern for the environment to his future campaign speeches.

During our post-dram interviews, Matthew demonstrated that he was using more complex, higher levels of synthesizing to apply what he had learned in the campaign to his conscious evaluation of “real” candidates in the future. Matthew stressed that he would now consider the reliability of campaign promises and evaluate what the candidates said against what he judged to be reasonable: “I would look for the candidate that is most reasonable. Cause you know he’s going to say no more taxes. That’s probably not going to be true because we’ve always had taxes, so why is it just going to change now?” Believability has now become part of Matthew’s criteria.

Maggie and Aaron were also able to utilize what they had learned from their drama experiences to develop connections and insight into the “real world” of politics. Maggie demonstrated critical thinking and an intuitive sense of the difficulty which lies in sorting out truth from fiction: “And also it’s pretty hard to find out like if they’re lying

about some things, like how they really feel about it because he might have like—they might be saying something that was expressing like they really mean it, but they might not.”

Aaron indicated that she was also developing an understanding of the motivations which underlie negative campaign practices: I wouldn’t vote for a candidate who like says bad things about the other people so that other people would like him He’s just doing that so he can become President faster by putting down the other people so that people start liking him.”

Their insightful answers provide examples of how drama experiences “change who we are through what we do.” These examples also provide examples of the types of learnings that occur in process drama which are not reflected in standardized assessments. Kristin, Eve, and Brooks conversation and strategy session indicated to me that they were developing skills of multiple perspective taking, interpreting, analyzing and synthesizing. However, since schools currently operate in “educational efficiency” mode, utilizing the “efficient and uniform” one-dimensional mode of assessment, much of their learning is never documented or “counted” in the large-scale comparisons.

Howard Gardner reminds us of the critical need to evaluate student growth and development in more comprehensive and multi-dimensional ways:

As knowledge about the vast differences acJack individuals, developmental levels, and varieties of expertise becomes established in the research literature, an assessment program which fails to take these into account becomes increasingly anachronistic.”
(Gardner, 1988, p. 34)

In conclusion, we as educators must recognize that “the greatest asset in the student’s possession—the greatest, moreover that will ever be in his possession—[is] his own direct and personal experience” (Dewey, 1904, p.153). We must find ways to encourage students to bring their personal experiences to bear upon their learning experiences in the classroom. We must recognize that all students can contribute to the learning process, and find ways to enable them to participate in safe and nurturing environments. Teachers need to recognize that there need not be a dichotomy between skills and process, rather, good teaching and learning empowers our students by encompassing both. I believe that research and experience both demonstrate that process drama can enrich the curriculum in many meaningful and authentic ways for our students, by valuing their knowledge and experience and by providing opportunities for them to actively experience and critically reflect upon their learning.

Considering Research Alternatives: What Might Be Done Differently?

All researchers must make choices about what data to record, how that data will be recorded, how often to record it, how intrusive the data gathering will be, and how the data will be interpreted. Similarly, given the opportunity to study a similar question under different or even similar circumstances, the researcher might conduct the study somewhat differently each time. Therefore, although there are a variety of ways in which this study could have been conducted and interpreted, these alternatives should not necessarily be considered as limitations, but rather as possibilities that should be discussed and explored.

Methodological Findings

I found that informal, spontaneous interviews (questions which emerged in the course of conversations or as a result of observations made while the children were engaged in an activity) were much more useful as a means of eliciting information from the students than formal interviews (in which we sat down together for the specific purpose of asking predetermined questions). During formal interviews, certain children tended to dominate the conversation and others seemed content for that to happen. If I then would ask one of the quieter students "What do you think?" I would often get a response like "The same as what Aaron said" or "I don't know." Some students seemed to act as if they thought that there was a "right" answer expected during the formal interview. They seemed reluctant to even attempt a response, even if the question was of an open-ended nature, such as "What did you think when . . . happened.?" or "How were you feeling when . . . ?" However, there was a marked difference in their responses in a more "natural" setting when we were just talking. Virtually all of the students seemed to talk much more openly and provided significantly more-in depth answers when the questions were asked in the course of a normal conversation. Consequently, questions that emerged in the course of our day to day activities and conversations frequently enriched the study, whereas questions and responses that were generated in more formal interviews often produced less interesting and less informative data. Because of the implications of this, I believe that in future inquiries, I will focus my attempts to gather data in more naturalistic settings.

I also found that it was difficult to record the data that I had gathering in the more naturalistic settings, as I needed to continue to rotate among groups in the classroom to assist and monitor progress. I often had to depend upon my memory after the events or conversations had occurred to record them in my field notes of journal. Although I felt that I had done a reasonably good job of recording events and conversations accurately and in a timely manner, I would like to explore ways of improving upon this process. I believe that it might be helpful to attempt to use recording equipment that captures more student conversation during their planning and decision-making processes. This would also provide a more accurate record of our spontaneous interviews. It seems to me that this could possibly provide a rich source of data and would serve as an important record of their decision-making processes. I would continue to record my recollections of how events transpired and conversations that we engaged in, and then later I could compare my recollection of events with those of the audio recording. I would take particular note of the data that I did *not* record and those aspects of the conversation that I did *not* attend to. I believe that this might provide valuable insight into my data gathering processes and biases.

As I evaluate the data that I have gathered, I have become aware of a tendency to record events and conversations of some children more than others. Part of the reason for this might be because there was a considerable variation in the verbal behaviors of the children - that is, some children spoke more freely and more often than others. Some of these children tended to articulate their thinking "out loud" and so their conversations seemed to be especially valuable in considering how they were making sense of the

curriculum. However, I am concerned about those children who did not so freely articulate their thinking. I have reflected upon all that I must have missed by not more actively seeking out their thoughts and ideas. I have also reflected upon ways in which I might more frequently elicit the thoughts and ideas of the quieter students in the future. One way might be to focus on seeking out time for more conversations with these students in very naturalistic settings. Some very quiet students seem to be more comfortable with small group or one-on-one casual conversations, so I will re-double my efforts to build more time into my data gathering to focus on this groups of less vocal students.

Implications of the Study

Any conclusions drawn from this study should consider the limitations of this research; that is, this was a study of one classroom's experiences with learning social studies through process drama. Conclusions drawn from this study should take into account the particular social and cultural contexts in which the research occurred. A similar study undertaken in different or even similar contexts might yield quite different conclusions.

During this study I observed the students learning and making discoveries through their experiences. The students were able to *become* a part of the election process, rather than merely reading about it. I observed students making meaningful connections between their lives and the curriculum that they were encountering. They began to understand and use new vocabulary correctly in context. Although there were children in the class at

many different developmental levels, the drama experiences provided a means for all of the children to begin from individual starting points and learn in ways that were appropriate for their levels of understanding. The students demonstrated an increased understanding of different language registers through their speech in role. I also observed the students demonstrate a deeper and more comprehensive level of understanding of government structure and the election process than they had demonstrated prior to this study.

The conclusions of this study suggest some areas for further research. Some specific areas for future research are:

1. Study on the retention of learning acquired through drama.
2. Longitudinal research on the influence of process drama experiences on cognitive development.
3. Inquiry in evaluating and assessing levels of cognitive development.
4. Study focused on the interpretive nature of assessment.
5. Research on improved methods for assessment and evaluation in educational process drama.
6. Research on student transfer of knowledge from drama experiences to application in formal testing situations.
7. Study of the application of these methods to other curriculum areas (i.e. science, math, music, etc.)
8. Research on developing more multi-dimensional assessments that meet a broader range of assessment needs.

9. Study of teachers and the processes they use in planning and utilizing process drama to teach curriculum content.
10. Research on the use of process drama in a collaborative classroom compared to a one- teacher classroom.
11. Study of management issues in process drama.
12. Inquiry on “guided discovery” verses “discovery” in process drama.
13. Additional study of language in drama, particularly with regard to how children experiment with register and vocabulary.
14. Research on the developmental connections between language and thought in drama experiences.

Although the findings which were presented in this study relate specifically to this third grade classroom, it is likely that other teachers might find that some of the insights and discoveries will be helpful in their own classroom situations. It is my sincere hope that teachers will continue to seek out ways in which students can learn through their experiences and discoveries, finding new and exciting ways for their students to bring their own unique talents and perspectives to their learning. It is also my hope that teachers will continue to discover new connections between drama and learning, thus continuing to enrich our teaching and learning experiences. Perhaps more teachers will begin to see themselves in the role of researcher, actively engaged in observing, analyzing and reflecting on the teaching and learning that occurs in their classrooms, and sharing that knowledge with others.

I also hope that from this study, teachers and students will begin to see drama education as vehicle for change in how we go about the business of thinking about and teaching the curriculum. And finally, I also hold out hope that teachers will become more active in the educational and political decision-making processes that so powerfully impact our students' lives. Our responsibility to our profession, our students and ourselves demand that this be so.

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