

# PEDAGOGY AND POLITICS


## in Hungarian TIE



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*the original of the cover-photo was shot by **Máté Tóth-Ridovics***

A young participant and **János Kardos**  
in the project of Káva called **New Spectator (Új néző)** in Szomolya



**Attila Varga** in the play of Káva, called ***Elveszettek***

photo by **Káva**



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# PREFACE

Káva is an independent theatre group in Hungary, which puts participation into its focus. This geographical condition of operating in Hungary sets certain limitations to our work language-wise. Most of our practical and theoretical work reaches only Hungarian professionals. However, in the past few years we have cooperated with colleagues from other countries as well, thus increasing our presence internationally. The very idea of coming up with a publication in English was mostly urged by our partners from other countries. Hopefully, this volume will be followed by further English publications.

It has always been our ambition and tradition to focus not only on the practical side of our artistic and educational work, but also on the theoretical aspects of our professional field. Apart from our theoretical and methodological series, Theatre and Pedagogy, we have launched an online publication series, titled Káva+. The 6th volume of this series, the Pedagogy and Politics in Hungarian TiE, contains the English translation of two articles authored by the artistic director of Káva.

Budapest, 31.01.2021.

# Political aspects of Theatre in Education in Hungary (and its English roots)

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*This short paper was first published in Hungarian in 2018, in the book titled Theatre Politics # Political Theatre.<sup>1</sup>*

**In this article I examine the relationship of Hungarian Theatre in Education (TiE) to politics. As this is a short piece, I shall only be able to share some important ideas related to this theme.**

I primarily consider myself a practitioner: I have been an actor-teacher and the artistic director of Káva Drama and Theatre in Education Association, but I also carry out tasks related to people and organisation management (fundraising, marketing, HR and communication). This offers me the opportunity to examine my own work from several different perspectives. For this reason, this writing relies much more on personal, subjective experience than scientific analysis.

I was present at the birth of the first Hungarian TiE programmes and also followed the different phases of the development of this genre through its growth in Hungary. I strongly believe that if TiE programmes do not contain a social dimension, if they do not reflect powerfully those social processes and problems that impact on children and young people, then this genre cannot realise its function related to developing the theatre culture and the wider Hungarian democratic culture. (It could be the subject of a separate study whether practitioners working in this field consider this their duty and task at all.) I believe that there is significance in which stories are chosen to be explored by Hungarian TiE companies, even though the political nature of TiE need not be grasped primarily based on the content of the programmes.

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1 Kronos Kiadó, Pécs, 2018.

Theatre in Education has been present in Hungary since 1992<sup>2</sup>. Those familiar with this genre of theatre may rightly ask what social impact can TiE boast of? Are any of its results visible after 26 years? Many hundred thousand (!) children and young people and thousands of teachers took part in these programmes in the past two and a half decades. Could this artistic, educational, sociological, political “tool”, that proclaims itself to be centred around the values of multiple perspective, critical stance, enactive thinking and partnership influence its social surrounding to any extent? Three decades after the regime change to what degree can the values and principles represented by people working in this field be brought to match the political system that we live under currently? Do TiE practitioners have any responsibility in the mass disengagement in social issues and political apathy becoming (again) defining characteristics of Hungarian society? Do they have any responsibility in Hungarian culture and the education system producing symptoms reminiscent of 40 years ago, or even older?

Though a detailed response to these complex questions demands in-depth analysis, it is clear that part of the answer lies in the fact that Theatre in Education in Hungarian did not develop into a network or a movement, as it did in the UK, in the 70’s and 80’s following its initiation in 1965<sup>3</sup>. For many years there were only two professional companies<sup>4</sup> in Hungary offering TiE programmes and even today there are only a few more<sup>5</sup>. Instead of a network of companies covering the whole country only a dedicated few offered TiE programmes so the results did not add up, and the impact of such work could only be noticed locally, at best.

## Defining Theatre in Education

Complex Theatre in Education Programmes are a specific genre within a variety of Educational Theatre Programmes<sup>6</sup>, all belonging under the large umbrella term of Educational Theatre and Drama<sup>7</sup>. As different theatre forms used for educational aims make up an important segment of the larger category of Applied Theatre and Drama<sup>8</sup>.

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2 This was when the first TiE company, Round Table Theatre in Education Company started working in Gödöllő, under the leadership of László Kaposi.

3 The first TiE Company was set up in the Belgrade Theatre in the city of Coventry, England.

4 Round Table Theatre in Education Company (1992), Káva ..... (1997)

5 Exploring the reasons behind this is beyond the scope of this article. Beside the two previously mentioned companies Rév Theatre and Education Company (Győr) and Open Circle (Budapest) offer TiE programmes regularly.

6 Cziboly, Ádám (ed.) 2017. Színházi nevelési és színházpedagógiai kézikönyv, Budapest, InSite Drama, 156-157.

7 ibid, 151-153.

8 ibid, 154.



*“Theatre in Education Programmes are such Educational Theatre Programmes, in which the performed scenes or play and the interactive workshop elements that process or think further the theatre – these can be discussions or theatre forms designed to fit with the aesthetics of the performance – form together a coherent dramaturgical structure. These programmes usually last 2-3 hours in Hungary and are always prepared for a specific age-group (mostly children or young people). They offer a variety of participatory forms and activities to their audiences besides the performance. These programmes are realised by actor-teachers, who not only perform but also facilitate the interactive parts.”<sup>9</sup>*

These programmes portray humans as social beings living in the present, and always engage in moral, social or age-group specific problems. The creators and performers of TIE programmes need to be actors and drama teachers as well, who can consciously employ pedagogical tools and improvise; and even operate as dramaturgs, playwrights or directors at times.

Through workshops, publications, films and festival participations the Hungarian TiE movement, and especially its initiator Round Table, and after becoming independent Káva as well, played a crucial role in making the concept of audience participation a recognised element of Hungarian theatre culture. Forms of theatre that placed the audience at the centre of their work were established and spread like wildfire. Methodologies focussing on enhancing a creative-participatory engagement spread across the field.

TiE companies have an undeniable role in participatory theatre and community theatre becoming genres that are used by a small but an ever-growing group of dedicated artists and being accepted as legitimate artforms by audiences.

*“The main challenge ever since the regime change for Hungarian theatre has been to find its way back to its contemporariness. It has taken so long for performances with social sensitivity, or a political-critical stance to appear after the change, because theatre could not connect with its own reason of existence, as it was impossible to digest the seismic shift in the reality around it. The unmoving directionless-ness of the nineties was only replaced by something new at the turn of the century. A generation that was socialised in a new era (who became adults and professionals after the regime change) had to appear for the old expectations to slowly splinter off.”<sup>10</sup>*

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9      *ibid*, 159.

10     Tompa, Andrea. Aminek lennie kell. Miért ilyen ma a politikai színház?, Magyar Narancs, in <http://m.magynarancs.hu/szinhaz2/aminek-lennie-kell-88851>, last accessed: 2020.12.10.

Not only do TiE programmes fit into this larger trend, but I also believe, they operated as a catalyst in this process.

### **What does ‘political’ mean in relation to Theatre in Education?**

Perhaps the most important aspect in relation to TiE programmes is that they alter the framework defining classic mainstream theatre’s distribution of roles. The framework defining who can speak, who can take action and who is the creator of a performance. The participants of TiE are “normal” primary or secondary school groups who get drawn into the realisation of the performance – the performance would not, could not be complete without their participation. In order to be able to articulate their thinking about the problem on offer the audience/participants of TiE programmes need to be present as co-creators. The actors, the teacher accompanying the group and the students are all present in the same space and with the same possibilities to share – in, or out of role – their opinion, their questions or critique. They can do this as part of a debate, or through artistic means using a variety of forms offered in the programmes. The programmes are accessible for all groups studying in the compulsory education system, whether they are from elite secondary schools or vocational schools. Students with physical disabilities, behaviour issues or with special educational needs, arriving from religious schools or from a Roma background can all take part in TiE programmes.

*“These theatre practices do not aim to expose social or political misconduct, and don’t aim at finding consensual solutions to malpractices that are acceptable to the majority, but rather to show contesting alternatives, that at times might exclude each other, and as such become performative examples of democracy as agnostic confrontation (Chantal Mouffe). This matches a sound recognition concerning the nature of the medium of theatre, which is much more appropriate for showing a diversity of perspectives that for conveying (political) messages.”<sup>11</sup>*

In the TiE programmes the aim is to offer a powerful dilemma rather than to convey a message (for example through how the play is directed or performed). The creators try to locate a question or a problem that demands to be examined in diverse ways, from multiple perspectives. The programmes try to locate and share the truth of each major character, rather than choosing one perspective. The creators feel satisfied if they

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11 Kricsfalusi, Beatrix A reprezentáció politikája. A politikai színházról, Színház, 2014/07, in <http://szinhaz.net/2014/07/22/kricsfalusi-beatrix-a-reprezentacio-politikaja/> , last accessed: 2018. 08.28.

manage to offer important problems for discussion by taking this route. They create a forum where different opinions can be shared, ideas can clash, with the aim of creating dialogue between participants. Dialogue among students who sit in the same class but hold different values and views of the world, and dialogue between adults and students. Their aim is to stretch the investigation in a vertical, rather than a horizontal direction, creating a dramatic close-up for the participants<sup>12</sup>.

Reaching back to the roots of the word ‘politics’, we can state that in the case of Theatre in Education its political aspects means collective thinking, the discussion of common issues based on multiple perspectives and the exploration of the possibilities of dealing with the problems. On the other hand:

*“Today it is “not through the direct thematization of the political that theatre becomes political”, so it is not the content of the plays, but “through the implicit substance and critical value” that make them political, and this is expressed in “its mode of representation”.*<sup>13</sup>

*“Theatre understands its own political value the best if it creates situations which allow the disruption of its own system of rules, rather than that of politics.”*<sup>14</sup>

The makers of Theatre in Education programmes create interactive performances that incorporate educational aims equipped with the knowledge that these events disrupt the existing system of rules.

### **England and Hungary – similarities and differences**

The TiE movement, along with its ideology and methodology, was born in 1960s England, at the same time as the first interactive theatre performances appeared on the international theatre scene. TiE’s roots reach back all the way to the ancient Greek theatre, to the Renaissance, the Jacobean theatre, the birth of drama education, the

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12 Even today this approach can be problematic for many teachers, who expect some sort of solution to the problems presented, they often expect the proclamation of a generalised truth by the TiE companies.

13 Lehmann, Hans-Thies. *Postdramatic Theatre*, Translated by Karen Jürs-Munby, London, Routledge, 178.

14 Kricsfalusi, Beatrix, *Reprezentáció, politika, esztétika (avagy miért nem politikus a magyar színház)*, Alföld, 2011/8, 85.

social crisis at the turn of the 19th century and to the two World Wars<sup>15</sup>. Its immediate lead-up was the period after the defeat of fascism and the social consensus that offered free education and health service to members of the working class and led to radical changes in British society. Among others, the idea that the right to participate in cultural life is universal and independent of social background is also a product of this period. These changes were trying to contrast the great injustices that led to the Second World War. The state subsidised theatres to reach young audiences. The aim was to break down the barriers between communities and this could be achieved by theatres if they could get into schools.

Chris Cooper, the ex-artistic director of Big Brum Theatre in Education Company, breaks down the history of English TiE into four phases.

In the first phase the role of actor-teacher was created and the companies engaged in social issues openly in their performances, such as human rights, women's rights, differences in social class and racism.

The second phase can be seen as a reaction to the failure of the '68 revolutions – programmes aimed to achieve radical and total social change. Artists believed that theatre's task is to expose dominant ideologies and to offer alternatives instead. Obviously, these alternatives became ideological as well: students were drawn into the ideologies behind the struggle against injustice, different forms of oppression and racism. These processes mirrored the 1970's Britain where in certain ways everything become overtly political.

The third phase was based on the realisation that the previous era often created dogmatic, didactic programmes. Here the emphasis moved from what to think to how to think. Pedagogy, conceptual learning and theory came to the fore. Society was still riddled with crises, and radicalisation became a street-front problem (fights engaging the unions, the deployment of the army). This social situation led to the reign of Margaret Thatcher as Prime Minister.

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15 The main source of these thoughts is Chris Cooper's video message (2014) sent to the Forum '14 conference organised by Káva.



Those working in TiE discovered Vygotsky's theories about children using imagined situations to explore reality through them. This allows children to reflection on the self and on society at the same time. The Theatre in Education movement was the subject of permanent attacks in this era (we are in the 1980s), because those in power did not believe that the purpose of education and theatre was to offer children tools to think independently. As they saw these as destructive and subversive aims TiE's dismantling slowly, but surely began.

The fourth phase can be linked to Edward Bond's appearance on the stage of TiE (following his walk-out from the official theatre world). Bond works with metaphors and the imagination, aiming to create the possibility for the audience not only to meet themselves on the stage but also take responsibility for the situation. He claims that we can either use our imagination to create a more human world, or if our imagination is corrupted, we can make the world less human.

In light of all this, we can claim that Theatre in Education, with its original aims, in the form it was created does not exist any more in the UK. TiE has been present in Hungary for twenty-six years. As people living in the socialist block we did not have the chance to experience and understand the causes of its original birth – as the revolutionary social changes of the movements of '68 did not reach our countries. However, a form of TiE was created in Hungary that could survive and even develop in this specific socio-cultural environment. TiE arrived to Hungary as an adaptation: the forms existing in the UK were discovered and brought to Hungary<sup>16</sup>. It was not the existing social or theatre structures in Hungary that gave birth to this form. They could not have, as the exploration of reality was not a central aim of the theatre culture of the time.

*"The embezzlement of reality was so successful, because though theatre in the 19th century played an important role in creating the national identity, in the 20th century popular entertainment became its dominant driving force – and not, for example, taking social responsibility. Popular entertainment did not require experiencing "reality", that the audience should meet their immediate reality on stage, on the contrary, it made it possible to step away from it. Then the era of censorship finally managed to completely discredit the immediate, experienceable reality from art and theatre."*<sup>17</sup>

16 I have to mention László Kaposi's name again, as he was the initiator of the process, the founder of Round Table TIE and the adaptation started its course in Hungary based on his decisions.

17 Tompa, Andrea. Aminek lennie kell. Miért ilyen ma a politikai színház?, Magyar Narancs, in <http://m.magvarnarancs.hu/szinhaz2/aminek-lennie-kell-88851>, last accessed: 2020.12.10.

TiE arrived from foreign lands, from outside this world. It had to get itself noticed, to be used, it needed to fit in. Then it could start its invasive activity. For many-many years, starting in the early nineties, Hungarian TiE had to engage in energy consuming and tedious battles with a segment of theatre professionals who kept trying to push it over the boundary line, label it as something interesting, but belonging to the world of education. TiE was aimed at young audiences so winning legitimacy was also made difficult by the traditional low esteem of children's theatre in Hungary.

Round Table, the first Hungarian TiE company was set up in 1992. The themes chosen by the company for its performances did not reflect social issues, though the regime change could have offered many: the impacts of ripe capitalism, social and financial inequalities, unemployment, equity, women's rights, the social situation of Roma communities, traumas related to historic events, the undiscussed issues of the communist regime, disfunctioning elements of the freshly set up democratic institutions. The first TiE programmes was White Horse's Son, based on a Hungarian folk tale. It explored the theme of betrayal. The second programme focussed on growing-up and was the Voyage of Máel Dúin. While the third programme was about teenage love and sexuality, titled Here it is again.... These are clearly not social issues; they are themes related to specific age-groups. What made it political, as explained earlier, was much more the form in which they were approached. Hungarian schools pounced on the opportunity with a hunger that made it clear: these events offer something that is a novelty in the education system and theatre world. Teachers were aware that there is very little space within the school system (or indeed outside it) for addressing children as partners, asking their opinion, engaging their imagination, things that were happening at TiE programmes. TiE arrived in Hungary after a long period of political oppression. Teachers and pupils sensed and understood that this genre offers them liberty, that they have the change to experience reality differently through theatre, here they are offered tools for thinking. This had great value in an education system based on rote learning and frontal teaching, in a system that contained so many anachronisms, and where reform pedagogies remained closed enclaves. Theatre broke into schools and brought with itself equality, multiple perspectives and critical attitude.

When Káva started working independently in 1997 it continued on the same track, it worked in the beginning in the same way as Round Table did (this was so also because the founders of Káva had previously all worked in Round Table). The themes for the programs were also chosen in a similar fashion, based on literary narratives.

However, after a few years something changed. It was not just the form, but also the content that we began to look at with a critical stance. Perhaps by this time the disappointment related to the regime change became more articulate. By then the social inequality became extremely blatant, and it became evident that something needs to happen with how the Roma are represented on stage. Perhaps the practitioners working in the company also just needed to grow up and understand the world around them.

In 2001 Káva began the Drama Drom project that ran for seven years at the Mánfa secondary school for Boyash Roma students. Together with Playground, a TiE programme exploring bullying, these projects meant a new beginning for Káva: focussing on burning social issues. Beside its more traditional repertory, in the following years the company developed a series of projects that can be clearly considered performance based social interventions. The collaboration with Krétakör and Parforum led to important stages in this process, like creating Obstacle Race, a TiE programme exploring the subject of freedom within the school institution, and the New Spectator project addressing all the inhabitants of Ároktő and Szomolya villages. Amateur Roma actors performed in The Missing Classmate programme, created with Parforum, investigating the segregation and selection processes of the Hungarian education system. The same actors worked in the programme exploring activism and the relationship to refugees in The Lost. The one and half year long Windmills project implemented in the area of Hódmezővásárhely and reaching out especially to students from homesteads can also be listed as part of this important series. Similarly to the performance series titled The Dramas of Remembrance, realised in 2013. This featured four TiE programmes that each explored a different traumatic historic event that had become a taboo subject of some sort in Hungary. These historic events were portrayed through stories happening in present times. The Empty Page was about the Trianon treaty ending the first world war, Compensation examined the long-lasting impacts of the Holocaust, Testimony explored the informers operating in the 1980's and The Statue was about the racist series of murders committed against Romas in 2008-2009.

I believe that we live in a time when there is dire need for Theatre in Education in Hungary. Problems of incredible depth and volume are collecting in a society that is more and more divided. Many (of us) live in bubbles, with no understanding of the realities of the lives of people from other social groups. These bubbles are dangerous for all of us. We live in times when young people need methods and forms that allow them to see reality in new ways and allow them to think independently. We, actor-teachers can be

mediators between ourselves and society. It is useful to reflect on how the aims set at the initiation of Hungarian TiE could have become relevant again in Hungary in 2018, as the result of a strange time travel.

Our task is to open up situations for children and young people so they can decide what sort of world they want for themselves and how do they want to live in it. We can use the methods of Theatre in Education, which is a form of political theatre. Role and the conventions related to frame offer an overview, while theatre offers a resonance of their own life. TiE programmes offer the opportunity to manipulate time and space in ways that many have never experienced before. It is not messages that need to be conveyed, we need to create opportunities for participants to come to own themselves. This today is an artistic, educational and political action at the same time.

**Translated by** **Ádám Bethlenfalvy**





*Edit Romankovics* in the play of Káva  
called *Compensation (Kárpótlás)*

photo by *Máté Tóth-Ridovics*



# Constructivist Drama

## Connecting Drama in Education with some basic concepts of Constructivist Pedagogy

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*This paper was first published in Hungarian, in the first volume of Theatre and Pedagogy, a theoretical and methodological series of publications, in 2009. The volume was titled "Constructivist Drama".*

In this paper, I would like to draw attention to connections between basic concepts of Drama in Education<sup>1</sup> and some central ideas of constructivist pedagogy. I believe that it is not only possible but also useful to connect these two fields, because both state that supporting children in creating adaptive knowledge, i.e. understanding how to relate to the world surrounding them, is an important role of education. This entails teaching children how to be independent, supporting them in creating their own notions, theories and in making their own decisions. This can be enhanced by offering appropriate problems to different communities and framing these in the most productive forms. Constructivist pedagogy claims that our knowledge of the world is our own construction. This central thesis can be connected to a central proposition of drama education which states that the most important aim of education is to form our relationship to specific problems.

I have primarily formed my understanding of drama through practice. I have been an actor-teacher for more than 16 years, I am the professional director of the Budapest based Káva Drama and Theatre in Education Company<sup>2</sup>, I have been teaching in higher education and at teachers' professional development courses for many years. My writing serves as an introduction to the fields discussed, but I hope it will be useful for those as well who are interested in the educational theory of drama. For them, the comparison with constructivist pedagogy in this paper might offer an exciting new perspective on drama.

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- 1 I will be referring to Drama in Education as simply drama through most of this writing. With this term I am referring to the UK tradition and concept of Drama in Education, which shares many of its theoretical groundings with Theatre in Education (TiE) as well.
  - 2 An artistic and educational company set up in 1996, which primarily creates and tours Theatre in Education and drama programmes for primary and secondary school students.

## The sites of creating knowledge

Modern state funded educational institutions rephrase what their society considers knowledge in that given period and present it in school jargon. Through this act they legitimise this knowledge in wide circles. These institutions are producers of social know-how to the extent that this “production” of meaning becomes industrial in its scale. Let us follow this metaphor further: industrial units usually produce products that can be manufactured in great numbers on an assembly line, and the outputs are all identical. So, if the education-factory produces knowledge, this will probably be canned-knowledge, and its adaptive value will be highly contestable.

Of course, we know that the “production of knowledge” is not only possible through “bulk production”. There are a number of alternative sites in Hungary as well, where knowledge is created differently. These sites often become insular, and in other cases, they tend to be each other’s rivals or even opponents. I would like to present drama as an actor of the education field, which can become an additional alternative to the bulk-knowledge-production discussed earlier. But I would be careful not to juxtapose the two.

*“The school of late-modern society is characteristically a modern institution, which relies on producing and operating a specific kind of knowledge. Modern school does not really accept that knowledge other than what the institution teaches exists. So, it does not consider how the knowledge it offers can be made compatible with other forms of knowledge. This leads to the common experience that knowledge taught in school can only be used in school, and school skills do not help in dealing with out-of-school challenges. A different skill base is needed to deal with those. To live in a late-modern society, one needs knowledge and skills that are very different from the forms of knowledge taught in schools. These skills and knowledge require methodologies, educational aims and processes that are different from those currently present in the system.” (Deme – Horváth, 2008).*

I claim that drama can offer opportunities to create this different type of knowledge, which is generally not accessible in schools. Drama can help children and young people become accustomed to the world around them and create adaptive knowledge. Drama relies on the creation or use of knowledge that is usually not in the forefront, or in

many cases, not even acknowledged within institutionalised learning processes. Drama guarantees that this knowledge will become visible and part of the thinking process, because it works around questions, themes and problems that are rooted in the contemporary socio-political environment.

Drama becomes a tool for learning in the following way: groups of different size and age create their micro-worlds in the drama session, and within these worlds they can examine actions, motivations and impacts and their implications and interrelations. Through this process the participants can gather experience and understand others, can learn about coping with others, can explore oppression, acceptance and empathy.<sup>3</sup> Drama workshops examine how our behaviour changes when we become engaged in various situations. Different key elements of social life materialise in drama workshops: work, death, myths, celebrations, law, commerce, travel, etc. These contents appear in drama through different cultural forms (eg. tools, language, buildings, reports, weapons, behaviour, secrets, food, etc.). From this perspective, drama can be understood as a system of cultural practices through which social life and its processes can be presented in order to see, experience and understand the role, motivations, possibilities and behaviour patterns of the individuals in them. The possibilities for such learning within the educational institutions discussed before are extremely limited.

### **Constructivist pedagogy's concept of knowledge and learning**

The educational theory and methodologies of constructivism<sup>4</sup> offer an important alternative approach to how knowledge is created. This book's first two essays offer a deeper insight into these. A central tenet of this theory is that children use mental models and these influence their behaviour in different situations. This also means that the existing patterns of thinking determine which pieces of information are processed in the course of learning and how these can be turned into mental models. If the existing mental models are adaptive in nature they get reinforced, if they are not adaptive then new models are constructed.

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3 Following this train of thought brings us to the understanding of drama as social performance. The second volume of our Színház és Pedagógia [Theatre and Education] series offers much more on this subject.

4 Some of the most important representatives of this approach are Rosalind Driver, James Novak, David Ausubel and Ernst Glasersfeld. In Hungary István Nahalka is considered the main representative of constructivist education.



According to constructivists, the development of each individual is based on the constant transformation of the world model within their mind. This procedure is a constantly active, internally directed process, many such constructs are assembled and crashed during a lifetime. “Learning happens in the interaction between new experiences and the existing internal interpretive framework, with the latter directing the process” (Nahalka, 2003:122).

Constructivism defines learning as a process of individual meaning making, so the process of learning depends on how someone interprets certain things. Our existing mind models interact with the new information, and the synchronisation of these can only be understood as active meaning making. Conceptual thinking is an important component of this process, as it opens the course for application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation.

Unfortunately, we do not have sufficient scientific research on how knowledge is created in drama. However, there are two models that seem to offer useful insights into this process. Beside the individual meaning making model referred to above, the model of learning as a process of knowledge building through social activities also holds relevance for the field of drama. According to this latter model, the social group’s collective knowledge is internalised by the individual. When, on the other hand, an individual creates new knowledge, they verbally externalise it, and the other members of the group use and internalise this knowledge. This model is rooted in the situational or socio-cultural approach to learning, which is based on the proposition that in the process of learning, thinking and action happen in a social context, hence learning is a social activity based on cooperation.

The slow process of change in the Hungarian education system could be productively boosted by the implementation of constructivist education and drama. The world we live in will not move backwards, people will have to constantly face new challenges. Our late-modern societies cannot be as straightforward and transparent in their structure as they were in the era of classic modernity. This also means that a given society’s value and representational systems cannot be so incontestable and obligate as before. This has a huge impact on what can be considered modern knowledge, and also on modern educational institutions, which aim to transmit this knowledge, but also on how teachers see their role in this system and on the methods they use in teaching.

The challenge seems even more gigantic if we take into consideration all other factors, such as the incredible amount of information available, the impacts of technological developments, the growth in aggression and segregation within the school system, the almost unbridgeable differences in the social experiences that students who sit in the same classrooms have, and the hopefully momentary recession of values, like solidarity, in society.

I do not state that a constructivist pedagogy would be a miraculous solution to all these problems. But I do believe that if they were to be combined with the best practices of learning by doing, like drama in education, then together they can become catalysts of a more up-to-date and effective education.

### **Constructivist drama**

I will continue by looking at some points of connection between drama in education and the constructivist education approach. My account of this field is introductory in nature. A large part of the literature related to constructivist pedagogy refers to the teaching of science subjects, there is hardly any research conducted on the less exact humanities subjects. Drama, on the other hand, focusses on the questions and problems related to human relationships, themes that are age-group specific, or on moral dilemmas of social life. But what sort of learning do we have in mind when we are examining the meaning of concepts like freedom, prejudice, friendship, aggression or authority?

Drama offers a framework for participants (for students) to define their relationship to a specific problem, and after an in-depth investigation including various perspectives, refine or if needed override their attitude, their concept of that problem. "What the student creates is of less importance than that he creates something which he can see as his own private statement about something" (Courtney 1980:97) All children arrive at the drama lesson with a view of the world, with a more or less reflected moral stance. Drama tries to offer different situations to provoke the group into collective thinking about what they consider adequate decisions and behaviour in those specific situations.

Drama sees learning and understanding as an active and creative process that builds upon existing knowledge and skills (similarly to constructivism), but in this case, we have social situations at the centre of investigation. Emphasis is placed on understanding processes and certain systematic patterns within social situations. At the same time, drama offers the opportunity to synthesise traditional and progressive educational

philosophies, because it builds on curriculum prescribed knowledge about the real world, but at the same time, by constructing a fictional world, it also involves students in the creation of this knowledge.

I believe that the methodology of drama builds upon the following key characteristics:

- learning through tasks and action
- problem solving
- examining through experiencing
- understanding through metaphorical thinking

This clarifies that drama entails much more than merely role playing situations. Understanding can happen through experiential moments, but this is not the sole aim of drama. In order to create a deeper understanding, we lead the participating children through the following four phases in drama:

- *Articulation*: the decoding of theatre forms through language and the verbal exploration of the problems at hand.
- *Discussion*: the exchange of ideas, debating, using language in a creative and active ways.
- *Experiencing*: exploring the thoughts, feelings and actions of the different roles, using different theatre forms (conventions).
- *Creation*: re-coding, expressing our understanding of the explored problem in a new artistic form.

These tools need to be used in an integrative, complex manner. Based on what is explained above, we can state that the aim and result of drama education is to create a shift in the understanding of the participants. This can only be achieved if they become motivated and interested in the exploration.

From the perspective of non-formal education, but also keeping in mind the possibilities drama and theatre in education can offer within the education system, I believe that drama can assist the realisation of the following aims:

1. Preparation for social practice: drama can offer adaptive knowledge, knowledge that can be used in real life. (This should not be mistaken with the concept of “preparing for life”, an approach that implies school is a bubble and children start living after they leave the institution.)
2. Forming, expressing and defending *independent opinion*, developed through the use of questioning.
3. Offering models for *collective thinking*.
4. Developing *literacy skills* (reading, writing, speaking) and fostering symbolic and metaphoric thinking.
5. Spreading non-teacher-led *differentiated learning*.
6. *Working against the selective education system*, which deepens social differences, or at least counterpoising it through spreading methods and programs (curricula) that help marginalised groups by offering equal opportunities in education.
7. Building *real motivation and reframing the concept of knowledge*, also by acknowledging prior knowledge. Making students engaged in education by reflecting on individual needs and interests, and offering a variety of forms of evaluation.

### **The role of the drama teacher**

The drama teacher (or to be less specific, the educator) cannot solve the problems raised instead of the children or young people, but can offer support in the process of finding possible solutions by consequently representing the multiplicity of perspectives. This can also help form a sense of responsibility for the decisions taken, which is important both on individual and collective levels. Both drama and constructivist education are set against the paternalist world view and way of life, which is so prevalent in Hungary.

Both drama and constructivist education believe that the success of the learning process, similarly to any other educational practice, depends highly on the teacher’s personality, well-preparedness and attitude. We can confirm that the tasks of the drama teacher lie much more in presenting the problems and situations that serve the learning process than in providing the knowledge itself. Drama teachers usually see drama education as an approach building on the following:

- individual and group learning situations,
- emphasis on collaboration rather than competition,
- a process led by the learner's internal motivation,
- direct experience (through tasks and activities) is prior to indirect experience (transmission of information).

To be able to implement the aims listed above, the drama teacher relies on specific attitudes, skills and abilities. These include creating a partnership with the learners, searching for consensus, being open to and interested in the opinion of students, empathy, imagination, good written and oral communication skills, tolerance, cooperation, flexibility. It is especially important that the drama teacher implements competences that are related to acceptance, appreciating the individual values of the participants, and the creative management of differences, which can be channelled into an educational process. Being familiar with and using modern educational tools are also essential. It is important that the teacher is able to deal with the frustrations arising out of social marginalisation, and is able to provide the learners with equal opportunities and a sense of achievement (at least in school), but it is also an important task to deal with the stereotypes and prejudices of both Roma and non-Roma learners.

Drama demands a thoughtful attitude and a curiosity in both the events of the world and the world of the learners. Drama teachers educate learners to think critically and to ask questions. This is undoubtedly one of the most challenging tasks a teacher can have. They teach students to look at different aspects of a given situation and consider the routes leading to and from it from several perspectives. Drawing conclusions is not the task of the drama teacher, he or she is not the provider of fixed moral wisdom, instead, they are offering the stance of multiple perspectives and alternatives in thinking. The most powerful tools of the drama teacher are asking questions and working from role<sup>5</sup>, through which they can also become part of the story, and also the ability to offer appropriate language and those forms of theatre that help participants express their thoughts and feelings most precisely.

“Drama teachers need to have a clear idea of their ideological and education philosophical stance, and must be aware of how this appears in the classroom through their practice.

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5 The teacher takes on an attitude that manifests itself most powerfully through language and intonation. Taking on a role makes it possible to bring herself and the group into a fictional situation and creates a more balanced power relationship.

They also need to decide whether they represent their own position with commitment, or structure their lessons in a way that it is primarily the students who voice their opinions, while the teacher operates as a generator of exploration and discussion” (Szauder 1996:12). A third position also exists between the two explained above, in which the drama teacher incorporates his or her opinion within the collective thinking, but in a way that it does not become dominant over the participants’ opinion.

According to current interpretations, drama can be placed among the methodologies of reform-pedagogies, within the larger group based on learning by doing. Drama builds upon doing as a catalyst of the learning process but it always entails much more than merely acting out situations. The phases in the lessons related to planning, discussion, reflection by students and teacher, the collective development of the process of understanding are as important (if not more important) as the performative representation of situations (people, objects, ideas). Thus, drama can be seen as a possibility to understand ourselves and the world surrounding us, an event in which actions based on feelings and ideas carry a central role.

*“Drama lifts the participants out of their traditional roles and reframes their everyday experiences that are rooted in the individual’s emotions. It creates challenges, situations of initiation, in which the individual can experience what he or she is capable of. Risk-taking creates opportunities to transform the experiences of the self. Experiencing emotions is central in creating change. The different emotional states influence learning and recollection from memory, attention, thinking and the willingness to take actions” (Szitó 2005:10).*

### **Conceptual change as a change in understanding**

Constructivists claim that conceptual change happens when a new piece of information comes into contradiction with the internal system of thinking in such a way that it leads to a radical transformation of the system itself. This entails much more than just acquiring new knowledge, at times it is a painful transformation that leads to the creation of new schemes and structures, based on making difficult decisions.

The aim of drama is to create a change in understanding. “Understanding consists in grasping the place of an idea or fact in some more general structure of knowledge. When we understand something, we understand it as an exemplar of a broader conceptual principle or theory”. (Bruner 1996:9) It is the teacher’s responsibility to choose what



the aim of the change is. Besides a change in understanding, the teacher might want to create a change in attitude or a change in the expectations concerning role-play, a change in social relations or in the use of language, or a change in the awareness of the needs and intentions of others.

So how does this “change in understanding” happen in drama? Erik Szauder’s study, referred to above, builds on Karl Popper’s model, which describes the process of scientific discoveries as a formula. According to this theory, the phases of hypothesis formation and active exploration are central elements of the drama methodology. This approach shows striking similarity to that thesis of constructivist pedagogy which claims that everyone applies their previous hypotheses when managing new knowledge.

The exploratory work (the process of understanding) starts out from a problem (**P1**). A null hypothesis is generated (**HY1**), which can be tested in drama through action (**A1**). This is followed by corrections in the process and the elimination of false ideas (**CE1**). This phase produces new problems (**P2**), which differ from the starting problem. **P2** relates to a higher level of knowledge that is the product of the preceding process. Similarly, **HY2**, **A2**, **CE2** relate to a more complex process based in a higher level of knowledge. By leading the students through this process, a point can be reached where they achieve a change in understanding. This is the moment of conceptual change:

**P1 → HY1 → A1 → CE1 → P2 → HY2 → A2 → CE2 → P3 → ... → conceptual change**

According to constructivist education (to which Karl Popper’s theories are of central importance, for example, the falsification theory), conceptual change<sup>6</sup> is attained through the following process:

**Personal world model (initial state) + new knowledge to be understood →  
→ contradiction between the two →  
→ processing begins →  
→ new knowledge gets anchored →  
→ the mental model related to the knowledge changes (conceptual change)**

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6 Karl Popper uses the term in relation to the refutability of a theory. In simple terms, according to Popper, a theory can be considered scientific if it can be falsified, otherwise it is a dogma.

Using a term from theatre jargon, the moment of conceptual change can also be described as a catharsis of the process of learning or understanding. In Poetics, Aristotle describes catharsis as the main impact of drama, which happens through feeling empathy, and which purifies the audience. It is an intense process and its impacts are long lasting, and I believe that it is in close proximity to the concepts of conceptual change and deeper understanding.

### **The concept of prior knowledge in constructivism and in drama**

Almost all educational approaches acknowledge the importance of prior knowledge, the system of understanding that already exists in the students' minds. Constructivists take a step further, they believe that the students' prior knowledge should be the base of the educational process. Drama also believes that the existing knowledge of students plays a central role in their learning process, and also, that this needs to be taken into consideration when defining the aims of a process.

Prior knowledge is important in constructivist pedagogy for two reasons:

- Constructivists do not think that the mind of a child is a clean slate that gets filled slowly through teaching, but believe that children use their inherent world model to understand events and to take action.
- The teacher needs to understand which elements of earlier learning processes have been integrated<sup>7</sup> or anchored within the mind models of the learners. These elements can be built further, and the teacher is able to see what needs to be done to achieve conceptual change or reach deeper understanding.

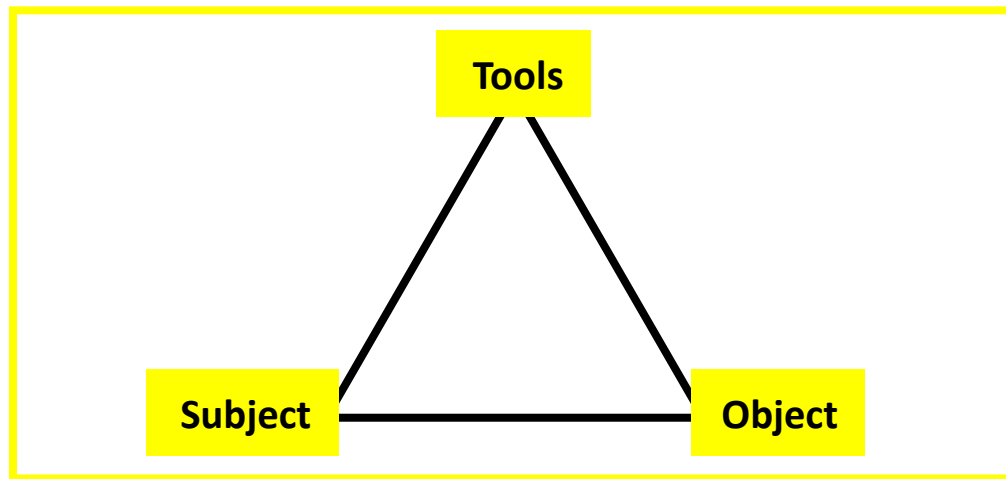
The toolkit drama offers is highly adequate to create a learning environment in which students can imagine and build models that they do not yet possess. The imagination and creativity of the drama teacher and that of the students, along with a well-defined, problem-centred situational context can provide fertile ground for building? new knowledge.

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7 In more traditional educational settings, teachers often take it for granted that what has been said in the classroom, the so-called learning materials, automatically get integrated into students' knowledge. A long list of daily occurrences from the world of school proving this naïve theory to be wrong could fill many-many pages.

## Connections with Vygotsky

Vygotsky claims that the dialectic relationship with the world, mediated through different tools, plays a central role in the learning process. The social and cultural context is also mediated to children through these tools. The teacher can play such a mediating role in this framework that can form the dialectic process.



*Vygotsky's model*

According to Vygotsky, there is constant interaction between the Subject, the Object and the Tools.

- **Object** = the objective of the action, i.e., the goal that the subject wants to achieve.
- **Tools** = artefacts and people (teachers, drama teachers), language, writing, numbers, memories, sign systems, forms of symbolisation, maps, artistic products. The possible choices among the variety of tools offer great flexibility to the learning process.
- **Subject** = the person at the centre of the learning process (a student or a teacher)

The Zone of Proximal Development is a central tenet of Vygotsky's theory. This differentiates between what a child is able to achieve individually and what he or she can achieve with the support of a competent person (a teacher, a parent or a carer). With the appropriate support, a child can always achieve a higher level of development, so teachers must focus on the Zone of Proximal Development in their teaching.

*“Below this level, teaching does not develop the learner, because it does not contain new knowledge. In the area above the Zone, the learner does not profit either, because he or she cannot solve the tasks. The different interpretations and developments of the theory of the Zone of Proximal Development all aim to identify that area above the current knowledge of the learner which is neither too simple and thus useless, nor incomprehensible because of its complexity” (Csapó 2006:2-16)*

Drama teachers can aim for the children participating in drama workshops to step from their current knowledge to a higher level of understanding through the use of drama, the complex exploration of problems, the use of artistic tools, and with the drama teacher operating as a catalyst and facilitator of the learning process.

The following areas can be developed through drama:

- the process of mimesis (mirror stage),
- interiorising events and creating internal systems,
- verbalising intentions and what has been done,
- the interaction between teacher and learner (and between learners),
- a conscious use of language,
- connecting the areas above and moving between them.

Moreover, the drama teacher can offer insights into the thinking process behind different tasks offered to students. This greatly enhances the consciousness of students and promotes self-spectatorship, participants become able to observe themselves while playing. This also means that the drama teachers need to be extremely conscious of their signing, as they are constantly conveying messages to the group.

From an educational perspective, the most important question is how a child can be moved from their current zone of development. Understanding the stages of mental representation might offer us some guidance. The following basic modes of representation can appear consecutively or simultaneously in the learning process:

- *enactive mode* = when something is recollected through action
- *iconic mode* = when the recollection appears visually
- *symbolic mode* = when the recollection is language and concept based

Different activities in drama can offer the possibility for participants to switch between modes of representation consciously. This can enrich the learning process. We know that younger children use the enactive mode far more, while young people are more comfortable with the symbolic mode. The drama teacher can rely on the modes of representation and on the above discussed processes and areas of development in making Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development accessible for learners in their classrooms.

### **The logic of learning**

The different methodologies within learning by doing follow inductive reasoning processes, while constructivist education builds on a deductive approach. Which process of reasoning should drama consider authoritative?

Reform-pedagogies believe that children create their understanding of the world through inductive procedures, through their immediate experiences (gathered through action), with the help of abstraction, generalisation and analogies. This process moves from the specific to the general. Experience based on doing is the first step, and we reach a more complex understanding through simpler systems of knowledge. The deductive reasoning that the constructivist approach builds upon does not simply mean the opposite of this. In this case, the general starting point is the prior knowledge, the existing cognitive structure of the child.

*"The cognition theories of drama in education produced the "deductive shift", which prefers conscious planning, reflection and evaluation processes, especially in comparison with the practices of "inductive enactive learning", which produce uncontrollable processes and accidental results. Also, drama is capable of synthesising cognitive understanding with emotive experience" (Zalay 2007: 144-153).*

I agree with the statement above, but believe that it is useful to think it further. In my opinion, the current methodologies of drama in education in Hungary carry elements of both approaches. The practice of the past sixteen years and the lessons published can be seen as examples of the inductive approach. The structure of the drama lessons usually follows an inductive logic, they start out from a specific narrative and help the

participants generalise their ideas that are developed while exploring the story, and also help them to realise how all this relates to their experiences. However, there are other drama lesson structures as well, which stand much closer to the deductive constructivist approach. These lessons aim to explore a concept, often not even engaging in a whole story, instead, they only focus on a specific situations, or reach personalised knowledge through engaging in just a few objects.

### **The manifestation of the context principle**

It is essential within the constructivist framework that “in the learning process, children meet new knowledge in life-like situations that are tangible, rich in connections and easily recognisable for them” (Nahalka 2002). This sentence could have been written by someone working with drama in education as well. For them, it is a basic principle to start out from and explore themes that are related to the participants’ everyday reality. Of course, it is an important professional question how to structure the exploration through the choice of frame and the appropriate frame distance. Drama is not about the roles chosen (e.g. pirates), but about the problems encountered in those roles, for example, a problem that could be part of the life of pirates. Children do not need to have direct experience of the problem being explored for the learning process to be successful, it is sufficient for the problem to be recognisable for the participants. For example, to explore the theme of separation, the participants do not need to have deep knowledge or first-hand experience concerning the life of refugees. Their everyday knowledge is enough to set off their imagination and thoughts about this subject. Themes can be recognisable based on both emotions and experiences.

Constructivists believe that the contexts recognised as life-like by the learners can connect to their deepest existing systems of knowledge. Drama also builds on the same premise, channelling artistic processes into information gathering procedures, and creating situations that go beyond mediating information. This allows various mental procedures to become activated<sup>8</sup>:

- First, creating understanding relies highly on analogies, we associate our existing knowledge with situations that are very different from ours (I was referring to this in my example concerning refugees).

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8 Based on the thoughts of H.P. Rickman.



- Second, we understand more phenomena than we consciously conceptualise. In the case of drama, this means that challenging situations (ones that drama works with can liberate emotions and mobilise knowledge. Drama not only builds on the subjective opinions of participants, but actually places these centre stage in the learning process.
- Third, high intensity situations can be understood with the help of experience originating from similar, low intensity situations. This is important for drama when it aims to explore questions related to subjects like slavery, racism or euthanasia.

It is important within both the constructivist and the drama framework that knowledge and information never appear independently of context. “Knowledge can be channelled in only if it is relevant in that specific situation (if it is contextualised)” (Szauder, 1996:11). Drama always aims to explore a well-defined field of knowledge, however, this can be understood more broadly than school subject based knowledge, hence it can contain content from any curriculum subject.

Erik Szauder explains that in drama “specific problems appear as challenging situations, which need to be explored for a solution to be found. These also provide a reason for the use of knowledge and creativity, and also offer a framework for the process. As the situations highlight different aspects of human life, they can contribute to the generalisation of different conceptual categories (or, according to Dorothy Heathcote’s terminology, to the development of “universal” knowledge), and also to the development of a network of concepts. Based on the above, I claim that the artistic activity of drama enhances (mostly indirectly) both knowledge acquisition and meaning making processes” (Szauder, 1996:13).

### **The science of questioning, the language of constructivist drama**

The following section is dedicated to one of the most effective tools of constructivist drama, namely, the discipline of questioning, the questioning techniques teachers can use. It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of questioning. Asking the right questions is the drama teacher’s main ‘weapon’ in realising the aims and objectives discussed above. Weapon, in the positive sense of the word, it is used to make the participants think. The aim is to use language not only as a bridge to the children’s soul, but also as a well-brandished sword. Though the situation is similar in traditional

teaching, questioning acquires a special importance when we talk about structuring drama. Can the drama teacher use questions in a way that they direct the children's thinking towards new knowledge and meaning making? Can he or she avoid simplistic, didactic questions that carry the answer – even if in a covert way – within the question? Do the questions, which could be about the specific situations within the fiction, or reflections on them, or related to the learning process itself, set off a deeper meaning making process, which becomes visible in the participants' responses? All this depends on how questions are asked.

Constructivist drama offers content for learning that is related to human relationships, moral and social issues, which can only be interpreted in depth if it appears in a specific situation. Teachers need to adapt their communication to fit with these new circumstances. If our aim is to create an atmosphere in which participants are open to engage in the drama and explore the problems offered in the drama, then trust needs to be established. This will also enhance the free sharing of opinions. If the teacher's tone is judging, critical or ironic, it will have the opposite impact. The students' anxiety of being judged will make them withhold their opinion or offer teacher-pleasing responses. The teacher needs to adjust all the aspects of their communication, become an open recipient of the participants' opinion, and should encourage them to share their views and thoughts.

The past fifteen years have produced a well applicable canon of questioning techniques, which can also be easily taught. This canon includes different modes of questions, applied with different aims, such as seeking information, containing information, provoking research, controlling, branching or seeking opinion<sup>9</sup>. Handling responses to questions is also a subject closely linked to questioning, I will not engage in a detailed discussion of this topic, only list the most important techniques used: writing down the responses of the participants, small group discussion prior to offering answers to the whole group, withholding verbal and non-verbal teacher's responses, encouragement, looking for common themes, re-thinking responses and asking participants to re-evaluate them, voting.

Besides clarification and creating tension, the most important function of questions is to slow events down, creating the so-called accident time<sup>10</sup>, in which participants have

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9 The development of the field of questioning in Hungary can be directly linked to the translation of Jonothan Neelands' book *Making Sense of Drama*.

10 The term is based on the phenomenon when time slows down in accidents, and seconds of real time are experienced as minutes or even endless time by those involved.

ample time for detailed analysis. Such an expansion of time can allow a single moment of significance to be analysed in detail, with this analysis becoming the organising focus point of the structure. I will offer a series of questions<sup>11</sup>, which can also be understood as a process, in order to share an example of how far thinking can be stretched by using appropriate questions.

I will share an example to illustrate my claim. Please imagine a very old kitchen-stool. Long ago it used to be white, but its colour has faded and the paint has splintered off here and there. A part of one leg of the stool has been sawn off by its owner but this piece has been put back in its place, so if the stool is not moved, it looks like it is completely intact. If someone sits on it carelessly, they fall over together with the stool. The stool is owned by a lonely old lady.

The following series of questions can produce answers of various levels and quality:

- What does this object make you think of?  
In this case the teacher is expecting spontaneous responses, the first thoughts that the object sets off.
- What do you see?  
This is the space for objective responses, a straightforward description of what can be seen. It is the linguistic detail and accuracy of the description that becomes important.
- What does the object you see remind you of?  
Here we are aiming to induce associations, to create resonance. We are looking for points of connection.
- What do we actually see?  
We have arrived at responses that reflect on the metatext. The participants share the deeper level meanings the object has for them, looking behind the primary level of meaning making. What more does the object speak about than itself?
- What is this stool for?  
What sort of kitchen or home could this stool belong to? This question leads to speculative answers as participants try to guess what the object says about its surroundings.

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11 An analysis of the work of Big Brum Theatre in Education Company's designer, Ceri Townsend, helped me form this structure of thinking.

- What sort of life does this stool imply?  
What is it that we do not know? We are exploring through analytic responses.
- Give a title to this image.  
Similarly to the previous question, we are summarising our thoughts here.  
The reflective responses condense the thoughts we have explored before.
- What do you expect?  
This question produces narrative responses. We step out of the analytic mode of thinking and use our creativity to build a narrative in relation to our expectations related to the future.

Dorothy Heathcote looks at a different side of the same problem when she analyses the motivation of certain role in a specific situation, in five steps. There is significance to the sequence of the five questions related to the different layers, which are the following:

1. What (exactly) is the action you're doing?
2. Why is what you are doing important for you? / What is your motivation?
3. What do you expect to gain out of this? / What have you invested?
4. Where have you learnt to behave like this? / How have you learnt it?
5. What should your life be like? / How do you see the world?

I believe that these questions can be really useful in the consistent exploration of a subject. Their exact linguistic formulation needs to be adjusted to the specific situation so it will be different in each case.

### **A possible framework for interpretation**

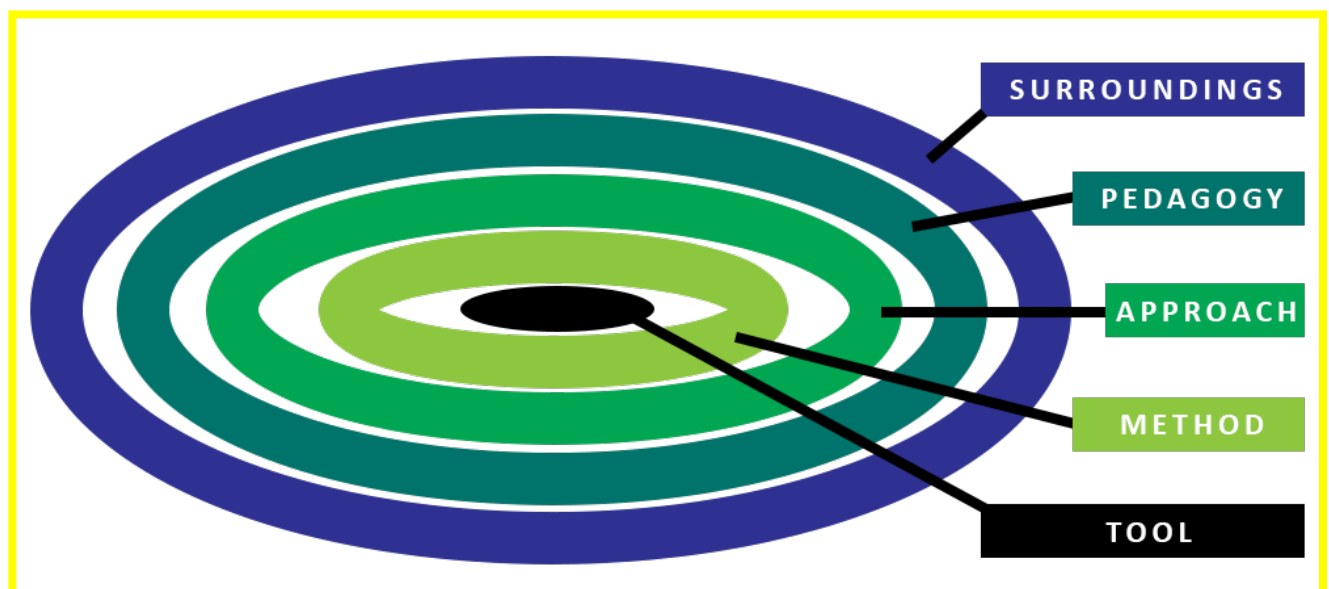
Finally, I would like to share a possible framework for interpretation that reflects the drama based aspects of the concepts of tool, method, approach, pedagogy and surroundings. Under the term drama I primarily mean a certain mode of thinking and approach, and secondarily a mode of communication and action that is centred around the concept of dramatic action. Dramatic action builds upon the tension<sup>12</sup> inherent in situations, which provides the possibility for drama to be developed. This is a characteristic of all the

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12 Productive tension is not the same as conflict. This is cardinal in deepening the understanding of the journey and of the motivations behind an action. Conflict is the more superficial of the two concepts as it produces repetitive and mostly negative responses, hence it hampers more sophisticated work (cf. Dorothy Heathcote).

situations in which people have to make such decisions which are realised in action, decisions, which have a huge impact on the future (of the individual or that of the community) (cf. Dúró – Nánay 1993). This is important because situations pressured by decision making test the meaning making process.

- Tool: all the specific forms and activities through which the lesson is realised = activities, conventions, rules of games and exercises, theatre scenes, teacher in role.
- Method: the principle according to which the tools are structured into a whole = a sequence of games and activities; drama in education (DiE); mantle of the expert; theatre in education (TiE).
- Approach: the general ideology of the method = drama education.
- Pedagogy: the framework in which the approach can be realised = the theory of constructivist education, the different theories and practices of reform-pedagogies.
- Surroundings: the problems of the surroundings need to be explored = the triangle of the closer, personal surroundings, of contemporary Hungarian society and of the world surrounding it; the field of challenges, which offers the problems to be explored.



*A possible framework for interpretation*

Perhaps the image of a pebble thrown into still water depicts how I imagine the interrelation between the different levels, and the place of drama within them. The impact follows through the different rings from the inside right out to the outer ring, so the tools based on the methodologies and approaches of drama or constructivist education can be employed to explore and understand the world surrounding us. However, the process is not a one-way one, the changes in the external ring also have an impact on the tools ring in the middle. Constructivist education and drama education create the passage between the internal and the external rings by using methods that aim to create knowledge (and tools) applicable in the real world.

### **Closing thoughts**

In this paper I tried to show and interpret some similarities between the approach and main concepts of drama education and those of constructivist education. I have hopefully demonstrated that the main principles of learning by doing and constructivist education stand close to each other, connecting them seems self-apparent and necessary.

“We believe that pedagogies based on illustration or simply on the transmission of knowledge cannot be considered adaptive in the new millennia. A school serving modern needs has to build on the independence and activity of the children, on the complex development of personality, on the use of multiple methodologies. Hence, learning by doing and constructivism are the approaches we can truly rely on” (Nahalka 2003:126). The inspiration for this writing was the idea of creating a school that gives adequate (or adaptive, to use a term from constructivist or drama terminology) responses to contemporary problems with the help of progressive educational theories and methodologies. In this imaginary school “there is mutual sharing of knowledge and ideas, mutual aid in mastering material, division of labor and exchange of roles, opportunity to reflect on the group’s activities. (...) School, in such a dispensation, is conceived of both as an exercise in consciousness raising about the possibilities of communal mental activity, and as a means for acquiring knowledge and skill. The teacher is the enabler, *primus inter pares*”. (Bruner 1996:12)



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He has been the leader, artistic director and one of the actor-dramateachers of the Káva Drama / Theatre in Education Association since its start in 1996. He is the external lecturer of several Hungarian universities. He has held courses and workshops in Theatre in Education (TiE), Drama in Education (DiE) and participatory theatre, both in Hungary and abroad for many years. He has been a consultant, programme manager and actor-drama teacher of numerous complex TiE programmes. He is also the professional leader of many long-term theatre and drama projects, community theatre and participatory theatre programmes and international projects of Káva. He lives in Budapest with his wife and two daughters. He has tried parachuting several times but learnt to ride a bike only at the age of 18.



*Gábor Takács* in the play  
of Káva called ***The Statue (Szobor)***

photo by **László Kálócz**



*A participant in the play of Káva  
called The Secret Door (Titkos ajtó)*

*photo by Márton Somorjai*

A decorative border composed of numerous yellow plus signs (+) arranged in a circular, slightly irregular pattern around the central text box.

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