

Part 2: Theoretical Background and Further Information

Socialisation and group structure

The relationship between an individual and a group is an important socio-psychological phenomenon that has been analysed and researched at great lengths. Erikson (1979, quoted by Kron 2000) referred to the shaping and development of the "individual identity" and the "group", as two decisive moments of basic human existence. From birth onwards, we are subject to our own group identity that enables us to behave culturally, socially and conduct ourselves in society. Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development are particularly relevant from an educational point of view. More specifically, they include personal challenges, tasks and conflicts that individuals encounter throughout their life and that they must "work through" (Kron 2000). Likewise described here is the succession of socialization steps (i.e. for the development of social skills), in the form of conflicts that the individual must cope with at each stage.

Kurt Lewin, the father of social and Gestalt psychology, showed how the process of socialization can be understood in connection with the group. He examined teaching and leadership styles and mainly differentiated between authoritarian, laissez-faire and democratic styles. He applied this to the structure of the group, on the basis of a number of studies, and referred to "Our" group and "Your" group (Hegedűs 1997, Mérei 2006). According to Faragó (1997), a group structure itself is influenced by the following factors:

- emotional relations with others (a liking for someone, a dislike for someone, common traditions or experiences);
- communication;
- power hierarchy.

Group dynamics and gender issues

The greater the "integration" of group members, the more intensive is the so-called group cohesion. The functions and roles within a group are also systematically "distributed". Therefore, it is possible to differentiate between the following participants and roles within a group (Faragó 1997):

- Alpha (the leader);
- Beta (the specialist);
- Gamma (the worker);
- Omega (the scapegoat);

However, the modern view of group dynamics (Forgács 2007), is based on the hypothesis that leadership is less the function of one person (i.e. a leader), but much more the function of the group itself, i.e. all members of the group share this responsibility. For this reason, there is the tendency for groups to develop internal homogeneity i.e. participants are increasingly required to conform to a kind of group behaviour— although of course, the composition of each group is unavoidably heterogeneous!



(Source: <http://szasz.uw.hu/blog/csoport.JPG>)

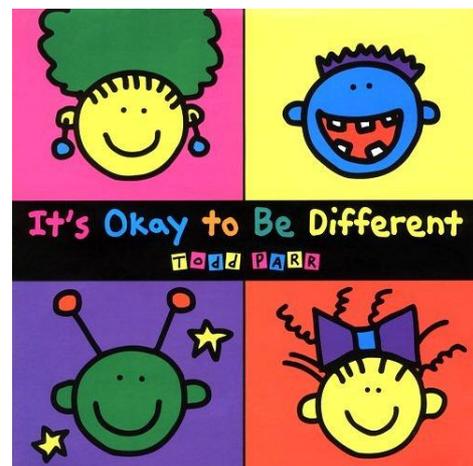
This means, that group values must be shared by the individual participants and that group activities should be based on these norms (Hegedűs 1997).

It is possible to measure how well and effectively a group works together, (i.e. the group structure— group relations, feelings of affinity or antipathy) by using the so-called

sociometer, a method prepared by Jakob Levy Moreno and Ferenc Mérei (Mérei 2006). The resulting sociogram (also: sociomatrix) can be useful in education and other areas, for example, to analyse the class community, the role of pupils and interpersonal relations. The fact, that in many respects, groups in everyday school life are not homogeneous can negatively affect learning and moreover, restrict the activity of participants. The following criteria are especially important to determine the level of heterogeneity: age, socio-cultural background, interpersonal contacts, the environment, education, gender, etc.

It is another matter to determine whether and how *gender-oriented* education in groups can take place i.e. – encouraging the development of an identity or "ego". In another study that analyzed gender and sexual identity in children's and juvenile literature (<http://kritikusvagyok.sfblogs.net/2007/08/20/a-tarsadalmi-nem-es-a-szexualis-identitas-abrazolasanak-valtozasa-a-gyerekirodalomban>), it was emphasized that since the works of the reputable scholars of Gender Studies, Michel Foucault and Judith Butler, it is clear in our culture that an individual does not adopt a general archetypal identity based on biologically determined categories of male or female. In fact, according to modern gender research, the "ego" or identity is not related to our biological gender; moreover, an identity is not a product of our biological gender, but this involves a much more complex phenomenon. As a result, does this imply that biological and gender-related aspects have hardly any consequence on group work?

All in all, biological differences (male-female) – also like in Todd Parr's book, *The Family Book, It's okay to be different* – should be handled just like any other differences such as the colour of one's skin, language, ethnic origin, physical appearance, etc. All of these kinds of heterogeneity unconditionally contribute to intercultural learning and the promotion of social skills which can lead to tolerance and an acceptance of others. (Nagy 2000).



(Source: okaydiff.jpg)

Drama pedagogy in group work



(Source: http://www.mmi.hu/szinfolt/kepek/alarc_3.gif)

Which methods and pedagogic tools can therefore be used to promote intercultural learning which develops social skills and what new methods can be used to replace the traditional classroom-style teaching which "no longer" has the capacity to "meet the challenges" of our times? In cases where pair and group work offers an alternative to traditional learning, can, for example, drama pedagogy or individual elements of drama pedagogy be used to provide insights into processes, events, conflicts and group dynamics. This method also has a broad repertoire to offer in the area of interaction between individuals and groups as well as an improvement of group dynamics.

"Drama pedagogy involves holistic learning through experience and discovery." It is a teaching method with pedagogic, socio-pedagogic and psychosocial goals and "holistic, creative and aesthetic teaching and learning methods" which also uses role plays and acting in the classroom." This method draws on a pupil's previous experiences,

knowledge and values and lets them develop them further according to clearly defined objectives. They receive cues from their teachers who "prompt and encourage communicative and acting out activities as well as creative processes." Here, what is important is the process, "acting", rather than the result or the product. (<http://www.dramapaedagogik.org/wasistdrama.pdf>)

The Hungarian educational system has introduced "dance and dramatics" as a new school subject in the Hungarian national curriculum (Nemzeti Alaptanterv), "and according to a Ministry study, 11% of Hungarian schools provide instruction in drama in some form or another." (<http://www.drama.hu/mdt.pl?ID=ge&VALUE=0&GUID=0>) The Hungarian drama pedagogic company e.V. offers a series of didactic examples for teaching drama in schools. A number of these plays as well as the website *zzzebra (the Webmagazine for children)* offer many opportunities for the promotion of group dynamics and the cohesion of group participants. However, there are no gender-specific or gender-oriented games.

Dramatic art categories in schools

Drama instruction can be categorized into several groups depending on the type of activity and the "formal structure" as well as their use to achieve specific learning goals.

Exercises are suitable for short sequences and are self-contained activities (they always have an ending point) and do not necessarily involve intense emotions. The drama-based game "does not answer the question: When is it over? It does not strive to be a self-contained activity; its major values are continuity, flexibility and spontaneity; it is not easy an activity that can be easily repeated a second time; it does not require high levels of emotion and concentration, although these often are there, nevertheless."



(Source: <http://www.massag.hu/images/balkep.gif>)

In theatrical kinds of activities, participants can and should express their performing or acting skills and play before an audience.

This last category involves the so-called "**change in comprehension**" and combines all three categories. "The goal is for participants to experience and reappraise the theme in question, on a personal level, and at the same time, for them to become aware of meaningful contents on the latent, universal and human dimension; this activity progresses through the construction of its form aspects (conventions), but at the same time with the emotional and mental involvement of the pupils; some external elements of the processes are also clear to spectators. Nevertheless, it is not the goal of the group, nor the teacher to communicate the contents experienced to spectators." <http://www.drama.hu/mdt.pl?ID=ge&VALUE=0&GUID=0>



(Source:

http://www.mosolyalapitvany.hu/_site/img/kepek/kava/kava_2.jpg)

All three types or mixed types of dramatic activities are appropriate depending on various educational situations and goals set. Drama pedagogy should always be followed by a period of reflection and a feedback session with participants.

Children in primary school – as well as older target groups – can benefit from this kind of an educational activity. They can greatly develop their skills and they can gain experiences by learning-by-doing, while having fun at the same time.

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