



# The value of drama-in-education as a decolonising pedagogy through embodied drama strategies in a higher education classroom

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## Abstract

In this paper I provide a detailed account of how drama-in-education was used to engage third-year university students in an education module entitled *Issues and challenges in education*. The aim of the research was to introduce aspects of decolonisation in South Africa through the module and to implement drama-in-education strategies, such as the use of tableaux, improvisation, and role plays to enhance the understanding of these issues. The data collection method I implemented was based on students' written reflections on their experiences of drama-in-education as pedagogy in this module. The findings indicated that although students were initially resistant to engaging with the drama-in-education process, through their embodied participation they became more involved in their learning. They felt that, since the strategies provided a context for learning, the issues that led to enhanced learning, engagement, and reflection could be interrogated more critically. I argue that as a decolonising pedagogy in the university lecture room, drama-in-education contributes significantly to an enhanced understanding of teaching and learning and the development of students' critical and creative skills.

**Keywords:** creative learning, embodied learning, decolonising pedagogy, drama-in-education, teaching strategies

## Introduction and background

Teaching and learning in the context of higher education prescribes particular curriculum content and design, instructional strategies and techniques, and forms of evaluation. According to McLaren (1998) these prescriptions specify which version of knowledge is more important, what it means to know something, and how we might construct a representation of our world and our place in it. In recent literature (see Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Shahjahan, 2014) questions relating to traditional higher education pedagogical practices, curricular focus, and the commodification of knowledge have come under scrutiny. According to Wagner and Shahjahan (2015) such thinking tends to focus exclusively on "intellectualizing the world, thereby precluding deeper engagement with topics under investigation" (p. 244). Hence there is a need to focus on pedagogical strategies that foster

embodied ways of knowing, that are “attentive to our bodies and its experiences as a way of knowing” (Freiler, 2008, p. 40) in anti-oppressive pedagogy.

Since teacher education programmes tend to be predominantly monocultural and conservative in terms of ideology (Beyer, 2001), rarely is there an attempt to include counter hegemonic teaching practices. It is in this traditional pedagogical framework of higher education that I sought to implement drama-in-education in a third-year education module to examine how it could subvert traditional ways of teaching and learning so as to embrace new ways of knowing. Although Wagner and Shajahan (2015) have pointed out that such an approach to teaching and learning across the curriculum in higher education is less common since it is confined mostly to specific fields such as language teaching and the dramatic arts, in the context of this study the use of the body through drama-in-education practices became central to the learning process.

It is with this background in mind that I aimed to explore how Intermediate Phase (IP)<sup>1</sup> pre-service teachers experienced the implementation of drama-in-education as a decolonising pedagogy in this third-year education module. I deemed Critical Performative Pedagogy an appropriate theoretical framework for the purposes of this study since it is associated with embodied learning on both literal and figurative levels.

## Critical Performative Pedagogy (CPP) as a theoretical framework

In decolonising discourse linked to critical pedagogy the emphasis is on the ways in which education operates as a site of colonial power so that classrooms, curricula, and educational communities are “deeply implicated in the reproduction of colonial hegemonies” (Gatimu, 2009, p. 67). According to Giroux, central to any critical pedagogy is the need to “actively transform knowledge rather than consume it” (2011, p. 7). Critical pedagogy becomes performative when critical reflection is embodied and when teachers engage students in feeling and enfleshing theory in action (Giroux, 2011; McLaren, 1989; Pineau, 1994). In CPP, by crossing borders continually between and among their multiple identities and roles, students and teachers no longer remain fixed behind one theoretical mask, but negotiate instead among many (Goffman, 1959). As McLaren (1995) has pointed out, it is pivotal that we undo the myth of a fixed self if we hope to teach all students effectively in our multicultural classes. This is achieved through reframing teaching as a continually unfolding “ensemble of narratives and performances, rather than a linear accumulation of isolated, discipline-specific competencies” (Pineau, 1994, p. 10). The contextualisation of factual information in this way ensures that students are able to gain a deeper understanding of the human condition even as they are “consciously setting up and experiencing fictitious social situations” (Szauder, 2002, p. 6). Hence CPP probes the performative through reenactments

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<sup>1</sup> The schooling system in South Africa is divided into four phases: Foundation Phase (FP) (grades 1–3), Intermediate Phase (IP) (grades 4–6); Senior Phase (SP) (grades 7–9); and Further Education and Training (FET) (grades 10–12).

in the improvised scenes of our everyday practices (Butler, 1988) and is, furthermore, also dialogic and participatory in nature (Harman & French, 2004).

For me, too, CPP is a “kinesthetic and multi-dimensional process that incorporates questions of systemic inequity, cultural hegemony and unequal access into teacher education” (Harman & French, 2004, p. 14) and the critically performative educator is one who “understands teaching to be an essentially improvised drama that takes place within a curricular narrative” (McLaren, 1988, p.174). Hence, I see drama-in-education as a mechanism through which CPP can be actualised. It can be construed as counter hegemonic in that it resists remaining within one particular discipline, insists always on being collaborative and contextualised, and acknowledges the body as a pivotal player in the classroom (Harman & French, 2004).

## Literature review

### Drama-in-education as a decolonising pedagogy

According to Kovacs (2014) drama-in-education is process-centred and considered to be reform pedagogy. Central to the methodology is a focus on learning by activity, problem-solving, action-reflection interplay, and discovery by experience (Bolton, 1999). The focus on the social construction of knowledge in drama enables students to realise that knowledge is both a product and a means of social contact (Szauder, 2002). This implies that in the *as if* world of drama, students need to use their existing knowledge, and, by interacting and collaborating with others, they gain additional information and make meaning that enables them to resolve certain challenges and issues. In this way the authenticity of the activity is emphasised in that learning is contextualised in both a fictitious context and as it applies to the real world. The manner in which the students represent their views through performance-role plays, tableaux and/or improvisation is influenced by their previous experience and knowledge. This focus on the real problems of life comes about in a protected environment that aims to facilitate learning through experience (Heathcote & Bolton, 1995).

According to Tejeda and Espinoza (2002) a decolonising pedagogy encompasses both an anti-colonial and decolonising notion of pedagogy as well as a decolonising pedagogical praxis. It is this anticolonial and decolonising theory and praxis that is vocal in its criticism that colonial domination and its ideological frameworks operate and are reproduced “in and through curricular content and design, the instructional practices, the social organisation of learning and the forms of evaluation that sort and label students into categories of failure and success at school” (p. 6). In the context of this study an anti-colonial and pedagogical praxis is seen to work to transform these dimensions of learning so that the university lecture room becomes a site for the development of a critical decolonising consciousness through the implementation of drama-in-education strategies. A decolonising pedagogical praxis challenges not only the forms, content, and intent of other pedagogies as these scholars have highlighted, but also requires “a complete reconceptualisation of the social organisation of learning” (p. 8) in the context of higher education. Such a reconceptualisation requires a

transformation in the social and intellectual relationships among the participants both in the university and in the particular communities in which the university is located.

The advantages of using drama-in-education in the classroom are manifold since it has the potential to promote learners' "imagination, creativity, critical thinking, flexibility and expressivity" (Nicholsan, 2009, p. 14) without restricting their own abilities and talents and without limiting their personalities (Kalogirou, 2016). As a personality-centred method, often associated with reform pedagogy, drama-in-education aims to develop creativity, spontaneity, and communicative competence, preparing students to face real-life situations with less difficulty (Kovacs, 2014). The focus on learners' lived experiences through drama-in-education leads to embodied learning since the content is more meaningful and this gives learning real purpose.

### Embodied learning

In recent decades, as has been pointed out by Harman and French (2004), a number of educational scholars have written about the need for an enlashed and embodied pedagogy (Giroux, 2011; hooks, 1994; McLaren, 1995; Pineau, 1998) but few seem to have gone beyond a theoretical and metaphorical exploration of the notion of what counts as performative. The use of the imagination, as highlighted by Freire (1998), is a significant feature of the performative process because the participants collaboratively reflect on how to create scenarios through performance that best reflect their lived experiences.

Through the reconstruction of their ideological bodies, teachers can gain new ways of being for themselves, their students, and their colleagues (Pineau, 2002). This "ideological body" (p. 44) to which she refers is a metaphor for how schools maintain gender, economic, and ethnic injustice. The classroom provides a site where "teachers' and students' bodies bring competing ideologies into confrontation" (Elliot, 2007, p. 10). This has been further discussed by McLaren (1989) who has contended that "students' bodies become sites of struggle in which resistance is a way of gaining power, celebrating pleasure and fighting oppression in the lived historicity of the moment and the concrete materiality of the classroom" (p. 170). Drama-in-education affords pre-service teachers the opportunity to project their interpretations of educational issues and challenges for deeper interrogation as they experience them through embodied learning. In this sense teaching and learning are not perceived as flat and finished but as multi-dimensional and multi-faceted. Pineau's (2002) notion of the "performing body" provides insights into how curricular and instructional models could be developed to enable students to be active and critical participants inside and outside the classroom. "Performing" in the context of critical performative pedagogy is radical since it involves a shift from the "body on display" to the "systematic exploration through enactment of real and imagined experience" (p. 50). In this study the students enacted scenarios, based on their lived experiences, during their school-based learning.

## Research methodology and design

In keeping with the principles of qualitative research the purpose of my study was to construct detailed descriptions of social reality by “using the participants’ natural language in order to come to a genuine understanding of their world” (de Vos, Strydom, Fouche & Delport, 2011, p. 66). In this case the language used to describe pre-service teachers’ perceptions of the value of drama-in-education as a strategy to teach a third-year education module was elicited from the summative written reflections based on their drama-in-education activities during classes. The phenomenological research design used for this study focused on a description of the “lived experiences of a phenomenon for several individuals” (Cresswell, 2007, p. 57). The sample was comprised of all 70 third-year B.Ed IP language students from diverse linguistic, ethnic, cultural, and religious backgrounds who attended the third-year Education module (*Issues and Challenges in Education–PGED (Programme Generic Education) 302*) that was presented through drama-in-education.

Data collected for the purposes of this study was based on summative written reflections at the end of the module in which students shared their views on drama-in-education as pedagogy used in teaching this third-year education module. The prompt that served to guide their writing was: Write a reflection on how you experienced drama-in-education as pedagogy in the delivery of the third year Education module (*Issues and Challenges in Education–PGED 302*).

The students’ anonymity was safeguarded since they were not required to write their names on their written reflections, but just whether they identified as male or female for the purposes of reporting the findings. The written reflections were coded and analysed according to common themes arising from them.

My own position in the research process was to serve as facilitator of the module and not as an instructor, so I tried to share power by enabling students to contribute to the themes through their own creative pieces based on their experiences. Nevertheless, I am fully aware of the fact that in my capacity as lecturer/facilitator I still had more power than the students and that this represents an ethical challenge that could have had a bearing on the research.

The findings of the study are limited in that the sample included only one group of PGED 302 IP language students. Hence the findings, emerging from the study, cannot be generalised to all groups.

### Overview of the module and drama-in-education strategies implemented

The PGED 302 module entitled *Issues and Challenges in Education* is a compulsory third year education module worth 15 credits for which all Bachelor of Education (FP, IP, SP, FET, and Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) students have to register. The module consists of the following ten themes which are covered over a period of two semesters (about 28 weeks) with a time allocation of one double period (70 minutes) per week:

- Unit 1: Theory and practice in shaping democratic schooling
- Unit 2: Paulo Freire and the humanising pedagogy
- Unit 3: Social justice in education
- Unit 4: Emancipation and empowerment in the context of schooling
- Unit 5: Social constructivism
- Unit 6: Teaching diverse learners
- Unit 7: Discipline in a diverse classroom
- Unit 8: Teaching in a linguistically diverse classroom
- Unit 9: Curriculum development to cater for diverse learners
- Unit 10: Collaborative action and schooling

Given the structured time allocation of the university programme each unit was covered in two to three double periods. Students were required to read prescribed articles and articles which they sourced independently, from a range of texts that were applicable to the theme, before each contact session. A typical session involved a short small-group discussion based on the theme, presentation of the drama-in-education activity according to the group's own interpretation, and questioning and reflecting based on the students' interpretation of the theme. One of the challenges was trying to fit these kinds of activities, all of which require more time than does the ordinary transmission lecture approach, into the university timetable and structure.

For each of the above-mentioned themes I designed a drama-in-education activity linked to the theme and I tried to ensure that students were afforded opportunities to experience a range of drama-in-education techniques including tableaux, improvisation, role plays, and combinations of these techniques as grounded in the work of Boal (1979) and Wagner (1979). The next section provides a brief outline of the drama-in-education strategies implemented for each of the units to demonstrate how the approach was implemented in this third-year education module.

The activity for Unit 1 required that students create tableaux (frozen scenes) on concepts of Gramscian and Freirean theory related to notions such as hegemony, intellectuals, the war of position, and the language of critique, dialogue and praxis. For Unit 2 students had to use tableaux to demonstrate their understanding, based on their readings, of what is meant by a humanising pedagogy. Unit 3, based on Social Justice, saw students, who had read an article on the marginalisation of lower socio-economic learners, presenting role plays based on the narrative. For Unit 4 they had to present protest improvisations, based on issues that were of concern to them in the university context. Unit 5 required that students demonstrate social constructivist principles through drama and for Unit 6 they had to stage short play sets on diversity based on various readings and their own experiences. For the unit on discipline in the diverse classroom (Unit 7) students had to read articles based on disciplinary challenges in classroom contexts and create a short improvised scene in which they highlighted their issues of concern. For the unit on linguistic diversity (Unit 8) students had to showcase issues and challenges relating to the implementation of linguistic diversity in school contexts through role plays. The activity for Unit 9 involved the design and presentation of a

curriculum that groups were required present, in role-play, to the Department of Basic Education. The activity for Unit 10 on parental involvement led to the creation of a simulated conference on parental involvement during which students, in-role as speakers from various higher education institutions, presented academic papers on the theme.

Students were given the freedom to interpret the issues and challenges from multiple perspectives, based on their own experiences, that showcased their embodied learning in creative ways.

## Findings

The findings, arising from the study, indicate that although students were initially apathetic towards the implementation of drama-in-education as an approach to teaching and learning, they became aware of its value after continual exposure and came to feel that they benefitted immensely. Some of their initial fears included “not being comfortable to perform in front of the class due to a lack of confidence” (S#15) and that it was a “waste of time as the lecturer was not presenting a lecture *per se* but expected them to take the lead in the lecture” (S#11). Some also felt that this approach unsettled them because they “did not receive the material and powerpoints to prepare for tests and exams” (S#18). S#41 and S#56 also reported that time constraints tended to pose a challenge since “we were not always able to complete all the plays in one session” (S#41) “and sometimes discussion time was limited” (S#56). In spite of their initial scepticism and the issues with time constraints, however, the students indicated that they found the experiences overwhelmingly positive. The randomly chosen extracts below are reminiscent of the general viewpoints of the students and were not selected to skew the findings in favour of drama pedagogy.

### Promotes multiple ways of viewing and learning

The students felt that drama-in-education created ample opportunities for a great number of ways of viewing since the groups showcased a range of issues on a particular theme. This served to enhance their insights especially since the class was very diverse in terms of ethnicity, gender, race, and religion. S#10 summarised this view,

I realised that while watching my classmates’ performance that everyone interprets the same information in a different way. With that said, it made me realise that my future learners will also interpret knowledge differently.

Quite clearly, this student was aware that she was being prepared for a role beyond the confines of the lecture room. The many perspectives of reality showcased through the various dramatic strategies broadened the students’ perspectives even as they gained new insights. This viewpoint was expressed by S#8,

The drama in education strategies also helped me to view other students’ perspectives on the content which made my thinking broader and more complex.

The fact that students were motivated to portray the themes in their own creative manner gave them, as highlighted by S#13, an enhanced understanding of difference.

[We had] the opportunity to enhance our understanding of each concept and theme, since people understand things differently and as such they [were] given the opportunity to portray how they understand something and implement different strategies.

Since the participants were encouraged to pose questions and reflect on each dramatic performance they could clarify what they intended portraying, why they portrayed it in a particular manner, and what message they aimed to convey through the performance. S#30 pointed out,

We [students] learnt a lot about others and how they interpreted different information and how they put it to use in different forms.

The students' viewpoints indicated that drama pedagogy enabled them to examine issues and challenges in education from various vantage points that lead to enhanced learning and understanding.

#### Enhances understanding of the humanising pedagogy, hegemony, and diversity

A major advantage of this approach was that it served to enhance students' understanding of the humanising pedagogy (Unit 2), hegemony (Unit 1), and diversity (Units 6 and 8) in the context of South African schooling. In her reflection on the learning that emerged from the drama-in-education process, S#20 explained that, in the group's presentation of Freirean theory (Unit 2), in which they critiqued the banking model, they were always presented with two opposing scenes.

First scene would show how the model is used currently at schools where the teacher[s] perceive themselves as always right and the learners as empty vessels; the scene would then change to scene 2 where we [were] shown as students how to not encourage the banking model but see ourselves as mediators in a learner's education and not as the power source.

A number of students also felt that their understanding of the humanising pedagogy, as espoused by Freire (Unit 2), was enhanced by the drama-in-education activities. As S#40 said,

You as a teacher need to remember that the children you teach are human beings and need to be treated with dignity. We had a teacher in the front of a class sitting and teaching. She didn't care about the students and she didn't care to adapt the work to make the children understand.

S#55 explained that through the performances she realised that

teaching is not always about standing in front of your learners and teaching. Humanising pedagogy involves including all learners through learning, using different ways of teaching.

S#63, in reflecting on her group's role play on the humanising pedagogy, (Unit 2) felt that the manner in which the sessions were devised mirrored the humanising approach to teaching and learning. This served to provide her with a better sense of the crux of the humanising pedagogy.

The topic I enjoyed most was humanising pedagogy and how we acted as if we were robots being taught and all we could do was regurgitate—this was definitely the opposite of what I have experienced in the PGED 302 class.

A number of students commented on how they became more aware of diversity-related issues in multicultural classes. One of them, in reflecting on how the theme of diversity (Unit 6) was developed among the various groups through their play sets, described the pieces as “fun, interesting and educational” which enabled her to “become more open to the concept” (S#43). In reflecting on how diversity related issues (Unit 6) were enhanced through the plays S#50 explained,

I loved it when we used drama to see what our class's perspective on diversity was. It was great to see that they understood that diversity is much more than the colour of our skin and that diversity can also be among the same racial, religious, political and cultural group.

This account indicates that the plays highlighted a range of diversity-related issues and served to expand students' narrow understanding of the concept beyond race and colour. In his reflection on his group's interpretation of linguistic diversity S#36 reflected that

in my group we highlighted the diverse cultures through language and the fact that English is regarded as a superior language by us, even if maybe one race [of] children are together they speak English rather than to speak their own language. We raise the issue that why can't we be given the opportunity to express ourselves in our own language (isiXhosa).

Through focusing on the issue of language (Unit 8) in this way the group demonstrated that as future teachers it is imperative for them to be aware of linguistic diversity in their classes. This portrayal enabled other students in the class to become more aware of the value of mother-tongue teaching. S#23 described her own learning on the issue.

One group showed how the issue of diversity (the teaching in the dominant languages) affects the majority and how it should/can be addressed. I felt that my knowledge was overall enhanced in a way that as a future teacher I will know how to deal with certain issues that arise in school context and in society especially relating to mother tongues.

Students engaged in positive ways with diversity (Unit 6) as described by S#31.

Being a diverse group, drama equipped us to embrace our diversity individually and as a group and each contact session became a learning to learn experience.

Most students indicated that they struggled initially to comprehend Gramscian theory (Unit 1) from the readings, but when the groups demonstrated concepts such as hegemony and the war of position through tableaus (Unit 1), they were able to understand the concepts more readily. This viewpoint was summed up by S#26, who said,

I feel that the drama helped me to remember and understand things better especially Gramscian theory. So, when groups did their tableaus and explained it I understood and found myself forming my own ideas and even adding to the thoughts I already had.

Through the tableaus, students were able to examine how hegemony (Unit 1) is related to social justice issues and how power relations in society determine who the beneficiaries and who the victims are. In reflecting on their representation of hegemony S#18 highlighted his learning.

For example, I will always remember the hegemony that is the inequality of the system which we portrayed in our tableau. We acted out the social justice aspect of children not having food for lunch vs those students that do have lunch. We also approached and changed the scene to be positive.

The above extracts illustrate that through embodied learning students' understanding of social justice issues was enhanced.

### **Focusing on lived experiences leads to embodied learning**

Students found the incorporation of their lived experiences into the dramatic portrayals in all the units presented productive since it enabled them to examine various issues and challenges in education from informed positions. This gaining a better understanding of the issues through lived experiences was summed up by S#6.

I also feel like using everyday situations in our presentations/plays gives us an opportunity to link the work that we are doing with real life situations which betters our understanding.

Students felt that since content was integrated into lived experiences this made learning more meaningful and relevant to their lives. As S#28 put it,

I also think that learning should not only be based on content but content itself need to be integrated to our everyday lives in order for us to understand and learn, for example the theme of diversity that was acted by one of the group's helped us to understand diversity within context.

In some instances, the opportunity for reflective practice in all the units based on lived experiences through enactment led to shifts in viewpoints and consciousness as participants became more aware of insights and experiences to which they had not been exposed in the past. S#60 described this effect.

Drama-in-education helped me to understand each topic/theme in the PGED 302 module and has changed some of my perspectives (consciousness/reflecting/adapting) over time.

It emerged from students' feedback that the focus on their lived experiences, as part of the drama-in-education process, created opportunities for more engaged learning that led to the development of enhanced critical reflective skills.

### Drama-in-education enhances understanding of abstract concepts

A number of students commented on the ability of drama-in-education to enhance learning, which enabled them to remember concepts, apply them to real experiences, and embody knowledge. As summed up by S#38,

The subject matter of the module as well as the way in which it was presented helped me build a framework in which I learn[ed] how to learn as well as how people think and learn.

The drama-in-education exercises enabled the students to gain a better understanding of abstract concepts since it encouraged the application of theory to practice. S#46 described his growth.

My knowledge was enhanced tremendously because sometimes the text in the study guides we are given can be difficult for a person like me, who has English as an additional language. The drama-in-education has broken down the content for me, not necessarily in words, but I could understand the gist of the topic through scenes displayed in class.

This was discussed further by S#42, who said,

The use of dramatisation, enactment and re-enactment clarified all topics covered, which to some extent were abstract concepts. Given the different and unique schooling backgrounds we came through and experienced, many times personalising abstract concepts enhanced understanding.

Embodied learning through drama-in-education led to a narrowing of the theory/practice divide. As S#15 articulated,

The use of drama-in-education expanded my knowledge on themes, because rather than having a theory-based approach, we were learning by doing/acting. It required us

to do extra research and have a more practical approach, which assisted us in remembering the themes.

Students indicated that drama-in-education has the potential to contribute significantly to clarifying difficult theoretical constructs, to enhancing meaning and understanding, and to supporting learning in the university lecture room.

### Promotes collaborative learning and builds relationships

A number of students identified the promotion of collaborative learning and the focus on building relationships as positive features of drama-in-education. Collaborative learning led to the development of interpersonal, intercultural, and social competence. S#12 described the advantages of collaborative learning.

The drama allowed us as students to know each other by names and learn to work as a team whereby each member has a role to play.

Since the process was inclusive, it encouraged mastery of learning which heightened understanding. For S#9,

Drama in the classroom gave me the power to master my own thinking as an individual and together with others—learning from others and others learning from me. It brought the realities of life alive.

The opportunity to work collaboratively in diverse groups promoted understanding of diversity because students were able to share ideas and learn from each other. For S#6,

Being a diverse group, drama equipped us to embrace our diversity individually and as a group and each contact session became a learning to learn experience.

Students felt that the collaborative learning that stemmed from the drama-in-education processes contributed to their own learning and understanding of issues and challenges.

## Discussion

The findings emerging from the study indicate that although students were initially sceptical about the implementation of drama-in-education as pedagogy, on-going exposure made them aware of its inherent value in promoting more engaged teaching and learning. Their initial negativity could be ascribed to the significance they accorded to knowledge as an instrumental commodity that has value only if it can be applied to one's workplace, one's professional development, or graduate study socialisation (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015). In the context of the pre-service teacher education programme, the implementation of novel strategies such as drama-in-education, which can lead to ambiguity, could be interpreted as ineffective teaching, or as the teacher not doing his or her job in bridging theory and practice. This kind of thinking tends to view the construction of knowledge in reductionist ways. In the context of this study the implementation of an unfamiliar pedagogical practice such as drama-

in-education to teach a third-year education module challenges students to engage beyond the traditional boundaries of academic practices and explore issues beyond a solely intellectual frame of reference.

The most significant finding arising from this study is that students' understanding of concepts such as humanising pedagogy, social justice, diversity, and hegemony was enhanced through their drama-in-education experiences. In their roles as both participants and viewers, through the embodied learning, the students acquired a depth of understanding of abstract concepts. There was a realisation that the humanising pedagogy involved "different ways of teaching" (S#55), sharing power with learners and not being the "power source" (S#20); that hegemony leads to "inequality in the system based on power"(S#18), and that diversity is not only limited to race and class so we should make provision for linguistic diversity, too (S#36 and S#23). In the context of this study the students were able to disrupt, transform, and play with meanings that may be more difficult to access and convey through dialogue only (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015). The mere act of embodying particular forms of privilege or oppression in their roles as either humanising or dehumanising teachers, for example, enhanced their understanding of what it means to be a humanising teacher and to reflect on the kind of teachers they would like to be (S#63, S#55, and S#40). Embodied learning through drama-in-education enabled students to explore "the shifting and contextual ways that they experience privilege and, more precisely, how privileges are afforded based on race, gender, class or sexuality and are made manifest in relation to, and in conjunction with, other aspects of identity within context-specific ways" (Zingsheim & Goltz, 2011, p. 230). According to these scholars, when students are able to explore multiple entry points from a variety of embodied and lived experiences they gain deeper insights into pressing educational challenges and this was certainly true for my students. A prominent theme that emerged from my findings relates to the value of drama-in-education as pedagogy that promotes multiple ways of seeing and learning. The collaborative meaning-making enabled students to become "open-minded" (S#10), "[think] broader and [in] more complex [ways]" (S#8), and be accepting of "different interpretations" (S#30).

The drama-in-education process also promoted collaboration which led to active meaning-making and enhanced learning. This is borne out by excerpts from students' written accounts such as the one that mentioned "mastering my own thinking in collaboration with others" (S#9) and the one that explained, "We helped each other to understand the [themes]" (S#12). According to Adomat (2009) the social negotiation aspect of drama-in-education provides ample opportunities for embodied performance, enhanced meaning-making, and deepening insights, thereby facilitating the critical engagement so important to Freire (1983).

The findings also indicated that the incorporation of students' lived experiences through "using everyday situations" (S#6) and integrating content into "[their] everyday lives" (S#28) led to embodied learning. The opportunities for embodied learning opened up perceptual possibilities that enabled the students "to feel more, sense more and be more consciously in the world" (Green, 2001, p. 10). In this way students felt more empowered to use their own

language and to share their own cultural practices, both of which led to collaborative meaning-making.

In exploring possibilities and choices relating to the creation of their drama-in-education presentations students were afforded opportunities to reflect on this “make believe” world themselves within the “real world” (O’Neill & Lambert, 1990, p. 11). In this way according to Van der Berg, Coetzee, & Munro (2014) participants could fluctuate between “empathetic involvement” and “objective detachment” (p. 224) which produces two modes of learning—the “participant-in-role looking from the inside out and that of the spectator participant looking from the outside in” (Munro & Coetzee, 2007, p. 100) that allow for embodied understanding, critical thought, and layered reflection.

By working with our bodies in the classroom we can “open up experiential enquiry among our students and ourselves about how our everyday practices are linked to discursive mechanisms of power” (Harman & French, 2004, p. 4). In this way, according to hooks, (1994) we challenge how power is established and entrenched in institutions of learning. Until the body in play is afforded an important space in educational institutions (hooks, 1994; Warren, 1999), we continue to support the status quo characterised by disembodied and hierarchical teaching practices.

The findings of my study indicate that the use of decolonising thought, through the medium of drama-in-education, challenges traditional colonial forms of knowledge production that privilege rationality and disembodiment consistent with Eurocentric systems of thought (Dei, 2000; Shahjahan, 2014). As pedagogy, drama-in-education subverts the traditional notion of education in that it affords students the opportunity to create their own contexts for learning, use their bodies to co-create their lived experiences through enactment, and critically reflect on these experiences. This correlates with Freire’s (1983) conceptualisation of action and reflection and his critique of the banking system of learning.

## Conclusion

The findings arising from this small-scale study indicate that drama-in-education, as a decolonising pedagogy, has a constructive contribution to make in enhancing pre-service student teachers’ understanding of critical reflective teaching and learning. Furthermore, in the context of this study, as highlighted by students, it has the potential to promote multiple perspectives of reality, collaborative and embodied learning, and critical engagement with abstract concepts. The embodied strategies such as tableaux, improvisations, and role plays have a significant contribution to make in education since they have the potential to stimulate critical engagement with key issues confronting education such as social justice, power, and privilege. As a field, drama pedagogy has a rich tradition of seminal works by Boal (1979), Wagner (1979), Heathcote & Bolton (1995) and others that have their origin in the 1960s. Any current desire among educators to transform their practice with a view to implementing more critical reflective pedagogies to decolonise their teaching will place drama-in-education

at the forefront because of its potential to stimulate embodied learning through critical engagement.

As a decolonising pedagogy drama-in-education creates ample opportunities for the lecturer to share power with his or her students so that their voices can be heard; the roles of the lecturers and students need to be adapted and transformed if constructive meaning-making is to be realised. This implies that lecturers need to accept their liberatory and constructivist roles and not perceive themselves as giving up their power; they need to be, as described by Stylsinger (2000), “humble, flexible, co-operative and receptive” (p. 192).

Implementing drama-in-education as an anti-oppressive pedagogy enables one to move beyond traditional Eurocentric paradigms, unsettling dominant tropes and work towards incorporating a more holistic decolonised approach that acknowledges multiple worldviews. Building on theorising established by Freire (1998) and Dewey (1934) drama-in-education challenges the artificial construction of the mind-body split and has the potential to deconstruct thinking steeped in Eurocentric paradigms and unexamined systems of privilege (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015).

This approach encompasses an acknowledgement that diverse systems of knowledge exist and holistic learning requires us to redefine power relations in the university lecture room so that the interconnected relationship between students, their peers, the lecturer, and their broader social and cultural environments can be foregrounded. The achievement of this ideal requires a pedagogy that moves beyond psychologically informed approaches that privilege the individualistic learner and his or her mind. It is in this context that drama-in-education offers the possibility for the promotion of embodied, collaborative learning through arts-based strategies such as tableaux, improvisations, and role plays.

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