

II.3.2 The Book

A variation of this drama lesson has been implemented with marginalised Roma students and it builds upon the experiences of other similar scenarios.

Objectives:

- offer a creative safe space where students can examine situations.
- move into “doing” and reflecting mode of exploration.
- offer possibilities to look at one incident from different perspectives.
- allow students to step into “the shoes” of others, to build empathy through felt understanding.
- explore social forces at work in school situations. To reflect on how language is used and abused.

Centre:

- A dictionary that has been brutally slashed by a knife.
- The relationship of aggression and language; doing and speaking.

The sequence of actions

Placing the problem through an object: The dictionary that has been slashed by a knife is unwrapped and shown to the group by the facilitator. The participants are asked to share the first words that come to their mind when they look at the book. The words are noted on brown wrapping paper.

The aim of this task is to generate discussion and note the first associations made by the group. It is important that there are no right or wrong answers.

Setting up the situation: The facilitator explains that this book is on the Headmaster’s table in his/her office. The Headmaster’s chair is also placed behind the table and another chair is placed at some dis-

tance from the table. The entrance to the room is behind the second chair.

The aim here is to begin easing the participants into the “as if”; the fiction of the drama. It is also important to mark the significance of meaning in space (it is not arbitrary how far the chair is from the table and that it has its back to the door). The facilitator can create significance by slowing down time and placing emphasis on detail in how she/he is doing things.

Sharing a moment in the Headmasters office: The facilitator says that she/he will share a moment of action that happens here in the Headmaster’s office. To do this she/he will step into the role of a student who has been summoned into the office. To mark the role, the facilitator puts on a hoody, then sits down in the second chair that is at some distance from the table.

The “student” (Teacher in Role) sits with his head bowed for some time. Then looks up. Looks around and then stands up. Looks at the book. Sighs. Steps a little closer to the book. After glimpsing at the door, he touches the book with one finger. Then starts paging through it. Smiles. He then pokes one of his fingers into one of the cuts in the book. Leaves his finger there. When he pulls his finger out it gets cut by a page (not really, of course). He sucks on his cut finger.

The facilitator stops here and takes of the hoody signing the student.

The aim of this task is to offer a problem that is presented through concrete actions which participants can interpret and make meaning for themselves. It is also offering a situation that is recognisable to all students.

Analysis of the situation: After sharing the moment above, the facilitator asks the group what they saw. Depending on what the students say, further questions can be asked. The facilitator is trying to get participants to make meaning of what they saw rather than just summarise the actions. It is useful to use open question.

The aim of this task is to begin a meaning making process that will later

be developed further into a narrative.

Improvisation with the Headmaster: The facilitator explains that she/he would like to see what happens in the continuation of the situation, when the Headmaster enters the office. But to help the person playing the Headmaster, it would be useful to clarify what *motto* the Headmaster has put up behind his/her desk. This is written on paper and stuck on the wall.

The facilitator needs a partner to be able to create the situation. She asks the participants who would be interested in trying out this situation in the role of the Headmaster. It is useful to reassure the group that the person playing the Headmaster can stop at any moment and ask for help/ideas from the rest of the group.

The facilitator – in the role of the student – should not say anything during the improvisation. There should be subtle reactions to what the Headmaster is doing of course, but no talk from the student. The participant playing the Headmaster can talk of course and should not be told in advance that the student will not speak.

The improvisation is followed by a short discussion, about why the student remains silent and what the Headmaster is trying to do and why.

The aim of this task is to create a situation that opens the problem presented through the book. The silence of the student can create a productive tension that forces the Headmaster to try out different things. The participant should be allowed the freedom to explore the possibilities in this situation.

Building the story – through creating still images: The participants are invited to build the story further through creating moments that happened before the incident in the office. They are asked to create still images (like photographs of actual moments) that show how the following events happened:

- Students find the slashed book – there are no teachers around, only students (they can also decide where they find it within the school).
- The students handing over the slashed book to a teacher.
- The book being brought into the staff room of the teachers, there are only teachers in this image.

The images are created and then depending on time and the abilities of the group, they might be shared first and then developed further, or the next step might come without sharing the still images collectively.

Developing a short scene from the images: The still images the groups created are developed further into short scenes, not longer than 20-30 seconds. The images can be the starting point or the end of the situation, or in the middle – this is left to the group. The scenes are realistic moments showing attitudes and responses.

The aim of the tasks above is offer the group the freedom of responding through the safety of roles to the problem presented. They have the possibility to examine different responses to the event and create situations that they think are exciting.

Whole group improvisation: After a short discussion about the scenes, the facilitator offers to explore how the story continues after the situation in the Headmaster's office. The Headmaster has called a staff meeting to discuss the situation with all the teachers. The participants are invited to take on the role of the teachers in the school. The facilitator will be playing the role of the Headmaster this time. The improvisation starts from a still image in which the teachers are in the meeting – this offers them some time to step into role. The Headmaster (Teacher in Role) starts and leads through the meeting.

The aim of this task is to offer space for different attitudes and understandings of the situations to be expressed verbally. The attitude of the Headmaster depends highly on the group, she/he might need to be provocative to tease out different opinions, but it might be possible that she/he might need to have a softer tone.

Reflection – through the object: After the improvisation the facilitator

tor offers a mode of reflection that leaves the people in the story and returns the book at the centre of it. She/he asks the participants to think about what the book would say about what happened to it. Participants are asked to write this down on post-it notes as if the book was saying it and place it on or around the book.

The aim of this task is to offer the space to look at the events from a different viewpoint and reflect on it.

II.3.3. Talking objects

We use objects all the time in our daily lives, but also assign great emotional value to objects that have some significance in our lives. Children especially use objects as transitional tools to express their needs, fears or wishes. Not only social scientists or psychologists are aware of this, but different art forms, including theatre, have been well aware of this and also used it.

The following structure allows children to use objects to connect with each other and play with animating the objects to help in thinking about solving problems.

Primary target age-group: early years (5 – 7 years).

Aims:

- To use the objects to help the group members to share stories and connect with each other.
- Connect the world of school and home through a transitional object.
- Create the possibility of group members taking home good experiences of working together with each other.

Description of the lesson:

The group members are invited to bring an object from home that is dear to them for some reason. They are asked to introduce their objects, but this should be done talking about their objects as if they were living people. Asking questions like: what is the object's favour-