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LOGAMURTHIE ATHIEMOOLAM



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Exploring the Value of Reflective Practice in Drama Pedagogy for the Development of Critical Consciousness among English Methodology Students

Logamurthie Athiemoolam,¹ Nelson Mandela University, South Africa

Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to explore the value of the reflective practice component of drama pedagogy for the development of critical consciousness among preservice English methodology students. The study adopted a qualitative approach and a phenomenological design to understand how preservice students experienced participation in their group's production of their play "Sophiatown." The research process commenced with the implementation of drama-in-education workshops for consciousness awareness, leading to the group's presentation of their researched play on forced removals from Sophiatown. After the students' presentation of the play, focus group interviews were conducted to understand how they experienced their participation in the drama through a critical reflection process. The focus group interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. The themes emerging from the students' critical reflections, based on their participation in the play, indicate that their critical consciousness was enhanced due to the play-building process and that they acquired a better understanding of their future roles as socially just teachers. The study indicates that critical reflective practice, which is synonymous with drama pedagogy, has the potential to enhance critical consciousness among preservice teachers. The findings of this study will contribute to our understanding of how drama pedagogy could be implemented in university contexts for the development of critical consciousness.

Keywords: Critical Consciousness, Critical Pedagogy, Drama Pedagogy, Reflective Practice, Social Justice Education, Teacher Education

Introduction

The development of a critically engaged citizenry, imbued with a sense of agency to confront social injustice and systemic inequality, is dependent on appropriately trained teachers with adequately developed critical consciousness. Institutions of higher education entrusted with the delivery of teacher education programs have a significant role to play in empowering teachers with skills to raise their critical consciousness.

A focus on the banking method of education in both the schooling and higher education systems, however, is cause for concern as students are perceived as knowledge consumers rather than knowledge producers. If this scenario is to change, educators will need to seriously reevaluate the teaching strategies and approaches that they are implementing in their classes and critically reflect on both their roles and the kind of learners they intend to help develop. With this said, there is a need to explore the value of implementing drama pedagogy for the enhancement of critical consciousness, specifically among preservice teachers so that they are adequately equipped to develop their future learners' critical consciousness as well. Through the teaching of English methodology to a group of preservice teachers (PGCE [Post Graduate Certificate in Education] students) being trained to teach English at the home language level for secondary school learners, I discovered that drama pedagogy could be implemented effectively for enhancing students' critical consciousness. Since the focus on drama pedagogy is not on aesthetic performance *per se* but on the learning that emerges through in-depth critical reflection that could occur at different stages during the drama-in-education process, it has a particularly significant

¹ Corresponding Author: Logamurthie Athiemoolam, Department of Secondary School Education, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, Eastern Province, 6020, South Africa. email: Logamurthie.Athiemoolam@mandela.ac.za

contribution to make to the development of critical consciousness among preservice teachers. According to Freire (2000), this process of action and reflection, which he refers to as praxis, makes a significant contribution to raising critical consciousness among students.

In his review of drama pedagogy, Bruner (1986, 128) contends that a significant feature of drama pedagogy for the development of critical consciousness is its “invitation to reflection about the human condition.” This view is also shared by Edmiston (1994, 2), who opines that reflecting on experiences within the play not only leads to an enhanced understanding of the themes explored but also enables the participants to “learn about their humanity,” which contributes to the development of critical consciousness. According to Heathcoate (1983, 97), it is only when students reflect that they can create meaning for themselves and construct their own understandings of their experiences of the events in the drama. The significant role of reflection for enhanced learning was also emphasized by both Dewey (1974) and Vygotsky (1978) in their respective theories on learning and teaching. According to Dewey (1974), reflective thinking should be an important aim of education because we do not learn from our actions without it. He further argues that through the process of reflection we can become more conscious of the consequences of our actions and are less likely to act irrationally or impulsively (Dewey 1974). This implies that when our critical consciousness is aroused through critical reflection, we are better predisposed to understand how social injustice manifests in society, which leads to a sense of agency for enhanced action. Hence, as pointed out by Dewey (1974), what may only have been semi-conscious awareness may become conscious if we engage in reflection, which has the potential to lead to greater self-control and the freedom to choose wisely. Freire (1970) argues that learning happens in praxis through a process of action and reflection, which, according to Heathcoate (1990), is how drama should be structured. Heathcoate (1990) argues that this process, which is dialectic in nature, should go from action to reflection and from reflection to action.

The focus of drama pedagogy is on creating opportunities for students to explore issues of concern through drama methods such as role-play, improvisation, tableau, and short plays and to critically reflect on these experiences for enhanced meaning-making and the development of critical consciousness. It is with this background in mind that this small-scale study reports on how I facilitated the drama in education process for critical consciousness raising in my English methodology class and the findings emerging from one of the group’s plays entitled *Sophiatown* after the critical reflection process.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that informed this study was critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy (education for social justice) is an approach to teaching that fosters a more empowered consciousness among participants. According to Bourdieu (1984) and Pherali (2016), Western education disconnects learners from the principles of humanity and social justice in favor of market-orientated-based learning. Hence, Freire’s (2000) conceptualization of critical pedagogy is to liberate students from an education system that focuses on banking education that stifles their humanity, creativity, and critical thinking skills. Within the context of this small-scale study, drama pedagogy, which is based on the principles of critical pedagogy for enhanced meaning-making and critical reflection, was implemented.

The realization of critical pedagogy within the classroom entails that the roles of educators need to change significantly in that they need to create learning environments where learners are active and equal partners in a democratic learning process (Freire 2000). This implies that knowledge needs to be co-constructed and co-investigated between participants and the role of the teacher needs to be changed to a facilitator of learning rather than a depositor of knowledge. Through the process, as pointed out by Freire (2000), participants aim to move beyond banking education to engage in critical dialogue to raise awareness of social realities. This leads to a process of conscientization or critical consciousness during which the individual recognizes the potential and acts according to a

new understanding (Freire 1974). Such an empowerment process is an active participatory process through which individuals and groups gain control over their identities and lives, protect human rights, and reduce social injustice (Maton 2008; Peterson 2014).

The aim of the process is to evoke praxis, which is a process of action and reflection described as a continuous cycle of learning and engagement (Freire 1974). Within the context of this study, creating opportunities for students to examine past social injustices through drama pedagogy contributed to the development of praxis as the participants were afforded opportunities to reflect on their roles in their own created play, thereby highlighting how their critical consciousness was enhanced.

The Research Process

The context of this study is situated within an English Methodology module that I teach to PGCE preservice teachers. The aim of the module is to prepare teacher trainees to teach English at the home language level within various contexts and milieus within the Nelson Mandela Metropole in the Eastern Cape, South Africa. Although the focus is on exposing students to the range of strategies that they could use in their classes, I also touch on issues of inclusivity and social justice as I consider these to be significant themes in their future roles as teachers given the diverse learning contexts within the South African schooling system.

During one of the lectures on social justice and its various manifestations in society at large and with specific reference to schooling within the South African context, I discovered that the students had not fully engaged with issues of social justice and had limited understanding of its various manifestations. Hence, I proposed to plan and implement a series of workshops aimed at enabling the preservice teachers to examine social justice issues more fully through their engagement in drama pedagogy.

The Participants

The participants comprised twenty PGCE preservice teachers registered for the English Methodology module that focused on preparing them to teach English at the secondary school level. The students had completed their bachelor of arts degree majoring in English but needed to complete the Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE), to qualify as teachers.

The demographics of the class were diverse, comprising twelve White students and eight Coloured² students, all over 21 years of age. Although all the students were English home language speakers, at least five of the eight Coloured students were fully bilingual in both Afrikaans and English. The lecturer is an Indian male who had been lecturing the module at the university for fifteen years.

The Workshops

During the initial discussion, when I discovered that the students had not fully embraced social justice issues within South African society, I resolved to design and present a series of workshops that would enable them to reflect on these issues. In the first workshop, I divided the class into four groups of five members per group and asked them to discuss their understanding of social injustice through the sharing of stories. I facilitated the process and listened to their shared stories within their respective groups; at times, I requested clarity and posed questions. After the groups shared their stories, they had to select one of the stories and present it as a tableau to the class. Toyé and Prendeville (2000, 117) describe a tableau as “a still picture of a key moment frozen in time” during which the participants use gesture, body position, and touch to visually represent a particular theme or issue (Branscombe and Schneider 2013). In this workshop, the participants were required to create a frozen scene (tableau) on the theme of social injustice within South African society.

² It should be noted that within the currently used South African racial classification system to identify racial groups, the term Coloured is an acceptable term and refers to people of mixed descent.

The themes that they presented through their tableaux to the class during the first workshop included poverty, especially in terms of the divide between the rich and the poor; language challenges experienced by learners who have to study through a language that is not their mother tongue; discrimination on the basis of race, especially in former White schools where non-White learners are still discriminated against on various levels; and religious discrimination in schools where former White schools still tended to promote the school's Christian ethos even though the demographics of the school had changed. The tableaux served to shed light on various manifestations of social injustice within South African society and provided a suitable backdrop for an examination of themes that served to make the students aware of their roles as agents of change within school contexts.

During the second workshop, copies of pages (9–11) from the text *Blame Me on History* by Bloke Modisane (1990) were distributed among the groups as a stimulus for them to engage with issues of loss, in this case, with specific reference to how non-Whites were forcefully removed from areas that were later declared as White areas. These pages of the book specifically focus on how devastated Modisane was after returning to Sophiatown to discover that the house where he lived was demolished and that all his childhood memories represented by the various landmarks, such as churches and recreation facilities, amongst others, were shattered. After a class discussion and students' responses to the text, the groups were asked to create a theater-in-education piece on their understanding of social justice within their own contexts by using the text as a basis for the construction of a theater-in-education piece. The brief was that the students could be as creative as they wanted to be and that the text had to be used as a stimulus for the creation of their own piece of theater focusing on issues of social justice within South African society. According to Lu (2002), theater-in-education is an approach that uses interactive drama and theater to educate the audience on issues of concern. Its main goal is to offer creative learning opportunities through theatrical experiences (Lu 2002).

The theater-in-education process commenced with the sharing of ideas on social injustice, leading to play building through various drama-in-education techniques, such as tableau and improvisation (Tarlington and Michaels 1995). The initial activities served to prepare students to conceptualize, develop, and present their plays to their fellow classmates. After the presentation of their plays, the participants and the audience shared their views on the issues highlighted in the plays. The aim of theater-in-education, as pointed out by Jackson (2005, 1), is to “actively engage the audience in the learning process.”

The Presentations

While three of the groups used the issues that emerged from their tableaux, such as language, poverty, and socioeconomic challenges, as themes for their pieces of theater, which they presented through freeze frames, cameos, dialogue, and choral verse, the fourth group decided to conduct extensive research on the issues highlighted in Bloke Modisane's text *Blame Me on History* based on his experiences of living in Sophiatown and produced a play entitled *Sophiatown*. This article specifically focuses on how this particular group conceptualized the play, how they felt about the roles that they portrayed, what they learned about social justice through their involvement in the production, and how they perceived their future roles as teachers in multiethnic South African schools.

The Group's Production of Sophiatown

The group consisting of five students (three Coloured students and two White students) decided to produce a play on *Sophiatown* after having engaged with the readings from Modisane's book *Blame It on History* on how non-Whites were forcibly removed from Sophiatown, the vibrance of the area, the many intellectuals and musicians who were born and lived there, and the impact of the forced removals on his life.

The play entitled *Sophiatown* was a twenty-minute production that used creative techniques such as frozen images, role-play, choral poetry recital, and music to visually portray the life and forced evictions of people from Sophiatown, a once diverse, multiethnic township in Johannesburg, South Africa that is well known for its artists, journalists, musicians, painters, and writers. The play was loosely based on a workshopped production entitled *Sophiatown* by the Junction Avenue Theatre Company that conceptualized the play in 1986 during the state of emergency in South Africa to look beyond the apartheid regime at the difficulties and promises of a democratic South Africa.

The students' version of *Sophiatown* opens with an introduction to Sophiatown in choral verse followed by a frozen scene of characters. Thereafter, the owner of the tavern Mama Thembu welcomes the audience to her place known for "dance, music, fun and entertainment." We are also introduced to the reporter and the musicians who describe their lives in Sophiatown. In the poetry recital piece, the participants describe what Sophiatown means to them by describing the various landmarks and places of entertainment, such as the Odeon bioscope and the famous Gerty Street where many musicians and artists lived. Then, the mood of the play changes from one of merriment and celebration with Miriam Makeba's song 'Pata pata' to a very somber, macabre mood, as the journalist announces that 60,000 residents will have to leave the area due to the promulgation of the Natives Resettlement and Group Areas Acts and that the Africans will be moved to Meadowlands. The characters describe their complete sense of helplessness as the police, accompanied by the security forces and the bulldozers, move in and forcibly remove the residents from the area.

The Research Methodology and Design

An arts-based qualitative research methodological approach referred to as performative inquiry, which shares characteristics of ethnodrama (Fels 2004), was used for the purposes of this research study. According to Fels (2012, 51) performative inquiry provides educators and researchers with "a way of inquiry into what matters as we engage in drama or theatre activities." As a way of being in inquiry, "performative inquiry embodies mindful attention, creative and improvisational interactions and reflection" (Fels 2012, 51). These were the aspects that characterized the research process and the data collection procedures.

The preservice teachers (in this case the PGCE students) were involved in performative inquiry, through play building (Tarlinton and Michaels 1995) in particular, which is an approach where the group collectively builds a play around a particular issue or theme, e.g., the theme of social injustice with specific reference to the forced removals of non-Whites from Sophiatown. In the construction of their play, the group researched the forced removals from Sophiatown by reading various texts, internet searches, and archival documents; interviewing non-Whites who were forcefully removed from certain areas during apartheid; writing about it; and finally deliberating on ways to showcase their learning. The characteristics of arts-based research is that it, as described by Finley (2005, 686), "provides a formula for a radical, ethical and revolutionary qualitative inquiry." In this case the play was used for the purposes of "self-reflection, self-expression and communication" (Finley 2005, 686), among the participants in the production.

Schon (1983, 26) distinguishes between "reflection-on-action" and "reflection-in-action." While the former focuses on reflecting back on what we have done, the latter, according to Schon (1987, 84), transpires when we "think about doing something while doing it." Within the context of this study, reflection took place after the group presented the play to the class; hence, the process of reflection was based on "reflection-on-action" after the experience of producing and participating in the play. Their reflection thus focused on their viewpoints from the perspectives of the people who were affected by the forced removals within the context of the play and in terms of their future roles as socially just teachers.

To gain insights into their development of and participation in the play, focus group interviews were conducted based on how the participants felt about the theme, their individual roles, and their interaction. The data were elicited by means of a focused group reflective interview after the

production. The main questions that guided the semi-structured interview design were: What did you learn from your experience relating to the roles you portrayed in *Sophiatown*, and how do you envision your engagement with social justice in your future roles as teachers?

The rich thick data that emerged from the reflective focused group interview were analyzed and presented thematically. The next section provides a detailed account of the findings by focusing on the themes that emerged from an in-depth analysis of the focused group interviews. In reporting on the findings, arising from the study, it should be noted that for ethical reasons, pseudonyms were used when referring to the participants.

Findings

An analysis of the findings that emerged from the focused group reflective interview on the participants' experiences through play building indicated that the students' participation in the play and reflecting on their experiences led to the development of their critical consciousness. The key themes that emerged served to demonstrate the richness and depth of meaning that could arise from such experiences. The findings are derived from multiple layers as the participants reflected on their roles in the play to describe their feelings, views, and experiences of being forcibly removed from an area and on their future roles as English teachers teaching diverse learners.

Some of the key themes that emerged from the study included a greater sense of what it means to be helpless, the awareness of loss, awareness of injustice, and the significance of reliving the past through drama. These themes are discussed in detail as follows.

Sense of Helplessness in the Face of Oppression

When they receive the news in the tavern that the residents from Sophiatown will be forcibly removed, one of the participants as the journalist in the play says to Mama Thembu, "We can't move. We got too much to lose. I will write anything, anything...protest letters, petitions. We will not move the congress says we must fight." Later, however, the journalist realizes that they cannot stand up against the regime, and they all are forced to leave Sophiatown. In reflecting on her role as the journalist, Cheryl says, "I feel so helpless and realize how difficult it must have been for the people living there when the bulldozers and police moved in to destroy the area." She contends further:

My participation in the play, as the journalist, also enabled me to have a better understanding of how helpless people are when a regime, in this case the Nationalist government, uses military force to oppress the citizens. My experiences in the play 'in role' as the journalist and my sense of helplessness against the forced removals enabled me to have a better understanding of how helpless the Jews must have felt when they were incarcerated in Germany during the Nazi era. I also have a better idea of how Anne Frank must have felt when she recorded her experiences of the holocaust in her diary.

In reflecting more carefully on her portrayal of the journalist in the play for the Drum Magazine, she articulated her views as follows:

My portrayal as the journalist opened up my eyes to oppression and to put myself in the shoes of others who may be oppressed in various ways in the world. My role made me feel their helplessness, because I could not stop the government from stopping the evictions as they were more powerful than me.

In reflecting on their roles as future English teachers teaching diverse learners, Cheryl contended as follows:

In reflecting on my experiences in working on the play and portraying my role as a journalist, I became more conscious of how oppression manifests in society especially in terms of those who control the means of production and those who have nothing. In my role as a teacher I

will be more aware of how poverty manifests itself within my school contexts and how the system could militate against the poor and marginalize them from society.

The participants realized how helpless people are in the face of oppression and what this implied for their future roles as teachers in terms of the way they engaged with their learners in diverse contexts, many of whom may come from disadvantaged backgrounds or who may have learning disorders. In this sense, the preservice teachers' reflections, based on their participation in the play, conscientized them to how they would need to engage with their future learners so that they ensured that all their learners in their classes were accommodated and respected. This implies that the strategies that they adopt should also make provision for engagement with reflective practice processes so that learners could be conscientized to how oppression manifests in society and how this could be addressed through social action. This also implies that the future teachers need to reflect on how all their learners could be engaged optimally for the creation of a more socially just learning environment.

Sense of Loss

One of the common themes that emerged from the data focused on the awareness of loss in its various manifestations. Jo-Anne, in reflecting on the group's choice of a play, explained their decisions as follows, "We brainstormed various themes and Cheryl suggested that we focus on the theme of loss in all its forms as highlighted in Bloke Modisane's book *Blame Me on History*. This theme led us to explore the Group Areas Act as epitomising loss in all its forms." Margaret summarizes the reason for their selection of *Sophiatown* as their choice for a play as follows, "We chose *Sophiatown* as we wanted to explore the issue of loss—lost identities, lost possessions, and loss of life." Jo-Anne, in reflecting on her role as one of the people who was evicted from Sophiatown and who watched the bulldozers "knocking down my house even as I was packing my stuff" (in the play), describes her experiences as follows, "The play made me aware of the sense of emptiness that accompanies the loss of one's personal possessions and the loss associated with one's removal from a place that one regards as one's home." In this regard Elaine, in reflecting on the forced removal of people from their familiar surroundings into alien environments said that "People could suffer from depression, various other psychological problems heartache and pain." As someone who was also forced out of her home in Sophiatown in the play to live in Meadowlands she added, "I now have a better understanding of what it felt like to be forced out of an area where one was surrounded by familiar people, places and experiences. When I was forced to move, I felt like my whole world was collapsing." Jo-Anne further added that,

since the place, where one grows up, forms one's identity it is inevitable that place will always serve as a frame of reference when comparing it to other places. This means that the place that shaped your childhood experiences and identity will always remain close to one's heart and forcefully removing one from that place that gives meaning to one's existence leads to a sense of loss of identity and meaning.

There was a sense from the participants that we give meaning to people, places, and events, and when these are forcefully taken away from us, we find it difficult to adjust to a new environment and, as Jo-Anne put it, "just perish away as our psychological, emotional and mental well-being will be affected by the forced separation." In her role as a singer, Margaret saw her whole world collapsing as she says to Mama Thembu "No mama. What about our music, our jazz, our beer, our shebeen, our life" (in the play). In reflecting on her role as the singer, Margaret expressed her views as follows:

I felt completely helpless as I realized that there was nothing that I could do to stop the evictions. What I realize is that when one's freedom is taken away to live where one wants to live, one loses a sense of purpose and meaning in life and in this way one's life

is artificially transformed by others, in this case the regime, as one has no control over one's own life. This sense of lack of control over one's own destiny could lead one either to become depressed or to rebel against the oppressive laws.

The participants' awareness of what it feels like to lose one's sense of purpose, identity, and possessions enabled them to reflect more carefully on the learners that they will be teaching, how the learners' experiences will impact their own learning, and how they will have to learn to be open in their roles as teachers to supporting and assisting these learners in a humanizing manner. This implies that they will need to be more empathetic to the learners' needs in their roles as fully fledged teachers and try to understand the contexts of the learners. Since the learners they will be teaching will come from various socioeconomic backgrounds, it will be important for them to understand who their learners are and what their needs are. This signifies that they will need to be reflective in terms of how they relate to their learners and not judge them from a deficit perspective in terms of what they lack.

Awareness of Injustice

All the participants felt that the greatest lesson that they learned from their participation in the play was a greater awareness of injustice in society. Since all of them were victims in the play, as such, in that they were forced to leave their homes against their will, their awareness of injustice in society in its various manifestations was enhanced. The play opened their eyes to, as very aptly summed up by Cheryl, "The history of Sophiatown, personalized struggles and the apartheid regime that destroyed so many people's lives, and enacting that piece took us each on a journey and the learning was raw and experiential."

In reflecting on the Acts, as depicted in the play, Jo-Anne articulated her views as follows:

I became more aware of the pain and suffering associated with these acts than I otherwise would have been able to do. Furthermore, my participation in the play made me aware of what it felt like to be marginalized and oppressed. The play enabled me to realize that the injustice associated with the apartheid system made one into, a non-person or non-entity.

Elaine further added that the system "turned one into a 'cog in a machine' and made one faceless; almost like an invisible man or woman," while Cheryl described the apartheid system "as a vicious monster that aimed to destroy the very fabric of society so that non-Whites remained on the periphery of society, while Whites enjoyed all the fruits that the country had to offer." Through the play, the participants' awareness of injustice was enhanced, especially in terms of those who benefited from the system and those who lost the little that they had. Jo-Anne articulated her views as follows: "The injustices, as highlighted in the play, in terms of forced removals need to serve as lessons to us in South Africa that such vicious acts only lead to misery and heartache, pain and resentment."

In reflecting on their roles as teachers in multi-ethnic learning environments, there was a strong sense among the group that they needed to create opportunities for all the learners in their classes to excel and to achieve success, not only the academically gifted ones or those learners from a specific ethnic group. This implies that the preservice teachers would also need to take cognizance of the funds of knowledge that learners bring to the classroom space. Such funds of knowledge could also include their individual talents that could be incorporated into lessons and their community cultural capital that could lead to enhanced social cohesion among competing groups within diverse classroom contexts. Such deeper reflections, emerging from the preservice teachers' participation in the play, could lead to the creation of more inclusive environments in which all learners' feel valued for what they bring to the classroom space and not where they come from.

Benefits of Researching the Past

There was consensus that researching the past empowers one with a better understanding of historical events that have a bearing on the future. Lilian, for example, contended that,

before our group worked on the play, we did not know much about Sophiatown and the livelihood of the people. My exposure to the historical events leading up to the forced removal of people from Sophiatown enabled me to have a deeper understanding of the emotions felt by the characters in the play and extended my knowledge as I learnt about important events in our country's history that I was not aware of.

According to Jo-Anne:

Our fascination for the rich history of Sophiatown stimulated us to read widely on the forced removals and to gain an understanding of the way people interacted and related to each other. In reflecting on my own readings and research I felt that people during that era appeared to be more interconnected and caring towards each other than today. The study of the era and the creation of the characters gave meaning to our own lives and enabled us to infuse the characters into our own personality.

This process, as further expatiated on by Lilian, “enabled us to have greater empathy for the victims of forced removals since we were actively engaged in researching the topic, using the material to create the play and shaping the characters by infusing life into them by our dramatic performance.”

The participants realized that in their roles as teachers they needed to ensure that multiple historical perspectives are discussed within their classes. This implies that learners needed to be encouraged to share their own lived experiences and histories with their peers so that learning could lead to the development of new insights and new ways of engaging with the world.

Discussion

The students' oral feedback, relating to their development and participation in the play *Sophiatown*, demonstrates that their critical consciousness had been enhanced on different levels. An analysis of the themes emerging from the focus group interviews indicates that students were able to engage with the issue of forced removals on multiple levels. In the first instance, they were able to provide their personal views on the experiences created in the play, and secondly, they were able to relate their experiences in the play to the attributes that they would need to consider in their future roles as English teachers in multiethnic learning environments.

The themes emerging from an analysis of the rich data, such as an awareness of loss and injustice, what it means to be helpless, and reliving the past through drama, demonstrate that the students' critical consciousness had been aroused through their participation in the play. The detailed accounts of their learning demonstrate the value of drama pedagogy for enhanced understanding of critical consciousness through the reflective process, which is a significant feature of drama pedagogy. According to Teoh (2012), the development of critical consciousness through drama is significant in that it serves as a vehicle for the deeper understanding of concepts and culture through enactment, dialogue, and exploration. In this instance, the students' development and participation in the play *Sophiatown* enabled them to gain deeper insights into social injustice and human suffering brought about by oppressive systems. There was, furthermore, also a realization on their part that in their future roles as teachers they would need to take their learners' multiple perspectives of reality into account and develop a greater awareness of their social conditions, circumstances, and unique experiences if they hoped to be socially just teachers.

The findings emerging from this study demonstrate that the implementation of drama pedagogy has the potential to stimulate critical reflective practice on various levels as proposed by Bolton (1979). According to Bolton (1979, 126), personal reflection is a process when “a student may have a change in self-awareness or insight into his own psychological makeup or into the social environment in which he lives.” He contends that the students’ feelings and ideas about the drama can be regarded as a beginning attitude, and as a result of their experiences in the drama, the students may develop insights that will change their attitudes in some way (Bolton 1979). An analysis of the students’ feedback demonstrates that their attitudes had changed in some way as they were able to reflect critically on their roles in the play and provide insights into their feelings and attitudes. The depth of their reflection, based on their feedback, indicates that their critical consciousness had been developed as they were able to engage more critically with social injustice and how it manifests within society at large.

Another level of reflection, according to Bolton (1979, 126), is analogous reflection, which he describes as “a leap from the drama context to another context.” The reflection at analogous level in the play was highlighted by Cheryl, for example, when she indicated that she had a better understanding of how the Jews and Anne Frank must have felt during the Nazi era. Her iteration demonstrates that the reflective processes, synonymous with drama pedagogy, enabled her to relate her role in the play as someone who was forcefully removed to the plight of the Jews during the Nazi era. These deeper insights demonstrate an enhanced degree of empathy and critical consciousness that drama pedagogy has the potential to develop within the psyches of the participants in the play through a critically reflective process.

The process of adopting drama to highlight social injustice enables the participants to challenge the discriminatory environment through reflective processes (Bowles and Nadon 2013). In this case, they indicated through their participation in the play *Sophiatown* that they found the forced removals reprehensible and that, as one student said, “It could be compared to the Holocaust.” The process of reenacting past atrocities in the present by means of drama pedagogy and reflecting on their experiences through the play-building process aims to empower students with skills and knowledge to become more aware of injustice and to be critical actors committed to a world free of oppression and exploitation.

The notion of liberating memory through the play-building process, as further highlighted by Bowles and Nadon (2013), does not only serve to recover dangerous instances from the past but also focuses on the subject of suffering and the reality of those treated as the ‘other.’ Then, as described by them, “we can begin to understand the reality of human existence and the need for all members of a democratic society to transform existing social conditions so as to eliminate such suffering in the present” (Bowles and Nadon 2013, 49). Liberating memory serves to remind students of lived experiences of inequality. However, rather than reinforcing a victim mentality, the process of exposing and challenging injustice reminds students that there is a history of the struggle and resistance that has prompted social transformation. The students’ reflections demonstrate a deep engagement with issues of injustice which highlight the level of critical consciousness that developed through their experiences in the play. According to Moon (2004), the more comprehensive role of reflection in learning is when it is used in the deep approach of meaningful learning, which implies that the learning shifts from merely meaning-making to working with meaning and later transformative learning. In this sense, the use of tableau and theater-in-education have significant contributions to make in terms of the development of critical consciousness.

Research-based drama has the potential to make the “political visible through pedagogical practices that attempt to make a difference in the world rather than simply reflect it” (Giroux 2001, 137). Furthermore, the process provides ample opportunities for the participants to engage with the key issues highlighted in the play and to reflect on them, which leads to enhanced critical consciousness as indicated in this small-scale study. This is in keeping with Freire’s (1974) conceptualization of the significant role of action and reflection (praxis) for enhanced meaning-making that frames the critical pedagogical process. Praxis was a significant feature of the theater-

in-education process since the students were afforded opportunities to reflect on their roles in their production and to examine how they envisaged supporting their own learners in their future roles as teachers, many of whom may come from disadvantaged backgrounds.

As Clifford, Herrmann, and Davison (1999, 17) remind us, it is “through bringing our mind, body and spirit to drama, [that] we gain insight into ourselves.” In doing so, personal understandings can be validated and affirmed, which can be both empowering and liberating (Boon and Plastow 2004; Clifford, Herrmann, and Davison 1999). Within the context of their own learning through their participation in the play *Sophiatown*, the preservice teachers’ critical consciousness was developed as they were not only able to critically reflect on how they experienced forced removals in the play but also to reflect on their future roles as teachers teaching in multiethnic learning environments. The application of theater-in-education, within the context of this small-scale study, enabled the participants to use their bodies and minds to gain insights into the psychological trauma of people who were forcefully removed out of an area based on their race.

Creating opportunities for reflective practice within teacher training modules, such as the English Methodology module, will motivate future teachers to implement reflective practice skills within the context of their own practices in their future roles as English teachers. According to LaBoskey (1994), since critical reflection is so advantageous to the development of critical consciousness among preservice teachers, it should not only be designated as a primary goal but also as a means in teacher education programs. The development of critical consciousness among preservice teachers requires that teacher educators use reflective practice to enable them to become aware of their beliefs, values, knowledge, and attitudes, which will contribute to the development of critical consciousness. The study indicates that the implementation of both tableau and theater-in-education have significant contributions to make in the development of students’ critical reflective skills that will contribute to enhanced critical consciousness. This emerged from the students’ accounts of their own learning based on their experiences in the use of the mentioned strategies to showcase their views on social injustice in society at large.

The development of preservice teachers’ critical consciousness through reflective approaches synonymous with drama pedagogy in university classes could have a positive spin-off in their future roles as teachers motivating their learners to become critical thinkers and agents of change. This was demonstrated in terms of how they envisaged working with their learners in the future in inclusive learning environments.

According to Dillon (2008, 180), the rationale for transforming students’ critical consciousness through critical pedagogy is based on the fact that without sufficiently empowering consciousness students will “not be able to change the limiting or oppressive circumstances of their lives, since they will still be limited by the way they see and understand their lives and circumstances.” It is with this in mind that drama pedagogy has a significant role to play in the development of preservice teachers’ critical consciousness.

Conclusion

The students’ research into the forced removals from *Sophiatown* and the creation of their play based on the research enabled them to reflect more critically on the trauma, sense of loss, and oppression synonymous with such discriminatory practices. This small-scale study highlights the significant role that drama pedagogy could play in the enhancement of English preservice teachers’ critical consciousness so that they could stimulate their learners to engage with social injustice in their English classes. Teaching in this sense goes beyond focusing on the content that needs to be conveyed but in stimulating learners to be engaged critical and reflective thinkers who will be more aware of the various manifestations of social injustice within the contexts in which they find themselves.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Logamurthie Athiemoolam: Associate Professor, Secondary School Education Department, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, Eastern Cape, South Africa

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