Chapter 11

Exploration Through Process Drama with Kindergarten Children

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11.1 Introduction

A quick review of books and articles about educational drama, especially on process drama, reveals that terms such as “explore” and “exploration” are frequently used. In process drama, exploration is crucial and implicit. It could be said that in process drama, exploration is the main point. In this kind of work, several elements are explored simultaneously; various aspects of a theme, a narrative, or a situation and the drama conventions in use are explored.

There is a long tradition in Europe of using theatre for educational purposes, originally in order to promote faith and moral judgment. As in all education, both drama and theatre have had an impact on children’s cultural formation, understood as the continuous process of development and learning in the society they live in (Ødegaard & Krüger, 2012; Ødemotland, 2013). The idea and practice of drama in education has developed over time according to emerging pedagogical theories. During the 1970s, there was rich and broad development in the field in which the seeds of process drama were sown. The ideas of the Soviet psychologist Lev S. Vygotsky, among others, were incorporated into the methodologies (Ferrari, 2011). The process drama pioneer Gavin Bolton turned to Vygotsky to develop a theory of drama in education (Bolton, 1979). The concept of *process drama* was not yet in use, but the genre was. Bolton was concerned about what he called “internal action” in this kind of drama in education (DIE). He drew a line to children’s play as he saw a need to understand this activity and to grasp the idea of DIE as symbolic or make-believe play. According to Bolton, make-believe play is a mental activity in which meaning is created by symbolic use of actions and objects (Bolton, 1979). Observations of make-believe play usually are a description of the external actions,

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Bolton claims. The internal and external activity is occurring simultaneously, however. There is an interdependence of the two “that characterizes symbolic play from other forms of play and drama from other art forms” (Bolton, 1979, p. 19). Bolton refers to Vygotsky when he suggests that DIE is thought in action: “Its purpose is the creating of meaning, its medium is the interaction between two concrete contexts” (Bolton, 1979, p. 21). Bolton suggests classifying meanings in two ways. The first one is a subjective way referring to personal, individual, egocentric, and affective meanings that are brought to an experience. The second is an objective way referring to collective, social, impersonal, and scientific meanings. Bolton’s theory has had a great impact on the further development of process drama; exploration has since then been crucial in this kind of work.

The questions asked in this chapter are: how may process drama be a tool for exploration of the system of law, a courthouse, judicial conflicts, and trials for 5-year-old children in kindergarten? What are the challenges for the teacher, and what knowledge, competences, and qualifications are needed for such work? I will first briefly present the concept of process drama. Then I will clarify the close connection between process drama and children’s dramatic play, and I will comment on the demands on the teacher or leader guiding process drama with young children. Finally, I will discuss an example where 5-year-old kindergarteners take part in a programme using process drama at the local courthouse. The structure of this last part follows the same form as the process drama. After each sequence of the example, I will discuss the children’s exploration and the leader’s work.

11.2 Part I Process Drama

Process drama is a genre within educational drama developed in the UK by Dorothy Heathcote and Gavin Bolton in the 1960–1970s. The concept of *process drama*, however, was not in common use until the late 1980s and early 1990s (Dunn, 2016). This type of work focuses on collaborative investigation and problem solving in an imaginary world (DICE, 2010). It is a highly engaging form, where participants of all ages, together with the teacher or leader, explore themes, ideas, and feelings. The aim is not to perform or entertain. No audience is involved, apart from the participants themselves watching each other in the process. It is a way of working which is based on improvisation rather than a script.

The work consists of episodes or sequences, often in a nonlinear fashion. A variety of working methods and drama conventions may be used to explore, reflect upon, and express a theme which concerns aspects of human beings and their society. The drama conventions are dramatic forms used as poetic, aesthetic, structuring, and reflecting devices (DICE, 2010; Dunn, 2016; Eriksson, 2009; Hallgren, 2018; Neelands & Goode, 2011/1990).

In between the sequences, there are opportunities to share thoughts, make clarifications, and have discussions about the work so far. Here one can also discuss possible expectations of what will come next.

Some sequences of a process drama involve being in role, in what may be called the dramatic fiction, within which the participants behave, speak, and act *as if* it were real. In process drama, identifying and interacting with other roles is essential. Meaning is constructed when one bodily and mentally tries out being somebody else in a different context. Thus, one opens up for a change of role and perspective (Vangsnes & Økland, 2017, p. 172).

Being in role together implies that among the participants there must be an acceptance for “the ‘one Big Lie’: that we are in this moment living at life rate in an agreed-upon place, time, and circumstance and are together facing the same problem” (Heathcote, 1984a/1975, p. 92), like children do when they play. When children play hospital, for instance, they behave like doctors, nurses, or patients as if it is a real situation. There is an agreement among the children on this, whether it is uttered or not. We find the same kind of agreement in process drama, but here it is the teacher or leader who sets up the dramatic event and *frames* the situation.

Dorothy Heathcote introduced the concept of framing (Heggstad, 2008, p. 90). Being framed into a role provides the chance to enter the dramatic fiction with a certain perspective to explore from. In process drama, the participants are framed into a collective role, as individual members of a group. They may, for instance, be servants at a castle, shopkeepers in a street, or members of a board. From the framed position, the participants have the opportunity of influencing what is happening. According to Heathcote, this is the most important factor, “being framed into *position of influence*” (Heathcote, 1984b/1980, p. 168). As such, process drama is a democratic working method.

In any social encounter, there are two aspects present: “One is the action necessary for the event to progress forward towards conclusion. The other is the perspective from which people are coming to enter the event” (Heathcote, 1982, p. 21). This, Heathcote argues, is frame, and she adds that frame is the main agent in providing tension and meaning for the participants. Tension and meaning are two central concepts within process drama (Heggstad, 2008, p. 114).

Cecily O’Neill suggests the use of pretext as a starting point:

The ideal pre-text ‘rings up the curtains’ by framing the participants effectively and economically in a firm relationship to the potential action. It may hint at previous events and foreshadow future occurrences so that the participants develop expectations about the dramatic action. The pre-text will also determine the first moment of the action, establishing location, atmosphere, roles, and situations. It provides the arc from which it is possible to begin to interfere the full circle of the action. (O’Neill, 1995, p.22)

Pretext refers to the source or impulse of the drama process. It may be an object, a piece of music, a story, a location, or a character. In the example I will use later in this chapter, the courthouse building in the city centre is the pretext (O’Neill, 1995).

A process drama may last one session or may consist of many sessions stretched over days and weeks. This gives an opportunity for in-depth exploration (Hallgren, 2018). It could very well be one of the activities in working with a theme in Tarp’s model, as Hedegaard presents earlier in this book.

As previously mentioned, process drama is closely related to children's play. In the next section, I will outline this connection further by showing some of the similarities between these two activities.

11.3 Process Drama and children's Play

The similarities between process drama and children's play are clear (Heggstad, 2012/1998). Both activities operate within a dramatic fiction – *as if* it were real, at the same time with an awareness of the here and now. The four core elements within the dramatic fiction are *story*, *character*, *space*, and *time*. Whether expressed or not, these core elements are always present in the dramatic fiction. In both children's play and process drama, there is the element of a story with a content more or less clear and articulated. Often the children, at the beginning of their play, express what they are going to play, such as family life. Likewise, with character and space, children in their play decide who should be who and where they pretend to be – such as in some home. The element of time is more seldom clearly expressed in children's play. Still, the play is going on in some time other than here and now. Sometimes, children turn on and off the light to express night and day in their play.

Process drama and children's play also both include stops and discussions out of the dramatic fiction. As explained earlier, process drama consists of sequences where various drama conventions are used to shed light on and explore a theme, question, or problem. In between these sequences, there may be stops in which, for instance, necessary clarifications and discussions are acted out. When playing, children may also make stops in the dramatic fiction for the same reasons. This may be noticed in the way their bodily and language attitude change. Often, they switch from present to past tense as they speak. Kindergarten children frequently explore the same theme over time in their play. Sometimes the play may take a new path from the theme, depending on the children's ideas. They then explore new aspects before they are back on track with the original theme.

The similarities between the child-initiated play and the teacher-initiated process drama seem obvious, even to young children. I have often experienced that after participating in process drama, children have expressed how they enjoyed “the playing.” In process drama, the children use their experiences and skills from dramatic play, and vice versa; experiences from process drama may also inspire their play.

There are also some clear differences between process drama and children's dramatic play. The children initiate dramatic play, and they play for the pleasure of it. In process drama, it is the teacher who initiates the activity, and she has clear educational aims for the work. In the following section, I will turn to the teacher and her role as leader of the process drama.

11.4 The Teacher's Responsibility, Role, and Attitude in Process Drama

In process drama, the teacher is not the one to determine exactly what is going to happen. She is the leader acting as a guide, questioner, participant, and onlooker (Wagner, 1999/1976). Being a teacher or facilitator leading a process drama requires an open attitude towards the children. She needs to be willing to step down from the role of the one who knows and move to the role of the one who wants to know. The teacher should sometimes lead clearly, at other times support, and at other times just pull back to let the children lead the exploration. Implicit in process drama is a wish for the children to explore, create, and reflect (Vangsnes & Økland, 2017).

Before starting a process drama, the children may not know what is going to happen and what they are going to be involved in. The teacher therefore needs to make clear, both verbally and bodily, that she is entering a dramatic fiction. By observing what the facilitator says and does, and how this is acted out, the children find their roles and reactions in this new context. The teacher's positioning gives the children an indication of change in the structure, and she is also a model for the children in how to behave and what language to use (Ørvig, 2017).

What the teacher does is what makes the difference, according to Jonathan Neelands. He suggests that process drama and other educational drama activities "should be an artistic as well as an educational journey" (Neelands, 2009, p. 14). In process drama, the teacher has some goals for what is to be explored, how, and why. Artistic awareness and knowledge of the aesthetics of theatre heighten the quality of the work. The teacher has prepared a frame and some possible drama conventions to structure the work. Within the frame, for instance a meeting where divers discuss what to do with the object they found in the sea, she will never be in total control. She will not know which ideas the children will express nor how they will be expressed. Process drama requires a teacher willing to be spontaneous and take risks (Dunn, 2016). O'Neill notes: "It involves the subtle attention to detail, nuance and implication; the ability to exploit the unpredictable in the course of the work; the confidence to shift both educational and artistic goals where appropriate; and the security to deal with disappointment and possible failure" (O'Neill, 2006). The teacher should have the ability to improvise and to be mentally ahead of the children to plan the next step (Ødegaard, *this volume*). She needs to be willing to expose herself to uncertainty and to have a philosophical attitude in order to encourage the children to explore the many wonders and aspects of the world. The teacher should have a profound interest in what the children bring into the process drama, their ideas, their thoughts, and their attitudes, and should challenge them to go deeper in their thinking (Wagner, 1999/1976).

From the start of the development of process drama, opening questions have been crucial. Heathcote always started her work very openly by asking the children what they wanted to work with. Questioning was her most important tool to involve the children in a work that explores significant human experiences. Wagner has organised seven varieties of Heathcote's questions: questions that seek information,

questions that supply information, branching questions (which call for a group decision between alternative courses of action), questions that control the class, questions that establish mood and feeling, questions that establish belief, and questions that deepen insight (Wagner, 1999/1976).

The questions used in process drama are what we may call authentic questions – questions without a clear given answer. Such questions send a signal to the children that the teacher is interested in their ideas and thoughts. The teacher should recognise what the children bring into the process drama by adding comments or follow-up questions or bringing it further in the work (Ørvig, 2017).

“Dramatic tension is the fuel which fires the imperative for actions in a play” (Bowell & Heap, 2001, p. 58). Using dramatic tension is also crucial in process drama. Without the tension, there is no drama. It is the facilitator’s responsibility to provide tension. This can be done by holding back information, giving small hints, bringing in some new information, showing uncertainty, or pointing out possible occurrences. She may bring in a letter, a message, sounds, or darkness, for instance, to introduce tension to the process (Heggstad, 2012/1998).

As we have seen, performing process drama with children demands an open-minded and playful teacher who is willing to take risks. Both teaching and artistic skills are required. No one person has total control of the situation, as the children and the teacher are equally important in the creative process.

The following, Part II, is an example of how process drama may be acted out.

11.5 Part II: An Example – With Analysing Comments

This example of a process drama has eight sequences, which are described chronologically. After each description of a sequence, in *italics*, there is an analysis of what happened, the children’s exploration, and the teacher’s role.

The facilitator is the one leading the process drama. In a kindergarten context, the facilitator may be the teacher or somebody else. She is the one who invites the children into the pretend world. The facilitator may be regarded as “a mediator between the participant and the material under exploration” (DICE, 2010, p. 202). The drama facilitator in this example is a former and experienced kindergarten teacher. She is developing different educational programmes at historical sites for kindergarteners and younger pupils in elementary school. Process drama is the main working method in these programmes.

11.6 At the Courthouse

It was the 200th anniversary of the Constitution. This event was celebrated in various ways throughout the country, including in schools and kindergartens. The local Children’s Culture House in one of the cities provided a specific programme for

kindergarteners to attend. Through process drama, children were invited to explore concepts such as laws, regulations, court, jury, judges, disagreements, disputes, accused, and defence, in addition to exploring the old courthouse, its symbols, and some of its history. Reflecting upon laws and regulations provides useful knowledge and convenient background for further discussions in the kindergarten, especially when disagreements among children occur. Listening to other people's views and trying to understand other perspectives is an important competence in the kindergarten.

This morning the group of 12 children (aged five) and two kindergarten teachers meet on the square outside the grand courthouse. The facilitator invites the children to examine the building and its features, size, and symbols.

This process drama is a site-specific event. There is a long tradition of doing process drama "on the site" (Birkeland & Krosshus, 2017, p. 243). The actual building plays a central communicative part. The architecture of the building, its history, and its role in the society influence the work. The building provides the children with a sensuous experience throughout the work. This is a great advantage for this process drama. Within a kindergarten context, children and teachers may build a scenography as part of a process drama and try to imagine what the space would look like.

The facilitator went over to the group. She presented herself, her colleague, and the courthouse's caretaker, who also was involved in the programme. Initially they had a little talk to get to know each other before the facilitator started the programme. In process drama, the beginning is important. How can the children's attention and interest be captured? There are a variety of options. Using a pretext is an efficient tactic, because it brings the children straight into the work. Here the building is the pretext, the firm base for the dramatic encounter of the process drama (O'Neill, 1995). The facilitator started by inviting the children to explore the building from the outside, from across the open space in front. In a sense, at the moment the group gathered and turned towards the building and collectively explored it, the curtain went up, and the event began. A silence among the children often follows a pretext. This also happened this morning at the moment when the group turned around to examine the courthouse. The pretext engages and activates the exploration, *together* with the participating teacher (Ørvig, 2017). The facilitator played an important role here in how she gathered the children, how she asked them to turn towards the building, how she used her body and gestures, and what questions she used in the exploration. To spend some time exploring what they actually saw heightened the interest for what might be inside the building and what would happen next.

At the end of this sequence, the facilitator asked the children to specially notice one of the basement windows for later. In that way, she built an expectation of something to come, and the children seemed intrigued by it. Process drama invites multidisciplinary exploration. Here is also an opportunity to raise awareness of concepts such as light, shadow, height, width, colours, shapes, and numbers on the façade of the building.

As they move on to the broad stairs outside the front door, behind the columns, the facilitator invites the children to a talk. She asks open-ended questions such as “What is law?” and “Why do we have laws?” “If you and I make an agreement, an appointment, or a promise, do I have to stick to it?” The children agree. “If anything happens which prevents me from keeping the agreement or appointment or promise, I probably should contact you so that we can make a new one?” They still agree. “You probably have rules in your kindergarten. Is it allowed to run and shout indoors?” “Nooooo!” they answer, slightly shocked. “But on the playground, it is OK,” they add. The children are now eager to discuss rules and regulation in the society. They agree that some kind of system is needed in order to live peacefully together. The facilitator tells them about the parent of all laws in the country: the Constitution, which in this country is celebrated every year as a national as well as a family event for everybody, and that date is known to every five-year-old.¹

In this sequence, the facilitator tuned the children in to the theme. She started out from a general basis on law and legislation and then moved to a more concrete and personal level: the children’s thoughts on what is just and fair in everyday life. Acceptance is a common strategy in process drama for encouraging the children to start reflecting, and it provides them with self-confidence towards the theme and what is to come next (Heggstad, 2008). The children listened attentively and actively, but they also contributed with comments. The facilitator listened to the children and responded to their utterances with comments and follow-up questions (Ørvig, 2017). The children were silently exploring what the facilitator told them. The facilitator had prepared thoroughly where this sequence should be acted out; there should be a chance for the children to sit, in order to keep their attention and concentration. She used both teaching and artistic skills when it came to her choice of language, pauses, and voice, where she placed herself according to the children, at what level, and how to use her eyes, gestures, and facial expressions. How she uses her artistic competence here makes a difference, for instance how she pauses to increase tension (Neelands, 2009).

The group is invited into the hall, underneath the big glass ceiling, which provides daylight into the middle of the huge stone building. The facilitator asks the children to look up to where they can see the big door to one of the main courtrooms. Behind that door, she tells them, are judges in black robes who are experts on law. There are also co-judges who help the judges to decide what is right and what is wrong. Suddenly a person in black robes walks through the hall and the children gasp and whisper, “Look! There is a judge!”

Here they also listen to the story of how that glass roof was smashed by an explosion on the harbour during World War II and how the heavy iron frames made cuts in the stone floor. “Can you find the cuts?” They do: “Here is one!” and “Here is one more!” The facilitator continues, “There is a law to protect old buildings and keep their history. Therefore, this floor has not been changed in spite of the scars. Isn’t that nice? A law may protect.”

At this point in the process drama, the tension and the children’s interest increased. The facilitator gathered the children in the middle of the hall and asked them to sit on the floor. She used a low voice, a symbol of respect for the law and for the skilled people trying to solve difficult judicial tasks in the offices and courtrooms nearby. With her words and behaviour, the facilitator serves as a model for how the group

¹The 17th of May.

should act in this context (Ørvig, 2017). The children listened closely to the story from the war, and all of them were eager to explore the floor and find the cuts and scars.

They move on, down to the basement. Everyone takes their coats off and gathers in a small corner. The facilitator invites the children to a role-play where they all are divers in the sea. "What is diving? What do we need to be divers?" The group discusses what diving can be like, what's in the sea – maybe treasures? What can be the obstacles? How may they communicate without being able to speak? They agree upon some important signs to communicate, signs meaning: danger, let's go back, let's go farther down, up to the surface.

This is an example of how process drama does not have a classical linear dramaturgy with a beginning, middle, and end. There is opportunity for moving freely in time, space, and role (Hallgren, 2018). To adults unacquainted with process drama, this sequence may seem confusing. Why diving? Why now? What has this to do with law and conflicts? There is not a clear logical connection to what the children have experienced previously in the process drama. The children, however, did not seem to bother. They are familiar with shifts in ideas when they play. They easily accepted the idea of diving, and it seemed as if it was interesting for them to explore. The dramatic tension was gradually increasing again. So now they were actively exploring this idea and creating their own sign language to use in the deep. The facilitator had found a suitable corner where there was just enough space for the group to sit closely together on the floor. There were no disturbances. The space was in a basement hall outside a courtroom seldom in use.

It is time to put on the diving equipment, as if it is real. They mime: the suit, quite strenuous. The flippers, difficult to walk with. The flasks, heavy. At last the masks; remember to spit in them to prevent condensation. Finally, everybody is ready to dive in. They all swim into the neighbouring room in silence. From time to time, they signal to each other. There are some steps up to a narrow and quite dark hallway. They swim a bit farther into the dark until one child makes the "danger" sign, and they all swim back in a hurry. On their way back, some find an interesting metal box. They bring the box back to the shore.

The children were now framed as divers. The facilitator led them step-by-step through the dressing process using mime. At the same time, she opened up for possible knowledge about diving among the children. Actually, spitting into the mask was knowledge initially provided by a child. In being framed, the children become somewhat protected. It is the facilitator's responsibility to shield the participants from unwanted personal exposure. A way to provide protection is to use distance; there should be a distance between the individual and the given role in the dramatic fiction (DICE, 2010; Eriksson, 2009; Heggstad, 2012/1998). A way to secure a distance is to frame the children as adult divers in a setting they have probably not experienced before. What happens within the dramatic fiction is not real, and the children are well aware of that. They all pretended to be somebody else, divers. This situation provided a way to freely explore what being a diver might be like. Whatever "my" diver says or does is not "me." These utterances are the diver's, not "mine." The distance of the role protects the child from an eventual criticism of the utterances. Each child may create a diver to their liking, according to what they want to explore: a diver who is clever, eager, scared, selfish, or brave, for instance.

The facilitator demonstrated what bodily effort was necessary to put on the diving gear. The children almost forgot to spit in the mask, which would have led to condensation when they came under water. The facilitator noticed the “mistake” with a laugh, and with that she brought humour into the work. The children obviously found the diving interesting, and there was a clear commitment to the “one Big Lie” (Heathcote, 1984a/1975, p. 92). They explored how diving might feel as they made no sounds, moved slowly and gently in the water, and made use of the signs they had agreed on. This was an improvised sequence. The facilitator and the children were improvising bodily together. Although the teacher had set the frame, and she knew there were spacious limitations within that frame, she could not know what the children would come up with. She had to accept and build on whatever ideas the children improvised and explored. It is the “spontaneous and unpredictable nature of process drama that makes it such an exciting form – for participant and facilitator” (Dunn, 2016, p. 130).

Now everyone gets rid of the diving equipment. There is a discussion about the box they had found while they were diving. Maybe it is a treasure! Who has lost it or thrown it away? Eventually they open it. The content is a metal object and nobody can understand what it is. It seems obvious that it is not a treasure, nothing of value. The object is passed along in the group for everybody to examine. They discuss what it may be, why it was in the box, whether it is important or valuable. The children develop possible stories: maybe it belongs to a shark king? Or to some pirates? Or maybe it is equipment for searching for gold? Maybe something from the explosion during the war? The facilitator says that clearly, it is an old object. It may be an object protected by the law, like the building. In that case it is a duty to pass it over to the authorities. The museum will find out what the object is and what to do with it.

A prop was brought into the process drama, and new tension arises. The facilitator, still in role as a fellow diver, spent some minutes with the group to fantasize about what might be inside. This increased the dramatic tension even more. When the content finally was revealed, the object was something nobody had ever seen before. The children seemed slightly confused and maybe disappointed. The fact that the object was unfamiliar, however, opened up the opportunity for more exploring and fantasizing. The dramatic tension increased, the energy in the group rose, and they eagerly took part in the discussion of what the object might be, creating possible stories behind it. Some ideas connected to the story about the explosion during the war that they heard earlier, upstairs in the hall. Others connected to stories about pirates that the children probably were familiar with. The facilitator then brought in the possibility of a law protecting the object and that they therefore could not keep it.

The drama convention *meeting* was used in this sequence. The group was gathered within the dramatic fiction, “to hear new information, plan action, make collective decisions, and suggest strategies to solve problems that have arisen” (Neelands & Goode, 2011/1990, p. 35). The facilitator, in role as a fellow diver, was leading the meeting. This sequence was focusing on an issue central in the further work. The children, in role as divers, had the opportunity to explore their hypotheses and speculations about the box, its content, and what to do with it. Towards the end of the meeting, the process drama connected to the original theme again.

The facilitator, out of role, informs the children that they now will enter a courtroom and listen to another diving story about an incident that happened some time ago. In that story, she says, there are two divers who cannot agree. "And all of us will try to help them find out what is right and wrong." She tells them that the children have to pretend to be the co-judges and that she will pretend to be the judge. The colleague of the facilitator and the caretaker will be the two divers in the case, and they put on jackets as a symbol that they now are pretending to be someone else. The divers both think what happened is unfair, and they want to express their views on the case. The facilitator informs the two, as the children listen: "They say you did something wrong in this case, but both of you totally disagree and are eager to tell your version of the story."

The facilitator puts on a black judge robe and brings forward the big red book of laws with the coat of arms printed in gold. She asks the children as co-judges to come forward and put a hand on the book. She asks them to repeat after her: "I promise to do my best to listen to what will be said in this case and then say what I think is right."

They all enter the courtroom. The facilitator as the judge finds her place behind the old, stern, dark wooden counter, one step up. The two kindergarten teachers are co-judges, together with the children, but at some point, the two get other roles. One is an expert on old objects; the other is an expert on diving. They use scarves as costumes to make their changes of roles clear. They also have a piece of paper, a statement, to read, or they may improvise.

The children and teachers sit down in two groups, alongside each side of the counter, one teacher in each group, in the shape of a U. In the opening of the U is the space for the two divers in the conflict. One at a time, they rise and explain their version of what happened that day. The jury and the judge ask questions to shed more light on the case. The two persons in conflict leave the room, and there is a discussion between the judge and the jury on what will be the right solution to the conflict. This discussion takes some time. The children seem to find it difficult to decide what is right and what is wrong in this case. Together with the judge they have to reach a conclusion. Eventually the two parties are summoned and the result shared with them.

Two drama conventions are in use in this sequence, *ritual* and *teacher-in-role*. According to Neelands & Goode, *ritual* within process drama belongs to what they call *poetic action*. These actions are useful as means "of making a deliberate shift" and "to conventions which heighten the awareness of form and which allow for the exploration and representation of key symbols and images suggested by the work" (Neelands & Goode, 2011/1990, p. 45). A *ritual* is "a stylized enactment bound by traditional rules and codes, usually repetitious and requiring individuals to submit to a group culture or ethic through their participation" (Neelands & Goode, 2011/1990, p. 45).

In this last part of the process drama, the children were framed as co-judges. The framing was amplified by a ritual where they all, at the same time, put their hand on the law book and repeated the oath the facilitator uttered. The moment was filled with symbolism and seriousness.

The second convention, *teacher-in-role*, is a way of leading the group from *within* the dramatic fiction. The facilitator puts on a suitable role to excite interest, invite involvement, create choices and ambiguity, and create opportunities for the group to interact in role. In this convention, the facilitator is not acting spontaneously; she is rather trying to mediate her aims of the process drama through role involvement (Neelands & Goode, 2011/1990).

Within the dramatic fiction, the children use what they already know, things they have experienced, heard, observed, or seen, and one often finds that they express themselves differently than they do in their everyday life. They may use a different and more complicated style both in language and attitude. This is similar to when they play, when they are above their average age, above their daily behaviour – a head taller than themselves (Vygotsky, 1976). There is a difference between ordinary dialogue and the dialogue within the dramatic fiction (Ørvig, 2017).

The atmosphere in the courtroom was quiet and serious. The symbols, the dark colours, the two leaded glass windows, and the seriousness that the judge and the two parties of the case acted out may have been the reason why the children did not participate much verbally in this part. Or they may – at this point – have been tired. Additionally, the case was difficult to solve. The facilitator who chose to come forward quite early in this sequence, as judge, asked every co-judge for his or her opinion. Although the children did not say much, they could explore the courtroom, the role of the judge, the experts, and the two sides of a possible case.

Summing up.

Afterwards, the facilitator praises the children for being concentrated for such a long time. “Imagine, in the courtrooms in this building, they may need many hours, a whole day to solve a case. And sometimes they spend many days – even weeks. It takes time to listen to all the views. According to the Constitution, everybody has the right to be heard in court. Somebody must listen, even if it takes days and weeks. This is serious. They need to reach a conclusion to find out what is right, according to the law.”

It is time to depart, and the children dress and leave through a back door. They gather in front of the building at the same place where it all started. Now they examine the building once more. This building is no longer just a building in the city. The children have an interest and ownership in it; they know something about it. Gazing at the building, they discuss where they think the big courtrooms are. Finally, the facilitator points out some windows in the basement, the windows to “their” courtroom.

In this last sequence, the facilitator provided a chance for the children to reflect on what they had been a part of. She returned to the core element of the Constitution, which she told them about on the stairs in the very beginning: everyone has the legal right to be listened to in disputes. The parties of a case in court have the right to tell their version of the story. She also brought in the element of time, which corresponded very well with the children’s experience, as several of them seemed to think that it took a long time to solve the case. At the same time, the amount of time it takes shows the seriousness and importance of justice in the society.

The facilitator accompanied the group back to the square. The pretext of the process drama, the building, is included in this final sequence (DICE, 2010). Once more they explore the building from the outside, only now with new knowledge of what kind of building it is and fresh impressions of what is going on inside. They may have developed ownership of the building, as they have been a part of its activities. If they come by the building again, they may show their companions that special room in the basement, which they likely would call “their” courtroom.

11.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have used an example to present how exploration is a vital element of process drama. We have seen that in the development of process drama there is a strong connection to the cultural historical tradition. Vygotsky's theories in particular have had a great impact from the beginning. We have also seen that there is a close connection between process drama and imaginary play.

Process drama allows teachers and children to be equitably together in an educational context. Although a responsible leader of the process drama, the teacher needs to have an open mind and willingness to welcome the children's ideas into the work. There is a need for both educational and artistic skills, such as awareness of details, symbols, and dramatic tension, in order to provide opportunities for exploration and at the same time demonstrate the artistic quality necessary. The example used in this chapter was a site-specific process drama. In this case, the children and their teachers had to travel to the courthouse. Most of the time, process drama is acted out in an everyday environment, like the kindergarten. There is no need for extra equipment; process drama is costless. Like in children's play, imagination is crucial for pretending this corner is a castle. Anything can be everything within the safe environment of the kindergarten. The only thing needed is a teacher with improvisational skills, playfulness, and aesthetic awareness who has a willingness to expose herself to the uncertainty of the outcome.

The example in this chapter was a programme for kindergarten children aged five in which process drama was the working method. The theme of the programme was the system of law, judicial conflicts, and trials, and it was acted out in the old courthouse of the city. Through the programme, the children had the opportunity to explore the building, its content, and its history. They also explored what a judicial conflict might be and had a taste of what is just, according to the law. Step by step, the programme facilitator opened doors to new aspects of the theme to explore. The programme has been going on for some time; many groups of children have attended. A mother commented afterwards that her daughter had talked a lot about her experience. It had made a deep impression on the child in a positive way, the mother said. For a long time, the child frequently talked about it; there was so much to reflect upon.

Process drama is an explorative, engaging, and playful genre to work with and a democratic and enjoyable way for adults and children to work together within an educational context. It provides a great opportunity for exploring all aspects of life and society and as such contributes to cultural formation of the children. It is a useful and efficient working method that should be encouraged to be used in kindergarten and therefore also in teacher training.

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