THE DRAMATIZATION IN THE CLASSROOM, IN A CONTEXT OF HIGHER EDUCATION, AS A RESOURCE TO PROMOTE SOCIAL, PSYCHOLOGICAL, EDUCATIONAL AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCES IN THE STUDENTS

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Abstract

While the Dramatization is still a rarely used resource in the Classroom, more and more research has provided relevant evidences about the benefits of the same in the teaching-learning process.

The Dramatization is an educational tool that helps students develop social skills with a psychological support in their interpersonal relationships, promotes their self-esteem, and lets them learn to trust in themselves and to know better their skills and their weak points. Additionally, it helps students to carry out teamwork, wherein the result does not depend on the sum of individual contributions, but rather on a work of coordination, cooperation between the team members, trust, and mutual commitment.

The teacher here plays a secondary role, and the students become the protagonists, no longer seeing themselves as receptors of content, but rather playing an active part in the teaching-learning process.

Furthermore, through the dramatization, students improve their emotional intelligence; they learn to lose stage fright, to empathize with the characters they play, to tolerate different points of view and to discuss, at the same time, their own opinions.

Finally, this educational resource is essential for the improvement of creativity and imagination, basic tools for the development of each individual and crucial for current and teachers who want to motivate and attract students to their subjects.

1 INTRODUCTION

The present Study, in particular, stems from the need to demonstrate the aforementioned benefits in the context of College Education, and more specifically in the Teacher Training in Obligatory Secondary and Upper Secondary School Education.

A total of 85 students from the Teacher Training in Obligatory Secondary and Upper Secondary School Education, from the University of Alcalá, have been the sample of our Study. These students belong to the specialties of Spanish Language, Foreign Language, Fine Arts, and Orientation. They are between the ages of 23 and 50.

The Dramatization has been used as an educational resource within two compulsory subjects of the Master’s degree, carried out transversally, during the first semester of the present academic year. These subjects are respectively: Society, Family, and Education and Learning and Personality Development.

Dowlati, Musick, Zhang, Thornton and Carvalho (2016) explored the use of dramatization and they found that it provides a great potential to be both effective and well received by students and can improve understanding, retention of material and satisfaction among students. Obviously, a drama session should be formulated in accordance with its purpose and used effectively (Ilhan, Burcak, Esenturk & Karasahinoglu, 2015), so it could contribute considerably to purpose of learning.

According to Pereira (2019), dramatization is an experience in which actors are willing to play as someone different from their habitual, daily-life selves, so the level of this involvement (or not) with the fictional situation presenting itself could be a key issue for the learning experience. During the role-play, students should overcome themselves to develop the circumstance and the personality of ‘an other’ and their personal, physical, ethical, moral, economical, and political characteristics. As Pereira explain: “the more individuals are distanced from the evolutions surrounding themselves, the further their actions and interferences can reach” (Pereira, 2019).
Dramatization could be used in several ways, connected to a number of active learning exercises which help students to assume responsibility for the knowledge and be capable to apply what they learn (Carvalho and West, 2011). During these activities, students are provided with specific roles that keep them engaged and motivated throughout the activity, so according to Miller, McNear and Metz, (2013) they can take advantage of multimodal strategies of teaching.

Thus, dramatization is also an embodiment experience (Smyrnaiou, Sotiriou, Georgakopoulou and Papadopoulou, 2016) in which students could develop creativity and critical thinking, their active participation to the learning process, their deep understanding of concepts and phenomena.

During the active learning activities and the dramatization, students could achieve a better learning of the concepts because it pushes them to understand and retain content rather than to simply memorize it (DiCarlo, 2009), but they should understand that the process itself is not so systematic as in a traditional learning method. As an example, as According to Morton, Doran and Maclaren (2008) explained, it is important to use mistakes as teaching and learning opportunities instead of allowing them to turn into misconceptions, which can be difficult to remediate.

2 METHODOLOGY

2.1 Participants

A total of 85 students from the Teacher Training in Obligatory Secondary and Upper Secondary School Education, from the University of Alcalá, have been the sample of our Study.

Among them, 11 students, where 4 were girls and 7 were boys, voluntarily decided to be interviewed by the teachers who carried out the subjects and the project of the Dramatization.

2.2 Instruments

Semi-structured interviews have been designed in order to understand the students’ opinions about the project and to verify if the aim of the Study had been achieved.

The interviews made, lasted one hour and a half each and participants were audio recorded. In three cases, participants have been interviewed individually, while, in the rest of the cases, groupal interviews have been made.

The transcripts of the records were deeply analyzed in order to obtain qualitative results of the Study.

2.3 Procedure

One year before the implementation of the Project of the Dramatization, the same project had been designed accurately.

The Dramatization itself has consisted in the simulation of a Judgment to the protagonist of a successful Spanish series, called Merlí, which has been broadcasted in different channels and digital platforms in the national and international territory, such as the television channel La Sexta, or the digital platform Netflix.

This series is about a Secondary Education teacher who works in a public school in Barcelona, who attracts students’ attention towards his subject. The teacher also knows how to create a secure attachment with each of his students, so that the students trust him and see him not only as a teacher, but also as a mentor. The series deals with issues related to adolescent development and family problems that may arise in the different types of families that exist in society, as well as making a strong criticism of the current Spanish educational system. It is a series whose aim is make the audience reflect on society and develop his/her own critical point of view regarding topics of educational, social, and cultural interest. Due to the above mentioned reasons, this series has been chosen as the basis for a dramatization in the classroom, where the accused is the protagonist of the series, and where the students have played the roles of the students, families involved in the chapters of the series, experts of the subjects that underlie the project, management team of the Center, and both prosecution and defense. The “Trial to Merlí” has been only the last piece of the process of preparing for the activity that started the first day of class. In fact, at the beginning of the semester, students were asked to watch the series throughout the course of the semester, in parallel and complementary to what was being worked on in class. Jointly, a Blog/forum was created where the students could comment on the chapters of the series. Here, through a detailed and critical analysis of
the characters and problems dealt with in each chapter students used the materials and texts provided by the teachers of the two subjects as support for their critiques and debates about the series.

After the visualization of the series, students had two classes of preparation for the trial, in which they chose the roles that they wanted to interpret and were divided into work groups in order to develop their characters and prepare the trial. During this time, students experienced the difficulties and advantages of working cooperatively, as well as growing individually and as groups. They also had the possibility to work with the contents of the subjects in a pleasant, dynamic and experiential way.

At the end of the semester, the students represented "the trial to Merlí", in a fictitious court, located in the Faculty of Law of the University of Alcalá. The entire Dramatization was recorded with cameras and microphones and has been the object of qualitative analysis.

On January of this year, individual and group interviews were developed for a total number of 11 students, who voluntarily offered to participate in the study.

Furthermore, it is important to add that, a part from the Dramatization in itself, during the period of the First Semester, other activities have been carried out in order to promote an active learning which include cooperative activities within traditional lectures to keep students engaged, using online materials to analyze in and inside the classroom and case studies.

As an example, students were involved in a role-playing in which different teachers, pupils and the Head of a fictitious Secondary School, had to decide if they wanted or not to implement in their school some innovative strategies and methods of learning, promoted by the students of the master. Students had to prepare this activity by both studying the contents of the subjects and by working in different teams, in order to design or find different kind of activities that enhance the educational experience of the students in this school.

3 RESULTS

The qualitative results, obtained through the analysis of both group and individual interviews, show the following:

1. The students interviewed have acquired social, communicative and psychological competences throughout the teaching-learning process, carried out throughout the preparation of the Dramatization in the Classroom.
2. The students, through the Dramatization, have acquired new resources and tools to use in the classroom when they will be teachers and school counselors in the context of Secondary Education.
3. Students have recognized a clear improvement in their coordination and teamwork skills, in addition to their emotional competencies;
4. The interviewees have expressed their gratitude to the teachers of the subjects for having experienced by themselves the cooperative work and for having raised their motivation and interest towards the subjects studied.
5. Students feel the need to encourage dramatization in the classroom at all stages of education, including the Higher Education, and emphasize the need for this educational resource in a master's degree that enables the Teaching.

Training in Obligatory Secondary and Upper Secondary School Education, has proven to be successful and necessary for the future development of the teaching work on the part of the students and for the acquisition of social, psychological, educational and communicative competences on their part.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The qualitative results of the Study have demonstrated the importance of the use of new tools and methods in the classroom in order to motivate students and to improve the teaching-learning process.

Through Dramatization, students have not only acquired basic competences, but also they have had the opportunity to put into practice the notions and theoretical content they had to study in order to properly interpret the actions and situations performed by the actors of the Series used for the project.
In Fact, during the Dramatization, they had to play a role in which they could experience and better understand the theory learnt in class in a dynamic way. Thanks to Dramatization, teachers and students have the possibility to live the teaching-learning process in a positive way that benefit everybody, teachers included. This tool is not only useful, but also necessary in each level of Formal Education.

4.1 Limitations of the study

Due to the limited time available after the end of the First Semester, the number of participants who could be interviewed has been lower than expected. Students, in fact, started their training as teachers in different High Schools, in cities or towns situated different from where the Faculty is located.

For this reasons, even though the researches have at their disposal different emails in which lots of students showed their satisfaction with the development of the project of Dramatization and affirmed that they improved their competences, these emails cannot constitute material to be analyzed for the Study.

4.2 Future research

The present Study has been the first approach to a new way to live the teaching-learning process at University.

Our aim for the future is to extend this innovative method to students of different specialties of the same Master, as future teachers of Science, Maths, and so on. We would like also to put into practice the Dramatization in the different Degrees of the Faculty of Science of Education in order to analyze the effects of the same in different Education Contexts.

REFERENCES


