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Applying Drama in Taiwan's primary curriculum:

The reality and difficulties through primary school teachers' viewpoints

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Abstract

When drama was included in the curriculum in Taiwan for the first time as the result of recent educational reform, drama in education (DIE) gained more attention and was widely introduced to teachers. The reality, however, of teaching or using drama may not be as fruitful as the theories; in addition, the different teaching/learning cultures may also cause obstacles.

This research focuses on the reality and possible difficulties of applying drama in the primary school curriculum in Taiwan, taking a primary school in Taipei, Taiwan's capital city, as an example. The study aimed to understand Taiwan teachers' perspectives and evaluation of teaching or using drama, and those aspects that lower teachers' willingness to do drama. The findings indicated that many of the respondents knew and had learnt about drama, though not all teachers were willing to adopt it in the curriculum. The difficulties teachers were facing were caused not only by the conditions of teaching drama but also the whole environment. Gaining insights from the literature and research findings, the researcher

outlines implications for drama's future development in Taiwan: to urge sufficient and sustainable teacher training, and to prepare for "the third space" for adopting different paradigm of teaching and learning.

Dramas, Taiwanese opera in festivals, or TV programmes based on ancient Chinese stories were the favourite pastimes of many people. Because it was seen as entertainment or part of religious activities (e.g., performed in temple fairs), drama had a low status in Taiwan. There was not even any place for drama in Taiwan's arts curriculum in the compulsory education system (children in Taiwan receive compulsory education between the age six and fifteen) until the recent educational reform (Jung, 2000). While the theory and practice of drama in education (DIE) is still new to Taiwan, it has been developed and applied in education for a long period in Western countries. Therefore, many who are interested and enthusiastic about drama, including myself, went to the US or UK, the origin of DIE, to study further on this long-developed art education and pedagogy.

Complications emerge, however, as differences between the Eastern and Western culture were noticed; for instance, the views on drama's role, values, and ways of teaching and learning. When the new curriculum, introduced in 2003, mandating that the arts and humanities, including drama, must be implemented in primary schools, more teachers faced the immediate need and challenge of doing drama. Teachers may often work hard and encounter difficulties individually without sharing experiences or discussing the problems with one another (Acker, 1999). Therefore, it is desirable for me as a researcher as well as a primary school teacher, to learn more about teachers' views and share them with others through this study. Also for the long term development of drama in Taiwan, it should be considered how teachers respond to and evaluate doing drama.

Through this study I aimed to understand the reality or possible difficulties of adopting drama into Taiwan's education system by investigating Taiwan teachers' viewpoints. The

main aims of the research were as follows:

- ◆ To find out present teachers' knowledge and perspectives of DIE
- ◆ To find out the possible difficulties that teachers encounter when using or teaching drama
- ◆ To find out and analyze possible cultural factors that make drama a less effective pedagogy
- ◆ To find out useful implications for adopting drama in education to Taiwan

Insights gained from the literature on drama and from the findings will be discussed, and finally the implications will be drawn for teaching drama and for drama's future development in Taiwan.

Research Context

The cultural context of Taiwan is different from Western society in important ways such as philosophy of life, value system and social order. The educational context and values differ significantly as well. However, Taiwan has also been developed and modernized in the last decades; consequently, the society is more affluent, liberal, and accepts different cultural influences from other countries outside of this tiny island, from places like America, Japan and Western Europe (Jung, 2000; Wu & Hung, 2003). Long Ying-tai (2003), a Taiwanese columnist, once commented that Taiwanese celebrate Christmas and go trick-or-treating or masquerade on Halloween. While they may colour their hair gold, they do not transfer Western ideologies under the hair. Whether her comments reveal the reality of transferring Western systems to Taiwan, the influences of Western cultures on Taiwan's life style nowadays are palpable.

The recent educational reform of Taiwan and the new curriculum, "Grade 1-9 curriculum" (MoE), were also inspired by Western education systems. Attentive to the educational trends in Western countries, educators and artists called for a complete reform of

our own education which has been criticized as imbalanced and exam-oriented. During 1999-2003 the Ministry of Education of Taiwan announced the Grade 1-9 curriculum guidelines, which included Drama for the first time as part of “Arts and Humanities”. Implementing the new curriculum caused anxiety among schools and teachers. Primary school arts teachers, however, were particularly worried because there had not been any training or courses on drama in the nine Taiwanese teacher training institutes in the past (Hsiao, 2004; Lin, 2002; Wang H., 2002; Wang, N., 2001).

The views of drama in Taiwan’s society are notable as well. Before the new concepts of drama were brought in our education, the values of drama were unimportant and unnoticed in Taiwan. Even now when the values of arts are justified in the new curriculum and drama has a place in it, parents or the schools are still suspicious about the role and values of drama (Lin, 2002). It could be hard for the teachers to do drama in the curriculum without the support from the school and parents (Tsai, 2003).

The Primary School and the Teachers

The primary school where this study took place is proud of its modern teaching equipment and its welcoming-attitude toward new teaching methods. In this large-sized primary school in Taipei, there are 66 classroom teachers (with 11 teachers in each grade), who teach almost every subject and take charge of communicating with parents; there are 24 specialist teachers in arts/music/PE/science/ English, and 24 teacher-administrators who teach fewer hours but deal with school administration. In a big primary school as such, the division of work will be very different from a small-scale school, where teachers take responsibility for a variety of works. Although the work is clearly divided, workloads of teachers in big schools are no less heavy than small schools. The maximum number of pupils in each class was reduced to thirty to thirty-five in recent years; and in each class there is only one classroom teacher.

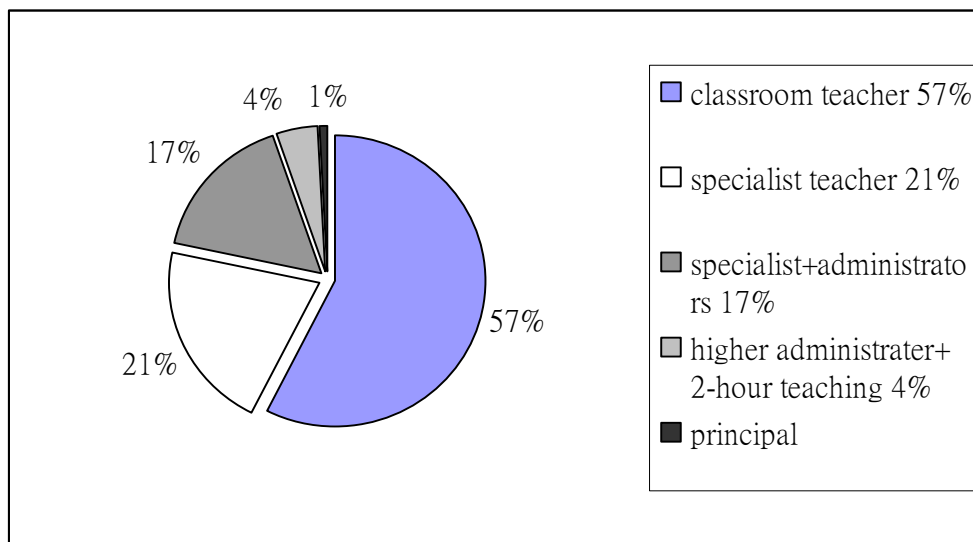


Figure 1. The structure of large/medium primary schools

Parts of the reformed primary curriculum were implemented in 2000; other subjects including “arts and humanities” were taught in 2003. Teacher training for the new subjects especially drama, was sporadic. While policies and guidelines of the grade 1-9 curriculum are set clearly, the images of how to implement the new subjects are still blurred. Teachers who must teach drama felt unprepared both mentally and professionally (Tsai, 2003; Wang, N., 2001; Wang, H., 2002). Therefore, one of the aims of this research was to learn teachers’ attitudes towards drama, to recognize the situations they faced and their evaluations of doing drama, and eventually let their voices heard through this study.

Literature Review

How drama is viewed in the West and its present status in the UK curriculum are examined in this section. Issues concerning teachers' abilities to both enact and understand a new paradigm from a different culture are also looked at in this section.

Drama's Role and Value

Drama, like dance and music, is natural and spontaneous expressions of humans. In the traditional view in West, the functions of drama, especially in the form of theatrical performances, are believed to be recreational or cathartic. Until more recent times, another role of drama has evolved as a learning medium (McGregor et al, 1977; Somers, 1994; Wagner, 1979) when the drama in education movement was initiated by drama educators such as Peter Slade in the UK and Winifred Ward in the US.

The names, focuses and practices of drama vary from country to country. In the US, *creative drama* is the term most used, along with *informal drama*, *creative play acting*, and *improvisational drama* (Heinig, 1993). Drawing from the notion of learning by doing of Dewey (1938) and the idea of encouraging children's natural creativity of Mearns (1929), Ward (1952) advocated creative drama including dramatic play and story dramatization which are at the heart of creative drama in the US (Chang, 2003). Whereas in other countries such as Britain, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand, the terms *developmental drama*, *educational drama*, *process drama*, or just *drama* are frequently seen (Chang, 2003; Heinig, 1993). The educational drama activities involve movement exercises such as theatre games, pantomime, and conventions such as improvisation, hot-seating, and teacher-in-role are employed to the discussion of certain issues (Barlow & Skidmore, 1994; Clements, 1996). Albeit there are different definitions and applications, the persistent characteristic of drama is considered to be a medium for learning. The nature and content of both creative drama and drama in education, is rather a dynamic process evoking personal development, instead of

product-oriented (Heinig, 1993; Hsiao, 2004).

Drama's Status in the UK

Drama was included in the UK's National curriculum as a part of "speaking and listening" in the English subject in 1990 (QCA). Nevertheless a debate was raised in the UK concerning drama's role and value in education: should drama be seen as an art subject in its own right which emphasizes the aesthetic education, or merely a pedagogical praxis that enriches the teaching/learning of other subjects? Practitioners who would like to see drama as a discrete *art* subject in the curriculum were disappointed (Abbs, 1996; Hornbrook, 1989). Whereas other educators eluded the controversy with a more integrated view noting that drama education can teach both the art form and cultivate an aesthetic as well as enrich learning and facilitate personal development, social skills, and creative abilities through drama process (McGregor et al, 1977; Somers, 1994). It is this integrated point of view of drama that was adopted in this research.

Despite more importance and status given to drama in the curriculum, drama was not applied as widely as expected (Henry, 2000). Baldwin (2002) pointed out that "the reality has been that hardly any drama is happening despite the fact that it is deemed statutory" (p.105). In addition, drama courses have decreased in teacher training institutions; as a result trainees are less likely or confident to use drama when they start their teaching career (Tsai, 2003). Therefore, there is still a gap between what is expected and the real practice even in the UK.

Teachers' Ability to Take Actions

Teachers do report difficulties when it comes to implementing mandated drama in the curriculum, including problems over controlling order in the classroom (Henry, 2000; Tsai, 2003) and difficulty in the assessment of drama. It is not easy, for example, to assess the quality of empathy or creativity by exams (Clements, 1996). There is, however, another

stance: teachers are not passive victims of a new education system and policy, but rather, empowered activists. Acker (1999) commented that some educational researchers tend to overstress the constraints of structure and cultures within the education system and neglect the fact that teachers can be creative individuals and can learn to face those unfavorable situations. Woolland (1993) also called the difficulties myths and excuses that teachers hold about drama in the primary school. He argued that albeit working in primary school is demanding, it is worthwhile finding time for drama. Without teachers' taking action, change and innovation will never be possible. This study sought to determine what the realities were for teachers trying to use drama for the first time.

Transferring a New Paradigm from a Different Culture

As mentioned previously, though Taiwan is deeply influenced by its Chinese inheritance, it is a multicultural society that welcomes both its own diverse cultures and influences from other “modernized” countries (Wu & Hung, 2003). The recent educational reform in Taiwan for instance, introduced new paradigms and pedagogical approaches from Western countries, including drama in education.

Greenwood (2001) noted that there are multiple views of the interaction of different cultures. Some scholars, for instance Said (1995), believe that Eastern societies, when colonized by the Western countries, lose their own identities; therefore Eastern countries should reject the “cultural invasion” of the West to keep their own cultures. Yet some other researchers, such as Spivak (1990) and Bhabha (1990), are more concerned with negotiation with Western values rather than simple rejection. Spivak has argued that postcolonial theory cannot predict or describe the dynamic of current cultural interaction; it can only analyse and describe what has happened. For Bhabha who proposed the concept of “the third space”, it is possible that two different cultures can meet and a new space emerges (as cited in Greenwood, 2001).

When DIE meets with Taiwan's culture, educational values and curriculum, one can question whether a "third space" will emerge, and if, it does, what will it look like. I believe this research and the people involved in this trend are all *witnesses* as well as a part of this culturally interactive process.

Methods of Data Collection and Analysis

This study aimed to develop a multiple-perspective understanding of the situations and problems that Taiwanese primary school teachers face when adopting drama, a Western pedagogy, to the classroom in Taiwanese educational settings. To attain this goal, questionnaires with open-ended questions and semi-structured interviews were employed to capture in-depth and extensive views from a real-life setting. Therefore, the information gathered was rich in qualitative evidence that helped to answer the research questions as listed below:

- ◆ What are the teachers' experiences with DIE and access of learning it?
- ◆ How do teachers evaluate employing drama in teaching?
- ◆ How have they responded to the new curriculum—drama was included for the first time?
- ◆ How willing were they to adopt DIE in their teaching?
- ◆ What is their perspective and suggestion for drama's future development in Taiwan?

Before the study was conducted, consent was obtained from the school authority (e.g., principal). I followed these steps in the research process: a) explained the purpose of the study to the participants and distributed or e-mailed the questionnaires through head teachers; b) collected the questionnaires; c) asked for follow up interviews after identifying issues needed to be clarified in the questionnaires; d) organized the data (e.g., typed the transcript) and analyzed; and e) translated the results from Mandarin (or Taiwanese in colloquial form) into English.

The term drama or DIE in the questionnaire and interview does not particularly confine to the practice of creative drama or DIE due to the situation in Taiwan. A more integrated view of drama was adopted as a result that both influences of creative drama in the US or drama in education in other countries come together in Taiwan. International drama conferences were held where practitioners from the UK, US, and Australia were invited, and theatre workshops held with trainers who have studied drama in the US or UK (Hsiao, 2004). Nevertheless, within varied practices, the applications for children's learning and development through drama are unchanged. Therefore a broader definition of drama was used, emphasizing its salient characteristic as a learning medium and process for development—against the traditional view and product-oriented way of teaching drama.

The questionnaire consists of four questions on background information, and 20 open-ended questions on doing drama, evaluation and recommendation of applying drama in the curriculum. The questionnaire was completed by 18 teachers who volunteered. They work in a large-sized primary school in Taipei, Taiwan's capital city where educational resources are abundant. Each of the volunteer-respondents had a different role in the school, varied teaching experiences, and educational background. Follow up interviews were conducted with eleven teachers who kindly offered me time (from 15-40 minutes) to clarify the issues raised in their returned questionnaires, and to collect deeper understanding of the research questions. Other data sources included e-mails with interviewees, lunch time chatting with parents and other teacher colleagues, and my own research diaries both in the UK and in Taiwan. The profuse data gave me valuable insights suggested by the data.

Analysing the qualitative data was a spiral process (Creswell, 2003) which involved an interaction between the inquirer and the data sources (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). To get the most out of the data, I employed systematic steps as followed: a) I read the data to get familiar with the contents. Then I broke down the texts and sorted by topics; b) I constructed categories within each topic by identifying recurrent themes; c) I coded the content and

interpreted the coded texts in light of the perspectives in the literature or researcher's own experiences (Radnor, 2001; Wellington, 2000); and constant comparisons with the new and previous data also helped the discovery of new relationships (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The participants' ratifications of the initial findings were sought since the interpretations were made from the researcher's perspectives and experiences (Creswell, 2003). While maintaining the credibility, the critical view of a disinterested peer was also employed not to claim the objectivity of the study but to be aware of my own bias (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Research Findings

The primary school teachers' views on drama are presented in four categories: teachers' experience with and access of learning DIE, teachers' perspectives and evaluation of drama, their willingness to do drama, and their recommendations for the future development of DIE in Taiwan.

Teachers' Experience With and Access of Learning DIE

As mentioned above, the 18 respondents had different positions in the school. In fact, their positions comprised three main roles in a large-sized primary school in Taiwan: classroom teachers, specialist teachers, or teacher-administrators. Their teaching experience was wide-ranging as well, from under three years to over fifteen years. The respondents either graduated as qualified primary school teachers from teachers' colleges in Taiwan (changed to "university of education" since 2005), or they graduated from other universities and then took a one year teacher training course and an extra year of apprenticeship.

Of the 18 teachers, 15 had heard and learned about DIE; only three teachers had never come across the term or pedagogy. Teachers learned about it from school seminars or workshops (every Wednesday afternoon 1:30-4:00 pm is reserved for meetings or seminars on different topics) or from workshops held by children's theatres and other arts institutes.

The seminars or workshops held in the school are free; teachers who are interested in attending workshops held by private institutes outside the schools have to pay for the training themselves. Three teachers learned about DIE through educational journals or arts websites (see table 1). Among the 15 teachers who had learned about DIE, six had observed a drama lesson in the school, and eight had actually applied drama in their teaching. In the following section, the evaluations of drama's strengths were made by the teachers who had observed or had taught drama. The appraisals about the difficulties in teacher drama were solely made by the eight teachers who had actually taught drama themselves.

Table 1*Access of Learning DIE*

<i>Access</i>	<i>Number of Person</i>
School seminar/workshops	9
Theatre workshops	7
Educational journals	1
Websites	2
Total	15

The result shows that most teachers in this primary school in Taipei have knowledge of DIE since in 2003 the “performing arts” were included in the new curriculum and school timetable. Because these of curricular reforms, the educational department, children's theatres, and private cultural institutes make efforts to promote the performing arts including teaching through drama.

Despite the fact that drama is becoming more wide-spread, there are still some teachers who have no idea or no interest in this trend. One interviewee simply explained that: “I just have no intention to learn drama, or use drama in teaching. I may go to see a performance, but not relate it with my teaching.” Perhaps, as Acker (1999) explained, teachers' work may

not totally mirror educational trends, for “schools appear to have elements of the old and new” (p.21). It is notable that the samples of this research are from the capital city; it is very possible that still many teachers elsewhere in Taiwan do not know about DIE, for other towns in Taiwan certainly have fewer resources than big cities.

Teachers' Evaluation on Drama — The Strengths

The teachers who had observed or taught drama discussed the effects of using drama in the classroom. They report that the benefits of teaching/using drama are to help children learn, to nurture creativity and to raise teacher's morale.

Helping children to learn. The respondents commented that drama makes learning more interesting and, therefore, raises pupils' motivation and increases their involvement in the learning process. Teachers also mentioned that drama techniques, if well-used, often help to bring in-depth learning. When appraising the effects of drama, a teacher said that: “...it really depends on how well the teachers use the drama techniques. We know it does not mean we can apply it well.....but I have seen very experienced teacher using the activities helps pupils to think deeply or differently.”

Nurture of creativity. It is worth noting that that all 15 respondents mentioned that drama is powerful in fostering children's creativity in the questionnaires. However, creativity can mean any kind of new ideas and inventions, including nasty ones. Therefore, seven of the teachers add a proviso that drama is helpful in nurturing creativity when the drama teacher guides the pupils properly. “I think drama helps develop pupils' creativity; by that I mean ‘positive creativity’. ... it's not that kind of funny jokes or teasing like the TV hosts made”, one teacher observed. Some other teachers also mentioned “positive creativity” to mean that they do not allow pupils to do whatever they want during drama lessons as the parents or other colleagues misunderstand when seeing a “noisy” or “messy” drama lesson.

Raising teacher's morale. Only three respondents considered that drama can boost their

morale when they can get more response and feedback from pupils in drama lessons and can keep their teaching from being dull. When I raised this issue in the interviews, teachers were less optimistic about drama's potential to raise teacher's working morale. One teacher said: "...to boost our morale is not the main purpose for me to do drama; I would only say it's just 'side-effects'." While another teacher considered the benefits of doing drama are "not so rich as to cover all the difficulties of teaching or the labour invested."

Other strengths. Teachers also listed other advantages that drama brings, including: pupils can learn to observe and become more concentrated, learn to express themselves, learn social skills such as co-operating or communicating with others, build their confidence, and gain a sense of achievement. A teacher using drama games in teaching Chinese idioms recalled that: "kids were excited and become more concentrated than normally. ...they participated enthusiastically". Through the drama activities or tasks, another interviewee commented that, "pupils can obtain the skills or improve in the aspects that in a traditional sit-and-listen learning won't help, like self-expressing and confidence....though [they progress] little by little".

Teachers' Evaluation of Drama — The Difficulties

Teaching is not easy work: during the process there will be many unexpected situations that will involve quick decision-making in addition to information delivery. Teaching drama or teaching through drama may be an even more difficult task for teachers. All of the eight respondents who had experiences of teaching/using drama admitted that there were difficulties that affected teachers' morale. The evaluations by the respondents are divided into two categories: difficulties of teaching drama itself and those caused by the different environment.

The difficulties of teaching drama itself. Primarily the respondents in this study mentioned that doing drama is "energy-consuming" and "intellectually-demanding". One

teacher commented in the interview that:

I have to maintain good classroom control through out the drama process, keep learning in a certain quality instead of just letting pupils have fun, and to respond immediately to various demands from different pupils. These are all tiresome. Every time after a (drama) lesson, I just feel exhausted physically and mentally!

The second difficulty teachers expressed is time constraint, which includes the pressure to plan the lessons and squeezing time in the crowded timetable and curriculum to develop drama activities with pupils. If teachers teach drama or use drama techniques to boost learning, they definitely will sacrifice the time of other “academic” subjects. The third difficulty comes from the teachers themselves: the desire to be “professional”. They wished to have as successful teaching experiences as they have read about or observed in workshops, but they often failed. They felt disappointed and less confident, and not sure what went wrong. “This really affects my will to carry on using drama. I will doubt if I can make it next time,” commented one teacher, who was very interested in learning DIE, and had attempted to apply what she learned.

Other difficulties brought up were: lack of enough space in schools, difficulty in maintaining classroom control due to the children’s lack of self restraint, pupils were not active enough in learning, and some teachers considered their personalities did not match this pedagogy.

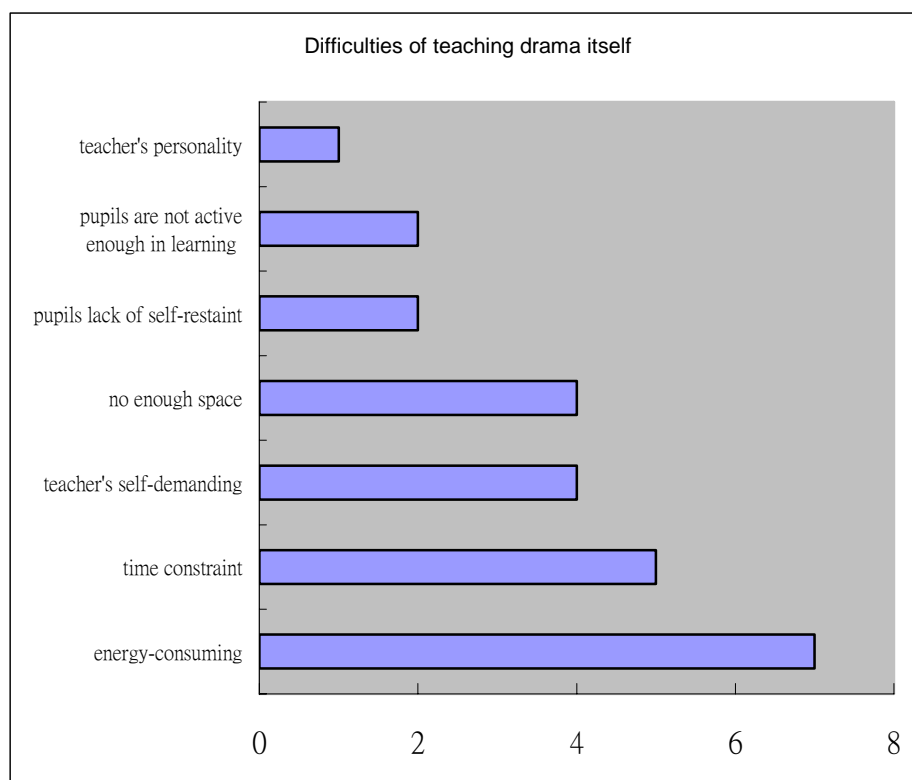


Figure 2. Difficulties of teaching drama

The difficulties caused by the environment. According to the respondents, some of the problems they encountered were caused by the environment, i.e., the social values, school culture, and ways of teaching/learning under Taiwanese cultural context. Some of the teachers, who required teaching performing arts, believed that they lacked sufficient training. Also they were disappointed that there was insufficient support or resources from the schools, such as funding, space, and continuous drama training. Due to drama's low status in Taiwanese society as mentioned in previous section, when teaching drama, as one teacher notes, "it is rare to get the support, understanding or appreciation from the principal, parents, and even other colleagues in the school..."

Teachers' Willingness to Take Action

What will teachers do after learning about and recognizing the positive effects of DIE?

Through the questionnaires and interviews, three aspects were investigated about teachers' actions: they would learn more about DIE, and to adopt DIE to their teaching.

Teachers' willingness to learn more about drama in education. All the teachers agreed that drama in education was worthwhile to learn and promote. Fourteen teachers said they were willing to attend schools' drama workshops. After all, "we can get a certificate that will add on the points of our teaching evaluation every year", said a teacher. Some also admitted that they liked the free chances to recharge themselves, to learn knowledge, get inspiration, and to be released from their intense work. However, only six said that they would attend theatre groups' workshops; the others hesitated to invest the extra money, time and energy.

Willingness to adopt DIE. Among the 18 respondents, most were willing or eager to do drama; while four of them clearly stated that they did not wish to teach or apply drama to their teaching; and one did not see the need to do drama so far. The reasons for being unwilling to adopt DIE include:

- lack of personal interest;
- lack of suitable personalities for doing drama, for instance, no interest in acting, in expressing through body movement; and
- lack of professional skills and knowledge in D.I.E or drama techniques.

If within this small-scale research there are teachers who are not interested in taking risks to change or try new pedagogy, there must be more teachers of similar backgrounds in Taiwan that respond to DIE in the same way. Interviewees had other reasons for not using drama which seemed both familiar and understandable. A teacher, for example, expressed that:

I am a traditional kind of teacher who likes to be well-prepared and organized, so that pupils admire me, and can benefit the most from my teaching. If I lack of knowledge in this field, or enthusiasm, how can I be persuasive?

This is really a teaching style or belief that many Taiwanese or Chinese teachers hold,

though the list of their reasons may be called a “myth” or “excuses” toward drama teaching (Woolland, 1993). This issue of different teaching styles and cultures will be discussed further in next section.

Teachers’ action. Given that many teachers in this study were ready to open their hearts and mind to adopt DIE, only eight teachers had taught drama themselves. Many among the 15 had never actually put their knowledge about drama into practice. Of the eight who had tried drama, only four teachers said they would be happy to “continue” doing drama. The others held back their fervency since they had experienced frustrations or obstacles, saying “perhaps will continue to try”, or “not in a short time”.

In sum, the results of the investigation show that the trend of adopting educational drama was wide spread, and most teachers were willing to learn or give it a try. However, among this trend, some teachers were not aware or informed about DIE; some even refused to adopt it. The findings also revealed the benefits and difficulties teachers weighed in using drama in the curriculum.

Discussion

Having realized through this study that there are no simple cause-and-effects for this sophisticated real life setting, or absolute facts (Radnor, 2002), I still endeavoured to describe and understand the interactions within the context, simply hoping to identify the key issues and to draw useful implications for drama’s future development in Taiwan.

The Reality and Difficulties — Three Key Factors

From the questionnaire and interview data about adopting DIE to Taiwan’s primary curriculum, there are three recurrent themes: environment, teachers and pupils. They rise from the reality of Taiwan teachers’ teaching, and they may also be the key factors to understand and solve the difficulties teachers confront.

Environment. One of the differences between the Western and Taiwan's educational context is the image of drama. It is only during recent years that drama's educational values were recognized; therefore from the result teachers stated that they seldom gain understanding or enough support from school and parents when teaching drama. They are fighting hard with the whole environment. As Acker (1999) described, teachers are "working hard, doing good, and feeling bad" (p.174). Therefore if the new concepts and pedagogy of drama from Western societies are not widely accepted, it is hard to expect any changes and success.

Joyce and Showers (1995) suggested four components for establishing a sound staff development system — the individual practitioner, the school site, the district initiative, and the governing agencies. Only when the four levels coordinate well, the renewal of the system will be possible. Within each level, proper responsibilities should be taken while training and consultation should be provided. This reflects the problems of the educational system in Taiwan which fails to support teacher's drama practice. Therefore, it is important to consider the aspects of trainings in strengthening teachers' skills, resources that help teachers to carry out what they learn about drama, and a democratic structure that allows autonomy and encourages collaboration. On the other hand, teachers' reflective practice can also help the school culture move toward a change-oriented one.

Teachers. When adopting new concepts and pedagogy from other educational paradigm, teachers play an important role. Some researchers even argue that teachers are the instrument and centre of implementing educational reform (Mullen, 2002). It really depends on teachers' choice to take action to change when they are aware of the need. The results of this study show that some teachers still know little and show little interest about DIE, though drama is now included in the statutory curriculum. As to teachers who have learned about the drama practice, many among them still have not put what they have learned into practice.

Another aspect that influenced teachers' taking action is the traditional view of teachers and teaching style. One of the interviewees who explained why teachers struggle to do drama said that:

DIE is difficult for some teachers to accept because when applying it, teachers' role totally changes.....In the learner-centred [drama] teaching, teachers will lose their authority, and lose the control of the whole classroom, which is quite opposite to what Taiwanese or Chinese teachers are used to.

Teachers in our society are the authority and source of knowledge, and therefore, should receive respect and obedience from pupils (Sham, 1997). As a result, to adopt drama means to change the ways of classroom management and views of teachers' role. Teachers' responses explained that it is a big challenge for them to accept and apply the educational concepts, and the ways of teaching embedded in DIE.

Pupils. The environment and the teachers are often the main concerns of education reforms. Pupils, however, are less considered as a part of the reform, but are mentioned by the teachers in the questionnaires and interviews that pupils can actually make differences in drama activities.

According to the data, the influence of pupils I attribute to is their learning style, which is formed under a very distinct educational context from the West. In the responses concerning the difficulties of doing drama, teachers listed many aspects that are related to pupils' learning style. For instance, they cannot collaborate with others, they prefer being given a correct answer than thinking and exploring, and they are not used to being "active" participants. In Chinese societies, pupils are asked to respect and be obedient to teachers, as a result they are less able to challenge authority and express themselves in front of the authority (Sham, 1997). Active learning, thinking independently and co-operating with others instead of competing are not encouraged (Watkins, 2000). Thus I would suggest before the ways of learning is re-examined, pupils and teachers will find it hard to benefit from DIE.

Implications for the Future

“Reality is something you rise above.” Liza Minnelli (1946 -)

In the light of the literature and Taiwanese teachers' perceptions of teaching DIE, I propose three suggestions for adopting drama: preparing for “the third space” for DIE in Taiwan, teacher training, and taking time.

Preparing for “the Third Space” for DIE in Taiwan

In the literature review, I referred to the concept of “the third space” where different cultures meet and interact: within this space different values or ways of doing things immerge, substitute or influence each other. When DIE meets Taiwan's cultural context and educational setting, participants may take different positions or reactions in the interactive process: to observe, to evaluate, to change, or to ignore. Cultural conflicts or dilemmas may be found, whereas there is a good opportunity to add vitality and create new possibilities for our own education and society; furthermore, something new may emerge that fits in Taiwan's context well.

To benefit from this “learning from each other” process and anticipate the third space happening, we need to let the voices of both sides be heard and dialogues begin. We need to keep an open mind, while at the same time we deliberately evaluate the spirits that drama encourages, including the interactive teaching/learning style, and a democratic classroom which emphasizes collaboration, communication, autonomy and thinking independently. With deeper understanding, the dialogue and interaction can then have a balanced stand.

Teacher Training

Drama is now included in Taiwan's curriculum; therefore, professional teacher training on both theories and practice of drama is more demanded then ever. For Taiwan's teachers,

learning DIE is not just learning about the drama techniques, but also learning values and culture from a different educational system. It is similar to what Acker (1999) mentioned about UK teachers: “In adjusting to the new requirement (National Curriculum), teachers were not just acquiring technical skills, but making a ‘major reconstruction of their self-identity’” (p.174). For Taiwanese teachers, while putting into practice of the new paradigm, they themselves need to adjust and reconstruct their ethos first. Professional training is vital to help them get prepared in these dimensions.

Time is the Best Friend

During Taiwan’s presidential election in 2004, turmoil happened and oppositions were created. On reporting these series of events, the *International Herald Tribune* commented that “in the short eight years of full democracy in Taiwan.....time is Taiwan’s friend” (Power, 2004). Whether implementing democracy or reforming education policy or new educational values, change takes time. Time is needed for absorbing, adapting and amending. Time and patience are required to change the surrounding culture which affects educators and schools (Craft, 1997). This does not mean that the educators and practitioners should use this as an excuse for not to change, but as an element to avoid hasty reforms and to produce sustainable educational development.

Conclusion

Based on the research conducted to investigate how teachers of a primary school in Taipei response to and evaluate teaching drama, this paper reports the findings and draws implications from literature as well as the results of the study. The rationale and aims of the research was given in the beginning of the paper, as well as the research context in terms of Taiwan’s cultural and the school background where the study conducted. Given the backdrop of the research, literature was then examined covering how drama was viewed in the Western

countries, aspects of teacher's taking actions, and the issues of transferring a new paradigm from a different culture including those raised by Said, Spivak and Bhabha. The research design including the methods of data collection and analysis were explained, and research findings reported regarding the background of the respondents, their evaluations of strengths and difficulties of teaching drama, and their willingness to put drama into practice. Finally discussion on the key factors—environment, teachers, pupils— was made and implications were proposed for drama education in Taiwan in terms of preparing for “the third space” for DIE in Taiwan, teacher training, and taking time.

Einstein the famous scientist once claimed that: “In the middle of difficulty lies opportunity.” From the findings of this research, the unique reality and difficulties are revealed concerning adopting DIE to Taiwan's educational system; yet understanding the real situations from teachers' viewpoints is just a start to come up with feasible implications. Hoping by sharing the research results and my personal insights, this paper can call for further evaluations on applying drama in Taiwan as well as on the whole educational system.

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About the Author

During 2003-04, I studied in the University of Exeter for MEd of Drama & Creative Arts in Education, hoping to contribute what I have learnt to Taiwan's education. Before I went to the UK, I worked in primary schools in Taipei as an English teacher and a classroom teacher. No matter teaching English or other subjects in Mandarin, I always love to use drama or stories, mixed with inventive methods to teach, and invite my pupils to learn with me creatively. After the research for my MA dissertation, I conducted a further study on the same topic which this paper is based on, and I also carried out another research of drama teaching in two primary schools for my PhD project — developing creativity through drama in Taiwan. The proposal of the PhD research was presented at the IDEA congress in July 2007 in Hong Kong, while a short article about the research, the lesson plan and pupils' responses will be published in the Journal of Aesthetic Education, No. 159. For me, doing research is a valuable process of examining theories and my experiences; while the ultimate goals is to share what I learnt with more people, and cultivate the soil where I grew upon!

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