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Introduction

*'There is one thing stronger than all the armies in the world
and that is an idea whose time has come.'*

Victor Hugo ■

*'Imagine that what for drama practitioners was simply felt
to be so, might now be researched, and what was largely
instinct and belief, might now be verifiable. The good news
is that it probably is.'*

John Norman (1999) ■

Young children from all cultures pretend. They create make-believe worlds that are stimulated by real or imagined experiences and, if they are fortunate, they will find adults who are adept at joining them in these make-believe worlds. Playful adults may be parents, carers, friends or possibly teachers and classroom assistants. Their reasons for playing make-believe with children may vary and, for teachers, the reasons may be rooted in an understanding that make-believe worlds are compelling places for children to be, within which they can be guided to learn in meaningful, memorable and enjoyable ways. Teachers who practise drama in education take all this one step further. They set about creating with children, sometimes quite complex shared, imagined and sustainable worlds which whole classes of children contract to enter alongside teachers. Within these shared, imagined worlds the children may have a play agenda and the teacher may have a learning agenda which can become synonymous in practice. Teachers who understand not just children and learning but also how drama works can make imagined experiences not only cognitively compelling and challenging but also aesthetically powerful and vivid.

It was from the seeds of dramatic play that drama in education grew and flourished, particularly in the 1960s and 70s, as teachers began to see the learning potential of creating and entering whole-class fictions. Dorothy Heathcote was a pioneer of this approach. The drama class worked co-operatively together with their teacher and committed themselves seriously as participants to an ongoing fiction. In the drama lesson they could pretend together to be a different people living in a different place and at a different point in time. Within the fiction infinitely possible plots could unfold, which the children owned with the teacher. Working in this way was (and still is) stimulating, motivating, enjoyable and compelling. It can also be thought provoking and deeply meaningful, linking memorable learning with emotion.

Drama soon became a vehicle for teaching creatively across the curriculum. For example, in history, drama could be used to help children to empathize through role with characters from the past and gain understanding of different viewpoints and historical events, bringing them alive and actively exploring them 'as if' they were there at the time. Often drama in education work was thematically based. A class might set off together on an enterprise as experts (anthropologists, botanists, geologists, archaeologists and so forth) on an imaginary voyage to an unexplored

island and, through an ongoing drama, be keeping a ship's log (English), charting the voyage (maths), mapping the island (geography). All the while they would be solving imaginary problems together, maybe creating an imaginary settlement, meeting imaginary dangers together, making sense of imaginary relics, thinking and problem solving together, creating a story-drama. The teaching and learning flowed on the sea of children's ideas, with the teacher at the learning helm.

This 'whole-class' drama declined with the introduction of the statutory national curriculum, which led to more subject-specific teaching and a requirement to cover specific content at particular ages. Teaching soon became content centred rather than child centred. It became more difficult to organize learning to flow across curriculum subjects as detailed planning became a main concern and high stakes assessments and inspections checked curriculum coverage. National strategies weighted teachers attentions and timetables towards literacy and numeracy. However, some teachers successfully carried on using drama in education within their teaching of the newly prescribed curriculum and national strategies but nonetheless drama, and in particular whole-class drama, declined and became associated with the teaching of the 1960s and early 70s, which was being eroded and eradicated.

However, drama in education did not disappear. Some teachers felt it to be even more necessary as a way of bringing the new curriculum alive for children. After a while drama started to emerge or find synchronicity with new educational activities and movements such as Philosophy for Children (P4C) and curriculum areas such as PSHE. Soon drama in education was spawning new roots and names. 'Process drama', 'enquiry drama', 'issue-based drama' and 'context drama' started to emerge in conjunction with the burgeoning interest in thinking skills. Drama strategies have increasingly leaked into educational practice outside the context of drama lessons through teachers becoming aware of and using certain drama strategies as methodology – such as Mantle of the Expert, Hot-seating and Freeze-frame (see Part Two).

As thinking about thinking (metacognition) and the teaching of thinking has come to the fore in recent years, drama practitioners have begun to recognize that the stimulation, development and communication of thinking has always been at the heart of the drama process. Recently, enhanced understanding of the teaching of thinking skills by drama practitioners has sharpened process-based drama practice. Conversely, teachers engaged in the teaching of thinking skills are becoming increasingly aware of drama as a child-friendly and 'brain-friendly' medium with an established framework and methodology that supports the teaching of thinking.

Several years ago I attended a conference, at which a well-established and respected drama practitioner was talking about teaching and learning to an audience who were there to focus on the teaching of thinking. I realized that the methodology he was describing and exemplifying was drama in education and yet strangely, he did not once use the word 'drama'. At the end of his talk I said how pleased I was that he was promoting drama as a teaching and learning medium. He said, 'I advise you not to call what we do "drama"; call it "accelerated learning" if you want people to listen. As soon as you call it "drama" they will shut off.' I bristled in defence of drama. 'But it is drama that you are doing,' I protested. He agreed with me and said, almost conspiratorially, that it was also close to what was now being called 'accelerated learning', which was actively encouraged. He considered promoting the practice of drama in education more important than naming it. I appreciate now the many congruent aspects between accelerated learning and drama (see Chapter 1).

Around the same time I attended several courses about the brain and learning, including days on accelerated learning. I started to gain new knowledge and understanding about educationally relevant neuroscientific research, the theory of multiple intelligences, preferred learning styles, gender and the brain and so on. Again, what I was learning was powerfully resonating in relation to drama in education. I knew that drama was the most motivational of all subjects (Harland et al., 2000) but I was becoming increasingly aware why this might be so. It became clear that drama in education fitted with what was being referred to as 'brain-friendly' learning, like a glove. Drama is multisensory, visual, auditory, kinesthetic, tactile, multi-intelligent, emotionally linked learning. Drama relies on co-operation and through it we learn about ourselves as human beings and about others and the world we inhabit together. Drama is humanistic and concerned with the personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development of people.

This book is most certainly not about returning to the 1960s and 70s, within which much good and bad drama thrived. It is about helping drama to be understood in relation to our recent understandings about learning, thinking and the brain. It is about building theoretical and practice-based bridges between complementary educational worlds and movements. It is also about understanding where drama fits into and supports the existing curriculum and that of the future. And most importantly, it is about trying to support learning-focused, process-based, child-centred practice for the benefit of children first, and then teachers.

This book aims both to help drama practitioners understand more about the brain, thinking and learning, and to help those who are interested in the brain, thinking and learning understand more about drama as a learning model and methodology. I am a drama specialist with a particular interest in learning and the brain. I am not a neuroscientist. If it transpires that there are any errors in this book I apologize in advance.

This book is timely. It is published at a time when teachers are being officially told that they should be teaching for creativity (QCA, 2003a) at a time when they are being asked to focus more specifically on teaching and developing speaking and listening and, within that, drama (QCA, 2003b and c), and at a time when Arts Council England have republished a second edition of *Drama in Schools*. It is also published at a time when schools are being encouraged to take back the freedom to organize the planning and teaching of the national curriculum and the national strategies in their own way, including teaching across subjects and in ways that are active and learning-centred rather than teaching-centred (DfES, 2003).

How to use this book

■ PART ONE

This section explains what is meant by drama in education and how and why drama and dramatic play enable learning. It considers dramatic play and drama in the light of what neuroscientists have discovered in recent years about the way the brain functions most effectively and how it is wired for learning, particularly through play (including role play) and talk. It explains the important role of adults in helping sustain and develop children's natural learning skills and suggests how teachers might do this. Part One presents drama as a holistic, multisensory, multi-intelligent, cognitive and affective, shared learning experience that can be made accessible to the majority of children. Links are made between drama and current research on dialogic talk. Connections are also made between drama methodology and several recently emerged child-centred educational movements which focus on developing children's thinking for learning as well as their emotional well-being.

■ PART TWO

This section names and explains some of the main tools in the drama teacher's toolbox. Drama for learning has a well established methodology and strategies which can be of benefit to any teacher as a means of developing children holistically as thinkers and creators. Part Two lays out clearly some of these strategies and conventions. It explains what they are, what they do and how to go about selecting appropriate drama strategies. It also suggests how strategies might be best mixed, matched and developed in order to make thinking and learning multi-intelligently more accessible.

■ PART THREE

Part Three offers a series of drama units. These exemplify the ways in which drama strategies and forms can be brought together to produce a coherent and enjoyable unit of drama work that can stimulate teaching and learning across the curriculum at various key stages. The units of work are presented in columns that make clear which drama strategy is being used and why, as well as giving helpful instructions to the teacher as to how to set up and carry through the various activities. The drama units give evidence to the claims made in Part One, that drama is an accessible medium for all teachers.

■ PART FOUR

Photocopiable sheets are provided that offer optional additional support to clarify and extend thinking for learning. The sheets are generic and adaptable for a range of purposes both within the lessons, after the lessons or for teachers to use in ways unrelated to drama. The resource sheets take some of the key drama strategies explained in Part Two and link them to simple, visual frameworks, which can then support the organizing and recording of the emerging and evolving thoughts shared within the drama.



PART ONE

Chapter 1 – Drama in Education

Chapter 2 – Drama and the Brain

Chapter 3 – Dramatic Play and Learning

Chapter 4 – Drama and Intelligences

Chapter 5 – Drama and Thinking

Chapter 6 – Drama, Creativity and Imagination

Chapter 7 – Drama, Thinking and Talk