

Book reviews

Mullineaux, P. (2014) ***Just a Second! Exploring global issues through drama and theatre***. Dublin: Afri. 94 pages. ISBN 978-0-9511178-8-0.

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In *Just a Second! Exploring global issues through drama and theatre*, Pete Mullineaux compiles the results of years of development education work through drama and theatre with youth in Ireland. Some of his work has been conducted under the sponsorship of Afri, an NGO based in Dublin, Ireland. Afri was founded in 1975, originally to fundraise for projects in the developing world. It changed course five years later, with the realization that other approaches to global issues were needed. Consciousness raising and education have become important goals for the organization, which now holds a wider view on social justice.

In the words of Rose Kelly, Afri's Development Education Co-ordinator, the expression *Just a Second!* in the title comes from 'meditation on the power of the moment ... and how moments lead to moments and how decisions arising from each help to create individual and collective realities' (Mullineaux, 2014: 3). In her introductory section, Kelly explains the influence of Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy on Afri's drama and theatre methodology in development education. Going into schools, Afri facilitators have an agenda and a plan; however, they pay attention to 'who is in the room' in terms of their needs and gifts (2). This allows for a flexibility of scenarios that encourages creativity. 'It invites participants to really step into their own light and shine. This, in turn, fosters aware, thoughtful and active citizenship. The local/global link is often made in development education' (2).

But the methodology goes further. The *personal* is added to the local and global. Kelly indicates that students and teachers experienced pain and suffering due to the disturbing topics entertained, such as excessive expenditures on weaponry, wars, poverty, and famine. One step forward was to 'not simply focus on the negative but to present positive alternatives.' The shift to imagining different possibilities for life in the world fosters 'empowerment, hope and engagement with the issues, and thus

facilitate[s] positive change' (3). In this process, the distinction between participant teachers and students becomes 'fluid and open' (4), which illustrates Freire's emphasis on the interaction between teaching and learning and on the humility required of teachers.

A third aspect of the methodology is the variety of activities afforded, with special attention paid to the real stories of the people in the room and elsewhere in the world. Activities included, for example: round-table discussions about global issues; a game, *The Gift Box of a Voice Box*, where players think about the gift of having a voice and then voice their personal concerns to the group; an examination of the archetype of the superhero, finding one's own superhero gifts, and voicing them personally and as a group.

Mullineaux encapsulates these ideas as follows:

Our objective was to create memorable and compelling visual and audio images that would tell an immediate story, get to the nub of things, touch feelings and make sense as well as drama out of statistics. For the young participants in the workshops this also offered an opportunity to engage with the theme directly at an experiential and gut level; to anchor and inform subsequent reflection and discussion.

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He compiles texts of five mini-plays with global themes that resulted from projects involving schools and communities throughout Ireland, including the yearly Afri Famine Walk. He concludes with a detailed explanation about how theatre improvisation exercises with the young evolve into texts and performances.

The plays address global issues such as famine and forced migration (*Push Pull—We're on the Move*); Fair Trade, food sovereignty, and competition for resources (*The Sacred Cactus*); food security, seed protection, and gender (*Jackie and Her Beanstalk*); the global arms trade and gender (*Calling the Shots*); and food security with a sci-fi twist (*More!*). Mullineaux provides the background, full text, and follow-up to each of the mini-plays. In the follow-up, he revisits themes and provides examples of improvisation structures and drama techniques employed with participants during the particularly creative process of the play.

Kinaesthetic learning takes place when improvisation and drama techniques are used. The plays show examples of freeze frames (groups construct a themed action scene with their bodies and freeze on command); making a machine (groups construct a machine with their bodies, make sounds, and develop a rhythm appropriate to the theme); queues (each actor at the front of the line will do or say something and go back to the end of the line); voices in the head (to witness the different ideas

describing a situation); hot seating (one actor answers questions from the group); hearts, brains, and stomachs (voices about how human beings make decisions); street market (voice projection and persuasion); and protests (group develops voices against injustice). Such exercises yield characters, contexts, and narratives that become mini-plays, which are then written and performed. Mullineaux, who wrote the open-to-change and input blueprint for the plays as he worked with participants, explains:

The integrity of the project requires that it is inclusive and open-minded in approach and the participants given sufficient opportunities to explore. The process drama approach involves exploring issues and themes through role-play and improvisation, incorporating opportunities for reflection and discussion. The drama facilitator arrives at each session with a plan for stimulating imaginations in order for the group to gain more awareness of the issues.

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The texts of the mini-plays attest to the participants' enhanced awareness of the issues, and thus to the efficacy of this method.

Global and development education scholars have pointed out the need for active pedagogies to engage students in the complex and difficult issues that affect humanity. Pete Mullineaux and associated facilitators at Afri have applied Paulo Freire's and Augusto Boal's understanding of the importance of reflection and action to inspire and capture the interest of youth in the service of learning and practising citizenship. They share their experience with educators and researchers in this precious book.