

DRAMA FOR PERSONS WITH INTELLECTUAL DISABILITIES

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Самовираження і символізм є конституальними властивостями кожної людини, що дає можливість їй повноцінно діяти в навколишньому світі. Драма є потужним фактором розвитку таких властивостей.

Jean-Ovide Decroly observed children with speech deficiencies, and that led him to further studies in the fields of psycho and sociolinguistics. These studies forced him to question the omnipotence of the word and led him to the creation of his own concept of expression. Decroly came to believe that traditional systems glorify verbal education. He, in turn, proposed a broad definition of language as the notion of expression encompassing individual's exteriorization and internal concretization, thanks to which each human being is able to assimilate the elements of the outside world. His broad definition of language comprised a system of signs "at once physical, physiological and mental, individual and social". The use of various means of expression in everyday life proves the great importance and value of non-verbal manifestations, referring to articulated language and conventional codes. According to Decroly, language is the expression of emotions through the body (gestures, movement, facial expressions, dance), through vocalization (talking, calling out, singing), through writing (reading, writing, codes), and through art (painting, music, poetry, theatre).

Ernst Cassirer during his studies on language as a form of expression contended that symbolism is the key to the world of man and his culture. After him, "Human culture derives its specific character and its intellectual and moral values, not from the material of which it consists, but from its form, its architectural structure. And this form may be expressed in

any sense material" [1, 56]. Therefore progress in human development is possible regardless of the deficiencies of its sense material. If expression and symbolization are constitutive features of every human being, which enable it to function fully in the surrounding world, then drama is the appropriate method of developing them.

Symbolization and expression. The word "symbol" comes from the Greek "symbolon" [2]. Originally the term meant an object broken in half, where the halves constituted a sign of agreement between those in their possession. The agreement could encompass different areas of life: trade, family bonds, friendship, love or trust.

By W. Kopaliński "Everything that is symbolic, the tendency for multivalence, the constancy and variability, the expression of good and evil, life and death, budding and withering, rising and falling, is on the one hand exoteric and on the other esoteric at the same time, it reveals and obscures. The symbol is characterized by its indefinite character and vagueness; it is often fluid, shifting, full of contradictions, many a time comprehensible only to the insiders" [2, 8]. According to Jung a symbol concerns the "spiritual force, which operates in life and can be recognized only by its results" [3, 26]. It is a part of the language of archetypes, it transforms psychic energy into images, or in Jung's terms 'psychic images'. These images are the reflection and the essence of the dynamics of our psychic life. Symbols appear in dreams, visions, creating a form of individual mythology [4, 23]. Symbols play an important role in personal development,

in the process of individualization. The goal of individualization is the achievement of 'wholeness', inner harmony, which allows for diversification and integration of positive and negative experiences, and making them a part of one's psyche, also through the means of symbolization [5]. Both art and religion use symbols to facilitate understanding of oneself, God and the world. Emotional experiences connected with communing with art (as well as religion) reveals inner images, fantasies, subtle emotions and elusive thoughts. The therapeutic value of symbols arises from their existence outside of reality. By Z. Osiński "During the theatrical symbolic process literally everything, every element and every detail, acquires meaning, gains justified symbolic importance" [6, 182].

Children are able to manipulate symbolic reality without having reached full verbal potential and fluency. Initially the child uses individual symbols discovered through playing. In order to "enter" the role of a mother or father, the child uses objects associated with the particular person (father's mobile phone, cigarettes, mother's lipstick or shoes). Bettelheim [7] analyzes values and symbols found in fairy tales and their meaning in a child's life. He wrote: "The world of fairy tales is filled with symbols, where everything occurs in a symbolic reality. This fact helps the child to better understand the reality surrounding it". Although a fairy tale possesses specific psychological contents (i.e. rejection or cruelty in "Cinderella" and "The Ugly Duckling") it does not describe a specific reality. The events take place in a symbolic realm and time: "once upon a time", "far, far away". Such statements help the child understand the contents of the tale. Children's imagination is filled with an ever growing number of sensations, which become only partially integrated. Some features of reality are perceived adequately by children, while other features are received as imaginative fantasies. This allows them to fill the gaps in the child's understanding of the world tainted by immaturity. Whenever different child fantasies become embodied in fairy tales (the big bad wolf, the evil witch, the fairy-godmother) it enables the child to begin organizing its inner contradictory tendencies [7]. Symbolic fairy tales

develop the child's emotionality and stimulate and enrich the child's imagination.

Symbolism is also present in drama. It is the essence of drama to have a symbolic layer, the experiencing of it and conscious perception of the symbolic matter, as well as finding universal values within drama itself. Besides the symbolic content, symbols appear on other levels; in costumes, decorations and props.

Expression, creative expression to be more exact, is generally described in pedagogic literature in the context of artistic activities. This is also the way it was perceived by supporters of the New Education in Europe and Progressive Education in the United States, who propagated unlimited creative expression during classes concerning music, art, theatre or dance. In contemporary concepts of aesthetic education researchers point out the need of broadening of the scope of expression and creative attitude, and expanding it from artistic areas to other fields of education, both obligatory (school) and extracurricular (outside of school). Researchers like John Guilford and Viktor Lowenfeld maintained that creative abilities (disposition, imagination) of every human being may be developed. This view allowed for new perspectives on educational work. Leon Chancerel and Claudio Desinan believed physical expression to be the most important factor in drama. In their opinion, movement was the primary means of expression, therefore the use of movement should be the main goal in drama in creating one's consciousness or awareness of their body and its movement abilities and potential. During the initial drama session, the participants illustrate stories using sounds, gestures and movement. They discover different characteristics of movement: fluidity, tempo, rhythm, agility. The participants learn to express their emotions through body movements as well as by means of non-verbal communication. The next step in working with drama is the creation and illustration of participants' personal stories using diversified forms of expression. Brian Way proposes a series of exercises based on sensory data, which help arouse the imagination and body awareness. Next, he proposes exercises based on illustrating contradictions. Way believes that contradiction is the basis of dramatic conflict,

which forces participants to search for its resolution expressed through movement. This form of movement is symbolic in nature, which triggers and frees intuition and emotions. Creating various roles during group work, the participants “see” their own experiences treated as personal tragedies, which are perceived as universal in character and common to all through their symbolic generalization. This leads to participants’ distancing themselves from their personal experience. Therefore the result of drama sessions is the feeling of cleansing and relaxation.

Drama vs. dramatherapy. In the 1980s, David Read Johnson applied the developmental approach in dramatherapy. He believed that the developmental paradigm (theories by Erikson, Levinson) is connected with processes occurring during dramatherapy. Johnson describes five significant developmental stages.

1. Structure/organization. Persons with intellectual disabilities often need organization of their surroundings. In dramatherapy the structure is constituted by the place where the sessions take place (the room is always the same with the same arrangement), by the people (always the same group and therapist) and by clearly stated rules.

2. Means of expression. Johnson refers to three stages of development of thinking: Sensomotoric, in which thoughts are represented by body movement and expression; Symbolic, where thoughts are represented by visual and auditory symbols, or by using gesture, posture, or facial expression; Reflexive, where words, language and other abstract symbols appear. Drama uses all of the means of expression mentioned above.

3. Level of complexity of a situation or one’s activity. During drama sessions both the level of activity of a single participant and the relationships among members of the group can differ in complexity. One of the main rules of drama session construction is the gradual raising of difficulty level. The session commences with simple activities and goes on to more complex and difficult ones.

4. Ability to tolerate intense experience without anxiety. Drama allows participants to learn to understand their own emotions better

as well as those of other people. The therapist’s objective is to create a sense of security.

5. Level of relationship complexity among people. Awareness and understanding of other people’s emotions, intentions, opinions or behavior is enhanced during drama sessions. This not only happens because of roles played by participants, but also thanks to the forming of relationships among them. The goal of dramatherapy is to reach integration leading to a holistic, flexible and positive experience. Johnson believes that it is possible to use the developmental approach regardless of the group [8].

Are drama and dramatherapy the same method? In fact, both use the same activities. Drama is a kind of pedagogic therapy. The term dramatherapy is applied when drama methods are used in working with people with various disabilities and disorders (i.e. psychological) or during rehabilitation. Dramatherapy is a method which uses ‘creative drama’ during therapy focused on personal development, emotional and physical integration. We use the term dramatherapy where theatre is the means of self expression and group interaction, using theatric techniques [9]. Dramatherapy may be broadly applied during medical treatment, education and resocialization. This means that the method, goals, techniques and strategies remain the same. However the scope and level of drama activities may differ.

Chesner A. [10] formulated the rules for drama teachers working with people with learning disabilities. He believed that the following are of greatest significance during sessions:

1. Patience, allowing time for answer or initiation of an activity.
2. Possibility of flexible scenario change (allowing the participant for the completion of the original task/activity).
3. Maintaining of true and honest relationships with participants.
4. Predictability of the course of session.
5. Experimenting, creativity.
6. Respecting personal space and accepting the level of access granted by the participants.
7. Acceptance of the participants’ specific ways of speaking and behavior.
8. Dynamic work tempo.

9. Instruction repetition.

10. Ability to prevent preservative and obsessive behavior.

Following these rules guarantees effective session conduct and creates an atmosphere, in which participants feel comfortable and motivated to participate. Another aspect of great significance is the relationship between the drama therapist and the participants. The course of session influences further development of social and communicative interactions, which depend on positive negotiations, cooperation and empathy on the part of the therapist towards the participants. This means that the therapist also gains a deeper understanding and true respect for the needs and interests of persons with intellectual disabilities. Even if participants do not manifest the need for positive reinforcement, it should be given just the same as while working with groups exhibiting normal development [11].

Some researchers suggest that sometimes it is better not to give ready recipes for task completion [12]. This allows for session participants to approach the task in a more creative and appropriate way, develop their skills and reach the intended goal. Therefore the use of drama and other methods focused on intensified functioning on every level of their activity is crucial while working with participants with intellectual disabilities.

Drama can become a training ground for social interaction or a method of teaching social behaviors through experience for participants with intellectual disabilities. The level of education may concern everyday problems and practical skills, though it is important to initiate the work with subject matter the participants are most familiar with. The greater the intellectual and emotional involvement in the learning process, the more effective are the results and the greater the personal satisfaction of every participant.

The main area of education for persons with intellectual disabilities concerns aspects of everyday life, thanks to which participants engage themselves more deeply emotionally, and therefore more effectively acquire specific skills needed in everyday life. Beginning with basic forms of self-maintenance, through practice of everyday situations such as: shopping, telephone con-

versations or finding themselves under threatening circumstances (calling for ambulance, police or fire brigade). Drama should be a source of joy and satisfaction. Drama session contents should be directed towards and enriched with contents which stimulate personal development and expose the full potential of every participant (educational models based on positive reinforcement) through, among others, realization of needs for affiliation (social interactions within the group, self-affirmation through being accepted by the group) or needs connected with gaining new, diverse and emotionally engaging experiences. To put it simply – to teach specific skills (instrumental needs) [13].

Drama sessions for participants with intellectual disabilities do not differ from those for participants exhibiting developmental norm. The subject content, choice of techniques and scope of tasks may differ. The matter of greatest importance is the preparation of the therapist, which can also aid in methodic session preparation. The following guidelines may come in helpful during synopsis construction, it is therefore important to:

1. To complete no more than three objectives (goals) per session.
2. Gradually raise the difficulty of tasks.
3. Often change the form of activity.
4. Use a fixed (unchanging) order and schema of activities.
5. Pay attention to the individual needs of the participants.

Resume. It may happen that some of the participants with intellectual disabilities will never reach past the initial drama activities. However, if their skills have developed in even the slightest way and the sessions themselves are a source of happiness and leave the participants satisfied by their actions, than it is worth working using drama methods, remembering always that drama is a universal method. Everyone, regardless of the level they are beginning from can use it as a source of joy. A human being develops and functions in the world not only thanks to the activity of its cognitive processes. The constitutive elements of everyone of us are emotions and feelings, which drama helps to develop and gives them direction.



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Introduced the subject of drama use as a means of pedagogic therapy in facilitating developmental growth of persons with intellectual disabilities. Drama may constitute a training ground for social interaction or a method of teaching social behaviours through experience. The level of therapeutic work may concern everyday problems and practical skills, though it is important to initiate with subject matter that persons with intellectual or learning disabilities are most familiar with. The main goal of drama is to intensify the functioning of intellectually disabled persons on every level of their activity. Drama is a universal method which can become a source of joy and satisfaction, as well as benefit the development of every human being.

Розглянуто використання драми як засіб педагогічної терапії для осіб з обмеженими розумовими можливостями в сприянні зростанню їх розвитку. Драма може являти собою простір для соціальної взаємодії або методику опанування соціальної поведінки через досвід. Спрямованість терапевтичної роботи може стосуватися повсякденних практичних навичок, при цьому важливо починати з предмета, який для людей з інтелектуальними вадами або проблемами навчання найкраще знайомий. Основна мета драми — активізувати роботу осіб з обмеженими інтелектуальними можливостями на кожному рівні їх діяльності. Драма є універсальним методом, який може стати джерелом радості і задоволення, а також послугувати на користь розвитку кожної людини.

Рассмотрено использование драмы как средства педагогической терапии для лиц с ограниченными умственными возможностями в содействии росту их развития. Драма может представлять собой пространство для социального взаимодействия или методику овладения социальным поведением через опыт. Направленность терапевтической работы может касаться повседневных практических навыков, при этом важно начинать с предмета, который для людей с интеллектуальными недостатками или проблемами обучения лучше всего знаком. Основная цель драмы — активизировать работу лиц с ограниченными интеллектуальными возможностями на каждом уровне их деятельности. Драма является универсальным методом, который может стать источником радости и удовольствия, а также послужить на пользу развитию каждого человека.

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