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Striving for a High Quality Drama Educator Training Programme*

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Abstract

This article describes a drama educator training programme offered by the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts in the Master of Fine Art (MFA) in Drama programme (Drama and Theatre Education major) since 2008. The curricular objectives and rationale are stated, and three fundamental approaches are identified which contribute to the realization of the objectives at a high quality. The approaches are (1) Clear identification of the learners' needs and provide relevant support. The matching of students' previous education background and the provision of supplementary courses is explained (2) Persistency in high quality praxis by enhancement of the learners' artistry: Specialization and cross-disciplinary learning opportunities, professional practice opportunities, learning with world masters opportunities are considered vital to the advancement of artistic practice (3) Diversity in experimentation of educational drama/ theatre forms. Practice-based project examples including a museum theatre project, a community theatre project, and a children's theatre project are described, to illustrate how the students explored the relationship between purpose, content, form and target audience in each project.

* This article has not undergone the normal external review process.

Introduction

It was totally my own loss for not being able to attend ‘The Second UNESCO World Conference on Arts Education’ held in Seoul 2010. When I read through the final report for the closing session of the conference, prepared by Professor Larry O’Farrell, the General Rapporteur of the Conference, as well as the ‘Seoul Agenda: Goals for the Development of Arts Education’ , I could imagine how vivid and fruitful the exchanges must have been. Indeed, with a congregation of more than 650 officials and experts in arts education from a total of 95 countries, its richness and great diversity must have been glamorous too.

Imagining the Seoul conference, I could not help but recall some of the most impressive drama conferences I had participated before, including DECC (The World Conference of Drama Education in Chinese Communities) Congress 2009, IDEA (International Drama and Theatre Education Association) Congress 2007 -- both hosted in Hong Kong (HK), and ATEC (Asian Theatre Education Centre) International forum 2009, hosted in Beijing. Regardless of my role as an administrative person, a committee member or a presenter, the best part I would always treasure was how arts educators came together to celebrate achievements and solve problems collectively. It is always amazing to see how different countries or regions exchange ideas and compensate each other based on their own specific contexts and precious experience. Thus, I was especially drawn to the ‘Regional group discussions’ session in the final report, where I could learn about the developmental pace, achievements and concerns of other UNESCO regions. In the ‘Asia and the Pacific’ group to which Hong Kong drama educators belong, there are three main areas of concern expressed namely (i) research and networking (ii) inclusive arts education and (iii) arts education specific teacher training (Seoul Agenda, 2010). As a matter of fact, the ‘arts education teacher training’ is a common issue concerned by three regional groups out of five (The Arab States, Asia and the Pacific, Latin America and the Caribbean), which reflects

both the potentiality and need of the general development of arts education in many parts of the world.

As affirmed by the Seoul Agenda Goal 2(b), high quality arts education is inseparable from high quality arts education teaching training. Yet the ‘supply’ of a particular arts subject teacher training depends on how the society and thus their formal education ‘demand’ that subject. In the case of ‘Drama’, although it is an eligible component in arts education, it has somehow travelled a tougher road in comparison with that of music and visual arts, at least in Chinese societies. Due to various historical reasons, Chinese used to believe that learning to play music or to paint could nurture disciplined, diligent and elegant youngsters, while engaging in drama activities was merely fooling around without any true value. As the old Chinese saying goes ‘勤有功，戲無益’ (Diligence has its reward and play has no advantages), thus students playing in a classroom was inappropriate and should not be allowed, unless it was received as a vocational training of say, young traditional Chinese Opera performers. In addition, the old-fashioned concepts such as ‘戲子無真情’ (Actors are heartless) or ‘學戲劇=學做戲=發明星夢’ (Learning drama equals learning acting equals you want to be a movie star) and the like, had also contributed to the negative image of participating drama. Nowadays, thanks to better understanding of performing arts and contemporary educational theories, people are paying more respect to ‘drama’ as a unique art form and are more open to the significant concept of ‘learning through play’. However, the place of drama in formal education still carries a big question mark in most Chinese societies.

Having said that, Hong Kong has been extremely fortunate in the past fifteen years or more, as drama education has experienced a big leap since the end of 90s. As observed by Cheung (2009) and Wong (2009), the Education Reform launched by the Hong Kong SAR government in the beginning of the 21st century, emphasizing ‘All-round development’ and ‘Life-long learning’ has brought about great opportunities for arts education including drama

education to be introduced into schools. As identified by Cheung (2009), the 3-year project ‘Artist-in-School’ launched by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council since 1997; the 3-year project ‘Arts-in-Education’ co-organized by the Hong Kong Institute of Education (HKIED), the Hong Kong Education Bureau (EDB) and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC) since 2000; the ‘Junior secondary school drama education seed project’ once implemented by the EDB for the exploration of ‘Drama-in-education’ and ‘Drama education’ in formal education; have all paved the way for the enhancement of the local drama education development. In fact, one of the most influential factors on the role of drama in formal education is the introduction of the New Senior Secondary (NSS) academic structure. Under this new structure, drama has received a special role not previously enjoyed in schools. Firstly, under the ‘Other learning experience (OLE)’ component of the NSS, students are suggested to take at least 135 hours in ‘Aesthetic development’ activities (artistic experiences). Due to the liveliness and highly interactive nature of drama, activities such as theatre-in-education (TIE) programmes (usually known as ‘School touring performance’ locally), long or short term drama courses, theatre visits including watching drama productions in professional venues are becoming some of the most popular choices opted into by many schools, thus drama is reaching much more students and teachers than before. Secondly, students may take drama electives under Chinese Language and English Language, which are both compulsory subjects in NSS, titled ‘Drama Workshop’ and ‘Learning English through Drama’ respectively. Thirdly, as the most ground breaking one in my view, is ‘Drama’ to be offered as an art subject on its own right, under the Applied Learning course ‘Introduction to Theatre Arts’—it is the first time ever in the local HK secondary education formal curriculum. The direct result of all these changes in the role and place of drama in formal education is an increased exposure of drama/ theatre to young people, and the indirect result is an increased amount of drama education practitioners needed in the field. Besides, as

predicted by both Wong (2009) and Cheung (2009), the vast opportunity of arts education as a whole, provided by the development of the local West Kowloon Cultural hub will further stimulate the advancement of drama education in formal educational or communal settings.

In response to the above local needs and specific cultural contexts, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, the only professional tertiary institution specialized in performing arts in Hong Kong, launched the MFA (Drama) programme offering Drama and Theatre Education (DTE) major in 2008 with the mission and vision to nurture professional drama teachers, specialists, educational theatre makers and actor-teachers in a wide range of settings and communal contexts. According to the demand and specific context in Hong Kong, the following four main objectives of the training are derived as below:

- a. Devise and produce theatre productions and activities in, and for, schools and other educational or community contexts;
- b. Design and develop drama and theatre curricula, programmes, and activities, and serve as leaders and advocates of drama education and applied theatre both locally and internationally;
- c. Teach theatre and dramatic arts as an art form and act as theatre amateurs in schools or communities; and,
- d. Develop drama and theatre as a pedagogical tool to enhance teaching and learning of other subjects (e.g. liberal studies, education through arts, English and Putonghua)

Starting from the designing stage of this programme until now, the school of drama has been searching for the fundamental ways to ensure high-quality drama education training, which will bring about further advancement in our current arts education scene. Among other

approaches, the following three principles are by far the most concrete and achievable ones she has identified under the local unique contexts:

- I. Clear identification of our learners' needs and provide relevant support
- II. Persist in high-quality praxis by enhancement of the learners' artistry
- III. Diversity in experimentation of educational drama/ theatre forms

In the following, I would further elaborate our work corresponding to these three principles.

I. Clear identification of our learners' needs and provide relevant support

In the beginning of 2012, the Academy has invited an internationally renowned drama educator Prof. Peter O'Connor to visit and benchmark our programme as an external academic reviewer (EAR). After visiting the thesis project our students created, he was amazed by how the high level of praxis has been demonstrated in the work even with compared to other similar courses around the world. The highly specialized skills were supported by a thorough understanding and application of the theoretical principles in educational drama/theatre. Indeed, as a 'practice-based' degree emphasizing 'high-quality delivery', the programme structure and content must be able to support learning which stimulates and enhances the organic interaction between theoretical and practical knowledge in the field of drama education. The professional analysis and examination made by the international expert-panelists in the revalidation exercise held by HKCAAVQⁱ in 2010, has confirmed the appropriate level (QF6ⁱⁱ) and approved the structure of our programme as followsⁱⁱⁱ:

Table 1. Credit structure of MFA (Drama) programme

Required courses	36/37 credits
Thesis Project	14 credits
Specialization Electives (in Drama)	3-7 credits
Cross-disciplinary Electives (in Dance, Music, TV & Film, Theatre and Entertainment Arts)	3-6 credits
Total	60 credits

Under the ‘Required courses’, the DTE major has been providing three ‘pillar’ courses which are specifically addressing to the curricular objectives listed above, and serve as the vital theoretical framework and central educational drama/theatre pedagogies throughout the whole study. Building on the basis that these three courses are firmly founded, students will be exploring, experimenting and reflecting upon any areas or topics specific to their own interest and career aspiration. These courses are shown below with the targeting curricular objectives mapped:

Table 2. Three pillar courses mapping the curricular objectives

Course/ Programme objectives	(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)
Drama-in-Education		√		√
Drama as a Performing Arts Subject: Teaching and Learning		√	√	
Applied Theatre	√	√		

These three courses are responding to the three main types of competencies being needed or expected from the educational drama/ theatre specialists currently, and they are also the fundamental competencies for the future drama and theatre education development in Hong Kong:

1. Able to use drama as a teaching tool (drama-in-education) or participatory pedagogy to explore issues or enhance the teaching of other subjects (such as English language learning or Liberal studies)

2. Able to teach drama or theatre as an art form (drama/theatre knowledge and skills, such as dramaturgy, dramatic theories, practical skills including acting, directing, playwriting)
3. Able to devise, create and perform educational theatre work (such as Theatre-in-Education programmes, forum theatre, museum theatre) for exploring issues or various purposes

These three points are highly related and intertwined to different extents in the actual implementation, but the above categorization provides a clear picture and thus direction of strategy in our teaching and learning approach for this drama educator training programme.

Besides the three pillar courses, there are five other required courses which are generally addressing to the four curricular objectives, they are:

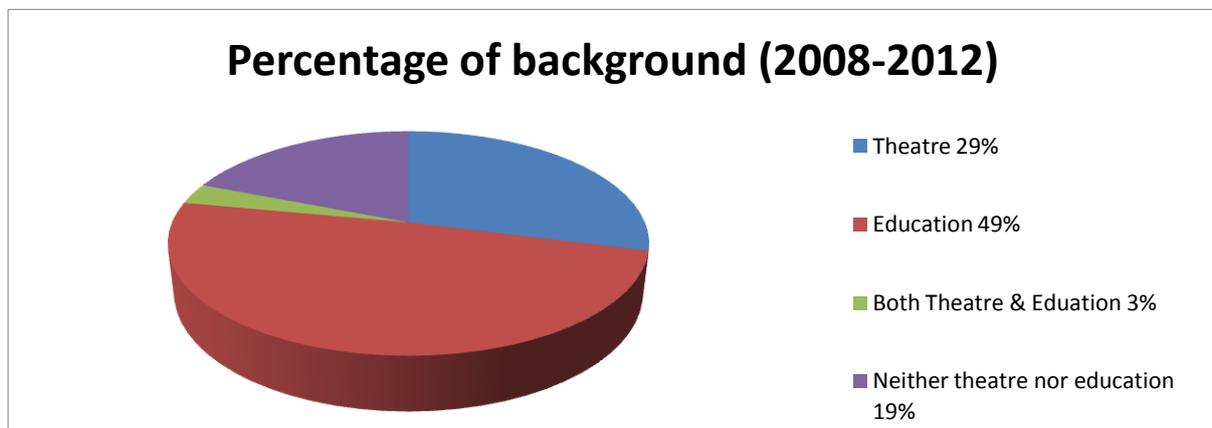
Table 3. Five other required courses mapping the curricular objectives

<i>Course/ Programme objectives</i>	<i>(a)</i>	<i>(b)</i>	<i>(c)</i>	<i>(d)</i>
Curriculum Development and Assessment in Performing Arts		√		
Performing Arts Education and the Reflective Practitioner		√		
Acting for DTE (Drama and Theatre Education major)	√	√	√	√
Methods in Stage Directing	√	√	√	√
Education courses	√	√	√	√

Due to the specific nature of drama education, it is vital that the students should be equipped with both the theatrical and educational knowledge. During the curriculum design stage in 2006-07, the mixed background of the enrolling students was anticipated, it would include:

1. Theatre artists with formal theatre training^{iv}
2. Educators/ School teachers with formal education or teaching training^v
3. Practitioners with both formal training
4. Practitioners with neither theatre nor education training

With reference to the statistic of our Master's students from 2008 until now, we would see the approximate percentage of each:



As shown in the above chart, about half of our students are school teachers. They have the knowledge in education and are seeking for the professional knowledge and skills of (1) Specialized educational drama/ theatre theories and practice (2) Drama as an art form.

Conversely, about a third of our students are theatre artists who have the knowledge in drama and are seeking for professional knowledge and skill of (1) Specialized educational drama/ theatre theories and practice (2) Educational and learning theories

In view of this, the MFA (Drama) Drama and Theatre Education major curriculum is providing supplementary training to students of either background:

Table 4. Learning needs of students with either education or theatre background

School teachers	Need (1)	1.	Pillar courses
	Need (2)	2. 3. 4.	Acting for DTE major Method of stage directing Specialization electives in Drama
Theatre artists	Need (1)	5.	Pillar courses
	Need (2)	6. 7. 8.	Education courses Performing arts education and reflective practitioners Curriculum development and assessment in performing arts

For students from both backgrounds, they need only the pillar courses and are eligible for exempting certain required courses. For students who have either background, in addition to the pillar courses, they could choose to either follow the educational courses or the theatrical courses provided in need (2) of school teachers and theatre artists. By the above design according to our rationale, we are determined to cultivate a strong generation of drama educators who are able to further enhance the quality of drama education in Hong Kong.

II. Persistency in high-quality praxis by enhancement of the learners' artistry

As a leading tertiary institution in performing arts in Asia, the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts understands that 'high quality' arts education as emphasized in the Seoul Agenda goal 2, cannot be done without 'high quality' artistic knowledge and skills. The following approaches are employed in the programme so as to foster the continuous artistic growth of the students, through a deepening and widening of their interested areas and topics:

i. Specialization and Cross-disciplinary learning opportunities

Drama/ theatre educators, like other artists, must never let themselves stand still at a certain point without further advancement in their artistry. Drama educators must always emerge

themselves in arts making, performing or appreciating in order to enhance their own artistry, and to keep abreast of the contemporary arts. The significance of ‘striving for artistic growth’ is embodied in our training which is sometimes overlooked by other arts education programmes. As an experienced and world renowned drama educator himself, Neelands (2004) emphasized the various roles, skills and the range of knowledge a drama teacher should be equipped with, in order to deliver high quality drama education. In terms of knowledge, Neelands categorized the five aspects of knowledge needed, which include:

1. Practical knowledge (such as dramaturgy, acting skills, project management)
2. Theoretical knowledge (such as dramatic theory, semiotics of drama, theatre anthropology)
3. Technical knowledge (such as sound and light technology, scenic design)
4. Historical knowledge (such as major periods and styles of theatre, genres of drama)
5. Cultural knowledge (such as contemporary trends in writing and performance styles, media and representation)

A quick mapping of the sample specialization electives and aspects of theatre knowledge as identified by Neelands is listed below:

Table 5. Sample specialization electives mapping Neelands’ five categories of theatre knowledge

<i>Specialization Electives/ Aspects of theatre knowledge</i>	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Comic Perspectives	√	√			
Contemporary & Traditional Chinese Theatre Techniques and Styles	√	√		√	√
Contemporary Performance Practice		√			√
Devising Theatre: Theory and Practice	√				
Directed Study in Play Reading and Drama Theory		√			
Drama in Literature	√	√		√	
Hong Kong Expression				√	√
Modern Drama Theory		√		√	
New Script Workshop	√				√
Physical Approach of Acting I, II	√	√			
The Collaborative Process in Performing Arts	√		√		
Theatre and Technology			√		√

Having worked in the drama education field for almost 15 years now, I found many local drama tutors still possess the misconception of ‘drama education = teach acting’. This misconception contributes to the ‘performer-training’ approach of drama education in the earlier years, and thus the narrow impression of what drama education can do to the youngsters or other target groups. The exposure to a more holistic view of drama and theatre, its links with historical development, cultural contexts, local and global trends, will undoubtedly widen the artistic view and arts education philosophy of the drama educator.

Cross-disciplinary performance and art work have been gaining more enthusiasm and have indeed produced countless innovative and exciting works. Projects such as the *Performa II*^{vi} where Asian artists brought their cross-disciplinary work to New York showed how contemporary artists could express their voice through a unique combination of different art forms. Merrion (2009) reports the forecast of a group of 14 experts experienced in and knowledgeable about collegiate arts education, for the future major changes:

...arts curricula will be more interdisciplinary. We already see increasing interdisciplinarity in graduate education and research...but the blurring of disciplinary boundaries will spread to undergraduate projects and public programs. The panel sees this trend already manifested in increasing numbers of multigenre performances: symphonic concerts interlace dance and digital imagery for instance, or electronic docents guide museum tours with the help of music while providing political contexts for the art....These new professionals (faculty) willcontinue to have deep specializations as practitioners who can place their art in theoretical contexts, they will blur disciplinary boundaries, be more knowledgeable about other artistic cultures, and do more work in the intersections of the arts (p.18).

As future drama educators, the above trend should be noted, and take on the opportunity to not only learn theoretically but also collaborate and create practically with artists from other disciplines to explore new forms. The cross-disciplinary courses offered by the five schools (Dance, Drama, TV & Film, Music and Theatre and Entertainment Arts) of the Academy provide valuable exchange opportunities for their students and prepare them for the exciting

interdisciplinary experiments. A sample list (selected) is shown below for the reference of the available choices:

Table 6. A sample list of interdisciplinary electives

<i>Cross-Disciplinary Electives/ Offered school</i>	<i>Dance</i>	<i>Drama</i>	<i>Music</i>	<i>TEA</i>	<i>TV/Film</i>	<i>Others^{vii}</i>
Arts and the Law				√		
Arts Management, Policy and Practice				√		
Arts Marketing and Audience Development				√		
ChoreoLab I	√					
Comic Perspectives		√				
Contemporary Dance in Action	√					
Contemporary Hong Kong Arts Practice		√				
Contemporary Performance Practice		√				
Curriculum Development and Assessment in Performing Arts Education						√
Creative Industries				√		
Critical Studies I, II (Film)					√	
Dance Science: Optimizing Performance	√					
Decoding Performance						√
Devising Theatre: Theory and Practice		√				
Documentary Project					√	
Fundraising and Sponsorship				√		
Mediated Space for Dance	√					
Musical Genre and Innovation			√			
Reading Dance: A Choreological Perspective	√					
Physical Approach of Acting I, II		√				
The Collaborative Process in the Performing Arts				√		
Theatre and Technology		√				
Time, Space, and Spatiality in Music			√			

As suggested by the Seoul agenda 1(a), policies and resources should be enacted and deployed to ensure sustainable access to ‘interdisciplinary arts experiences including digital and other emerging art forms both in school and out of school’. The knowledge and first person experience acquired in the interdisciplinary creative process will create valuable ideas

and insight into the powerful realization of the agenda proposed.

ii. Professional Practice opportunities

The nature of practice-oriented learning is described by Smith and Dean (2009) as:

...practice as research can best be interpreted in terms of a broader view of creative practice which includes not only the artwork but also the surrounding theorization and documentation (p. 5).

High quality practice-as-research relies on the student's artistic skills and ability to act as a 'reflective practitioner' upon her own work. As seen from the programme structure chart (in the Appendix), Professional practice constitutes a fifth of the total credits required of the degree, and is one of the most important components to cultivate the reflective practice of the students, as well as their ability to articulate the relationship between their work and the corresponding theories in their evaluation and analysis about the process and outcomes. Professional practice is not a taught course but the actual participation and practice in self-initiated projects or internships. Having learnt the educational drama/ theatre theories and techniques in class, students would be eager for the chance to apply it in the specific contexts they are interested in. Through professional practice, students are able to set their own learning objectives, experimentation approach and content, learning methodology, assessment tasks, criteria and weighting. Guided by the advisor of his project, the student is responsible for the theorization and documentation of it. Typically, a reflective essay or oral presentation focusing on the reflection throughout the process, final conclusion and insights will have to be submitted or presented by the end of each project. By engaging in the continuous cycle of reflection on one's own creative process and the dynamic linkage between theory, research and practice, high quality artistic praxis will be enhanced and achieved.

Professional practice serves also as the preparation stage of Thesis project, in the way it provides at least three practicing opportunities (Professional practice I, II, III) before the actual implementation of the thesis project. Students are expected to make use of the professional practice projects to try-out a particular part of the fuller project or to explore the possible approaches of it, in order to narrow down, smoothen and deepen the thesis project process.

iii. 'Learning with Drama Education World Masters' opportunities

There is nothing mysterious about world masters, except the excellent insights in the development of the field, knowledgeable thoughts in the subject matter, extensive experience and the sophisticated skills in the praxis they are able to teach and share. As a relatively new drama educator training programme, we have been actively inviting a number of internationally renowned masters since the launching of the programme in 2008 for their valuable sharing and input. The engagement includes guest teaching, intensive workshops, special workshops, public lectures, and assessing as external reviewer for the international benchmarking of the programme in terms of its content and delivery. In the past four years, the highly acclaimed Prof. Jonathan Neelands^{viii}, Prof. Joe Winston^{ix}, Prof. Peter O'Connor^x and Mr. Kim Carpenter^{xi} have been contributing much to the development of our programme. The various encountering provided opportunities for the students to observe and participate in the real 'master-at-work', which had triggered in-depth discussions and teaching throughout.



Figure 1. Prof. Jonothan Neelands demonstrating 'Teacher-in-role' in a process drama *The Arrival* with our students. Rehearsal room 2, HKAPA, Feb 2010.



Figure 2. Prof. Joe Winston holding a drama teaching workshop with master's students. Black box theatre, HKAPA, Oct 2011



Figure 3. Prof. Peter O'Connor giving a public lecture sharing *Teaspoon of light* project funded by UNESCO , Dance studio 1, HKAPA,, Feb 2012.

The exchange opportunities have been bringing the international current issues, best practice and reflections to the students and faculty, that help keeping abreast and maintaining the high quality of the teaching and learning. The public lecture by O'Connor on his applied theatre project of 'Teaspoon of light', (which has evolved into a UNESCO funded theatre-in-education programme having served over 3000 children in some of the most quake affected areas of Christchurch, for instance), raised great interest and in-depth discussion amongst the audience that day. Since it is one of our missions to localize the theories and practice of educational drama/ theatre into Chinese communities, this kind of continuous dialogue between world experts, local scholars, practitioners and learners is considered to be vital.

III. Diversity in experimentation of educational drama/ theatre forms

"Purpose, content, form and target group" are the four fundamental elements to be considered

in any educational drama/ theatre project. To carry out exploration, experimentation and investigation into the relationship between these four elements is thus the main goal for our students. From the school's point of view, to be able to support the above experimentation and develop the maturity in creating or designing high quality projects are of high priority in our teacher training.

In other words, the ultimate goal of all the above explained, including programme design, structure to support students of different backgrounds, widening and deepening of artistic exposure, high quality core training in educational/ theatre strategies and theories, practice-as-research strategies and international masters input, is for the students *to acquire competency in designing and implementing effective educational drama work which would empower its target group in real life*. This 'effectiveness' does not necessarily means 'transformation' to be made on the participants. Nicholson (2005) agrees to the idea of Schechner (2003)^{xii}, on the distinction between 'transformation' and 'transportation', and reflects that she is more 'easy' with using the term 'transportation' to describe the effect of applied drama work. She elaborates:

...the idea of transportation suggests greater scope for creativity and unpredictability than that of transformation. Should transformation occur, it is a gradual and cumulative process, the result of learning and negotiation with others, a progressive act of self-creation. In the process of transportation, the outcomes are clearly focused but not fixed, and change may take place gradually, a collaborative and sustained process between participants and other supportive agencies. It is about travelling into another world, often fictional, which offers both new ways of seeing and different ways of looking at the familiar. As British theatre director Tim Etchells has said, performance is about 'going into another world and coming back with gifts'^{xiii} (p.12-13).

In order to achieve the 'transportation' in their arts education projects, students must be able to choose the appropriate focus and form according to the specific contexts. In the following, I would introduce three examples of our students' previous work, to give an idea of the

diverse range of the experimentation they have been working on.

1. Museum Theatre project: *Revisiting Our History – The 1941 Sino-Japanese War* (日佔香江)

Time:	Dec 2011- Feb 2012
Venue:	The Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defense
Target group:	Upper primary to secondary students
Performances:	15
Number of students each performance:	100-120
Total number of students attended:	more than 180
Form:	Site-specific theatre, museum theatre, Theatre-in-Education, process drama ‘convention’ approach.



Figure 4. Museum Theatre project: *Revisiting Our History – The 1941 Sino-Japanese War*, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

This is a thesis project presented by a group of three students, who worked as a devising team to create an interactive site-specific educational theatre in the Hong Kong Museum of Coastal Defense^{xiv}. The museum itself is a historical site (formerly known as the Lei Yue Mun Fort) built a hundred years ago, serving as the fortification and an important battlefield during the Sino-Japanese War in 1941, located in Shau Kei Wan. The project was designed for the 70th anniversary of Japan's occupation of Hong Kong, aiming at provoking the participants (upper primary and secondary students) to reflect on the national identity of Hong Kong people, and its meaning for themselves.

Acting as the educational programme designer, deviser, director, scriptwriter of this project, the devising team had chosen to employ a highly participatory and interactive drama strategy to approach the sophisticated issues involved. Process drama conventions and theatre pieces were intertwined throughout the process, which include:

i. Pre-performance process drama workshop

The workshop aimed at preparing the students for the historical background they would need to know (or more accurately, to feel) before they participated in the actual museum theatre performance, and to familiarized the students with the process drama convention forms (e.g. Still-image, Thought-tracking, Meetings, Hot-seating, Spectrum of difference^{xv}) involved. These conventions would be used in the later museum theatre visit. In this process drama workshop exploring the pre-war situation, no formal performance was done except that the drama tutor would enter into role (Teacher-in-role) as a suspected traitor to be hot-seated by the villagers (students' role). Through the dramatic encounter, students acquired an entry point into knowing this 'remote' historic event and were motivated to participate in the museum theatre performance.

ii. The museum theatre visit

The performance was divided into two parts, according to the exhibition areas of the museum. The outdoor performance took place along the 'Historical trail' where a number of military remains were restored. The remains include Ammunition Stores, South and North Caponiers, Ditch, Central Battery, Water Tank and Oil Store, Gunpowder Factory etc. The indoor performance took place in the 'Redoubt' which was an open courtyard where the soldiers assembled before the restoration.

a. Journey on the Historical Trail (Outdoor dramatic encounter)

The whole group of students (around 100-120) were divided into five smaller groups, each led by a facilitator to visit the five selected heritage spots in different orders to avoid traffic jam. Five short dramatic scenes (around 5-10 minutes) involving different levels of audience participation provided students with a wide range of perspectives from different stakeholders in the war:

- (1) '*Courtroom for an Army Deserter*' at the Central Battery presented a soldier trying to escape from the war. The judging general would ask for the students' opinion about this disloyal act



***Figure 5. Heritage spot 1: Central Battery, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum,
Feb 2012***

(2) *'Love under the Fire of War'* at the Ruined structure presented a young lady who was desperately looking for her lover, later with the help of the students found that the young man was arrested due to underground activities



**Figure 6. Heritage spot 2: Ruined structure, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum,
Feb 2012**

(3) *'The Dilemma of a Rice Merchant' at the West Battery* presented the inner struggle of a rice merchant for whether to help the Japanese military or not



Figure 7. Heritage spot 3: West Battery, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

(4) *'The Confession of a Japanese' at the Gunpowder Factory* presented the reason stated by a Japanese general for initiating this war, students would also listen to the contrasting thought of a young Chinese girl



Figure 8. Heritage spot 4: Gunpowder Factory, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

(5) *'An Anti-Japanese student' at the Bridge* presented the determination of a young man to fight against his enemy, he also invited the students to offer him help



Figure 9. Heritage spot 5: The Bridge, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

b. In the Redoubt (Indoor dramatic encounter)

After the journey along the historical trail, all small groups would be joining together again to watch the main performance in the Redoubt. The story was set in the war period when ordinary people's life was getting tougher and harder. The three main characters: Young man, his younger Sister, and the Uncle were looking for their own way of survival during the war. They represent three different points of view on 'patriotism' and thus their positioning in the relationship with the Japanese.



Figure 10. Performance in the Redoubt, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

During the performance, students were assigned a role (implying a career or socio-economic status) and in the first participatory session, some would be chosen to enter the acting area to participate in a meeting, to decide whether to organize a celebration event of the Japanese governing or not. Actor-teachers would facilitate the discussion between students of different opinions, so as to deepen the thoughts about different standpoints.



Figure 11. One of the main characters – the Sister, having a conversation with a Japanese official in the Redoubt performance, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

Towards the end of the drama, students would have witnessed the advantages as well as the painstaking disadvantages of each main character representing a belief / a set of values. It was an open-ended story, and the performance was stopped at the climax point. At that moment, ALL students were invited to ‘Taking Sides’^{xvi}. They were asked to move up from their seats and physically stand behind the one character they mostly agreed to or identified with, if they did not agree to anyone, they could choose to stand at another assigned spot. This convention ran for two rounds, in the first round the student would think in the shoes of the assigned role living at that time, in the second round they would be themselves as students living in 2012.

Students could change to another character or to remain the same position in the second round. Actor-teachers would follow up by asking some students to explain their choice, and share their reflection upon the changed or unchanged of position within the two rounds. The devising team member Chow (2012) believed that this switch of roles (from others to self) would create an overlapping of the *fictional role* and *reality self*, *past* and *present* which would produce the educational ‘historical empathy’ (神入歴史) effect.



Figure 12. Students participating in the drama making difficult decisions in the Redoubt performance, Hong Kong Coastal Defense Museum, Feb 2012

After the completion of this project, the devising team was glad to receive much positive feedback from the participating school teachers, students, and especially the external reviewer Prof. Peter O’Connor, who has commented positively on both the highly specialized educational drama/ theatre skills and the theoretical understanding behind the design. This

project has demonstrated an in-depth exploration and experimentation in participatory drama forms and at a scale which has not been commonly seen in local museum theatre projects.

2. Community theatre project: *Between Earning a living and Living a life*

(生存之下, 生活之上)

Time:	Nov 2011- Feb 2012
Venue:	The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts Black box theatre
Target group:	Nine working adults
Performances:	2
Audience size each performance:	40
Total audience attended:	80
Form:	Devising theatre, Community theatre



Figure 13. Community theatre project *Between Earning a living and Living a life* , Black box theatre, HKAPA, Feb 2012

This is a thesis project led by a final year student and devised with a group of young working adults (aged 23-32), to explore the pressure they were facing in the rapid-paced city life -- “How was it like to be a working class adult in Hong Kong?” The nine working adults were coming from different occupations, including GP (family doctor), court clerk, financial consultant, laboratory technician, sports coach. They were volunteers without previous formal theatre training. Due to the background and research interest of the student, musical elements were emphasized in the devising process, aiming at (1) an experimentation on the role of music played in enhancing the drama devising and performing process for a piece of community theatre (2) a reflection of the participants’ own pressurized life. In order to achieve these, this project has involved elements of ethnodrama and living theatre.



Figure 14. An actress was using a wave drum to express her feeling in the drama, Black box theatre, HKAPA, Feb 2012

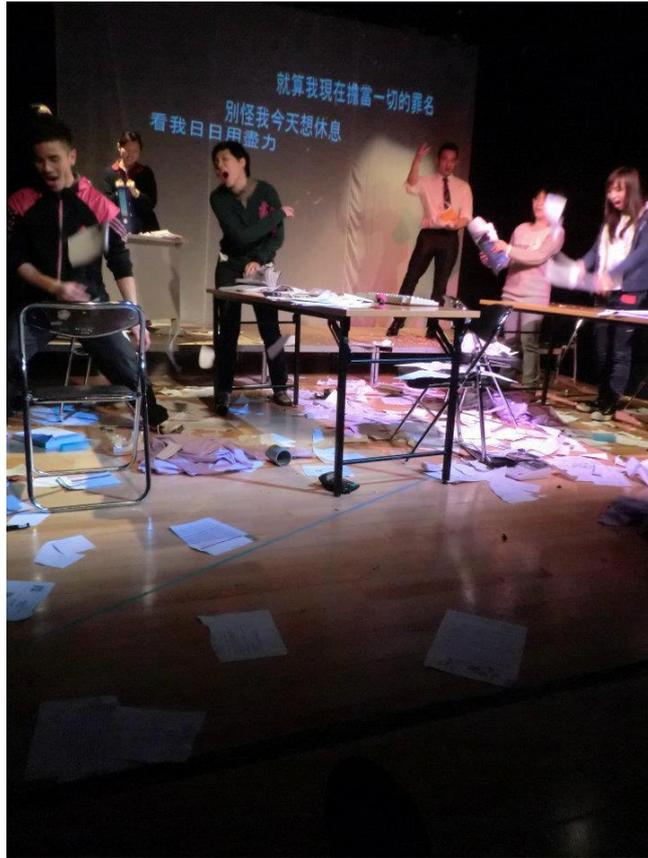


Figure 15. The group voiced their thoughts about pressure at work through theatre, Black box theatre, HKAPA, Feb 2012

Through the guidance and facilitation of the student (as drama tutor, deviser and director), participants went through a series of phases (Leung, 2012) including:

- 1) Workshop phase -- theatre training activities (such as theatre games and exercises) and musical exercises to open up the 'body and mind' as well as aesthetic sensitivity
- 2) Creative phase – personal stories, viewpoints and concerns around the stress of working adults were explored and developed through dramatic and musical activities. Interviews, auto-ethnographic narratives and scripts, discussion content were all collected as data for writing up the final script
- 3) Rehearsal phase – the searching of a coherent staging, theatrical form and structure to best

hold the content and expression intended by the community group, the participants would become actors performing themselves in the show. It would create an interesting reflection about how they were presenting their own lives onstage.

4) Performance phase – the story and viewpoints were shared with the audience through public performances. A post-performance discussion session between audience and actors was held after each performance, for stimulating the dialogues and sharing in the community.



Figure 16. Post-performance sharing session between audience and actors hosted by the director, Black box theatre, HKAPA, Feb 2012

When compared to the previous project, the participation mode of this one was a more lengthy co-work relationship with the drama tutor, instead of the dramatic interaction in the participatory sessions in the workshop or the performance of the museum theatre project.

This ‘collaborative and sustained process between participants and other supportive agencies’ as described by Nicholson (2005) quoted earlier, is the fuel for the ‘transportation’ to be experienced by the participants, from which they could look at themselves and their situation from another perspective(s), resulting in a possible ‘extended’ (if not ‘changed’) meaning on their perception of both work and life.



Figure 17. Integration of Canton pop-song into the performance to enhance the expression of devising actors. Black box theatre, HKAPA, Feb 2012

Arts education or enjoyment has been largely targeted at children and young people in most drama projects, for these are the groups which are most easily reached through the established channels such as schools and community centres. However, as urged by the Seoul Agenda goal 1(c), arts educators should not overlook the needs and rights of artistic activities for other age groups, generations and people from different social background. The beauty of

this community theatre project is the enhancement of aesthetic equipment for this unique group of people who shared a common ethnographic ground. The dialogue during post-performance sharing session promoted people from different generations (including retired and working class) to exchange stories which actually brought out the unheard voices in the society. How to ensure this continuous opportunity for artistic empowerment of these less voiced society groups, is indeed an important area to further work on in Hong Kong.

3. Children's theatre project: *An adventurous journey in the Government House*

Date: 19 March 2011

Venue: Government House^{xvii} (Ballroom), Hong Kong

Target group: Children Cancer survivors and their family members

Performances: 1

Audience size: approx.60

Form: Children's theatre with participatory creative drama strategy, storytelling, devising theatre



Figure 18. Children's theatre project *An adventurous journey*, Government House, March 2011

This professional practice project was devised and performed by a group of three students who were all school teachers. Having been introduced to the educational drama/ theatre concepts and theatre acting training, the students were eager to take on this chance to create and perform a piece of children's theatre specific to the interest and needs of a group of children cancer survivors (from Little Life Warrior Society). According to the unique contexts such as performance duration (max. 30 minutes), facilities of the stage, physical space, budget, nature of the activity and the background of the target group, a light comical children's theatre was devised, aiming at bringing an uplifting and enjoyable theatre experience to the children and their families .



Figure 19. Little Life Warriors and their families enjoying the theatre experience together. Government House, March 2011

It is not hard to imagine that the cancer fighting experience is an extra-ordinary journey the client has to go through. While uncertainties, ups and downs, persistency, mutual support are all elements people could find in adventurous stories, the team had chosen to develop this metaphorical adventure story, and invite the audience to help solve the main character's (a monkey) challenge faced in his physical condition – non-stop hiccupping! Participatory strategies are especially empowering if the audience members are allowed to actively explore ways to 'make a difference' on what is happening onstage and is meaningful to them. In this project, direct and simple tasks were set by the team for both the children and the adults accompanying them.

In terms of the complexity of participatory strategy, this project seemed to be the least sophisticated due to the provided contexts, yet, the directness and freedom were almost closest to the 'natural phenomenon' as the significant educational drama figure Way (1981)

states that:

Audience participation in Children's Theatre – particularly with younger children – is a phenomenon that exists within the children themselves... I remind myself that we are concerned with a phenomenon that is, not one that was invented...when they (young children) attend a play that is well done, in the right environment, not only do they, like adults, participate with their mind, their heart and their spirit, but also give vent to the inner reactions of those experiences through additional vocal and physical participation. They do so directly and with total simplicity – providing circumstances permit (p. 1-2).



Figure 20. Interactive dramatic playing during the children's theatre. Auditorium, Government House, March 2011

And in this project, the two participatory tasks were both action-oriented. First being asked to help fighting against the monster onstage, the second being asked to build a tunnel collectively for the monkeys to reach their destination. These action-oriented tasks were

especially suitable for the immediate engagement of both the kids and the family members accompanying them. As stated by Way (1981),

...getting the young people involved in action and in doing as soon as possible, accepting the role of leadership and carrying it out. As we have met before, this is a directed stage of participation, which works as well and correctly for small groups as we have seen it work for the whole audience working together (p. 96).



Figure 21. Participatory task by the whole audience group, Onstage and auditorium, Government House, March 2011

As a common thread, ‘Creativity, Enjoyment and Empowerment’ are three guiding forces embodied in all of the above examples shown. In fact, the reflective power, transportation and transformation need not to be cultivated in a dark, dragging and lifeless way. While there are a thousand ways of pedagogies out there which could be equally effective and efficient, why using pedagogies of drama and theatre? ‘Creativity, Enjoyment and Empowerment’ are three

of the numerous reasons we would give.

I am so looking forward to further sharing with my peer arts educators around the world in the near future, about the other projects with diversified theatrical forms and serving targets -- such as the Forum Theatre projects our students have done in 2009 and 2010, the Theatre-in-Education project done in 2010, the Reminiscence theatre projects with elderly people in 2011 and 2012. For I strongly agree to the proposal of the Seoul Agenda 2(c) on the importance to ‘stimulate exchange between research and practice in arts education’. While our exploration and experimentation carries unique strength and weaknesses, I believe constant and regular exchanges or discussion will definitely help us to further enhance our high quality training and arts education delivery in the long run.

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Appendix

MFA (Drama) Drama and Theatre Education major curriculum chart 2012-13

<i>Required courses</i>	<i>36/37 credits</i>
Professional Practice I, II, III	4,4,4
Applied Theatre: Theory and Practice	3
Curriculum Development and Assessment in Performing Arts	1.5
Drama as a Performing Arts Subject: Teaching and Learning	3
Drama-in-Education	3
Performing Arts Education and the Reflective Practitioner	1.5
Acting I & II for DTE (3 credits each), Methods in Stage Directing (2 credits) OR	6 or 7
Additional educational courses	
Process Writing	3
Research and Practice-as-research	3
Thesis Project	14 credits
Thesis Project Seminar I, II, III, IV	1,1,1,1
Thesis Project	10
Specialization Electives (in Drama)	3-7 credits
Comic Perspectives	2
Contemporary & Traditional Chinese Theatre Techniques and Styles	2
Contemporary Performance Practice	3
Devising Theatre: Theory and Practice	3
Directed Study in Play Reading and Drama Theory	1
Drama in Literature	2
Hong Kong Expression	2
Independent Study	1-4
Methods in Stage Directing	2
Modern Drama Theory	3
New Script Workshop	2
Physical Approaches to Acting I, II	3,3
The Collaborative Process in the Performing Arts	3
Theatre and Technology	3
Cross-disciplinary Electives	3-6 credits
Arts and the Law	3
Arts Management, Policy and Practice	3
Arts Marketing and Audience Development	3
ChoreoLab I	3
Contemporary Dance in Action	3
Contemporary Hong Kong Arts Practice	3
Creative Industries	3
Critical Studies I, II (Film)	3,3
Curriculum Development and Assessment in Performing Arts Education	1.5
Dance Science: Optimizing Performance	3
Decoding Performance	3
Documentary Project	3
Fundraising and Sponsorship	3
Mediated Space for Dance	3
Musical Genre and Innovation	2

Performing Arts Education and the Reflective Practitioner	1.5
Reading Dance: A choreological Perspective	3
The Collaborative Process in the Performing Arts	3
Time, Space, and Spatiality in Music	2
Total	60 credits

ⁱ The Hong Kong Council for Accreditation of Academic and Vocational Qualifications (HKCAAVQ) is a statutory body responsible for the academic and vocational accreditation, education and training and quality assurance in Hong Kong (<http://www.hkcaavq.edu.hk/en/main.asp>)

ⁱⁱ The qualifications framework (QF) is a hierarchy of qualifications, applicable to all sectors to facilitate the interface between academic, vocational and continuing education. There are seven levels from QF1-7, each characterized by outcome-based generic level descriptors which describe the common features of qualification at the same level. Master's level is corresponding to QF level 6. (<http://www.hkqf.gov.hk/guie/home.asp>)

ⁱⁱⁱ A sample list of the curriculum is attached in appendix

^{iv} Diploma or above in Drama

^v Diploma or above in Education with Teacher's certificate

^{vi} "Asian artists bring cross-disciplinary work to New York's Performa 11"

<http://artradarjournal.com/2011/08/30/number-asian-artists-participate-in-2011-performa-visual-art-performance-biennial/>

^{vii} Offered by the Graduate Education Centre (GEC) of the Academy

^{viii} Prof. Jonathan Neelands is a National Teaching Fellow, Chair of "Drama and Theatre Education" and Director of Teaching and Learning in the Institute of Education, University of Warwick. Author of Structuring Drama Work, Beginning Drama 11-14, Key Shakespeare 1 and 2, Drama and Theatre Studies at A/S and A level, Improving Your Primary School Through Drama, his collection of writings

is published in Peter O'Connor's *Creating Democratic Citizenship through Drama Education: the writings of Jonathan Neelands* in 2010.

^{ix} Prof. Joe Winston is the professor of Drama and Theatre Education, Director of Research Degrees, Institute of Education Course leader, MA in Drama and Theatre Education. He was responsible for co-ordinating the Arts subjects in the BA(QTS) degree and is currently the co-ordinator of the MA in Drama and Theatre Education. He is joint editor of *Research in Drama Education*, widely recognized as the leading academic journal in its field.

^x Prof. Peter O'Connor is an associate professor in University of Auckland. He is an internationally recognised expert in applied theatre. Recent applied theatre research includes national programmes on preventing family violence and child abuse and parenting programmes in Youth Justice Facilities. His work in Christchurch following the February earthquake has led to UNESCO funded research and programme development.

^{xi} Kim Carpenter is the artistic director of Theatre of Image based in Sydney, Australia which is renowned for visually striking children's theatre.

^{xii} Richard Schechner, 'Performers and Spectators Transported and Transformed', in P. Auslander (ed.), *Performance: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, vol. 1 (London: Routledge, 2003), p. 270

^{xiii} Tim Etchells, *Certain Fragments* (London: Routledge, 2003), p.270.

^{xiv} <http://www.lcsd.gov.hk/ce/Museum/Coastal/en/section1-1.php>

^{xv} Various process drama conventions are collected in Neelands (2000)

^{xvi} A process drama convention (Neelands, 2000, p.89)

^{xvii} <http://www.ceo.gov.hk/gh/eng/>

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Estella Wong is currently the Senior lecturer, discipline leader of Drama/Theatre Education and MFA co-ordinator (Drama) of the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts. Since 1997, she has been an active drama education advocate as dramatist, columnist, department head in

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