

Chapter 2

The Making of Diverse Schools

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ABSTRACT

This chapter presents the results of research carried out over three years applying the Pedagogical Theatre as a teaching strategy for the development of competence in a group of 22 people with Down syndrome in Tenerife. From the theoretical point of view, it has been possible to verify that the proposed model of theatrical pedagogy supposes a contribution in the competency improvement of people with Down syndrome. From the methodological perspective of mixed studies, the relevance of this methodology as a resource for attention to diversity has been verified. Finally, the results have demonstrated the benefits of the intervention in the competence development of the population under study.

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, different studies have emerged that show the innumerable advantages of innovating in the field of attention to diversity through new educational practices. Proof of this are the works of Muntaner (2014), Guasp (2014) and Díez Gutiérrez (2014), who affirm that the theatrical resource is an important contribution to the development of innovative practices in the classroom. Thus, as García Velasco (2008, p. 29) points out, “theatrical activities possess educational values” and, at the same time, serve as an asset for the work of curricular contents (Prado Aragonés, 2004). In this sense, theater becomes a powerful resource to implement in the classroom to benefit learning.

The present research was designed to develop actions aimed at responding to the individual needs of people with Down syndrome, adapting the teaching processes - learning to the characteristics, particularities and capabilities of each/a.

Thus, our training proposal is located within a comprehensive and globalized approach focused on competence learning (Alegre, 2006). For this reason, it is a priority to provide the participants with the necessary tools and resources so that they can act more effectively and constructively in the environment in which they live. In this way, through the actions that the Pedagogical Theatre (TP) develops with the theatrical techniques, concrete and real situations of daily life are represented and staged, with the objective that the participants learn and can generalize and apply what they have learned to other

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contexts. The intervention room becomes, therefore, a virtual space where learning situations are constructed from which the subject can learn; situations, which through theatrical action provide the possibility of reconstructing realities and contexts where the subjects-actors-participants project concepts, ideas, emotions and affections, behaviors and behaviors, susceptible to be redirected (Morín, 1991). In this regard, basic social skills (verbal and non-verbal communication skills) are trained and developed; behaviours are redirected through strategies for resolving interpersonal problems; the management of emotions (skills of self-control, coping, conflict resolution); prosocial behaviour (perspective, empathy, cooperation) is encouraged; and interpersonal relationships are improved. All this, with the purpose of favoring processes of personal improvement or aid to the change in its participants, manifesting the TP as an effective didactic strategy for the development of competence in the classroom. In this way, through the programmed activities, using different theatrical techniques, we will contribute to promote competential aspects related to dimensions of the evolutionary development of the person (cognitive, motor, communicative, emotional and social dimension) and with more specific dimensions, linked to contents related to the performing arts (artistic dimension and productive or scenic dimension).

The theatre, understood as dramatic art, “puts the accent on the performance, on the spectator and the spectator, on the aesthetics of the reception and on the acquisition of some acting skills with a view to making the product as attractive as possible to the spectators” (Baldwin, 2014, p. 20). On the other hand, the PT, instead, places it in action itself, in the process that leads to representation highlighting the scientific character of this discipline and therefore its contribution to the generation of knowledge about education through research.

The benefits of PT in people with Down syndrome have been developed in research and scientific literature. Thus, Madariaga (2008) highlights that the accumulation of negative experiences experienced by these people, resulting from discrimination against persons with disabilities, is offset by the positive consequences that these TP activities generate. On the other hand, participation in social activities becomes a particularly relevant area for people who, because of their characteristics and needs, cannot assume certain social roles in other areas of their lives. And, finally, it indicates that this type of activity, unlike others, does not have some standards of excellence or standards that must be met. Its value is in the sense, meaning and enjoyment that each one gives it.

In this direction, the competences that are developed through the TP aim to compensate and minimize certain deficiencies, deficit or difficulties that affect the subject, enhancing their capacities. We highlight the following competencies that TP improves and that we have developed in our research: a) the motor competence that, as Jacques (1988) indicates, develops operational intelligence, which means knowing what to do, how to do it, when and with whom, depending on the changing conditions of the environment; b) expressive competition where the language of the gesture implies that each movement is a message that communicates our intention to others (Carballa, 1995); c) social competence which, as indicated by Monjas (2000), will be developed through a socializing process, in interaction with others, through elements such as direct practice, observation of close models, verbal learning and interpersonal feedback, which will reinforce behaviour; and, d) the productive-artistic competence that alludes to the mastery of those capacities that allow the subject to express himself through artistic codes.

It is therefore here, where the subject puts into operation his initiative, imagination and creativity to express himself through these codes, which will favour the construction of new neural networks that carry with them a greater capacity of response and resolution of problems in interaction with the environment, with the others and with (González-Martínez, 2017, p. 105).

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