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An inquiry into child-centred Education and the development of T.I.E

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Abstract

This paper presents a researched study into the approaches of child centred learning by examining theories that have impacted today’s contemporary society within the educational context. A comprehensive background study will contextualise traditional and progressive education from the 19th century to current contemporary practice. The paper draws upon research established by educational psychologists Piaget and Vygotsky and cross references the work of drama practitioners Dorothy Heathcote *Mantle of the Expert* and Augusto Boal *Theatre of the Oppressed*. The paper presents evidence referencing a range of theories and practitioners that have shaped holistic educational provisions, supported by presenting findings from Theatre in Education innovations.
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Introduction

This investigation presents key theories of child centred learning, referencing the current issues of today’s arts education. The aim of the study is to further develop an understanding of educational theorists’ and assess their impact on current contemporary teaching practices.

Chapter one provides a timeline of historical context relating to child centred learning and its origins. Early research examines the work of fundamental figures Jean-Jacques Rousseau, (1712-1778) Friedrich Froebel (1782-1852), John Dewey (1859-1952), Maria Montessori (1870-1952) and Jean Piaget (1896-1980) who all innovated theories for a new pedagogy which differed from traditional structure and fulfilling the progressive movement (1890). The progressive education movement was an integral part of the early twentieth century reform. Traditional education was rigorously conservative and directed on a procedure of back-to basics education (Kohn, 1999:3) which resembled the factory model systems (Dismantling the factory model of assessment, 2002:67). Reformers at this time were “seeking a vision that helps us transcend and progress beyond the status quo” (Morrison, 2007:41). This reform focused on hands on approaches to education through students actively being a part of classroom lessons. This placed the child at the centre of their own learning and subjected against traditional teaching of core principles and teacher domineering practice.

Moving beyond historical context, chapter 2 explores a range of drama practitioners whose work is founded on the framework of these published theorists. Following the millennium,
Drama practitioners applied conventions within their lessons plans to capture the imaginations and attentions of young people using dramatic activities to achieve certain educational goals and objectives. (Ozbek, 2014:27). Drawing on the work of Dorothy Heathcote and her developed techniques of Teacher in Role and Mantle of the Expert the chapter presents contemporary activities that achieve scholastic goals as well as presenting a holistic approach to education.

Following this contemporary shift regarding core curriculums and educational systems, Theatre in Education succeeded in becoming an educational benefit aiding and promoting learning across all disciplines. Highly valued companies utilised conventions of drama to create educational programmes, theatre performances and workshop activities which covered all three learning domains; facilitating learning and the development of the whole child (Brockbank, McGill, 2007:49). In this chapter, Augusto’s Boal’s Theatre of the oppressed and Vygotsky’s scaffolding approach is tied with the succession of modern day Theatre in Education (TIE) programmes such as Big Brum Theatre.

Following this progressive unity of teaching, learning and dramatic conventions this paper will present how drama in education can be utilised effectively through the use of TIE programmes.
Chapter 1- Child Centred Learning.

In the course of the late nineteenth century an educational notion arose to endorse new methods of teaching practices in schooling systems. In the mid-1900’s, traditional teaching structures dominated educational systems in the democratic society. Reformers, argued to diminish these traditional notions by encompassing new holistic approaches thus providing “an alternative vision on how things should, or could be, if done differently and more accordance with our society’s highest ideals” (Morrison, 2007:41). This shifted the balance of instruction from teacher to student which therefore promoted the idea of child centred learning through the power of the three learning domains on Education (Bloomfield and Childs, 2013:1). As Laird (1985) states this new principle was specifically designed to foster the developmental growth of the child by attributing methods to enhance their “intellect, emotions, bodily impulse (desire) intuition and imagination” (Laird, 1985:121). Thereby, prompting new schemes to nurture children’s abilities and skills. This new focus aimed to educate the whole child through child centred approaches which later encouraged a change in attitude towards the role and status of the arts within the curriculum.

At this time, reformists were intercepting traditional schooling methodologies by deliberatively shifting the focus from traditional to progressive learning methods during the late 1800’s to the early 1900’s (Kaplan and Owings, 2014:75). This shift arose from conflicting perspectives on teaching and learning between traditional societies and child centred learning theorists. At this time, traditional approaches were being criticised by
progressive educators as being equivalent to ‘factory systems’ (Morrison, 2007:46). Consequently, this reflected society’s perception to which education related to, the rational mind, the brain, and the intellect (Morrison, 2007:46). Agreeing with the ‘factory system’

David Pennac (1994) describes:

“School cannot be a place of pleasure, with all the freedom that would imply. School is factory, and we need to know which workers are up to snuff. The teachers in charge are the floor bosses, so don’t expect them to praise the virtues of free intellectual development when everything, absolutely everything in the school setting—the classes, grades, exams, scales, levels, orientations, streams—enforces the competitive nature of the institution, itself a model of the workaday world.”

(Pennac, 1994:92)

Frank Serafini (2002) refers to David Pennac quotation “school has been traditionally designed as a factory, with the child seen as a product and all of the other educational components supporting that premise” (Dismantling the factory model of assessment, 2002:67). This emphasised the fact that traditional schooling systems were seen to prepare children for just industrial jobs in the economy – a one teaching practice fits all approach to education.

Physiologists and educationalists of the time, John Dewey (1859–1952) and Piaget (1896-1980) still remains highly respected in modern educational theory with regards to this published theories and educational innovations with the rejection to traditional education. Dewey believed that the current education praxis did not meet the requirements of this new found era. (Nutbrown, Clough, 2014). It was alleged that education should be interdisciplinary and not objectified to favour a curriculum of passive learning, which predominantly focused on the three ‘R’s (reading, writing, arithmetic). Nutbrown and
Clough (2014) add that Dewey wanted to incorporate a more sociological approach to learning, believing that learning the principles and practices of democracy would serve a broader purpose for helping children become effective members of the society when they grow up.

One of the most concerning issues regarding traditional education was based on the fact that students were not allowed to acquire knowledge from other areas of the curriculum. Teachers were focused on subject knowledge, book based instruction and students being passive recipients of factual information (Levine, 2013:197). These strict teaching practices ensured that children had an obligation to follow exactly what the teacher wanted, consequently not thinking beyond the subject matter at hand. This was the learning theory reformists and educational psychologists sought to change (Levin, 2013:197) with the pragmatist's argument that when faced with a problem, a solution is never evidenced from a single academic subject (Levin, 2013). Morrison (2007) enhances this theory by applying further psychological research stating that by the mind making connections from other resources and subjects this enables us to become ‘critical and creative thinkers’ (2007:47). In contrast, an idealist view objectifies against this assumption as they believe students must acquire knowledge first by studying organised subjects. Traditional schooling systems heavily relied on the assumption that knowledge is objective ‘it exists outside of the human conscience, and learning is the absorption and memorization of the knowledge that the students recite’ (Morrison, 2007:47) this was evidenced by the notion of ‘drilling’ factual information through text based learning. Progressive educators critiqued this as it was
thought to be an inaccurate perception as knowledge is not fixed as it is socially constructed (2007:42). According to this research, the construction of knowledge is enhanced by the interaction between others and our experiences within the world thus referencing Piaget’s constructivism theory.

Kaplan and Owings (2014) point out that progressive educationalists contended that state systems of public schooling focused on achieving cultural uniformity and rejected diversity (Kaplan, Owings 2014: 75). This focus on achieving uniformity rejected all aspects of individualism ensuring that traditional teaching practices prepared all children to think and act the same to fit society’s status quo. This further enhanced the reformist’s dispute to reject teacher-centred approaches in favour to a student-centred method (Kaplan, Owings 2014) where children could become individuals in their own right supported by differentiated approaches and activities within the curriculum. This soon became a practice that fostered a cross curricular learning approach – a method that educates the whole child.

Dewey (1938) was the central voice promoting the value of experiences in learning this was evidenced in his publication *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897) (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2013:5). Dewey’s (1938) influence came from Frobel and Pestalozzi theories and work, who were among the first to articulate the process of educating the “whole child,” where learning moves beyond subject matter. Dewey’s publication pointed out that the progressive education movement was too primarily concerned with “the meaning of subject matter and of organisation within experience” (Dewey, 1938:7). The core principle of Dewey’s publication was to understand
that education was not just the transmission of facts but the education of the whole person (Itin, 1999:92). Freire (1973) agreeing with Dewey states that “Education is about the content to be taught, the process by which it is taught, and the resulting consequences for the person within their social context” (Freire 1973, cited by Itin 1999:93) As a result, Dewey positioned the child at the centre of education and Freire reflecting on social process developed progressive strategies for a new pedagogical practice.

Progressive educators aimed to create a highly collaborative classroom environment, where children could learn from interests, social interactions and experiences thereby promoting the holistic child through “personal, social and intellectual development” (Levine, 2013:197). To begin this movement, progressive educators re-designed the curriculum deterring from core subjects to a creative curriculum based on collaboration and expressive activities. This prioritised a modern way for children to learn through practical experience, creativity and imagination within a new educational layout. This new approach was to free the child from conventional restraints and suppression of a classroom environment (2013:197).

It has been thought that the environmental state strongly impacts child development and sensory training awareness. The success of this model for early years was first designed by child philosopher Friedrich Froebel who established a new school designed for early years and to which he named ‘kindergarten’ (Froebel web, 1998-2015)This new school trialled a new educational system directed on ‘Activity and play’ (Levine, 2013:17). He considered
development as a natural process that provided the foundation for child learning. “Play is the highest expression of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in a child's soul” (Froebel 1887 cited in Matheson 2014:208). Froebel incorporated creative activities by incorporating songs, stories, and games. He also linked these creative skills to the curriculum by adding materials and objects such as cubes and cylinders to build upon physical and motor skills (Levine, 2013:90-99). Froebel’s creative strategies enabled toddlers to learn through play. This theory is also reflected in Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) educational psychology which signifies the importance of creating a direct interest for children to use as stimulation for learning (Gargiulo, Kilgo, 2013:5). These theories were highly influential within the progressive era. Building on Rousseau research, Dewey observed that a child’s interest has a huge impact on the learning process and not the reinforcement of activities that are fixed upon by teachers. Dewey endeavoured for change to the education system. Dewey hoped for developmental growth of the child through his newly designed classroom system this was tested in his laboratory school which opened 1986. (Dehsen, 2013:52) As Gargiulo and Kilgo (2013:7) highlight this involved stimulating a socially active environment, engaging in practical activities, and discovering how objects work through continual opportunity, inquiry, investigation and discovery. As well as reinforcing Rousseau research; promoting that the “environment is a destination in which intellectual skills can be uplifted by child’s interaction through their own activity, play and spontaneity” (Gargiulo & Kilgo 2013:7). Similarly to Rousseau and Dewey, Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was an exceedingly influential contributor and innovator to classroom practice in early year provisions especially in the progressive era. Montessori adopted her own approach to education the ‘Montessori
method’ (Introduction to Montessori Method, 2016) centred on the holistic child evidenced through scientific observations of the child from birth to adulthood. Montessori valued the human spirit and the central development of the whole child- physical, social, emotional and cognitive skills (Introduction to the Montessori Method 2016). She advanced her theory by concluding that sensory experience is essential to learning and thereby developed a sensory model including teaching approaches and didactic materials. Montessori observed that through childhood children progress through three stages of sensitive periods. Wilson (2003) categorises Montessori growth periods; practical life experience, sensory education and academic education (2003:17). These components enriched a child’s independence and responsibility in learning. Her theory promoted that learning was heightened when set tasks enhanced motor and sensory skills; as Montessori stated “First education of the senses, then education of the intellect” (Montessori, 1964). Montessori concluded that intelligence is not static or fixed, but can be influenced by child experience (Wilson, 2003:17). Montessori’s aim ensured that children became confident and independent learners – a skill set for the 21st century and thereby dismantling the factory model of assessment as seen in traditional pedagogy.

Montessori theory of stage progression links strong to Piaget’s theory. Piaget an educational psychologist of the traditional vs. progressive era, strongly states that the learning process occurs through qualitative change. From research and observation of children which he revised prior the Second World War 1939-1945 he objected against fixated behaviourist’s theorem; whose strategies involved laboratory experiments and not exclusively evaluating
real life human behaviour as a method to critically assess (Brooks, 2012:43). Piaget advanced educational theory involved a four stage model to which the child develops; the sensorimotor stage (0-2 years) the preoperational stage (2-7 years) the concrete operational stage (7-12 years) and the formal operational stage (12+) (Brooks, Abbott, Huddleston 2012:43). According to Piaget, a main attribute to a child’s cognitive development is what he terms the stage of maturation and activity. Therefore, this theory leads to an increase in a child’s ability to act on their environment and to learn from action thus embedding a practical learning experience.

Finally, with reference to child centred learning Alfie Kohn (1999) outlines traditional education as being “rigorously conservative, supervised by a directed procedure of back-to-basics of pedagogic practice” (Kohn 1999 p2-3). Kohn research highlights that within traditional education, there is a clear structure within the classroom environment; students are required to recite direct information and to fully partake in all academia. Khon’s argument proceeded that the innovations of traditional teaching neglected the need for the holistic growth of the child because they never had the opportunity to explore through imagination, creativity and experience (Kohn, 1999:2-3). Consequently these were the main principles that rooted Rousseau and Montessori theories. The recognition of these vital shifts in educational theories identified that a new holistic approach to learning was needed in the twenty first century to advocate the child at the centre of their education. The integrated curriculum fostered a new approach to learning enabling children to transfer
knowledge and skills cross-curricular. This encouraged new teaching approaches within an integrated curriculum paving a contemporary way for the arts to be recognised within an educational climate.
Chapter 2- Drama in Education

Child centred education was on the rise during the 1950s – 1960s which demanded more from education systems opposed to the notions of a centrally defined curriculum within traditional teaching (Wooster, 2007). This new approach was supported by a range of educators who supported the notion for a more holistic teaching approach (Wooster, 2007). As established in the previous chapter, educational psychologists believed that effective learning took place when children were encouraged to investigate the world through play and active approaches to discovery (Wooster, 2007). The key fundamental figures of child centred learning (Rousseau, Frobel, Montessori, Dewey) have all had a huge impact on modern day teaching and education systems through their contributions in published and referenced theories. In modern context, Drama in education still remains accredited for its holistic nature and practical learning journey. Thus succeeding the original research of Dewey, Piaget and Freire in fostering the developmental needs of children’s growth and following modern research of the three learning domains in education (Bloomfield, Childs, 2013:1). Further advancements relating to Drama in education have been pioneered by practitioners such as Dorothy Heathcote (29 August 1926- 8 October 2011), Augusto Boal (16 March 1931- 2 May 2009), Peter Slade (7 November 1912- 28 June 2004), and Brian Way (12 September 1923- 23 February 1926). These drama practitioners objectified against traditional education systems placing drama as a core mode of learning and encouraging a change in attitude towards the role and status of the arts in the curriculum. Ozbek (2014:47) states the success of using ‘drama’ as a “practical technique for teaching and improvement for learning has become extensively recognised as a global spectacle, which is supported by the International Drama/Theatre in Education Association” (Ozbek: 2014:p47).
In recognition of this curriculum shift, it should be noted that these practitioners did not substitute drama for traditional subjects within the curriculum, but rather used drama as a complimentary teaching strategy to enhance holistic learning and achieve educational objectives more efficiently (Ozbek, 2014). Winifred Ward (1957) purposed that creative drama develops the ‘Whole person” by aiding children’s physical, intellectual, social and emotional welfare consequently this gives children an avenue for self-expression by guiding their creative imaginations and fostering collaborative opportunities (Ward 1957 cited in Ozbek, 2014:48). Playwright David Farmer (2012:1) states Drama can be applied to all teaching subjects as it promotes interactive learning through experience and role reversal. In his research, Farmer also makes reference to make believe play. This is a dramatic activity which enables children to make sense of their own identity in the world, as well as exploring fictional situations that have Parallels to the modern day society (Farmer, 2012:1).

“Drama gives children opportunities to explore, discuss and deal with difficult issues and to express their emotions in a supportive environment. It enables them to explore their own cultural values and those of others, past and present. It encourages them to think and act creatively, thus developing critical thinking and problem solving skills that can be applied in all areas of learning. Through drama, children are encouraged to take responsible roles and make choices- to participate and guide their own learning. Teachers can take a more open-minded approach, concentrating on the process of learning at least as much- if not more than- the product”.

(Farmer, 2012:1)

Farmer believed drama could be applied to cross curricular subjects to further enhance the learning of particular topics. This also follows that a collaboration of teaching, learning and achievement which can be strengthened when fused with the arts in particular Drama, as
the holistic journey concentrates on the process of learning as opposed to curriculum goals and progress levels. It can thereby be said that applying an active and interactive learning style follows the research of progressive educationalists and moves towards a curriculum based on the process of experiencing.

It’s important to accentuate that drama education begins with learning through dramatic play (Arts Council England, 2003). For that reason learning through drama combines concepts that involve using drama as a teaching method utilising conventions that cultivate the imagination and increases knowledge, this reference’s the teaching practices of Harriet Finley Johnson (1817-1956) and her innovations to her classroom practice. Pioneers who apply drama in their teaching practice draw upon the theory of cognitive constructivism from research of Piaget (Ragnarsdottir & Porkeldottir, 2012). Ragnarsdottir and Porkeldottir (2012) explain Piaget philosophy is about the progression of “human intelligence which advances through a series of different stages refer to appendix one for model”. The model illustrates the development stages from when children gain new experiences and make discoveries. Thus, when applied to education, children can learn based on previous knowledge they have consumed.

Drama first came to be in Education by the teachings methods by Harriet Finlay Johnson (1817-1956) her approaches placed her in the core of the progressive movement. Johnson placed drama at the centre of children’s learning by incorporating dramatic methods which were performative and physical utilising role play and dramatization (Nicholson, 2011:46).
Johnson’s classroom was based on active response and playful learning through cross circular activities and further employed classroom techniques that incorporated educational trips, outdoor retreats and the acumination of factual learning through history, nature and the environment (Pogrow, 2008:18). As stated by Pogrow (2008:18) Johnson viewed drama as a more efficient way to teach pupils, to which this helps develop artistic expression which resulted in a dynamic way of extracting knowledge. Henceforward, dramatic activity was valued as a dynamic way of illuminating acquisition of knowledge. Another practitioner whom heavily influenced the role of Drama in Education was Peter Slade (1912-2004) similarly to Finley Johnson he also incorporated theatrical devices to his classroom utilising scripts and performative play (Carkin, 2007:52). Slade also articulated an innovative concept of an improvisatory art form which he termed ‘child drama’. Slade characterised this new type of play ‘personal’ and ‘projected’ (Pickering, 2010:108). Wright (2011) describes Personal play, as involving the physical body in which students may experience by ‘being someone or something’ when actively participating in role play (2011:182). Whereas, projected play involves the whole mind but excludes the body an exemplar case, playing with objects or toys to create an imaginary world (2011:182). Slades study is still notable in drama education today; with many Secondary schools devising schemes of work based on characterisation and stimulus projects involving the element of play through improvisation. This work is vital for personal and social development not only in Drama as a specialist subject but as a medium of accessing difficult topics across the curriculum.
By the 1970s, Heathcote followed Slade’s approach of personal growth and improvisation in which she developed two major techniques *Mantle of the Expert* and *Teacher in role*. These teaching techniques are still to this day, widely recognised within the Drama classroom. Heathcote’s contribution of teacher in role changes the dynamic of the relationship between students and teachers allowing a power transition between both. For instance Heathcote offered authority to the students to allow them to create their own character roles. In this situation the students are dependent on providing the dialogue for the content of the drama in opposition to the teacher directing the lesson therefore the teacher in role experience gives equal opportunity to both teacher and student (Anderson, 2012:35). Heathcote’s teacher in role technique is not only used within the Drama classroom, the technique has been adapted by core subject teachers to teach an array of concepts. Teacher in role is now widely recognised for its use within the Primary classroom environment. Controversially, Bolton (1998) argues that not all practitioners were supportive of Heathcote’s teacher in role approach, with critical commentary stating it was ‘Indulgent and idiosyncratic’ (Bolton, 1998:182). This is often the case when teachers let students take full control of the situation, it has been noted from observations within the drama classroom that teacher in role works at its best when teachers prompt students with correct questioning techniques as opposed to the situation becoming spontaneously improvised.

Furthermore to Heathcote’s research she also invented Mantle of the Expert (MoE) this is another dramatic inquiry for teaching and learning still used in present day. This is an
approach in which the students adopt the roles of experts in a designated field of a creation in a fictional world. (Drama Resource, 2015) The job function of the teacher’s role places them within a fictional role and the teacher facilities the lesson within the unfolding scenario (Manon Van Der Water, Mcvoy and Hunt, 2015:24). Through this process Heathcote positions the children in roles as experts. In this case, the children obtain a role of someone who has a degree of knowledge and understanding in the specific area of research, but they need to discover a solution to a problem. Students are expected to work collaboratively with their peers through practice and using additional skills to fix the particular situation (Pound, Lee, 2015:79). Linda Pound and Trisha Lee (2015) agree that Mantle of Expert is a beneficial method in aiding pupils to be interactive, as they work together to find solutions thereby finding their own pathway through learning. This intention of Heathcote was to develop life skills as the desired outcome not drama skills. (Manon Van der water, Mary Mcvoy and Kristen hunt, 2015:24). These gained life skills are what the younger generation of today are lacking due to a government cuts within the arts in particular Drama (Department of Education, 2013).

Another practitioner, hugely influential within Drama and education is Jerome Bruner (1967). Similarly to Heathcote, Bruner (1967) endorsed a theory of active participation towards a theory of instruction. He suggested that learners need to participate actively which is an aspect that is essential to the learning process and that child fantasies and values needs to be integrated into lessons so that knowledge becomes personalised (Bowell, 2013, p2). This theory is heavily based on Piaget’s theory of child developmental psychology
which focuses of the attributes of ‘play’ and discovery’. Bruner’s theory references Piaget in the new millennium context. With regards to the evolution of Drama in education and an array of influential practitioners endorsing theories and techniques, Peter Brook (1968) published his book ‘Empty Space’ acknowledging ‘play’ as a foundation for TIE (Theatre in Education). Brook also stated that ‘play’ was a building block for continuing human and personal development (Wooster, 2007). TIE and improvisation is highly advocated tool in core education institutions in performing arts. Its theorem involves extensive practical work, creating dynamic projects, utilising techniques and performance from spontaneity and improvisation plus offering opportunity for industry employment.

It’s important to note that the use of educationally drama promotes different modes of learning; Intrinsic learning, Extrinsic learning, Aesthetic learning and Artistic learning. (Courtney, 1989:13) Pioneers in the field accentuate the importance of the child and holistic growth within the education provision as their innovations were to endorse change. It was a constant reinforcement of “Learn by doing” voiced by Dewey (Courtney, 1989:20). Furthermore, in the words of Locke “Education had to form habits of the mind, not concrete memorization” (1989:20). Manon Van Der Water, Mary Mcvoy and Kristen hunt put forward that drama is a medium in which everyone can learn, focuses on communication, language, observation and empathy which becomes embodied through experience. As Linda Pound and Trisha Lee states; not in any circumstance is the context about a polished product as Heathcoat reinstates it’s the desire of orienting life skills by fostering creativity, spontaneity and critical thinking. (Pound, Lee, 2015:3) The mode of drama does contest with the theatre
and interlink within drama in education as a learning model for Theatre in education this investigation will carry forward in chapter three.
Chapter -3 Theatre in Education

This chapter will apply a case study to Theatre in Education practice with reference to Drama practitioner Boal and Psychologist Vygotsky. It is important to begin with acknowledging the origin of Theatre in Education commonly known in current context as TIE which emerged as a distinct hybrid in 1960s. TIE operates as a learning tool for child centred learning; holistically developing pupil’s intellect through investigation, enquiry and project based teaching strategies (Wooster, 2007:21). Oliver Turner (2010) empathised “TIE reflects a learning that is child centred and experimental seeking to engage young people with and through their humanity” (Turner, 2010). Theatre practitioners plus theatre producers began to use theoretical conventions for an educational benefit by applying drama techniques to ‘teach’ issues surrounding modern day society. This shift in theatre practice soon enabled Drama to become a ‘valued medium’ for learning as it improves the learning process (Turner, 2010:4). Consequently this enabled Theatre in Education companies to invest in generating educational programmes that sought to deliver high quality performances with hidden morals. These programmes are designed based upon age requirements and subject content ensuring all participants fully understand the educational issue at hand by creating parallel worlds, the society lived in and the fictional world (Wooster, 2007:24) which are performed by highly trained actors. TIE still remains an educational tool in school environments as an array of TIE Company’s tour primary and secondary schools performing and facilitating workshops relating to key stage issues (Jackson, Vine, 2013).
Theorist and practitioner Augusto Boal (16 March 1931 - 2 May 2009) remains accredited with TIE praxis and renowned for his innovations and pedagogy in education. Boal developed the concept of *Theatre of the Oppressed* during the 1970s, this is a theoretical framework and set of techniques applied to forum theatre (Augusto Boal & Theatre of the Oppressed, 2016). Techniques pioneered with Theatre of the Oppressed include Forum theatre in which scenes depict some kind of oppression and audience members are advised to intervene. This involves breaking the forth wall by inviting spectators to intervene at any point by implementing the following actions; stopping the action, replacing actors, re-enacting their own ideas. This inevitably changes the situation and therefore the desired outcome of the performance (Drama Resource, 2016). Boal was aware that humans had the ability to take action in the world while simultaneously observing themselves in the process. Thompson (2016) states we have the power to amend alter and adjust actions to have a different outcome thanks to Boal’s technique. TIE companies continue to use Boal’s influences as well as applying other drama conventions including; image theatre, tableaux and rainbow of desire.

To further contextualise the use of TIE, the DICE project (Drama Improves Lisbon Key Competences in Education) has been used as a researched case study. The DICE project was an international project investigating five of Lisbon key competences and their effect on education (Dice Consortium, 2010). This project was supported by local theatre company Big Brum (1982). Big Brum “seek to provide the highest quality theatre in education programmes for children and young people” (Big Brum Theatre in Education Company,)
The company also aim to deliver extended activities to all areas of the curriculum through drama projects and touring productions (Big Brum, 2016). Subsequently, Big Brum has developed an extraordinary fifteen year artistic relationship with playwright Edward Bond whose work and theoretical approaches to drama have immensely influenced the artistic model of the company.

Edward Bond has been an influential artist on the companies work. Big Brum’s TIE project was based upon Bonds play ‘A Window’ (2009). The project toured for six weeks across the United Kingdom from 2009-2010. As stated when publicising the DICE project;

‘The play highlighted the difficulties of being human in an inhuman world and the relation between the individual and the community... the play focused on exploring delusion, reality, choice and oppression. The characters seek justice in an inhuman world, but society corrupts their values. The play is divided into three panels. It takes places in a high rise flat, a room with a chaise-lounge and window facing the audience... The program was facilitated via three sections pre performance workshop, performance with interaction between scenes and a post-performance workshop’.

(Dice Consortium, 2010)

The pre-workshop begins with a personal observation of the set. The students were advised to investigate the room by observing details surrounding the space. They were then asked how this made them feel – this was interpreted as a question and answer session therefore breaking the fourth wall between the students as spectators and Big Brum Company as facilitators. Students were then advised to stand behind the window placed on the stage and asked further questions to describe the detail of what they could see. The students answered with kinaesthetic responses involving images, sound and scents all relating to the
performance ‘society’ surrounding them. Following this, the class were divided into three groups to which they had to create a manmade object associated with the streets. The performance continues with a range of social interactions cued by Big Brum theatre. This created a collaborative environment to which students were asked to use their imagination and creativity. Upon finishing constructing their objects the groups were asked to create an illustration with the object in it. The company prompted questions such as; “what’s the intention of the object, Value, is there any meaning? Does it lie unnoticed? And why does it lie there? (Big Brum, Dice Consortium, 2010:156). This performative task entailed group collaboration and opportunity to evidence a range of applied drama techniques including image theatre, tableaux and roleplay. This resulted in each group placing their object below the original window box frame which concluded in a peer showing.

Following the pre workshop, the first panel is performed by the theatre company. The synopsis for panel one can be found in Appendix 2. The central theme is revealed during the performance about a mother blinding her infant with a pair of scissors to keep the child safe from the world. Liz, one of the main characters in the performance becomes obsessed with the narrative of the mother and the blinded child. At this point, the students are given the opportunity to discuss, reflect and express any feelings or concerns raised over the theme of the performance. This places the student at the centre of the characters situation enabling them to understand how the character must be feeling at this point. Throughout this panel, students are also asked to explore though a practical approach using forum theatre to explore how Liz may have reacted to the newspaper which concluded with a discussion about the value of the bedsheets. Hillock school Students discussed purity in relation to
innocence and whether the sheet may have been compromised in some way. (Golden Hillock, Dice Consortium, 2010:157-158).

Following the open discussion with the students, Panel two is set sixteen years later. The narrative of the story has progressed to show that Dan, the son of Liz has ended up with the responsibility of looking after his drug addict mother (Drama Library, 2016). The flash forward scene has cleverly placed drugs and responsibility as a central theme within the performance referencing a range of other themes including suicide, relationships and failure throughout. For further detail and description refer to Appendix 3 for synopsis. This directly relates to Boal’s convention of the oppressed as the students are able to empathetically feel what the characters are going through. When participating within the TIE performance, Golden Hillock pupils were then asked to reflect upon what they had just witnessed in relation to the underlying themes of the performance.

To finish, performance panel 3 is performed see Appendix 4 for Synopsis. Big Brum theatre announced that the starting point for the next exercise is interchangeable depending on the different groups and this is a consequence of our different shared experiences in life. The students including Golden Hillock pupils return back to the original room to examine what has changed since witnessing the performance. At this point the set of the room is now distorted and unrecognisable due to the conditions and character oppressions (Golden Hillock, 2009, in Dice Consortium, 2010:158-159). The group were then instructed by the company to discuss what they now see promoted with kinaesthetic clues around the new found space. Responses from the Golden Hillock include ‘emptiness’ (Student 1: 2009),
‘a world out of order’ (Student 11:2009) and “with all the stuff everywhere comes more emptiness” (Student 3:2009) (Golden Hillock, 2009, in Dice Consortium, 2010, P158-159). To conclude Dan (the son of Liz) is asked to look out of the objectified window and whispers his closing line of “For the kid, for the kid” (Bond, 2011, p209). A final question is asked by the Big Brum facilitator to the students – they are asked what is meant by Dan’s closing statement. Responses included:

“His mother gave her life for her child...
He feels guilty...
The boy is like the flat...
At the end he’s been torn apart and wants to get out onto the street...
The boy didn’t want to let his mother go.
She was like the kid and he was like the parent.
Maybe he feels like he blinded her (by feeding her habit) He’s seeing the world for the first time”.

(Golden Hillock, 2009, in Dice Consortium, 2010:159)

The above summary of Golden Hillocks student responses, reflect the main objective of the play. The pupils are asked to place themselves in the characters ‘shoes’ giving them an insight to the problems of being human in an inhuman world through a range of thematic references. The characters are seeking justice in an inhuman world, but the society corrupts their values. Subsequently Dan by the end of play has rediscovered his innocence and realises he must turn out to the city to find justice. The very end of the performance Big Brum asked one final question “What do you think he is seeing when he looks out into the street? And what is he blind to?”

Golden hillock concluded;

‘He can see himself in the street doing what he’s done [mugging] and at the same time he can see his mother selling herself.
Transactions.
He’s blinded himself to his mum’s situation, he doesn’t want to see the truth, but he knows it.
He can’t see his family together.
He has to create new visions.
Part of him sees himself dead and the other part imagines living in the future. Contradictions.
He can see a mother pushing a baby in a pram. He can see himself and the childhood he’s lost. He can see himself through the baby on the street. He has empathy with the child.
He can see himself in everything now. He keeps asking himself ‘why was I born?’

(Golden Hillock, 2009, in Dice Consortium, 2010:60)

To finish, Big Bum narrated the unseen details of the pupil’s original task of exploring and discussing the question; “why was I born”. The groups were given 30 minutes to work on a collaborative task exploring this moment which then ended with a peer showing. This placed them directly in Dan’s mind giving them to the opportunity to be as creative and imaginative as they wish the theme. This acts as an expression of their own value as children in today’s society as well relating to the narrative of the original performance.

Big Brum (2009) heavily base their Theatre in Education performances on Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky’s educational theory. Vygotsky’s awareness into child’s play has immensely impacted upon the development of drama plus theatre in education and greatly influenced TIE praxis (Big Brum, teacher’s resource pack, 2016). Vygotsky acknowledged that in play children are dealing predominantly with the meaning (or concepts) of things. This relates directly to Edwards Play ‘A Window’ (2009) where students are asked to construct their own meaning to each characters predicament. As Vygotsky states (1978); in play, action is subordinated to meaning, but in real life action dominates meaning. In relation to theatre in education, children create imaginary situations to explore real life
circumstances from the development point of view. By creating these imaginary conditions and characters, conditions can be understood as a means of developing abstract thoughts. (Big Brum, teacher’s resource pack, 2016:6). Vygotsky’s understanding of children led to further studies in which he developed Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) The *zone of proximal development* (ZPD) has been defined as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers" (Vygotsky, 1978:86). From Vygotsky’s research he found that as humans we can learn from each other, both of the same age and those of a higher age and developmental level (Muijs, in Brooks, Abbott, Huddleston: 2012). Daniel Muijs adds that the concept of ZPD was a major contrition to learning theory as this refers to the gap between what a person is able to do alone and what they can do with help of someone more knowledgeable or skilled than themselves (Muijs, in Brooks, Abbott, Huddleston: 2012)

Big Brum (2016) directly use Vygotsky’s ZPD approach in their TIE programs and workshops to aid support as learning theory. Students are encouraged to use their creativity collaboratively to respond to a range of thematic themes suited to their key stage age. This not only enhances creative skills but also intellectual skills through character thought processes. These processes are ahead of their actual development age through the mediation of the actor-teacher and the scaffolding of their more capable peers. As Big Brum (2016:6) states “what a child can do with assistance today they will be able to do on their own tomorrow.” Through the use of Vygotsky’s ZPD and scaffolding learning theories, Big
Brum theatre is constantly challenging students to learn through Drama. Children are encouraged to be active seekers of new knowledge, interacting with their surroundings and thereby aiding cognitive development in a culturally adaptive way.
Conclusion

To conclude, a range of evidence has been presented recognising the fundamental educational theories that have impacted current educational practice. The assessment of child centred learning theories with recognition to Dewey, Froebel, Montessori, and Piaget establish that enhancing the holistic child supports the developmental growth and can in effect extend a child’s knowledge through alternative academic provisions. The historical movement from traditional to progressive approaches played a significant role to the shaping of a new curriculum throughout the millennium. This important change contested the traditional concept of text book teaching and enabled child centred learning to be trialled across the new curriculum. Dewey positioned this child centred curriculum at the core of learning through real life experiences, interaction, and activity (Gargiulo & Kilgo, 2013:8). His research is still seen in today’s contemporary culture by placing the child at the core of their own learning and thereby enabling them to become active learners and critical thinkers across an array of multidisciplinary subjects.

This holistic approach has been used as inspiration across the discipline of drama in education as teachers have utilised drama conventions across the primary and secondary curriculum to achieve educational goals and objectives (Ozbek, 2014:27). The nature of drama in education, perused by a range of drama practitioners and TIE companies has also been examined. Slade, Boal and Heathcote’s work have all been developed under the notion of nurturing the holistic child consequently this influenced TIE. Children are thereby encouraged to play, understand, empathise and reflect on an array of character roles and
narratives. Furthermore, Heathcote’s mantle of the expert and teacher in role innovations provide the opportunity for students to be creative through practical experiences and a ‘learn by doing’ approach linking Dewey’s original theory. This theory was further explored through Boal’s *theatre of the oppressed* and *forum theatre* techniques. These techniques explore creativity, and enhance cognitive development through practical exploration and participation. Further research into Piaget’s constructivism theory justified the impact of child centred learning with regards to child development juxtaposed with Vygotsky’s ZPD and scaffolding theories. Both progressive theories have been referenced to drama in education and within Theatre in education praxis through BIG Brum theatre’s case study.

References to these fundamental theorists still inspire the educational aims of today’s TIE companies, valuing their expertise through educational programmes and aiding knowledge and understanding in a range of practical disciplines. As Wooster (2007) describes, this added benefit operates to aid child centred learning across all key stages as well as holistically developing a pupil’s intellect through investigation, enquiry and project based teaching strategies (Wooster, 2007:21). Contextual evidence presented in this paper, suggests that a huge change has occurred in drama in education since the progressive shift. The sole purpose of child centred learning was the encouragement of a child’s ability to question and reflect in order to empower pupil over teacher. It is arguable that such goals are still evidenced in TIE performance as seen through the examined case study of Big Brum. Conversely it is also clear that TIE performances have taken over this child centred notion. Thus detreating responsibility from drama in education and opting to employ companies to deliver performances as opposed to incorporating dramatic conventions across the
curriculum. These external companies are valued within educational settings with the need for such performance work still heavily sought after; consequently this may be deflecting ‘child centred learning’ across the curriculum. The works of TIE companies do indeed offer an educational contribution, enhancing the holistic child through a range of dramatic conventions. Though it seems that the original aims of TIE are fading – shifting TIE into a form of educational theatre as opposed to the progressive development of child-centered theatre and education praxis. It could therefore be suggested that the essential element of 'learning through experience' needs to be re-introduced in primary and secondary education, with school’s aiming to work alongside TIE companies to expand and broaden a range of curriculum topics.
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### Appendices

#### Appendix 1

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Appendix 2- Big Brum Case study (Dice Consortium, 2010:153)

Panel One: Liz is making a bed on the chaise-longue when Richard arrives home. He has been out all day, sitting for hours on the bus, looking unsuccessfully for work. He finds her in the room and asks her ‘what’s the matter?’ She cannot tell him and continues to make the bed. Richard realises she is going to sleep in the room. This alarms him and he wants to know if they are still eating together. He also wants to know what he’s done to deserve this. She says she doesn’t want an argument, just some space. Richard keeps provoking her until she tells him a story from the newspaper she has read about a mother who blinded her baby with a pair of scissors to keep it safe from the world and at home with her. Richard doesn’t believe her. He goes to look for the newspaper but she tells him she’s torn it up so that she doesn’t have to keep going back to it. She obsessively recounts in detail how the woman blinded the child. Richard tells her to stop telling the story but Liz can’t. He doesn’t see why their relationship has to suffer because of what this woman has done. Richard decides to take control of the situation by taking the bedding out of the room. When he returns, Liz tells him she’s pregnant. Richard tells her they can’t afford it. ‘Get rid of it.’ He offers to go to the doctor with her in the morning to explain, in case the doctor ‘asks any questions’. Liz does not respond. Richard tells Liz that even if he could afford it, he still wouldn’t want the baby; kids are no use, all ‘want, want and gimme, gimme.’ Richard becomes frustrated by Liz’s intransigence and despondent about how the world treats him. Richard says he’s had enough and decides to go ‘down the pub’. He borrows money from her handbag to do it. Richard throws the handbag into the middle of the room ‘I’ve left enough in to shop for one’, and leaves her with an ultimatum – she has to choose between having the baby or their relationship.

Appendix 3- Big Brum case study (Dice Consortium, 2010, P153:154)

Panel Two: Sixteen years later. The room remains the same. Dan, Liz’s son, enters. He puts a small packet on the table and sits on the chaise-longue. Liz enters. She has come for the packet – it is a packet of drugs. Dan tells her to take it to her room. She picks the packet up but she is too ashamed to leave and does not like being spoken to ‘like a child’ by her own child. She presses him on why he won’t take his coat off. Eventually Dan reveals a stab wound in his arm from when he went to buy the drugs with his friend: his friend too is now addicted to the drug and tried to steal them from Dan for himself and his girlfriend and family. Liz is hysterical now and fears that the police will find them by following the trail of blood he has left on the landing – ‘you’ve marked us out’. Liz puts the packet down and goes to get something to dress the wound. She gets a bowl of water and antiseptic but can’t find any bandages. She returns with a white bed-sheet, which she tears a strip from. Dan objects to her ruining the sheet. They fight over it. The water spills. Liz rescues the packet from the running water and, relieved that it isn’t ‘ruined’, especially after all he has been through to get the drugs for her, she goes to put them somewhere safe in her room. Dan cleans up the mess. Liz returns carrying a pair of scissors to cut the sheet with; she is high, having injected the drug. She cannot make the scissors work and begins to tear the sheet once more for more bandages which she lets drop on the floor. Dan tells her to give it up but she explains that she can’t. She continues to tear the sheet into strips. Dan tells her she is ruining their lives. He, exhausted, covers himself with the coat and sleeps on the chaise-longue. Liz does not realise he is asleep and tries to tempt him to take the drug. We learn that Dan mugs people to pay for his mother’s habit. But as Liz looks at his sleeping face she realises that he is innocent. Liz begins to tell him the story of the woman who blinded her child. She continues to tear and tear the sheet, littering the floor with strips. Liz becomes increasingly resentful of his innocence, as the hopelessness of her own addiction begins to torture her. She decides to blind her own son with the scissors, ‘I’ll look after you. Always take care of you. Love you. I promise. See the needle in me hand. I got the skill. Stab. Stab …’ but as she takes the scissors to his face she is unable to do it. Liz realises that the woman in the story was lying to herself. ‘She said she did it so she’d always look after it. Not true. She didn’t know herself.’ Liz realises she is kidding herself and decides to take her own life in order to free Dan. Moving the chair to the middle of the room she makes a noose from the torn strips of bed sheet and climbs onto it. From this position she can see all the suffering of the world, the whole world is under the chair and she is terrified and liberated by it at the same time. But she cannot kill herself in the room, before the eyes of the world and her son. ‘He woke up and saw – he’d close his eyes – never open them again.’ Liz takes an mp3 player from the drawer in the table, puts on some dance music and leaves the room. Dan continues to sleep. Off-stage we hear a loud crash. Slowly Dan wakes. He sees the mess and begins to clear up the room dancing to the music and crying while he cleans – crying and dancing. He leaves the room taking the bandages, bowl, scissors, drugs and mp3 player with him. The chair remains where Liz left it.

Appendix 4- Big Brum case study (Dice Consortium, 2010, P154:155)

Panel Three: a few days later. The chair remains in the middle of the room. The doorbell rings. Off, we hear a conversation between Dan and a man. Dan isn’t expecting the visitor. Dan brings the man into the room to wait for a moment while he finishes what he was doing. The man is Richard. Dan returns; he assumes that Richard has been sent by social services to see how he is coping after the death of his mother. Richard plays along with him. He tries to find out as much as he can about Liz’s death. Dan is very protective of her. He blames his absent father for what happened to her – a man, he says, ‘who has worms crawling on his face.’ Richard leaves a dazed and confused Dan in the room while he has a look round the flat to do his ‘assessment.’ While he is gone Dan looks out of the window (this is the first time the presence of the window has been acknowledged) at the street below. ‘People in the streets. One way. Then the other. They don’t know where they’re going.’ Richard returns with the clothing he has looted from Liz’s wardrobe. He claims he’s going to give them to charity. Dan’s sake, to save him the job and rid him of bad memories. Dan becomes suspicious and takes the clothes back from Richard.

blocking the exit and demanding to know who he actually is. Cornered, Richard replies ‘Your Dad’ to his estranged son. Richard begins to berate Liz, about her drug addiction, which Dan claims to be his own, and her obsession with a story about a woman taking ‘some kid’s eyes out.’ Dan is emotionally eviscerated by the ferocity and cruelty of Richard’s assault and buries his face in the chaise-longue. Richard decides to leave with his ‘boot’ and as a parting shot he tells Dan that the money he made from mugging people wasn’t enough to pay for Liz’s habit and that his mum had to prostitute herself to make money. He knows because he had been with her in a doorway and she didn’t even recognise him. This apparently destroys Dan. He asks Richard to leave, to take his mother’s clothes with him, and the little bit of jewellery that is hidden in the bottom of the wardrobe in her room. ‘Don’t want nothing to do with her. Not after that.’ Richard is only too happy to oblige, ‘I can take it off your hands. If you don’t want it.’ He leaves the clothes for a moment and goes out of the room to find the jewellery. Dan grabs the clothes and tells them Richard is a liar, ‘We’ll kill him.’ He overturns the chaise-longue to reveal a mass of white bed-sheets torn into strips. When Richard returns Dan knocks him out with a cosh [a short weighted, often leather-bound, weapon used to bludgeon the victim over the head] and ties him to the chaise-longue with strips of sheet. He arranges the clothes on the chair where they can see Richard and shakes his father into consciousness. A confrontation ensues where Dan tries to get Richard to confess to the clothes/Liz that he is lying about her prostitution. Richard begs for his life. Dan decides that he is not going to kill Richard, but will take out his father’s eyes instead. He does not have scissors so he decides to stamp them out. In his panic and fear Richard manages to get a hand free and topple Dan who is trying to stamp on him. Dan falls, releasing an animal-like cry of despair. Dan staggers, groans, and begins to cry, saying ‘Sorry – sorry – sorry.’ He turns his back on Richard, who crawls out of the room with strips still hanging from his arms and legs, calling for the police. Dan stands once more in the window looking out at the city. There is silence. Eventually Richard re-appears to gather as many clothes as he can without going too close to Dan, and then runs out. But Dan does not notice him now. He is still looking out of the window as he says, with quiet authority, ‘For the kid, for the kid.’