

**TITLE OF THE ARTICLE:**

**Teachers' Professional Competences: what has Drama in Education to offer? An empirical study in Greece**

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## ABSTRACT

This paper examines how the training *in* and the use *of* Drama in Education (DiE) affects the development of teachers' professional skills. It draws on data from broader empirical qualitative research about the impact of DiE on personal, social, and professional development of Greek secondary school teachers. It was carried out using focus groups and focused semi-structured interviews with 27 secondary school teachers who had all been trained in DiE and had already integrated it into their instructional practice (Zourna 2012). As findings clearly showed DiE has been decisive in the development of teachers' professional profiles. Since its initial use, it has strengthened their professional identity, improved their instructional and organizational skills, enhanced the achievement of learning goals for all stakeholders - teachers and learners alike -, reinforced their belief in the necessity of lifelong learning, and helped them develop cooperation and effective interaction in and out of the school environment.

Key words: *secondary teachers, Drama in Education, Process Drama, professional competences, professional skills*

## **Introduction**

Although several studies have been carried out during the last decade on the impact of teaching through the arts on students' development and achievements (Wright 2006, DICE 2011, Walker *et al.* 2011, Villadsen *et al.* 2012, McLauchlan and Winters 2014) the influence of Drama in Education (DiE) on teachers and educators themselves both as personalities and as professionals has rarely been academically investigated. The current article is an attempt to fill this gap in the literature. The main questions leading this study were the following: What

specific professional skills did teachers develop after being trained in DiE and using it in their class? How did DiE affect teachers' knowledge, instructional practice and relations with students, colleagues, and the community? Could DiE be considered an innovative and effective method for teachers' professional development?

Based on the findings of 27 focused semi-structured interviews guided by the above questions, it can be claimed that the interviewed Greek secondary school teachers regard DiE as an innovative creative essential tool that can be used to motivate their students, renew their own engagement to the profession, and encourage co-operation with colleagues and the community outside school. Suitable for all levels of formal education, including teacher training and adult education, DiE has offered them a strong incentive for self-development, motivating them to seek further learning opportunities and engage in new career roles.

## **Drama in Education**

### ***Definitions and Description***

Drama in Education (DiE)<sup>1</sup> is a 'theatrical art form of pedagogical nature' (Avdi and Chadjigeorgiou 2007, p. 19), a dynamic process combining emotional engagement with cognitive processing, as well as individual and collective living experiences with reflection. The focus in drama is 'on process: a social activity that relies on many voices, perspectives, and role-taking and which focuses on task rather than individual interests and enables participants to see from new perspectives (DICE 2010, p. 19). Moreover it relies on the skills of the leading facilitator and requires neither an external audience nor full theatre resources in actual theatre plays and performances as costumes and props are no longer a necessity (Jackson 1993, Flynn 1997). The actual process involves an *as if* reality where the participants are aware that they belong in two worlds at the same time – real and imaginative – a kind of awareness called '*metaxis*' by Augusto Boal (sited in Kana and Aitken 2007, p.

701) deriving from the notion of *μέθεξις* in the works of ancient Greek philosopher Plato (Plat. *Parmenides* 132d). It is role-taking and not role-playing that differentiates DiE from usual improvisational activities since participants ‘live the experience as themselves without trying to imagine what someone else would say or do’ (Pearce and Jackson 2006) while keeping a safe distance from the issues at stake and the usually strong emotional engagement occurring during the process.

Initially influenced by the learning theories of Lev Vygotsky and Jerome Bruner and shaped over time through the work of inventive practitioners such as Dorothy Heathcote, David Davis, and Patrice Baldwin in the UK, David Booth in Canada, Avra Avdi and Melina Chadjigeorgiou in Greece and that of drama theorists such as Gavin Bolton, John O’Toole and Cecily O’Neill, DiE explores the human condition. It explores issues through suitable theatrical techniques and enhances understanding through reflection sessions. A drama scenario includes at least one major contradicting issue which can be explored from different points of view; the more the better. As Avdi and Chadjigeorgiou (2007) explain, ‘Originally set in particular conditions, situations, relationships, and roles, the dramatic context takes shape in time and space through dramatic tension, focus, discourse, and movement, creating suitable atmosphere and symbols so that all these together create an experience revealing the meaning of drama’ (p.52). Conditions necessary for a drama session are usually: sufficient time for implementation and discussion, the right type of environment without external interventions, a group of people, and a trained facilitator; such an example being a class of students and their teacher.

On the one hand, students as participants are relieved of the fear of making mistakes facing dilemmas, analyzing different perspectives, identifying alternatives, acting, reacting, enacting, making decisions, solving problems, gaining new knowledge, and deepening their

understanding of the issues in question. On the other hand, teachers as facilitators of learning are no longer providers of knowledge, as teaching lies in reflective discussion about meanings and connections with the real lives of the students (Fairbairn 2002). According to Cecily O'Neill, through taking on roles in drama teachers 'are not acting but are conscious of how they might enable participants to explore the issue, event, or relationship under investigation; joining in with them, but working ahead of them' and according to Gavin Bolton 'classroom dynamics and participants' differing interests, attitudes, and personalities can influence how the structure evolves' (sited in Taylor 2004, p. 102).

### ***Drama in Education and teachers' professional skills: Literature Review***

The latest / Current research reported in the literature around the globe calls for a differentiation in the design of future professional development programs for teachers [[which]] who could take advantage of the benefits of using DiE as a core method in training. During the last decade serious evidence has been accumulated concerning the potential of DiE in various educational settings.

Teachers using DiE confess to becoming learners again, forced to 'step out of their comfort zone and facilitate new lessons that may or may not succeed' (Dawson *et al.* 2011, p. 331) experiencing 'the uncertain feeling of "being a novice" again, of standing on shaky ground' (Barak *et al.* 2010, p. 282). They characterize learning through drama as 'a qualitative change of meaning, a constructive activity, and an interpretative process aiming at better understanding reality' (Laakso 2005, p. 355). They have realized that drama motivates teachers and students alike by addressing multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles (Duma and Silverstein 2008). They report important changes in their role and serious differentiation in the development of traditional relationships in class allowing students 'freedom of expression and real opportunities for thinking and decision-making'

(McNaughton 2006, p. 37) as teachers ‘no longer wear authoritative masks but rather interact with learners in order to negotiate meanings’ (Dora To *et al.* 2011, p. 528), engage students with special educational needs and manage to reach even the hard-to-educate student (Upitis *et al.* 2001); students have ‘become co-creators of their own learning’ (Dawson *et al.* 2011, p. 318) and ‘tend to remember longer and reflect more thoroughly which makes drama a valid tool for learning in any subject area’ (Kana and Aitken 2007, p. 700). Teachers have succeeded in raising their students’ authentic learning, as reading, writing, speaking, listening and intercultural skills have been organically integrated in their multicultural lives and their achievements in school-wide testing have also ameliorated (Betts 2005, Kendrick *et al.* 2006, Cawthon and Dawson 2009, Dora To *et al.* 2011, Noonan 2011).

Teachers realize how drama offers meaningful connections to the curriculum (Duma and Silverstein 2008, Andrews 2010), having integrated hands-on instructional strategies into their pedagogy as drama creates ‘the necessary space to draw on their own voices’ (Cawthon and Dawson 2009, p. 157) and adapt drama activities to their own style enriching their teaching repertoire (Betts 2005, Oreck 2006). At first teachers hesitate to use drama as an instructional tool either because they feel they lack the knowledge on how to use curriculum as a source (Flynn 1997) or because of time constraints (Stinson 2009). Nevertheless, through drama teachers gain confidence to try new things and even incorporate ‘information, terminology, vocabulary, and other disciplines in dramas’ (Flynn 1997, p. 65). They acquire a new appreciation of planning, a revitalization of teaching, and a commitment to provide more time, materials, instruction, and support for students’ art-making (Upitis *et al.* 2001). As they become more experienced they bring their creativity into the classroom in more effective ways issuing ‘art activities into many subjects for a variety of instructional purposes’ (Oreck 2006, p. 11) among which the desire to ‘provide a sense of relevance’ between learning, the subject discipline, and the students’ lives (Dorion 2009, p. 2260). As another researcher

suggests, teacher trainers should help ‘their trainees see themselves as teachers whose art is teaching regardless of subject specialism’ (Kempe 2012, p. 535).

A strong relationship between performing and teaching has been identified in the literature (Whatman 1997, Sawyer 2004, Ryan 2005, Dunn and Stinson 2011, Kempe 2012) as teachers ‘employ self-images of entertainer and actor and use theatrical techniques in class’ (Ryan 2005, p. 184); they must think in a ‘quadripartite manner, making decisions as actor, director, playwright, and teacher simultaneously’ (Dunn and Stinson 2011, p. 618). Drama can facilitate this heavy task by enhancing group dynamics as active learning could come with many risks particularly in the area of classroom management. Therefore by using drama contracts teachers can achieve a balance between mindfulness and playfulness, can manage unrest, uncertainty and unpredictable situations allowing students freedom while maintaining control (Laakso 2005, Oreck 2006, Toivanen 2011a, 2011b, Lee *et al.* 2013). As Heikkinen (2005) describes it, in drama, teacher and students ‘play a game of un-decidability, of presence and absence within the horizon of incompleteness in order to create or express new possibilities of meaning’ (p.367). As Kempe (2012) comments, ‘recognizing the different ways in which adopting a role involves different elements of performance’ can be valuable to all educators (p.523); therefore, latest research calls for a shift in routine practices as drama-experienced teachers view teaching as an improvisatory art and the education of potential teachers as performing artists (Whatman 1997, Sawyer 2004, Dora To *et al.* 2011).

Through suitable drama activities focusing on problems and dilemmas they might face in their professional lives, teachers become ‘aware of the aesthetic and multi literacy benefits of drama use in their classrooms’ (Kerry-Moran and Meyer 2009, p. 209) securing knowledge of arts vocabulary, a mastery of content knowledge in their specific subject areas as well as generic instructional skills (Andrews 2010, Toivanen 2011b). They can also gain new

perspectives on cultural exclusion, social justice, and leadership (Kana and Aitken 2007). Research shows that drama itself ‘helps teachers increase their theoretical knowledge of the structural factors that influence drama lessons’ (Toivanen 2011b, p. 61) while drama in teacher training can help practitioners develop deeper interaction skills and new ideas and thoughts about teaching, as trainees usually find it ‘difficult to move away from scripted teaching’ (Toivanen 2011a, p. 409). Teachers participating in drama-based programs become more involved in action research by collecting data themselves and keeping valuable archives (Betts 2005).

Evidence shows that teachers using drama become significant ‘agents of organizational change in their schools’ (Ryan 2005, p. 195) as they grow ‘comfortable to listen, critique, and suggest changes’ (Hadar and Brody 2010, p. 1650), while providing / and provide?? ‘support, motivation, expertise, knowledge and skills’ (Oreck 2006, p. 15) thus adding ‘quality to induction practice’ (Raphael and O’Mara 2002, p. 84). Teachers have admitted that integrating drama in their class has not been ‘easy without mentors to work with’ (Waldschmidt 1998, p. 107). They appreciate an interdisciplinary collaborative approach (Andrews 2010) as this leads to mutual benefit for collaborating partners (Andersen 2004); a ‘revitalization of the professional culture in school’ (Patrick *et al.* 2010, p. 287); ‘a better understanding of the discipline, the content standards, student learning, and planning’ (Lind 2007, p. 14); an increase in awareness of teachers’ concerns and production of tutorials (Flynn 1997); content knowledge in dramatization, interpersonal and personal understandings (Catterall 2007); ‘recognition and respect from colleagues, a sense of collegiality, dissemination in local newspapers to promote public awareness of teachers’ commitment and achievements’ (Hundert 1996, p. 210); forums for sharing ideas and advancing knowledge and skills, follow-up discussions and professional networks strengthening relationships and communication channels (Duma and Silverstein 2008); serious discussion about integrating

drama in the official curriculum and in future professional development programs for teachers (Kendrick *et al.* 2006).

### **Teachers' professional competences**

As professional profiles have been transformed during the last decades due to vast changes in society, the economy, and technology, new mixtures of specialized knowledge and transversal skills are highly demanded by employers. In order to overcome the existing mismatch between education and labor market demands, generic skills development is being introduced as a main subject in tertiary education (Bradshaw 1985, Watkins and Drury 1999). Since the discussion about the profile of a modern employee has been to date continuous the development of the so-called *21<sup>st</sup> century skills*, *employability skills*, *career competences*, *key-competences*, *life-career skills* etc has been investigated thoroughly in numerous projects and papers internationally (European Commission 2007, Sultana 2009, European Commission 2010, Voogt and Pareja Roblin 2010, Rosenberg *et al.* 2012).

Teachers of the 21<sup>st</sup> century are also professionals whose profile undergoes similar changes and shifts; it is being shaped by specific professional competences, though enriched by emotional intelligence characteristics reinforcing any existing personal and interpersonal skills (Hargreaves and Fullan 1992, Goleman 1998, Kennedy 2005, Cawthon and Dawson 2009, Collinson 2012). The term '*competences*' encompasses all learnable and teachable capacities of an individual to cope with specific situational demands while the term '*professional competences*' specifically refers to abilities responding to work-related demands. The term broadly understood includes motivational, meta-cognitive and self-regulatory attributes, which decisively contribute to willingness for action (Baumert and Kunter 2013).

In the primary and secondary literature<sup>2</sup> one can encounter numerous lists of competences that assumingly form the profile of the teaching profession. As expected, all these lists have similarities in their main categories of the professional skills a modern effective teacher should master. The categories most commonly referred to are: *instruction, organization, classroom management, content knowledge, professional growth, and lifelong learning* (Freiberg 2002, P.S.T. 2005, Paraskeva and Papagianni 2008, N.I.E.S. 2009, C.C.S.S.O. 2010, Thomason 2011, Baumert and Kunter 2013). It can easily be understood that the significant/specific professional competences of teachers can be classified as oriented either to the learner –the central beneficiary of teaching– or to the teacher him/herself, functioning as prerequisites for effective teaching. In order to best analyze our data suitable elements and terminology from the above mentioned sources were used to create the following classification of professional competences for teachers/educators which responded to and actually led our research (s. Table 1).

**[Insert Table 1 near here]**

## **Methodology**

Wishing to understand a unique person's experience within the educational context, the researchers were driven by the constructivist/interpretative paradigm. As education requires both practical and applicable ideas the pragmatist paradigm also led the current study (Cuba and Lincoln 1994, Mackenzie and Knipe 2006, Hammersley 2012). The Greek educational system needs innovative instructional methods and Greek teachers need to be trained in implementing more constructivist collaborative interventions in their classrooms. Drama in Education as experienced and applied by the researchers in their own professional lives seemed to offer such an opportunity for further exploration.

Being interested in the personal interpretation and experience of other educators using DiE in their professional development the researchers decided to use a qualitative research method. Of utmost importance was not the generalizability of results as in quantitative studies but an in-depth description and dissemination of the perceived experiences (Lincoln and Guba 2011). As claimed by Auerbach and Silverstein, the validity and reliability of qualitative studies are reinforced by ‘transparency in analysis, communicability of theoretical constructs, and internal coherence’ (2003, p. 78).

### ***Sample***

Sampling was driven by the purpose and aims of the study. The participants had to / needed to have been trained in DiE and have implemented it in their teaching practice – not to mention] Furthermore the innovative character of the issue in question in Greece[; therefore,] meant that sampling had to be focused. However, the participants, 27 women and 8 men in all, from 28 to 63 years old, with 4 to 35 years of teaching experience, working at 24 different schools in 4 major Greek cities, belonged to the widest possible range of academic disciplines: theology, modern literature, foreign language, history, mathematics, science, geology, music, arts, computer and social sciences. During the research procedure all ethics requirements were met (Cohen *et al.* 2008).

### ***Research tools***

In order to collect research data a focus group and personal interviews were used as research tools. In the focus group session, key issues concerning the research question were gathered in a short period of time through the immediate interaction among the participants (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2011, Robinson 2012). As DiE is an innovative method in Greece the focus group also helped in designing the interview pilot guide, as the main axes of the research were clarified and detailed views emerged. On the other hand, investigating

personal opinions and interpretations about DiE, focused on semi-structured interviews which allowed free expression without restrictions (Plummer 2000, Forsey 2012).

### ***Focus group discussion***

The focus group discussion took place [[in]] at the end of a[[n]] one-day conference where teaching courses using DiE were disseminated to the wider professional community; eight teachers of both sex genders, ten students, and an audience – both teachers and non teachers – had the opportunity to interfere in the discussion. A teacher, colleague of the researchers, coordinated the discourse while one of the researchers and another colleague had the responsibility of taking notes of all expressed opinions as well as non-verbal communication signs. The intervention of the researcher in the discourse was minimal. After analyzing the data the following issues emerged: *interdisciplinary approach integration, experience sharing, relation improvement in and out of school, differentiated teaching approach ('absolutely experiential'), changes in teacher role and attitude (becoming a 'facilitator of knowledge', 'a fellow traveler'), renewal of engagement and commitment to the profession, reinforcement of believing in lifelong learning, and finally self, cognitive, emotional, and social awareness*. These issues accounted for nearly one quarter (25%) of the total number of issues that emerged in the research and were taken into account when designing the interview pilot guide.

### ***Focused semi-structured interviews***

The focused semi-structured interview allows the researcher to give more space to the interviewees in a way that they can comment on various issues without having to answer to a specific order of questions. Of utmost importance is the requirement that all issues that interest the interviewer be commented upon among other topics possibly emerging during the continually flowing discussion. The interviewer uses a pilot guide which does not comprise

[[of]] a simple list of questions but [[it]] rather describes a wider context upon which the interviews are conducted, directed, and focused (Millward 2004, Bell 2007). Analyzing data is much more complicated than in a wholly structured form but this type of interview suited better the scope and purpose of the current research. Because of their characteristics it should not come as a surprise that most of the interviews lasted 30 to 40 minutes. Apart from the essential demographic questions (sex gender, academic discipline, age, years of experience in the profession, and city of employment) the pilot guide included a description of the major issues at stake such as the influence of DiE in their teaching practice, its impact on their professional, personal, and interpersonal skills, and what it meant to them both as individuals and as professionals.

### ***Biases***

The first author's background as an academic in career guidance and counseling, working for the last 10 years mostly with teachers as postgraduate students in the Department of Educational and Social Policy, University of Macedonia, has led to her research interest in innovative [[approaching]] methods in the professional development of teachers. The second author, a mathematics teacher working for 25 years in private and public secondary schools, encountered drama as a mature professional; after experiencing a strong renewal of her commitment to the profession she was suitably drama-trained, realized the potential of the method, and integrated it into her teaching practice[[]; then, she sought]] This led her to seek further professional development by pursuing postgraduate studies in Educational and Social Policy and she now holds a Master's degree in Adult Education. Moreover, she is interested in drama and theatre applications in educational settings and professional development.

### **Analysis**

Data coding followed (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003) method, the basic idea of which is moving from raw text to research concerns in small steps, each step building on the previous one (p.35). According to the authors, the steps in grounded theory coding are: *Raw Text*, *Relevant Text*, *Repeating Ideas*, *Themes*, *Theoretical Constructs*, *Theoretical Narrative*, and *Research Concerns*. By following this method in our research 146 *Simple Ideas* were identified which were organized into 15 *Repeating Ideas* and these categorized under 6 different *Themes*. Finally, the latter were grouped into two *Theoretical Constructs* corresponding directly to the Professional Competences of teachers found in the revised literature. For example, the *Simple Ideas* ‘not an absolute knowledge authority’, ‘it opened up new horizons’, ‘we all learn in the classroom’, ‘new learning paths’, ‘we are fellow travelers of our students’ and ‘the children didn’t realize they were learning’ were organized under the umbrella of the *Repeating Idea* the teachers become ‘aware of how the learner develops’. In Figure 1, one can see the final form of the tree structure developed in the process of constant comparison of codes and categories[[:]] [[f]] For the purposes of this article all unrelated codes were discarded, and for each *Theme* two or three quotes were selected and translated all by consensus of the two researchers.

**[Insert Figure 1 near here]**

## **Results**

### ***1. Learner- oriented competences***

#### *i. Instructing*

All participants admitted that through drama they became aware of how the learner develops[[:; therefore, they have differentiated]] subsequently differentiating their instructing strategies and leading their students to ‘knowledge without their realizing they were actually

learning' (T18)<sup>3</sup>, through 'new learning paths by using the right questions, innovative techniques, and suitable procedures feeling as fellow travelers of their own students' (T17). Moreover, 'children realize this is as serious as any other kind of teaching; and they are serious about it, too. They are attracted to it, in both hearts and minds' (T3). Participants commented that even children who are not 'efficient in typical class' (T14) or the ones who are 'needy' (T26) show a totally different persona in drama: they can 'improvise, speak out, prove themselves witty, and stand for their opinion' (T14), they 'get a unique opportunity to show their potential and skills which cannot be revealed in a formal lesson' (T26). Children learn 'how to break down boundaries, change attitudes, internalize new ones' (T6), they also learn to 'listen to each other, obey, trust, collaborate, come closer, overcome competitiveness, and share, realizing that only through cooperation, inclusion and recognition will they manage to lead a fulfilling life after they leave school' (T17). Both teachers and children 'can learn through drama a great many skills necessary in real life' (T10); 'if teachers cannot prepare you for life then who else can?' (T14).

## *ii. Organizing and Planning*

DiE 'offers a canvas: everything is now structured in a meaningful web' (T14). However, it 'demands [[for]] a lesson plan; if you want to succeed in a so-called "free" lesson, you have to be aware that [[on the contrary]] it has to be very carefully organized and planned' (T3). On the one hand, it is a structured method where 'suitable activities bring into the open [[daylight]] any conflicts, misconceptions, and hidden stereotypes; therefore, ideas, interests, opinions, values, and needs of the students are taken into consideration' (T1). When planning a drama scenario many important decisions must be made: 'always start by choosing a certain subject; formulate it into suitable open questions; [[make]] conduct your own research using every possible source; connect the material to your own perceptions, experiences, and

knowledge' (T8), 'incorporate children's personal views, attitudes towards social issues, and prior knowledge' (T5). On the other hand, DiE is both flexible and adaptable; as three of the participants explained:

I was always intrigued by the idea of how to connect the events of the Bible [[events]] with the real lives of my students two thousand years after they had happened / occurred. Drama has helped me make the suitable connections. The scenario of the prodigal son *is* after all an everyday phenomenon, isn't it? It is not imaginary; it is real. (T6)

I was always followed by unanswered questions: why is Literature needed, how can I persuade others to read? I had to find some answers. Just like Literature, drama also gives meaning to the world around us. (T14)

At a museum I once organized an educational program on photography; [[in]] on the evaluation sheets most children characterized them as paintings. After I used drama in a repetition of the same program things drastically changed: children clearly *knew* the displayed items were *indeed* photographs. (T24)

### *iii. Implementing*

The majority of the participants expressed the view that education has [[got]] many similarities to theatre in a way that in the classroom, teachers often 'define space using body language and group dynamics, improvise, communicate both verbally and non verbally, retain control of the tone and variation of their voice' (T23) in order to 'draw children's interest and maintain their attention' (T16). As one of the participants confessed:

I had had [[a]] personal theatre experience before entering the profession; all these years in education I have completely taken advantage of that previous experience

keeping a balance between the material children have to learn at school and the playful ways they can do so. (T19)

Nevertheless, it is a real challenge to ensure the cooperation of children who 'do not consider drama a real lesson at first as they are used to being lectured; even rearranging their desks differently or sitting in a circle seem strange but later on they are attracted to it, they buy-in, they demand it' (T15). Through drama the teacher creates a trusting and safe learning environment which can only be successful thanks to the evolving interaction between teacher and students. As one participant put it, 'every expressed opinion is respected and treasured' (T6). Another commented that 'it is the children who mostly contribute to the success of your efforts; no matter how hard you have tried to prepare your lesson, if children do not cooperate it will be to no avail' (T11). On the other hand, 'drama should never be didactic; with teenagers you can never be sure of what [[could]] may come up. Being vigilant all the time is the key to success' (T25).

Many participants supported the view that 'taking advantage of the major characteristic of the youth: the joy of playing' (T14) can contribute to the success of teaching through drama. Some wondered: 'What's wrong with letting children laugh and play? Even something serious can mean fun for children; they have fun, learn, and evolve at the same time' (T11) and some commented 'it is so delightful to observe your students mov[[e]] ing, thinking, playing, feeling, cooperat[[e]] ing, and mak[[e]] ing critical judgments all in one lesson (T14). Nevertheless, flexibility and seriousness are needed during [[implication]] implementation. Teachers should 'never experiment with drama' (T6). Some participants offered advice: 'be prepared to face challenge and controversy, be ready to make variations but always keep a certain plan in mind' (T6), also remain open to all possibilities: 'I use modern technology, such as ICT, laptops, interactive whiteboards, any suitable software as

well as traditional resources, approaching my discipline from various directions in both preparation and application of a drama lesson' (T19).

## ***2. Teacher-oriented competences***

### *i. Knowledge*

Teachers need to continually enrich their knowledge, concerning their specific professional discipline, subject content, pedagogy, psychology, curriculum, current or future educational policies as well as self-, multicultural and global awareness. The participants admitted that the whole process of being trained and using drama in class was 'a great new school; not only our students but we trainers also learn more and learn better' (T1). Another confessed 'the more I satisfied knowledge deficiency the more I felt the need to be further educated and learn relevant things; and I keep learning [[in high]] with great enthusiasm' (T12). Moreover, trying to apply newly acquired knowledge in class made them realize that 'practice is most important but one needs the theoretical background as well. In order to begin, one needs to know what is done and why' (T13) and some made suggestions 'be well trained to use drama, acquire certain skills, such as developing a better understanding of group dynamics, psychology, theatre techniques; be competent in your own content knowledge' (T5).

As for the educational policies usually organized and directed by others, [[than]] non class practitioners, participants commented that 'real change in educational matters cannot be imposed from top to bottom. Innovation happens in class; it can arise through true inspiration children provide, through substantial teacher-student interaction' (T11). Experiencing drama provoked even more substantial changes to some participants' professional directions:

I was so shocked when I first experienced drama that right on the spot I decided to pursue a PhD connecting drama to my discipline in order to [[get]] become involved in issuing real innovation in educational policies; which I have been doing for the last four years [[in]] with complete success. (T7)

Others noted: ‘teachers who have never experienced drama have no idea of what they are missing; nor do their students. Every teacher should have the opportunity to role play[[ing]] /to implement role-playing, [[get]] be / become exposed, face their own fears, discover their real selves before working with children. We are responsible for them as we definitely share much more time with them at school than do their own parents at home’ (T23). Awareness of their responsibility towards students, parents, and society in general has increased through drama experience. As one commented ‘I have decided to pursue the drama program with my students once again this year regardless [[if]] of whether I get paid for the extra time or not’ (T26) and another testified ‘I [[got]] became involved in [[volunteering]], voluntary work, social debates, community matters; I was socially sensitized’ (T15).

## *ii. Lifelong learning*

Most participants revealed that their involvement with DiE has strengthened their belief in the necessity of lifelong learning [[considering]] and consider learning [[as]] ‘a matter of existence. I have already started thinking about what to learn after my retirement in two years’ (T1). The majority have taken substantial initiatives in pursuing higher studies in formal education such as Master’s and/or PhD connecting their subject area with DiE; in their own words, ‘I plan to finish my Master’s in Theatre Pedagog[[ic]] y and then pursue a relative Ph.D. parallel to my job at school’ (T5), ‘I have just completed my thesis for a distance learning program on the use of DiE in teaching Greek as a foreign language to non-Greek [[speaking]] learners’ (T15). Others have pursued changes inside the profession as in:

‘becoming a teacher[[s’]] trainer and a candidate lecturer at the University; I participated in the team designing the latest curricula on Greek Modern Language and Literature’ (T7), ‘teaching at the University for the last ten years; I took part in curriculum development projects for the Greek Ministry of Education’ (T1), ‘being trained in museum education, adult learning, special needs learning; I have also worked at a second chance school for adults for two years’ (T24). All participants with no exception admitted that thanks to drama they constantly seek informal or non-formal education and practice. They participate in ‘seminars’ (T24), ‘relevant workshops, organize and conduct drama seminars in various schools as well as in non-formal learning environments’ (T12), ‘present academic papers on innovative issues at national and international conferences’ (T25), participate in ‘theatre groups and theatre plays’ (T6).

### *iii. Engagement in and out of school*

Teachers usually find it hard to cooperate with their colleagues mainly because, as some participants commented, ‘they feel they know everything and cannot admit that someone else [[could]] may know more, could do better, could *be* better’ (T6). On the contrary they said ‘drama makes you feel you want to share things; you keep searching for colleagues to cooperate; learn from each other’ (T8). They testified that having ‘cooperated with colleagues from various disciplines allowing others to watch their drama lessons openly’ (T2) has led to a ‘real transformation in our school’ (T4). Some commented that using DiE made them feel ‘committed to sharing and disseminating this knowledge into larger networks starting within one’s own school’ (T12) because ‘when you believe in the value of your innovative methods you can surely persuade others to try them’ (T4). The experience of one of the participants is most characteristic:

In the beginning, our team - two teachers of literature and religion together with a collaborating stage director - applied drama in open lessons while other colleagues and the principal [[were watching]] watched / observed. After some time, we were proud to observe that a core group was created in the school; colleagues were interested in creating a learning community overcoming usual traditional settings. The school principal's stance is most important, too; our principle stood by our efforts supporting innovative applications offering real inspiration the whole time.

(T6)

Some of the participants have sought higher ranking posts in public education promoting drama innovations and offering teachers[[']] training or mentoring as they believe that 'every dissemination of drama is important' (T7). In their own wording, 'I have become a teacher[[s']] trainer both locally and in other cities; for the last eight years I have been officially responsible for Culture Programs in all schools in one of the major cities in Greece' (T1), 'I use drama as a core method in the teacher training courses I am responsible for as a foreign language counselor; I have also published articles on the subject' (T18), 'I have written and released a general manual with 35 drama techniques and easily adaptable lesson plans' (T7).

Willing to disseminate the method and share the potential of DiE, many participants have used drama in various settings such as 'in cultural events for parents and the community to watch' (T17), 'in European Language Celebration drama events where some parents admitted they had never seen their children so absorbed in a task before' (T18), 'gathering material and keeping an archive at school, writing relevant articles in local newspapers, training teachers in cooperation with the Local Theatre Organization, organizing drama groups for children and adults' (T2), 'training student teachers in drama in cooperation with various University

Faculties' (T6), 'organizing special experiential workshops for undergraduate students at the University Faculty of Education' (T25), even 'in educational programs for children and adults at the local Archaeological Museum' (T24). One participant commented on the impact drama had on her professional life as follows: 'I have made new acquaintances. I seek cooperation in and out of school taking advantage of every possibility colleagues may offer. I now feel I am a member of a scientific professional community with common goals' (T12).

## **Discussion**

The results from this study confirm and add to the current research about the role of DiE in educational and/or instructional practice including professional development of teachers. As shown in the literature review DiE positively affects the development of different aspects of the [[teacher]] teaching profession. Nevertheless, no study was located which clearly examined the use and contribution of DiE in the development of teachers' professional skills. [[Especially]] [[t]]The contribution of DiE in the development of teachers' interest in lifelong learning activities in particular - though strongly expressed in our research - is not at all present in the literature, a fact that reinforces the importance of the current study.

Following the schema of learner- and teacher-oriented competences the current study examined the perceived impact of drama specifically on (a) the teachers' attributes as instructors, organizers/designers, and facilitators of knowledge in class and on (b) increasing their own knowledge, taking lifelong learning initiatives and engaging professionally in and out of school.

Regarding the development of *learner-oriented competences*, all participants admitted that both their training in and [[using]] use of drama in their class contributed essentially in improving their instructional and organizational skills and in successfully reaching learning goals using a different approach. Using drama in *instructing* helped them become aware of

how the learner develops. Consequently, they differentiated their [[instructing]] instructional strategies taking advantage of multiple intelligences and diverse learning styles leading their students to innovative learning paths; this interaction has helped students negotiate new meanings, break down boundaries, change attitudes, develop personal and interpersonal skills necessary for their later life, and also improve test results (Upitis *et al.* 2001, Sawyer 2004, Betts 2005, Heikkinen 2005, Laakso 2005, Kendrick *et al.* 2006, McNaughton 2006, Catterall 2007, Kana and Aitken 2007, Duma and Silverstein 2008, Kessler and Küppers 2008, Cawthon and Dawson 2009, McLauchlan 2010, Dora To *et al.* 2011, Dunn and Stinson 2011). Drama has offered a clear, flexible and adaptable structure to suit any subject, student age or teaching style, helpful in *organizing and planning* lessons in various disciplines across the entire curriculum such as mathematics, religion, literature, history, foreign languages, science, language arts, social studies etc (Flynn 1997, Oreck 2006, Cawthon and Dawson 2009, Dorion 2009, Andrews 2010). The metaphor of drama as *canvas* is most illuminating. The majority of the participants in this survey admitted regularly taking [[regularly]] advantage of theatrical elements to draw and maintain children's interest and attention during class; such a connection between education and theatre is widely discussed in the literature (Tedesco and Kaufmann 1977, Whatman 1997, Donelan and Cahill 2002, Ryan 2005, Dunn and Stinson 2011, Kempe 2012). Two crucial factors for successfully *implementing* drama were identified: a) a safe and inclusive learning environment, allowing children to learn through active participation, playing, and having fun and b) well prepared teachers [[staying]] remaining vigilant the whole time (Flynn 1997, Heikkinen 2005, Laakso 2005, Ryan 2005, McNaughton 2006, Oreck 2006, Dorion 2009, Toivanen 2011a, 2011b, Lee *et al.* 2013).

Regarding the development of *teacher-oriented competences* most participants testified their *knowledge* expanding in both art and respective discipline areas; they expressed their will to continue further education and training either in formal or informal settings and admitted that

drama has offered many opportunities to build substantial relationships in and out of school, further engage [[to]] in the profession and strengthen their will to share and cooperate. After experiencing drama, participants felt an urgent need to acquire new *knowledge* while allowing immediate integration of theory into practice; by using drama they became aware of multiple benefits, acquiring knowledge of arts vocabulary, mastering their subject content knowledge and generic instructional skills (Kerry-Moran and Meyer 2009, Andrews 2010, Barak *et al.* 2010, Dawson *et al.* 2011, Toivanen 2011b). Drama has increased their a) sense of responsibility for students, parents, and society in general, b) self- multicultural and global awareness, c) interest in innovative substantial changes in education, d) participating in curriculum development, and e) cooperating with teaching artists as co-researchers (Hundert 1996, Upitis *et al.* 2001, Sawyer 2004, Kana and Aitken 2007, Cawthon and Dawson 2011). Participants in the survey have also noticed a dramatic increase in their *engagement* [[to]] in the profession. Having realized the potential and benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration, professional networking, and on-site learning they have become agents of change in the professional culture in their own and/or collaborating schools. They participate in professional networks disseminating [[in]] on every suitable occasion teachers' commitment and achievements promoting public awareness and gaining support for the teaching profession (Hundert 1996, Upitis *et al.* 2001, Raphael and O'Mara 2002, Andersen 2004, Ryan 2005, Oreck 2006, Lind 2007, Duma and Silverstein 2008, Malm 2009, Andrews 2010, Patrick *et al.* 2010).

What is surprising in this particular study is that all participants admitted that drama has strengthened their belief in the necessity of *lifelong learning*. Some of them took initiatives to substantially change their hitherto professional status either by pursuing higher studies (MAs or PhDs) mostly connecting their discipline with DiE or by occupying higher ranking posts with increased duties and responsibilities. Others [[got]] acquired / received further training

and undertook new professional roles such as pre- and in-service teacher[[s']] train[[ing]] ers, even in special needs or tertiary education. Many were those who presented innovative teaching methods in national and international conferences, participated in coaching/mentoring, developed curriculum-based drama projects and/or organized and conducted professional development workshops. Thanks to drama all participants have increased their attendance in non-formal or informal education and training settings, developing their skills as participants and facilitators of arts activities, becoming involved [[with]] in the arts also outside school. However, all these changes were realized through their own expenses as professional development is regarded in Greece mostly as a personal matter in contrast to what is widely accepted in other countries. On the other hand, professional changes of such an extent have rarely been referred to in the literature as being initiated only by experiencing drama (Betts 2005, Oreck 2006, Duma and Silverstein 2008, Stinson 2009, Cawthon and Dawson 2011).

### **Limitations of the study**

The current study was based on the perceptions expressed by a relatively small sample among the teachers who have up-to-date integrated DiE in their instructional practice. More research is needed to investigate the impact of DiE on the professional development of teachers in all educational levels and also in other Greek cities.

### **Practice suggestions / Implications**

The encouraging results of this study suggest that Drama in Education could be integrated in Greece as a core method in pre- and in-service teacher[[s']] training programs, in primary, special needs, tertiary and adult education promoting professional development opportunities for trainers and trainees alike. It is worth noting that DiE is already being applied in other countries as a successful training method in various professional areas such as marketing,

nursing, social work, human resources etc (Monks *et al.* 2001, Ekebergh *et al.* 2004, Pearce and Jackson 2006, Villadsen *et al.* 2012, Armstrong-Stassen and Stassen 2013).

## **Conclusion**

To conclude the researchers have decided to [[let]] allow the participants to have the final word as their own wording is most appropriate:

*Not for once considered a panacea, DiE is an holistic approach, an artistic structured method, based on principles promoting active, experiential, collaborative learning, aimed at developing teamwork, improvisation, imagination, and self expression; it is an essential versatile tool to teach part of the curriculum in an experiential way and to engage students in dialogue concerning contemporary social, political or ethical issues emerging in class, a simultaneously creative and fun experience, an innovative interdisciplinary teaching approach.*

*I would characterize it as pure enrichment of us as people, as teachers, as professionals, of our students, of our schools, of our education. This is New School; a creative kind of school where children learn playfully[[.]] and joyfully. However, a drastic change in attitude is necessary; no further have we got the right to remain stable. Drama leads teachers to [[high]] great enthusiasm when realizing their own potential and possibilities. I could never return [[back]] to the kind of teacher I had been before experiencing drama.*

In an interview to the *New York Times* on March 31, 2013 the Harvard Education specialist Tony Wagner stressed that if Education is supposed to create the innovators of the 21<sup>st</sup> century this can only be achieved if teachers “bring the three most powerful ingredients of intrinsic motivation into the classroom: play, passion and purpose.” (Friedman 2013, p.

SR11). We have serious reasons to believe that Drama in Education could be [[a quite]] an appropriate way to achieve this goal.

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The text was linguistically edited by Mrs Anastasia Magounakis, native speaker, professional profile, other relevant jobs, contact details

**Endnotes**

<sup>1</sup> The terms *Educational Drama* or *Process Drama* are also used as synonymous in the literature.

<sup>2</sup> Under the term *primary literature* lie all the official educational policy documents which describe the teacher profession whereas under the term *secondary literature* lie all the books and articles relevant to our study. We have used both kinds in order to synthesize the most comprehensive list of professional skills serving our research questions.

<sup>3</sup> The 27 interviewees were coded from T1 to T27 following the time sequence of the interviews taken.

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