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Theatre as a space of learning attendance in family's social life with intellectually disabled person

Summary

At the very beginning, theatre performed its special role in the process of creating personality of a human being. Theatretherapy has its roots in ancient Greece. The word itself originates from Latin *theatrum* and greek *téhatron* „I watch” and *therapeuén* as „healing”, which already points out on that place of culture. The art in ancient Greece was identified with happiness, joy and leisure. Throughout the ages, theatre has been modified; affecting nowadays understanding of that art has vaster meaning due to reformers including Jerzy Grotowski and Nikolaj Jewreinow who had seen the role of a viewer as co-creators of the art. Nowadays theatre is a place of direct come in contact with an actor who is sender of a content, and publicity as a receiver. At the same time, publicity become emotion sender being read by an actor. Families of intellectually disabled people as well as those people itself, being subject of my research, not only being on the scene but also present as an audience, became senders and receivers of aesthetic impression and artistic creation broadcast. The very participation of before mentioned families in the art of theatre allow them to feel peculiar catharsis, which in literature is perceived as purification of your own feelings, and intensification of your own emotions.

Doctors thesis: „Theatre as a space of learning attendance in family's social life with intellectually disabled person” states interdisciplinary and holistic approach to theatre space, as a place open for families having disabled people. In that very space, people who visit theatre create a community that meet, discuss and exchange their experiences, resulting in mutual attendance of social learning curve. Groups have a goal to create a common good, which in this case would be both art of theatre, but as a result, families with disabled people in their vicinity are equipped with essential skills, that allow them to participate with social interactions with others.

In this work I carried out experiment showing different form of activities and cooperation by families in creation of art, which has been shown herein. Those activities were realized by mutual play with actors – intellectually disabled people, supporting their development, creating decorations or delivering them to theatre rehearsals. Participation of relatives in before mentioned activities, their devotion to other people, led to creating

common good. As a result, the process of art creation contributed to social inclusion of families having person with intellectual disability.

There is still scarcely any scientific work describing theatre as a space of learning of social participation by families with intellectually disabled person. There is research containing activities of intellectually disabled people in theatre, however they do not include their families; this is why idea to carry out that research which aim was to „get the know theatre as a space of learning participation of families’ social life and their relatives with intellectual disability”, originated from. Research I have carried out has practical aim: Optimization of theatres in engagement of intellectually disabled people, concerning social inclusion and participation of their relatives. The main research question was: “What role plays theatre in process of learning social participation for families with intellectually disabled person?”

I used ethnography as a method of quality research, relying on methodology of respected researchers like: B. Borowska-Beszta (2005), K. Rubacha (2008), U. Fick (1994), M. Hammersley, P. Atkinson (2000), M. Angrosino (2010), D. Jemielniak (2012), Y. S. Lincoln, G. S. Cannella (2004), N. K. Denzin, Y. S Lincoln (2009), D. Kubinowski (2010), M. Lichtman (2006), D. Silverman (2001) and many other authors. My research is compatible with interpretive paradigm and with understandably adaptive approach. Due to applied approach and research project I could enter researched environment, and get to know dependencies, relations, experiences, discovering different dimensions of creativities of groups being examined. Before all else I have managed to spot how the process of learning process of social participation for families with intellectually disabled person in theatre underwent.

During my quality research I have deliberately made a choice of research sample and environment. Sixteen respondents from research group took part in my interviews. Main group consisted of thirteen members of families having intellectually disabled person engaged in theatre activities. Additionally, I made in depth interviews with three theatre therapists/instructors, who work with intellectually disabled people and cooperate with their families on daily basis. Those interviews gave me possibility to overlook the process of social learning by families of disabled, who are engaged in theatre activities, from the perspective of an instructor and overseer, which brought much knowledge to experiments I have carried. One of the three interviews was made with theatre therapist, being at the same time mother of a child with mobility impairment. My research concern people with intellectual disability, even though experiences of a subject mother were invaluable, to my analysis I included only

her statements as theatre therapist. Every person whom I interviewed was connected with theatre activity in different way. Some of the parents performed on a stage with their children, other supported them from managerial, logistical or organizational side.

Data in doctoral thesis have been collected by making unstructured, in depth interviews, thanks to that I could acquire whole spectrum of reliable and credible data from researched environment. I used a tool – intelligence matrix, consisting of analytic categories:

- 1) The process of social participation learning by theatre
- 2) The ways of social participation learning by theatre
- 3) Competencies acquired by social participation in theatre
- 4) Supporting families by theatre
- 5) Groups embraced with learning participation in social life
- 6) Barriers existing in the process of social participation by theatre
- 7) Effects of learning the process of social participation by theatre

Doctoral thesis consists of 2 parts preceded by introduction and surmounted by conclusion, bibliography and appendixes. Theoretical part consists of five chapters. In research section there is methodological chapter, two chapters with analysis and interpretation collected research data, and the last chapter including recommendations for pedagogical practice, where I referred to practical aim of the thesis.

In the first chapter on the basis of personalism, I point out the very basis of this thesis, referring to postulates alluding to subjective treatment of human being, respect to his generativity and dignity. Ethic postulates of personalism states, that treating other man with respect and dignity, protects him from subjective treatment. That is why I choose personalism, at the same time being open to other inspirations from philosophical trends for social sciences.

Second chapter accentuates sociological and pedagogical discourse concerning social learning. In this chapter I characterized: theory of social learning by Albert Bandura, theory of existential learning by Peter Jarvis, transformative learning by Jack Mezirow and conception of lifetime learning. Theories and conceptions herein were essential for analysing and interpretation of non-formal process of learning by engagement with theatre activities of families. Those activities are described in next section of my thesis.

Third and fourth chapter of my doctoral thesis turn to families. These chapters portray modern and historical outline of discourse over defining family and its functions. Process of assistance by family members in development and social existence, has been put compatibly with personalistic norm. In analysis I placed external difficulties, barriers and limits of remote

participation, as well as internal obstacles like: fear, anxiety, fear of being rejected and main forms of exclusion for these families from society.

Chapter five concerns multi dimensionality of a theatre being a space of a process of social inclusion, non-formal education and lifetime learn of families. Theatre is a place open for every man, referring to reform of theatre and activities of great reformers Jerzy Grotowski and Nikolai Jewreinow. Theatre is a place of meeting, acceptance and social implementation by creativity that can become a space for social implementation and non-formal learning for families having intellectually disabled person. All abovementioned theoretical chapters include critical approach to content indicated herein, referring to literature and polemics with presented thesis in space of social sciences.

Research section starts with methodological chapter being of utmost importance to my thesis. I present here assumptions of quality research I conducted, ethics of research, the process of analysis by M. Angrosino (2010), interpretation of data and describing of limits that occurred during conducted experiments.

Chapter seven is dedicated to verbatim data gathered from interviewed people, data analysis, according to isolated analytic categories.

Chapter eight states interpretation results of an examination. Extended results from experiments I have carried have been shown in thesis, but here is necessary summary.

The process of learning social participation of families in theatre consisted of many systematic and difficult activities involving emotional, physical and social sphere. Process began with introduction to theatre space, work of employees, tasks of actors, staff and rules concerning publicity in theatre. Families made actions to build safety and acceptance of their children and themselves. Showing special methods like: pantomime, light and sound therapy, learn of safe touch and motion, emotion control, relax and usage of props became very important. Families were thought: openness, self-awareness, and building own subjectivity, dignity and value, being aware of oneself at the background of different society, work of own image.

Feeling support from theatre became crucial experience; families and intellectually disabled actors were provided with support by: other families, their relatives, theatre instructors, therapists and management of theatre. They have also got help from psychologists. Families having intellectually disabled members were provided support from: theatre workers and volunteers as well as audience and theatre community fans. Results of carried out experiments show that certain limits and barriers are being present in the process of social implementation of families and their social learn. External barriers like: transport,

logistics, managing theatre rehearsals, hampered families' engagement in art activity. Inner barriers – emotional and psychological; were hampered by early negative social experiences that also affected families' ability to socially develop and engage in theatre activities. Theatre stood against difficulties by nullifying barriers and limits. It's because of theatre that families learned self-esteem, pursuing social realization by other non-theatre activities in that special community.

In the last chapter recommendations for pedagogic practice directed for pedagogues and psychologists, animators working with families in theatre. Suggestions made in theatre space involve results and observations of my research in analysed society and their background. Theatre is a place with many opportunities for intellectually disabled ones and their families to engage in various activities. Theatre might be a place for social innovations at the same time being part of enhancing social participation and implementing disabled into society. In theatre takes place process of lifetime learning, that not only my research but also my own experiences as a volunteer and acting confirm. Recommendations for pedagogic practice also consist of useful and practical advice for animators creating opportunities for disabled and their families. These rules may be treated as universal not only for theatre but also other spheres of activity for disabled.

All in all, my doctoral dissertation consists of shortcut to most important discourses and recap of experimental and theoretical part of the content, included herein.

Vast webography and bibliography having 580 positions, list of charts, appendixes are placed at the very end.