

Apprenticeship in Pedagogy: Learning to Teach Theater through Participation in a University Extension Project

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This article concerns the issue of apprenticeship in the professional academic training of theater teachers.¹ From my work teaching theater in basic education and higher education,² I have observed the difficulty that the professional theatre teacher encounters in creating theatrical experiences with the students that encourage the students, themselves, to act as protagonists of the artistic experience. Since this is an issue that involves how the theater teacher is trained, it is also important to specifically discuss the academic formation of these teachers.

First of all, it is important to remember that when a newly formed teacher comes to a school, he or she enters an institution already shaped by long-standing rules and regulations. Also that, as students of basic education, most undergraduate students in theater have not had any previous theater education with a teacher trained in the area. In other words, current theater teachers are still pioneers in this artistic modality and often end up using a theatrical repertoire acquired in non-school experiences, such as workshops and open, or extension courses where,

¹ I am opting here for the term 'professional academic training' rather than 'initial training' in recognition of the fact that family experiences and school socialization during basic education of the future teacher form the base from which he or she will begin to know about teaching, about the role of the teacher, and about how to teach. In essence, these future professionals are immersed in their future work place for approximately twelve years, first as elementary school students (nine years) and then high school students (three years) (Tardif and Raymond, 2000) (Tardif, 2011). In this important sense, training was initiated with the future professor's first entry into the school environment.

² I graduated with a Performing Arts Degree in late 2003. Since the beginning of my studies in 2000, I had the opportunity to be in elementary school institutions and involved in projects in the educational field (Extension and University Research), a training that formed me as a teacher. In August 2004, I became a professor of higher education working in the formation of theater teachers.

often, the goal is on actor training - considerably distant from the goal of theater education in school.

Ideally, teaching is (or should be) for all students. Dealing with actor training or corporal exercises would be on a deeper level, geared toward a professionalizing technical education or specifically toward students specializing in theatre.

In this sense, it is interesting to highlight how the specific training of future theater professionals is presented in the *Diretrizes Curriculares Nacionais de Graduação em Teatro* (2004: National Curriculum Guidelines for an Undergraduate Degree in Theatre.). Quoting Article 4 of these guidelines:

Art. 4. The undergraduate degree in Theatre should enable a vocational training, developing skills and abilities in regards to:
I - knowledge of the specificities and processes of theatrical language, including the concepts and methods that are fundamental for critical reflection on the different elements of theatrical language;
II - knowledge of the history of theater, dramaturgy and dramatic literature;
III - command of the codes and conventions of scenic language specific to set design, staging and the creation of theatrical performance;
IV - technical and expressive corporal command necessary for theatrical interpretation;
V - technical command of the visual elements that compose the theatrical scene. (Conselho Nacional de Educação/CNE, 2004, p. 02).

According to this Directive, or Guideline (CNE, 2004), I understand that in basic education, and in regards to content in the area of Art, theater is geared to experimentation and compositions in the use of one's body (and voice); learning about the elements that constitute it as spectacle such as dramatic text, character, costume, prop, set design, lighting; and, the recognition of the different aesthetics that make up the theater nowadays.

These questions have to do with the very area of Theatre Pedagogy,³ where the reigning consensus seems to be that the theater teacher is, or should be, a teacher-artist. However, many professionals who graduate with theater degrees do not consider school as an interesting workspace for artistic creation, since the curriculum requirements of formal education often makes these institutions

³ The area of Theatre Pedagogy is one of the working groups belonging to the Associação Brasileira de Pesquisa e Pós-Graduação em Artes Cênicas (ABRACE/ The Brazilian Association for Research and Graduate Studies in Performing Arts). ABRACE brings together Brazilian professors and researchers who discuss how theater is taught and learned, whether within or outside of an educational environment and in the context of the formation of the scenic artist (actor, director, playwright, illuminator etc.).

unattractive for the realization of artistic practices. Also, many educational institutions do not recognize the importance of developing artistic practices as essential to training theater students, therefore neglecting to take advantage of ties with artistic productions outside of the school environment. As Maria Lúcia Pupo comments:

When examining the accurate picture of the Brazilian situation, we note that significant steps are being taken in cultural action regarding theater. In the most varied contexts, public and private initiatives, with varying degrees of substantiation and drawing on the most diverse methodological principles, have been responsible for providing processes of theatrical work geared to the various segments - age, social - of the population. (...) Unfortunately this intense and enthusiastic support is not to be found in another context, the educational institutions. The growing perplexity concerning the shortcomings and dysfunctions of the Brazilian educational system seems to convolutedly revolve around itself, causing considerable difficulties in facing up to the everyday problems of school life, increasingly complex and challenging. (PUPO, 2006, p.15).

From its inception, the school environment was not contemplated as a home for the theater and its transgressive Dionysian character, which encourages students to express themselves freely and corporally in the classroom space.

I realize that our current educational system is still founded on the principle of the disciplinary regime where "to discipline is both to organize and classify the sciences, as well as to discipline bodies and wills" (Gallo, 2004, p.82). Nevertheless, to try to establish the boundaries between theater and its contributions to the formation of the subject may seem useless in situations that reveal how tightly theater and pedagogy are intertwined, as Maria Lúcia Pupo recalls (2001, p. 31):

It is enough to remember how the very emergence of theater in our country follows didactic guidelines: it was with the objective of inculcating the Christian faith in the minds of Indians and indentured convicts, in the service of colonization, that Anchieta⁴ wrote texts and directed theatrical performances in the forest.

However, it is not enough to be an artist in order to be a teacher-artist. Many theater teachers maintain their theatrical activities outside the school environment, where they say they are "truly artists," and where they develop their creations with theater groups, perform on stage etc. What I call the teacher-artist

⁴ Trans. note: José de Anchieta (1534-1597), a Jesuit priest whose catechization methods included using theatrical texts in which he mixed indigenous ritual forms and languages with Portuguese (and sometimes Spanish and French).

here is the ability of the teacher to be creative in the classroom space, refusing to let the artistic flame belonging to the theater die out within the school establishment. Therefore, it is necessary to provide a favorable teacher-artist learning environment.

The concept of learning I prefer refers to the studies of Jean Lave and Etienne Wenger (2003) for whom learning takes place in situated activities where the learner, or apprentice, immersed in practice, develops knowledge about the situations experienced. That is, I understand that it is at school that the future teacher learns how to be a theater professor, conceiving artistic creation within the school setting, with all its rules, circumscriptions and potentials - in much the same way that a theater group needs to rehearse in the same space of the presentation in order to know and appropriate the space, to make the appropriate changes in scenic markings, etc. To promote theatrical creation within the school is to propose the discovery of the possibilities of this space in its physical, political and symbolic sense.

Thus, it is within the school context itself that future teachers build skills to deal with artistic and pedagogical practice. Lave and Wenger (2003) point out that learning takes place "as an inseparable and integral aspect of social practice." And for this study, I have chosen the school as a privileged space for learning to be a teacher.

Following this reasoning, I stress the importance of the university student being actively immersed in working in his or her field once specialization is chosen for the degree (for the undergraduate degree in Theatre EBA / UFMG this occurs in the third period during the course of eight university semesters). I also start from the premise that it is at school, in the context of the multiple interactions of the student's daily life, where one learns about what it means to be a teacher. The importance of immersion of future teachers in the school, in a partnership between the school and the university for teacher training, is pointed out by Maria do Ceú Roldão (2007). Roldão argues:

Initial training is effective only if transformed into immersion training, which also transforms the work context made with the schools, which, on the one hand, need to place the future teachers in a position that nourishes their training trajectory. On the other hand, [this immersion training] may transform into real spaces of continuous vocational training the schools, kindergartens, and work contexts in which our professionals will act - in so many training units with us in higher education and

research - to build training partnerships / research, developed within everyday school activities. (Roldão, 2007, p. 40).

Given the premise that the future theater teacher has a favorable environment for learning teaching within the school, I wish to introduce the concept of skill, as discussed by Tim Ingold (2001). Ingold emphasizes that a skill - when not transmitted from generation to generation - is developed through engagement in / and from practice. Understanding that being a teacher-artist is not a gift, a natural talent or received genetic heritage, we can see the importance of the apprenticeship element: teaching skills are honed in contact with the veteran teacher, with the students and, therefore, within the whole school environment.

The proposal to bring the future theater teacher into working contact with an already experienced and qualified teacher is important to set into place what Ingold (2001) called 'guided rediscovery.'⁵ This guided situation also serves as a legal buffer for the interim situation of the future, or student teacher, a looser apprenticeship not determined by laws that set conditions for either the actual teacher or by the laws that determine the category of a person contracted as an intern. This future teacher remains in school as an apprentice of the teaching profession, contributing and learning from how theater is taught.

When we recognize the veteran teacher's legitimate status as training professional, we are also recognizing the process of refinement in skills that have accompanied this process as well as the teacher's contextual experience. And working with a supervising teacher in the class with children has a number of purposes. First of all, there is no specific professional degree in Art for teachers working in the Municipal Education Network of Belo Horizonte / Minas Gerais (MG) Early Childhood educational system. The majority of the teachers have a degree in Pedagogy, perhaps with some course, or courses that discussed Art geared for children. In brief, we could only count on having a teacher endowed with knowledge related to teaching with children but no artistic training. Even so, the presence of the teacher brought some comfort to the student teachers, especially in the first months of work where children still did not know the adults, who, in turn, did not know exactly what the role of a teacher for children entailed. For

⁵ 'Rediscovery' because the apprentice-subject will undoubtedly discover his or her own path, even if she seeks to become a copy of her veteran teacher. The term 'guided' refers to the fact that the apprentice will surely be influenced by the knowledge of others in her pedagogical orientation.

example, questions such as "If the child wets his clothes, should the teacher change them," or "What do you do when a child vomits or is sick" were frequent. The knowledge acquired by the teacher were passed on seemingly without being noticed: student teachers' attention was directed to the pedagogical practice by the teacher's gestures and way of conducting the work with the children. Indeed, corporality is of key importance: the teacher had embodied the words and the concept of education by which he or she was trained. As Paulo Freire said, "teaching requires incorporating words by example." (2000, p. 38).

As proposed by Roldão (2007), to think of teacher training as a process of immersion is to seek a dialogue and establish a close partnership level through which the school and university take upon themselves the commitment to train teachers to work in line with the school's reality. Julio Emilio Diniz-Pereira (2008) studied an American example where this partnership between university and school is already consolidated. The researcher concludes his study with the following statement:

Universities and schools should establish mutual cooperation agreements so that both institutions would benefit with the shared model of teacher education. As is known, a form of internship still prevails in which the school basically gives up its space and classrooms for the experiential 'practice' of future teachers. (Diniz-Pereira, 2008, p. 266).

The lack of dialogue that Diniz-Pereira (2008) pointed out in relation to school internships is not what I wanted to happen. I aimed to establish a relationship where future teachers had a space to consolidate their teacher learning at the same time dialoguing with the school, donating their theatrical knowledge with the goal of opening up a theatrical learning space for students to investigate their perspectives as protagonists.

When I started teaching in the undergraduate theater program for future teachers in the area, my career in the field of teacher education enabled me to observe the lack of knowledge in certain theatrical contents. For example, unfamiliarity with dramaturgy hindered the teacher from finding texts where "voice" - the students' vocal abilities - would have weight in the preparation of scenic material. Thus, if the teacher opted to, or was invited by the someone in curriculum coordination to carry out an artistic product for the school community, the teacher always resorted to conventional productions - choosing an already prepared theatrical text, adapting the number of characters to the number of students, text rehearsals,

character creation, direction of the scenes - without questioning the creative process or opening it up to the public.

Another significant finding behind this proposal was the observation that the theatrical learning process during the undergraduate years tends to focus on actor training (Santana, 2000). In many degree courses in Theatre / Performing Arts, analyzed by Aaron Santana (2000), teacher education was directly linked to the practical work of the actor. The consequence of this type of training is directly linked to that mentioned by Tim Ingold (2001): a skill acquired in a given context is not necessarily transferred to another context, i.e., the fact that teacher is trained in performing exercises does not guarantee that he or she is able to realize scenic proposals as a professor.

In opposition to that perspective, teacher training via actor training, I agree with Marcos Bulhões Martins's formulation:

The notion of theatrical practice we adopted does not prioritize the area related to the actor; we consider it essential that the teacher in training will also realize scenographic concepts, sound, lighting and design projects, and act as a dramaturg - everything from adaptation of texts to writing them - as well as train in theater direction, in different types of processes. (Martins, 2006, p. ii)

In brief, it is fundamental to be aware of the different modes of theatrical creation in order to successfully establish theater as an element of school life, given the absence of such training in our Brazilian schools. When theater teachers act in both the artistic and pedagogical spheres and, through teaching and scenic creation, conquer skills in these areas, they gain a base that allows them to construct significant proposals, concerted actions that expand the students' cultural repertoire and theatrical knowledge.

I understand that this proposition should take a collectivized form where participants can collaborate effectively in the performing decisions and in the construction of the scenic text. Along with providing a space for students to articulate their theatrical discourse through practice, there needs to be room to enjoy scenic proposals coming from colleagues. Jean-Pierre Ryngaert (2009) draws attention to this binomial: play-and-watch, which, according to the author, is the essential combination for the realization of theatrical learning. In this sense, thinking/acting about theater becomes theater itself. In other words:

It is no longer viable to think in such restricted terms about theater in the school, vocational training or about other situations or organizational modalities. It is rather, a question of thinking more broadly, to *reflect on the purposes and procedures linked to processes of teaching / learning about scenic production*, processes that are manifested differently depending on the different contexts in which they may occur. (Pupo, 2010, p. 43) (my emphasis).

Corroborating the author, if we want to graduate theater teachers connected with the principles of scenic creation, and who are capable of teaching their students to be protagonists in making theater, we need to invest in conjoining the artistic aspect with the pedagogical, understanding that teacher training takes place in a complementary way to the university, within the professional field.

Thus, I advocate the academic formation of a theater teacher who is also an artist, where artistic practice dialogues with pedagogical practice, allowing these processes to feed each other and contribute to a renewed theater practice in school. Furthermore, that this artistic and educational practice be elaborated within the school itself, in accord to the time and spatial conditions available in the school environment to the teacher-artist.

Through observations made by theater interns under my coordination in public and private schools in the city of Belo Horizonte / MG, I found that theater education in school still bears remnants of a traditional education, with emphasis on the final product for presentations in commemorative celebrations, with pre-selected theatrical texts and scenic construction based on the realistic model. This finding led me to propose other ways to discuss and modify the process of formation of theater teachers. In this sense, I sought, through the project, to develop the inseparability between research and teaching, in opposition to the applicationist pedagogical model prevailing in teacher education, which, as in traditional pedagogy, is based on applying disciplinary parameters in which subjects are considered independent and closed units to be taught in defined, short-term courses. As Maurice Tardif puts it:

Disciplinary logic is governed by issues of knowledge and not by issues of action. In a discipline, to learn is to know. But, in practice, to learn is to do and to know by doing. In the applicationist model, knowing and doing are dissociated and treated separately in distinct and separate training units. In addition, doing is subordinate to learning, both temporally and logically, so that students in teacher training courses are taught that, to do well, they must first be well-informed before they apply their knowledge to practice. (Tardif, 2011, p 271 - 272).

Speaking to a dynamic operant within university teacher training, Luciano Mendes Faria Filho (2012) points out that the applicationist model strictly segregates areas of research (researchers), training (pedagogues) and practice (teachers): a hierarchy in which researchers produce knowledge that is then transmitted during educational training and only then "applied in school." Each of these groups is subject to the requirements of the career paths indicated by the area. In general, researchers tend to decrease their active participation in teacher training and become more distanced from practice in the field because they are inserted into an academic culture that enshrines the scientific-academic area as a priority in the competitive dispute among peers, nationally and international. In other words, "almost all the criteria for recognition of academic excellence concerns research, the production of new knowledge and training of researchers" (Faria Filho, 2012, p. 02).

Going against applicationist logic, I elaborated an extension project that could imprint an investigative and questioning attitude in student learning, expanding and developing a capacity to learn for oneself and to reflect on ones own professional practice - to "create conditions for the student to keep permanently learning" (Fórum, 2006, p.43).

Thus, teaching, research, and on-site extension apprenticeship form an indissoluble triad essential to the formation of theater teachers. The extension project allows a student to do field work and research through an actual teaching practice, always in dialogue with reality, seeking to understand it and transform it. I sought to break with the logic of a technical formation disassociated from the knowledge one acquires in actual processes involved in doing theater, motivated by the desire for the students to win their professional autonomy during their academic training period, thus beginning to create their own careers from personal motivations and experience.

After I became a professor in the undergraduate theater program degree at the Federal University of Minas Gerais and began teaching in the area of teacher training, I proposed the creation of a university extension project, "Theatre-Education: Theatrical Experiments in Early Childhood Education," to conjoin the production of knowledge in theater education as elaborated within the university environment with theater actually produced in the primary education system. This

dialogue interests me as a way to create an apprenticeship relationship involving both the university as well as the school, a project that would question the fragmentation of disciplinary knowledge, seeking integration within the theater itself. In other words: Whereas when working within the disciplines of the theater degree curriculum students have specified materials that prioritize the actor's work, the director's work and so on, when we realistically approach basic education, the theater teacher has to focus directly on the act of designing and teaching theater with his or her students.

The approximation of the university with the community, essential to an extension project, intended to allow and encourage undergraduates to participate in the basic education environment, thus offering a deeper comprehension of the processes involved in teacher training and of teaching.

The University Extension project has been held since 2010 in the Municipal Unit of Early Childhood Education (UMEI) Alaíde Lisboa. The school is located within the university campus of Pampulha, which houses most of the courses of the Federal University of Minas Gerais, including the undergraduate degree program in Theatre.

Another significant detail for the realization of this project is that I can count on a team of undergraduates, ranging between two and four, from different semesters of the program. This strategy means that a student more advanced in his academic studies, and who already has on-site experience teaching, can serve as an example for the student just entering into his or her apprenticeship teaching.

I have always made a point of having at least one male in the undergraduate group participating in the project teaching young children, a rare situation in primary education. Studies on the feminization of teaching, especially in early childhood education in Brazil, show since the late nineteenth century a significant departure of male teachers to work in industry, leaving the classroom increasingly in charge of female teachers (Cunha, 2012). This fact is also confirmed by a "discourse that associates primary school teaching with characteristics considered feminine" (Carvalho, 1998, p. 406), such as care, changing diapers, bathing, feeding - activities directly linked to domestic culture in Brazil.

Teaching theater to young children tries to break with might be thought of as common sense in relation to children's theater (where adults determine and

impose the children's roles) by seeking to emphasize the child as protagonist so that small children learn to express themselves theatrically. In order to do this, undergraduates began their work by field observation. They study the school as a socio-cultural space to understand its underlying pedagogical concepts and observe the cultural diversity of the people who form the school's environment: children, teachers, aides, cafeteria employees and cleaning personnel, porters, coordinators, director and parents. Who they are, how they look, how they position themselves in pedagogical relationships and in daily contact with children, how they talk to one another, how they talk. To understand, therefore, that the school has multiple educational dimensions.

In brief summary, the contents covered were:

(1) Knowledge of school reality: the student teachers accompanied the group of children for two months, watching what was proposed to them, how they played in recess or free time, what were their desires, fears, interests, etc.;

(2) A period of basic teacher training in theater arts concerning creating theater for children within the school environment: participating undergraduates had to deal with theatrical creation within the confines of the school, finding spaces, themes and aesthetic possibilities of presenting a theater for children. After observing the children in class and in their free moments during the school day, the apprentice teachers began to give acting classes for the children, seeking to link freely creative acting exercises to those exercises proposed as preparation for show rehearsals;

(3) Learning about elements of theatrical language while making theater: acting, directing and dramaturgy. Since theater is formed by multiple interactions between actors, directors and playwrights, the teaching apprentices were able to extend themselves in these creative roles in order to develop scenic exercises to be shared with the children.

Among the varied pedagogical-practical proposals experienced, I wish to emphasize:

(1) Use of space: the route from the classroom to the auditorium. The path was designed with the purpose of creating a ritualization of the theatrical experience. The route signified more than just the spatial displacement from the room where the children had lessons with the regular teacher to the theater room. This in-between space of passage was also where theater began, understood as a passageway to instill a *theatrical state* in the children, one differentiated from everyday school play states and spaces. There is intentionality, though it may be spontaneous, in gesture and action. The child's connection with the apprentice theater teach from the very start of the class - going from one room to another - proved to be the fine line separating free play from theatrical creation;

- (2) Creation: the body in action and experimentation. An actual theatre class based on elements of theatrical language and in line with the project that the teacher was developing;
- (3) A final moment to register the process and progress of the class, serving as evaluation of the meeting;
- (4) Return to the regular classroom, returning by the originally proposed route or by some extended/modified trajectory suggested by the day's class;
- (5) Presentation of scenes for / with the children.

The apprentice teachers' daily logbooks served as evaluation material for completion of the course, which offered optional credit. These logbooks registered their daily experiences in school, as well as reflections arising from their practice teaching. The voices and the experience of these undergraduates oriented the discussions presented in this article, opening up perspectives and questions that I had not previously covered.

It is clear from the testimonies of students participating in this project that the experience of apprentice immersion teaching provides a welcome sense of confidence and security as they construct their professional life, besides providing a space for exchange between peers and everyday supportive contact with an experienced teacher. Another element highlighted in these testimonies regards the professional and ethical care that began to develop after making commitments to an institution and, consequently, to the people involved.

To conclude, the process of leading this project since 2010 has also afforded me various enriching apprenticeship opportunities as a teacher training professor - perhaps the greatest of these being the experience and recognition that one learns in practice. All too often, professors in higher education exercise their profession without thinking about the important role of training other teachers. This process of coordinating young teachers in an apprenticeship teaching-learning adventure has been fruitful in realizing the importance of promoting a space for the exercise of teaching not bound by the semester's teaching schedule or material, and will ensure that the undergraduate will get to know what teaching is from the time he begins his pedagogical training. Learning, in this sense, is no different from doing. (Vincent, Lahir and Thin, 2001). In addition, the working contact of the apprentice with the regular teachers also enriched the teachers' knowledge and practice, adding experience in how to use theater's singular potential as a natural expression in the child's development. This, in turn, expanded the school's vision as to how art - as a specific and unique content in human culture - could be inserted into the school environment and curriculum. The partnership between the university and school proved to be fruitful for the joint training of teachers who, in the future, will act to strengthen education in our country. The great potential for the exchange of knowledges becomes apparent when we break down the symbolic walls of knowledge in which the university often encloses itself. My own apprenticeship - or learning - directing the teacher education project led me to the discovery that

the life stories of the future teachers directly influences how they think and act when they need to meet and deal with artistic situations in the school.

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