Arts Research Across Continents: Theatre/Drama and International Ethnography

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Arts Education in school and out of school

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Abstract

In this presentation, I aim to map out the layered research methodology of a collaborative research project across two continents and four different countries. This is a research project that takes as its subject, and also its method, how youth work with theatre, what they create, in what contexts, for what purposes and to what effect.

*Urban School Performances: The interplay, through live and digital drama, of local-global knowledge about student engagement (USP)* is an international research project that is examining, through attention to theatre contexts and practices in schools, how the relationships among culture, identity, multiculturalisms, student engagement and theatre have an impact on the lives of youth in schools and communities traditionally labeled ‘disadvantaged’ in the cities of Toronto, (Canada), Taipei (Taiwan), Lucknow (India), and New York City (USA). This Canadian-led project brings together diverse cities to examine theatre pedagogy and performance from a local-global perspective and to illustrate how such a multi-site ethnography is changed by arts-based, participatory, and digital/performative research methods. Because the insights of youth about questions of engagement with school remains a central concern, this project, now in its second year, is seeking new/performative ways to engage diverse youth in the research process, in the context of four communities equally concerned with ‘raising the bar’ for those students most disengaged from traditional practices of schooling.
Three particular questions will animate this discussion of international, multi-site, ethnographic research in the arts:

1. How is performance a lens for the social?
2. How are we using collaborative multi-site and hypermedia ethnography to research youth and their artistic engagement?
3. What are the possibilities and hazards of using digital methods to communicate across diverse geographic, cultural and linguistic contexts and to produce knowledge differently about theatre/drama education?

Bringing the social and the performative together, the project is engaging youth, teachers and researchers in a creative inquiry, using digital-drama research tools (see Gallagher and Kim 2008), to better understand the relationship between engagement and the social, academic and artistic contexts of schooling. The research therefore examines both the cultural and everyday performances and the artistic performances created by youth in the particular context of drama lessons. In other words, we are examining the aesthetic- and social- work undertaken in the context of the theatre classroom, how students understand themselves and their peers in these contexts, and how we produce knowledge about arts teaching and learning through ethnographic research.

Work Cited

APPENDIX 3

Unesco & the Government of the Republic of Korea
World Conference on Arts Education
Seoul 25~28 May 2010

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(research/case studies/experiences of best practices)
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<tbody>
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<td>Kathleen</td>
<td>Professor</td>
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Past and present occupation (detailed description):

Professor in the Department of Curriculum, Teaching and Learning at the University of Toronto. In this capacity, I teach graduate and teacher education courses in the arts. I am also the academic director of the Centre for Urban Schooling and hold a Canada Research Chair in Theatre, Youth, and Research in Urban Schools.

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