

4^ο Πανελλήνιο Συνέδριο

Το εκπαιδευτικό παιχνίδι και η τέχνη στην εκπαίδευση και στον πολιτισμό



4 & 5
Νοεμβρίου
2023

Trust relationships between theater in education teacher and pupils – Part 1

Maria A. Spyropoulou, candidate at the Department of Early Childhood Education Sciences (T.E.E.A.P.I.) University of Patras
e-mail: spuropoulou_maria@yahoo.gr

Prof. Pantelis Kiprianos, Professor of History of Education and Political Ideas at the Department of Early Childhood Education Sciences (T.E.E.A.P.I.) University of Patras
e-mail: kiprian@upatras.gr

Purpose: In the context of searching for the role that trust plays in children studying in Primary Education, the contribution of the theatre in education, as the course that tends to organize groups, to the development of trust in the relationships they create outside their family environment. However, because this paper is part of a larger research, its content is focused on the analysis of the first of the four research questions of the research and concerns the commitment brought about by the relationship that develops between the theatre in education teacher and the pupils in the context of the lesson, assuming that this is a relationship of trust.

Methodology: A quantitative methodological approach was followed and results were analyzed through the statistical program SPSS 26.0.

Results: The questions referring to the interest in the theater in education felt by the pupils and the closeness the pupils have with their teachers, the answers show commitment. In the question, however, about the practical communication of teachers with pupils through the knowledge of the interests of the latter from the former, no commitment appears.

Conclusions: Theater in education as a subject is able to provide binding in pupil-teacher relationships. However, because trust in relationships is determined in a subjective way, it can be interpreted by some people as its absence.

Introduction

Education, according to the philosophy of the New School, has for many years ceased to be interested exclusively in the level of learning. Its goal is now the promotion of the general well-being of the student. It includes his/her personality, his/her capacity as an individual or social being or even his/her future position in society and, more generally, in the environments that this person will choose to be found. In this sense, then, the role of the school is not just that its students perform well and become good professionals in the future, but that they are people who can contribute to society in multiple fields in such a way that the society that it will turn out each time to be more sophisticated than the previous one.

In this context, therefore, the possibility of identifying the student with the school is raised as a main issue (Mitchell et al, 2008. Finn, 1989). Of course, this requires strong bonds between pupils and their teachers, because safe attachment has been shown to lead to healthier relationships later in life, both among peers and adults (Watson, 2005). Thus, the key to achieving this goal is trust, as relationships based on it (mainly with adults) increase the desired attachment of children (especially those at young ages, such as those corresponding to attending primary school education) and therefore their overall development is affected (Bowlby, 1969).

Therefore, with the value of trust in delivering to society people who will be able to contribute positively to the formation of ever more sophisticated societies, this paper examines the degree of impact of the trust created between teachers and students in school. However, because relationships that develop early in life are stronger, this research will focus on pupils attending primary education. Even more specifically, however, the study will concern the theater in education and the relationships that develop between teachers and pupils within the context of the specific lesson, as the lesson that allows pupils greater freedom. At the same time, it should be emphasized at the outset that the research presented below is only one part of a general research conducted from spring to early summer 2022 of all registered theatre in education teachers who have declared that they have taught theatre in education at least once at the primary level.

In particular, this paper will present the analysis of the first of the four research questions raised in the research as a whole, which refers to the commitment created by the relationship that develops between the theatre in education teacher and his/her pupils in the context of the lesson and the examination of the degree in which their relationship can be considered a trust relationship. This question, which is included in the category concerning the relationships created between the two parties (teacher-pupils), during the lesson, was investigated through three more specialized questions, which were: the first, the interest they judged the interviewed theatre in education teachers that the pupils had about the theater in education they taught in the way they taught it, the second, the closeness of the relationship developed by the two parties under consideration because of the lesson in question, but outside of it and , the third, the possibility that the respondents have to know their pupils in their action outside the school environment, such as their extracurricular activities and the things they like to do after school.

However, regardless of the specific questions, it was considered appropriate, in order not to leave any very important gap that might have been created by the questions chosen by the research team, one more, open type, was added, in which the respondents were asked to optionally fill in the themselves something that they thought was related to the topic and had not been touched upon by these three questions.

Results analysis

In the question about the interest that the teachers who took part in the research believe their pupils have in the subject they teach, the vast majority of them (a total of 81.6%), as shown in Table 1 below, choose the two most positive answers (“a lot” and “very much”), with the most positive (“very much”), in fact, surpassing the second most positive (“a lot”) by almost 10 points. Accordingly, the percentages showing moderation or expressing disbelief (“quite” and “minimum” respectively), divide the remaining percentage up to 100%, which in total is less than 20 points (17% for the choice “quite” and 1.5% for the choice “minimum”).

Table 1: Interest shown by the pupils in the theatre in education, according to the judgement of the teachers.

	Frequency		Valid percent	Cumulative percent
	(N)	Percent		
Minimum	6	1,5	1,5	1,5
Quite	69	17,0	17,0	18,4
A lot	147	36,1	36,1	54,5
Very much	185	45,5	45,5	100,0
Total	407	100,0	100,0	

These answers, which were certainly not based on any arbitrary conclusion (this will be analyzed in more detail in the fourth question, of the open question, where those who choose to answer, clearly give the reason they answer in this particular way), based on the interpretations found in the literature from various researches that have established in the past. This combined with the already existing accepted scientific data, prove in the clearest way that the binding criterion examined with the research question is met which is analyzed in this paper. Thus, in this way, the opinion is strengthened that the theater in education can become the cause of the development of trusting relationships between teachers and students, which lays the groundwork to investigate, subsequently, the effect that this condition can have both on other relationships that children create (within and outside of school, with peers and non-peers), as well as those that they (the children) are going to create in their later life.

In fact, teachers' reference to pupils who demonstrated, during the lesson, substantial participation (psychological and emotional) (Edkins & Smyth, 2006) in the activities that took place in its context, good performance in the lesson (Goddard et al, 2001) and absence of discipline problems (Gregory & Ripski, 2008), are just some of the elements that indicate a relationship of trust between the two parties (teacher and students). As a result, positive answers to this question bring one step closer to an affirmative answer to the research question of which it is a component. This is mainly because, when the teacher can and does meet the expectations of the pupils, the pupils are more dedicated to him/her, which shows trust (Tennenbaum, 2018).

Regarding the second question that is asked with the aim of examining the students' commitment to the theater in education teacher (characterizing the closeness of the relationship created between teacher and pupils in the context of theater in education) and vice versa the teacher towards the pupils as an element of trust between them, the results are similar to the first question, with a slight variation in the percentage of the choice "quite" which alone exceeds 20% (21.6%). So, to the question of how close the theatre in education teachers who took part in the research consider the relationship with their pupils to be, again the vast majority answer "a lot" and "very much", there is, however, a notable variation that is divided into two parts. On the one hand, it is the reversal in the percentage that prevails (the answer "a lot" is almost 7 points higher than the answer "very much"), on the other hand, the increase of almost 5 points in the moderate answer "very much", as well as by 1.5 units increase of the least positive response of all ("minimum" choice) (Table 2).

Table 2: Closeness of the relationship of theatre in education teachers with their pupils in the context of the lesson.

	Frequency		Cumulate	
	(N)	Percent	Valid percent	percent
Minimum	12	2,9	2,9	2,9
Quite	88	21,6	21,6	24,6
A lot	167	41,0	41,0	65,6
Very much	140	34,4	34,4	100,0
Total	407	100,0	100,0	

This changes in responses, although it may have many explanations ranging from not understanding the question to even the fear of misunderstandings with the use of the adjective close to describe the relationship that the pupils have developed with the theatre in education teacher, it does not change the essence of the result. The responses are again at a rate of more than 50% in the two most positive choices, only now it is slightly higher than the other two responses. So, also from this question, it can be argued that the criterion of commitment is maintained between the two parties examined (teacher-pupils), so that, respectively, it can be considered again that the theater in education provides the possibility to create trust relationships between an adult and several minors who have an unequal relationship with each other.

On the other hand, in the third question, which refers to the degree to which teacher know the extracurricular activities of their pupils, in order to demonstrate the closeness of the relationship they have and, by extension, the degree that leaves room for the development of a relationship of trust to each other, the responses are largely shifted, which can be the basis for questioning trust in the relationship between them in the end. So, in particular, while the choice "not at all" is added here, which gathers a percentage within the limits of statistical error (only 1%), the majority of respondents (percentage 42.3%) choose the middle answer ("quite" choice), with the most positive answers showing a significant drop in their percentages ("a lot" 30.7% and "very much" 11.1%) compared to what they showed in the previous questions (Table 3).

Table 3: Information about the pupils' extracurricular activities.

	Frequency			Cumulative
	(N)	Percent	Valid percent	percent
Not at all	4	1,0	1,0	1,0
Minimum	61	15,0	15,0	16,0
Quite	172	42,3	42,3	58,2
A lot	125	30,7	30,7	88,9
Very much	45	11,1	11,1	100,0
Total	407	100,0	100,0	

Following the five-facet model of trust, one of the most widely used models, which refers to the components of trust, in order for it to exist, the relationship between the people being investigated in it must contain five basic characteristics: (1) vulnerability (Bryk & Schneider, 2002), (2) benevolence (Owens & Johnson, 2009), (3) reliability, (4) honesty and (5) openness. This means that for any relationship to be classified as a trust relationship, it requires that all parties involved in it give the other parties information about themselves that could put them in a difficult position if they were to be exploited. This is because they exclude the possibility of exploitation by the other parties, as they believe that the other person or the other people in the relationship have good intentions towards them, kindness, altruistic motives, honesty in their intentions and transparency towards them, so that they do not never cause unpleasant surprises to him/her. If, therefore, at school, the theatre in education teacher does not know about the extracurricular activities of his/her pupils, which reflect their desires, the activities they like and ultimately their very character, it means that the relationship between them is either superficial or formal, as it is limited to the school environment and, therefore, removes the element of trust from the relationship between them.

Finally, in the fourth question which, as already said, was deliberately chosen to be open-ended, optional and with free content so that each participant could add whatever he wished and felt had been omitted by the researcher, very few did use of it. Specifically, only 18 people out of the 407 who were included in the survey gave an answer. This number, however, although it is well below the average and therefore it is a bit difficult to generalize those with similar content and yield a safe conclusion, in any case, they should not be ignored. It is, therefore, necessary, in some way, to give some interpretation to these answers as well.

Thus, some of them define the concept of trust and describe the way in which they consider it to exist in their own relationship with their pupils, some others raise the issue of time in the acquisition of trust in the teacher-pupil relationship and claim that it is too early to argue that trust can be formed when teachers are with the same children for only one academic year and are asked to teach elsewhere the next, and some others are careful to clarify that the answers arise from the general picture of their students rather than the all of them, as each section is different even if it is children of the same age.

Therefore, if these answers are evaluated based on the results presented in the previous three questions, all the choices can be accurately explained. So, accordingly, all the assumptions made above, are eliminated and their place is taken by specific answers, although, as already said, their number does not allow any kind of generalization. So, for example, question 3 which talks about the extent to which teachers know about children's extracurricular activities and most of them express caution, one answer that can be given is the lack of duration of this relationship, because the frequent movement of teachers to other schools, which makes it difficult to develop a trust relationship between them. Something similar is done with the other questions, which, the fact that they are answered in a positive way, is explained by the way the teachers perceive the concept of trust.

Conclusion

The trust relationships that can develop in a school environment between the theatre in education teacher and his/her pupils, no matter how much one tries to approach them with the terms mentioned in the theory as conditions, it is not certain that it will be very successful. This can happen for many different reasons, all of which, however, can be attributed, in turn, to the subjectivity with which the parties involved in any process deal with the facts. That is, in simpler words, even if trust is defined in a certain way in the literature, anyone who is asked to characterize a relationship he enters into with another person as a trust relationship or not, the answer (s)he gives will be based on his/her own criteria.

Something similar happened in this research. Most of the respondents answered based on how they themselves consider a trust relationship to be. Nevertheless, their views can neither be canceled nor ignored, but enter into a more general investigation framework, where in future research these elements should also be taken into account, such as, for example, the element of time which they consider it to be an example of a trust relationship. However, regardless of this, in general, teachers believe that pupils' interest in theatre in education and the closeness of the relationship that pupils can have with their theatre in education teacher are sufficient elements for commitment between the two parties and, by extension, trust between them.

References

Bowlby, J. (1969). *Attachment and loss, 1 (Attachment)*. New York, NY: Basic Books.

Bryk, A. & Snedder, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

Edkins, A.J. & Smyth, H.J. (2006). Contractual management in PPP projects: Evaluation of legal versus relational contracting for service delivery. *ASCE Journal of Professional Issues in Engineering Education and Practice*, 132(1): 82-93.

Finn, J.D. (1989). Withdrawing from school. *Review of Educational Research*, 59: 117-142.

Goddard, R., Tschanne-Moran, M. & Hoy, W. (2001). Teacher trust in students and parents: A multilevel examination of the distribution and effects of teacher trust in urban elementary schools. *Elementary School Journal*, 102: 3-17.

Mitchell, R.M., Forsyth, P. & Robinson, U. (2008). Parent trust, student trust and identification with school. *Journal of Research in Education*, 18: 116-123.

Owens, M. & Johnson, B. (2009). From calculation through courtship to contribution: Cultivating trust among youth in an academic intervention program. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 45(2): 312-347.

Tennenbaum, S. (2018). *Relational trust within an urban public comprehensive high school district in Northern California*. Doctoral dissertation. SJSU Scholar Works.

Watson, M. (2005). *Can there be just one trust? A cross-disciplinary identification of trust definitions and measurement*. Marcia Watson.

Thank
you

