Introducing Digital Devices for Reflection in Drama to Develop Emotional Confidence

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Introduction

Reflection is a key skill in Drama and helps boys to consider what has gone well and what needs to change to improve a piece of performance. The more adaptable a boy is, the more likely he will have the confidence to make changes.

In devising drama, I noted some boys found it **difficult to propose creative solutions** when they got stuck. They **tended to fall back on tried and tested options** rather than experimenting with new ideas. I wanted to see whether the use of digital devices for oral reflection would have an impact on their risk-taking.

> **"It's a risk saying things openly and honestly."**

Therefore, I asked the boys to **create audio or filmed reflections** throughout the devising process and used action research methodology to see if this positively affected their approach in class.

The research question

How might the use of digital devices for creative reflection develop risk-taking in year 8 boys?

Research context and participants

King Edward's School is an independent day boys' school situated close to central Birmingham, the UK's second largest city. It ranges from Year 7 to Sixth Form and has a strong reputation for academic excellence. The school has boys from a variety of backgrounds - predominantly Asian - and a thriving Assisted Place scheme to encourage those from all economic backgrounds to apply.

My research participants were a Drama class of 25, Year 8 boys. I worked with the class once a week in their 40-minute lesson.

> **"I think that performing is a risk because you are doing something where there is no certainty."**

The research action

The boys worked in groups to create a class performance which explored the pressures facing men in the 21st century. Each week, a specific reflective question was posed for them to consider and then create an audio or video response. The research project took place over ten lessons. The class was split into project groups and over the project reflected on the following questions:

- What do I find difficult in Drama?
- What does an adaptable person look like?
- How adaptable am I?
- Why do men find it difficult to express their emotions?
- How is my group progressing?
- What is my individual contribution?
- How have I 'taken risks' in Drama over the whole of the process?

I transcribed the boys' digital reflections and gave feedback to the class about the general trends. Where students had created a film in response to a question, I often showed this to the class (with their permission). Many of these films became interludes between the scenes of their final performance.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through:

- Filmed class discussions
- Field observation notes
- Interviews with the boys
- Class surveys
- The actual reflections, which were a rich source of information

> **"When you are writing you feel under pressure to get it right. You don't feel like you've done it wrong when you've *said* something."**

When I had collected all the data I colour coded responses by highlighting similar ideas from the observations, transcribed reflections, and videos. I then collated the colour coded data and took time to think through the salient themes that emerged.

> **"I can be more honest with a video than writing."**

Key findings

Through analysis of the data, the following key themes emerged:

- Overcoming fear or anxiety about contributing to lessons
- An improved attitude to change in devising drama
- A confidence in taking risks in the creative process
- A greater honesty in reflection

> **"I have found myself more open and honest in my reflection as it's kind of hard to express myself normally."**

> **"One thing I have learned, the key part about being adaptable, is to try ideas and if they don't work – change them."**

Conclusions

The use of digital devices to reflect undoubtedly had a very **positive impact on the boys' confidence** in their performance work. Students generally submitted thoughtful responses that demonstrated a much **deeper insight** into their thinking. It was **a more convenient method for reflection** and allowed them to capture their thoughts in the moment.

The **trust among the class grew** as the project developed, with many clearly feeling **more confident to take part in class discussion**.

There was a palpable **enthusiasm and pride** in the process and their achievements. The process did not work for every boy, but the majority exhibited an **improved confidence** in their approach to devising drama.

The final piece demonstrated a **real maturity** in its content and execution. The class had **taken risks** by changing their ideas which resulted in a thought provoking piece of theatre.

The boys appreciated **the power of reflection**. The act of reflecting and the knowledge that they were being listened to made a **difference in their attitude** to work in class and was key to their success in performance.

> **"Sometimes I'm a bit scared to put all of myself out there but now I have thought about it and reflected on it, I'm actually going to put my all into it and not be afraid."**

Key Readings

Reichert, M., & Hawley, R. (2010). *Reaching boys, teaching boys: Strategies that work and why*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Giedd, J. N. (2012). The digital revolution and adolescent brain evolution. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, *51*(2), 101-105. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.06.002

Sipilä, K. (2014). Educational use of information and communications technology: teacher's perspective. *Technology, Pedagogy and Education*, *23*(2), 225-241. https://doi.org/10.1080/14759039x.2013.813407

> **"Our class has grown stronger as a group."**

International Boys' Schools Coalition Action Research Program 2017-18: Adaptability in a Changing World

Further information
This poster and further information is available at: www.theibsc.org
Researcher's Email: pkh@kes.org.uk

international boys' schools coalition