




Inquiry Drama as a Method to Explore the Museum Environment. An Action Research Example at the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis (Greece)

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Abstract

The present research paper explores the contribution of the Inquiry Drama Method to meaning-making in a museum environment. It presents and assesses an educational program realized in the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis. The article comprises a theoretical and an empirical section. The first part refers to the museum as a context of development and learning, in Inquiry Drama Method, and the functional connection between them. In the second part, a theatre-pedagogy intervention is presented through Inquiry Drama Method and Action Research methodology in a museum environment. The participants are university students in the 'Drama and Group Empowerment and Resilience' course of the Department of Primary Education at the Democritus University of Thrace. This educational research intervention was completed in three circles of four main stages each (plan, action, observe, reflect), drawing on museum exhibits regarding photos of refugees in Thrace as well as theatrical texts, storytelling, and personal testimonies from Armenian refugees. Results show that the participants constructed personal and social meaning through Inquiry Drama Method and drama techniques on sociopolitical issues, regarding what it means to be a refugee in the old and contemporary times.

Keywords

inquiry drama; theatre pedagogy; drama techniques; inquiry-based learning; museum environment; action research.

Introduction

The article aims to explore the connection between Theatre Pedagogy and the museum environment, especially through the Inquiry Drama Method, in the process of meaning-making in the museum.

The Inquiry Drama Method created and developed by Simos Papadopoulos (2007) has been evaluated in many research projects that confirmed its significance in meaningful learning and personal development (Papadopoulos, 2018). From here onwards the term Inquiry Drama Method will be referred to as IDM. The international bibliography already suggested the participatory inquiry process in Drama as fundamental to the curriculum through a theatrical form (Neelands & Goode, 2015). Some theorists have also developed relevant approaches to Drama (see: G. Bolton, D. Booth, R. Courtney, D. Davis, M. Fleming, B. Haseman, D. Heathcote, N. Morgan, J. Neelands, H. Nicholson, C. O'Neill, J. O'Toole, J. Saxton, J. Somers, B. J. Wagner, et al.).

Based on contemporary consideration of refugees and the unspeakable or also the described stories of people who unintendedly, without purpose, and suddenly change their lives to become refugees, victims of political games, we found it appropriate to

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explore how Inquiry Drama can cause the unfolding of thoughts and feelings in a Historical museum of a city which is located at the borders of Greece and carries on being a shelter for refugees. This paper is the result of action research aiming in this direction. The basic elements of planning, application and assessment of the three successive interventions at the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis are described as well as a short theoretical frame on the relationship between the museum and theatre/drama, in the empirical part. Particularly, the environment of the action (the museum and its exhibition), the age group and the level of education of the participants, the goals, the methodology, and the stages the activities develop as well as the final assessment of the museum and drama experience based on writings and constructed interviews are presented.

The Theoretical Framework

Museum for Learning

Considering the museum as a means for learning is something that appears in the European project LEM - The Learning Museum, within different pedagogical activities of museums and synergies with the international and local community (Falk & Dierking, 2016). The personal, social, and cultural development of the museum visitor is part of the contemporary constructivist (Hein, 2004) and participatory museum (Simon, 2017). The museum explores, preserves, and presents the material and intangible cultural heritage (Desvallées & Mairesse, 2014) while the visitor voluntarily and actively connects his previous knowledge with the new knowledge, he gets involved in the past through the present (Falk & Dierking, 2004), he associates people with actions and choices through the Contextual Model of Learning (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007). Museum also connects science with experiential learning, interaction, and investigation (Filippoupoliti, 2010; Filippoupoliti & Sylaiou, 2015). Experiential and object-based learning are very significant in formal and informal education (Chatterjee & Hannan, 2008). Participatory cultural activities are also successfully used in museums and drama as a form of representation of the past is mainly presented through the form of Museum Theatre (Bridal, 2004; Bennett, 2012). There are also several projects, such as *Living History*, a Broward Education Foundation program in Florida (USA), that change classrooms into museum exhibitions through drama (Farone, 2015). Experiential learning in museums and the meaningful understanding of collections and events through drama have increasingly become core research themes for the related international research community.

Inquiry Drama Method

In the large context of Theatre Pedagogy and the methodologically multidimensional field of Drama, IDM constitutes a dramatic-anthropological environment and method for the interdisciplinary and artistic exploration of human existence, nature, and experience. As a sociodramatic type of learning for bodily exercise, psychological empowerment, and spiritual growth, it is a scientific and artistic process during which a group of people explores life through reflection as well as a playful, improvised, and well-organized theatrical action. In the experiential, interactive, and dramatic environment of this method, cognitive, emotional, and spiritual processes are developed, and a whole set of skills, such as organizational, cooperative, communicative, dialogic, linguistic, creative, dramatic and evaluative (Papadopoulos, 2021).

The aforementioned stress the beneficial impact of IDM for development and learning. Its theoretical foundations are closely linked to its effectiveness since it aims at fostering virtuous life and well-being through cultural, aesthetic, and experiential apprenticeship. Therefore, IDM has a high pedagogical value when its potential is used functionally, regarding its educational content and its procedural dynamic (experiential, reflective, communicative, empathic). In that respect, dramatic environments must be subject to

knowledge exploration and the consolidation of principles and values, as they epitomize the classical Greek spirit (Papadopoulos, 2021).

IDM focuses on comprehending the self as other through dramatic exploration of the socio-political reality and, in that respect, it aims at the individual as well as group empowerment and resilience.

IDM as a method consists of five stages that refer to “*creating a suitable atmosphere among the group, introducing the children to the environment of the story, exploring and creating the new dramatic environment, assessing and comprehending the new experience, presentation*” (Papadopoulos, 2021).

Table 1. Synoptic Table of Inquiry Drama Method Stages

<p>A. CREATING ATMOSPHERE FOR THE GROUP variety of games (bodily expression, introduction, ice-breaking, observation, etc.)</p>
<p>B. INTRODUCING THE INITIAL ENVIRONMENT Teacher in a role or out of a role – participants out of a role ● GETTING TO KNOW THE WORK Reading and listening to the story/piece of music/ artwork/ watching a film or theatrical play ● GETTING TO KNOW THE STIMULUS Reading/ listening to/watching a testimony, the narration of a story, an artwork, and relevant concepts</p>
<p>C. CREATING THE DRAMATIC - NEW ENVIRONMENT ● FIRST REMARKS CONCERNING THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE STORY discussion out of role on the dramatic environment ● EXPLORATION AND REFLECTION in ROLE improvised action – use of theatre conventions and techniques/reflection in role ● FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT I assessment of action leading to comprehension (questions – versions – observations on content and process) ● SHAPING THE STORY Playing episodes out of role, in-between improvised action, creative writing, rewriting the narrative to dramatic form ● FORMATIVE ASSESSEMENT II Presentation to the group – feedback</p>
<p>D. PRESENTATION of NEW DRAMATIC TEXT Simple, without thorough preparation staging of action</p>
<p>E. FINAL ASSESSMENT Assessment of action leading to comprehension and catering for new action</p>

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Inquiry Drama Method in the museum

IDM in Museum, specifically, can develop in five stages (Papadopoulos & Filippopoliti, 2019):

- a. Creating an atmosphere for the group in the museum. The aim is to foster psychosocial, psychomotor, and dramatic expression and communication through icebreaking and trust games among the members of the group as well as observation exercises, memory and imagination games using the senses.
- b. Getting to know the museum environment (connecting with the exhibit under inquiry through audio-visual, material stimulus, written text, or literature excerpts). The aim is to introduce the participants to the world of the exhibit, which stands between history and fiction. The museum educator presents the stimulus or the text that is going to serve as a basis for the dramatic exploration of the story, informs them on

the activity they will engage in, and introduces the viewpoint from which they will explore the issue and the dramatic tension.

c. Creating a dramatic-new environment. The aim is dramatic exploration and re-creation of an environment as well as comprehending the life of the exhibit (cultural biography) on behalf of the participants. They define together the basic elements of the story and explore circumstances in which they participate in the role using proper theatrical techniques. These shed light on the research of the exhibit, they point out dramatic, organizational, expressive, dialogic, communicative, reflective, and evaluative skills, while the museum educator develops facilitating skills.

d. Evaluating action. The aim is to assess dramatic research regarding the exhibit as well as self-evaluation of the participants regarding the content, the process, the psychosocial context of the group, the cognitive changes, and personal and emotional responses.

e. Staging the action. The aim is an optional staging of theatrical action. The participants in the role point out historical and artistic aspects of the presentation using relevant objects to the museum exhibits.

The perspective of enriched museum experience through IDM led to an educational research proposal in Greece that reconstructed the five-stage method into a seven-stage museum pedagogical model (Karagianni, 2020; Karagianni & Papadopoulos, 2019b). In particular, the seven-stage museum pedagogical model of Inquiry Drama was developed to be tested in doctoral research, supported and funded by the State Scholarships Foundation in Greece (Karagianni, 2020). The philosophy of this drama museum educational model is based on the perspective that drama leads museum participants to construct relationships and approach life through inquiry. Using Action Research as a research method, the model was developed and evaluated in participatory inquiry educational museum programs with primary and high school students as participants in the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis, a local museum in Thrace of Northern Greece. The results of data collection and analysis proved that the above pedagogical model can effectively enhance the museum experience and learning of the participants through personal, emotional, and sociocultural development. The outcomes of this research are relevant to recent research, projects, and workshops that suggested museum drama as a significant way of approaching the museum environment and cultural landscape (Jackson & Kidd, 2007).

Considering the theoretical frame above, Drama and Inquiry for meaningful learning, creativity, and personal and social development indicate the need for more action and re-action, inquiry, and re-inquiry in schools, museums, and cultural landscape.

In Greece, IDM (Papadopoulos, 2007, 2010, 2021), is proposed as a mode of intervention for promoting the pedagogical, psycho-social, and educating character of the museum through inquiry-based learning (Papadopoulos & Filippopoliti, 2019; Karagianni & Papadopoulos, 2019a). We mention also that in the context of informal education, there are also other theatrical approaches in Greece applied to educational programs in a museum (Nikonanou & Venieri, 2017).

The empirical part

The research aim

The main objective of the interventions was to investigate the meaning of the museum exhibits by the participants using IDM, particularly the creation of personal and sociopolitical meaning on migration issues of older and contemporary times as well as the creation, re-creation, and understanding of values and human choices.

More specifically, the research focused on boosting critical reflection about migration issues and coercion as well as on altering initial understanding of values and human

choices. Moreover, the interventions aimed at the experiential involvement of young people in issues that, although they seem far from the reality of a country that is at peace, are nevertheless a cause of concern in contemporary times with prejudices and stereotypes against the refugees, with a tendency to oblivion instead of remembrance of the migration history of the Greeks, and particularly for the inhabitants of a city such as Alexandroupolis which is mainly composed of refugees after the Asia Minor disaster and the exchange of population in 1920. At the same time, engagement with local history and culture through the exhibits of the museum and theatre texts or extra props seemed to serve appropriately. Such an example is the display of photographs of population groups who inhabited the city before and after 1920-1930.

The research method

Action Research was implemented as a method (Papadopoulos, 2021a), which explores theoretical knowledge through enhancing practice (Carr, 2004; Elliot, 2010), while the four-stage cyclical process (plan, action, observe, reflect, etc.) (Grundy, 1987; Kemmis & McTaggart, 1988) turn this research method dynamic (Creswell, 2014).

Action Research is a multimodal and participative form of a democratic social type of research with a self-reflective and self-conscious character (Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Grundy & Kemmis, 1988; Hargreaves & Fullan, 1992; Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), that connects theory with practice through reflective inquiry of a social circumstance or educational practice, aiming at its improvement (Elliot, 1991, 2010) and its change (McNiff, 1995; McNiff, Lomax & Whitehead, 1996).

This research was based on the spiral model of action research cycles (see Figure 1) (Carr & Kemmis, 1986). This model was used to help university students create personal and social meanings on socio-political issues regarding migration problems of the older and contemporary times.

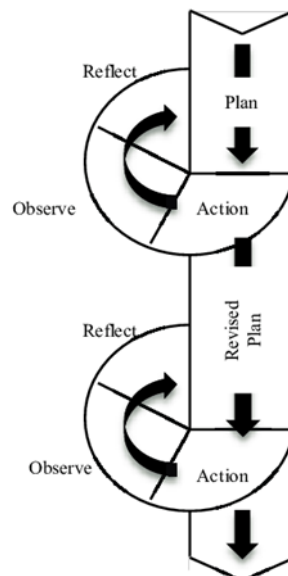


Figure 1. Action Research
(Carr & Kemmis, 1986)

Action Research was considered to be the most appropriate method (Papadopoulos, 2021a) since a) it constituted a qualitative research method for a holistic approach to the research circumstances (Hollingsworth, 1997), b) it aimed at improving the quality of action through the cooperation of the participants (Elliot, 1991), c) it focused on redesigning their instructional plan (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005), d) it promoted their

professional development as reflecting professionals (Schön, 1983), e) it introduced innovative elements (Altrichter, Posch, & Somekh, 1993).

The aforementioned qualities of Action Research served as criteria for selecting it in combination with IDM (Papadopoulos, 2007), since they both accept that observation and improvement of reality come through changing circumstances, the self and the world (O'Toole, 2006; Kemmis, 2008). In that respect, the researchers aimed to create the appropriate participative and interactive environments for inquiry, since both Action Research and IDM encouraged the meta-practice approach, that is the development of a new practice to change already known practices (Kemmis, 2009, 2010), to develop new research, theatrical and pedagogical practices in the group, while at the same time observing and reflecting on a metacognitive basis, realizing the importance of constant improvement and change (Somekh, 2006) as well as participation in it (Bradbury & Reason, 2008).

Action Research owns common aspects with IDM environments, which constitute inquiry fields of representing realistic models of human behavior (Cahill, 2006). Regarding the dynamic relationship between scientific and artistic creation (O'Toole, 2006) they both have inquiry and reflection as well as the subjectivity of their value systems as a common feature. In that respect, Action Research is included among the main research methods that are used in theatre (Edmiston & Wilhelm, 1996; O'Toole, 2006).

Combining Action Research and IDM serves the principles of both fields of knowledge. More particularly, it reinforced the connection between theory and practice through empirical, cooperative, critical-reflective inquiry into social circumstances with small-scale interdisciplinary, self-evaluative interventions. These were developed into specific, creative, and innovative learning environments in the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis.

Data collection

There were a variety of methodological tools to collect data to insure reliable and valid results through open observation, triangulation of the researchers, the participants, and the critical friend's opinions. More specifically: research data collection and personal notes, notes of the external observer/co-researcher and the transcriptions of the interventions, written texts with thoughts and feelings of the participants during the development of the activities, organized interviews from some of the participants about the creation or not of personal and social meanings in the museum through drama, as well as written assessments by the participants. The analysis and study of the data were performed through qualitative analysis of the content.

Participants and type of intervention

The workshops took place during the summer semester of the academic year 2020 (9/4, 16/4, 7/05) at the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis with undergraduate students and second-year students as participants, but also with postgraduate students from the Postgraduate Program "Diversity and Theatre Pedagogy". Altogether 25 persons took part: 21 undergraduate students aged 19-20, and 4 postgraduate students aged 30-35. This was a group of students who had the same educational background as far as the classes of "Theatre Pedagogy" are concerned since they are students from the Department of Primary Education at the Democritus University of Thrace. An exception was made for four participants who were active teachers and at the same time postgraduate students, at an age of above 30 - these persons had different intake, experiences, and perhaps personal or family experiences on the matter of migration. This mixed age group nonetheless collaborated in harmony, there was a strong interaction and the look of the participants worked rather penetratingly.

Research process

The intervention workshops were exploratory and used the techniques of IDM (Papadopoulos 2007, 2010). This method was applied to a variety of contexts, such as intercultural education (Dimasi & Papadopoulos, 2013), and is taught at the undergraduate and postgraduate levels at the Democritus University of Thrace and the Kapodistrian University of Athens. Therefore, the interventions had the following outline, using IDM in the museum:

Stage 1: familiarization of the participants with the museum environment

Stage 2: familiarization with the museum exhibits and the informative material of the exhibition

Stage 3: the creation of atmosphere and exploration of a new drama environment

Stage 4: assessment of the museum experience

Stage 5: the creation of the frozen frame drama activity.

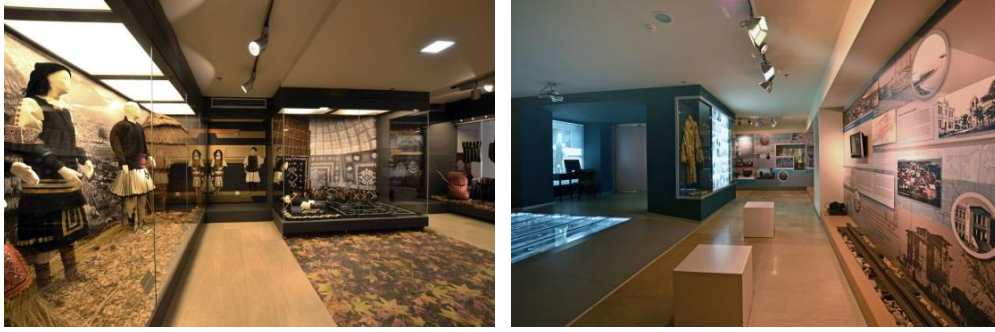
Three actions were designed and implemented in the framework of consecutive cycles of actions to register and study the thoughts and the points of view of the participants, but also to enrich the activities.

The first cycle of inquiry introduced the group to the museum environment and to an excerpt from an autobiographic text of a woman who experienced migration. It also explored the previously acquired knowledge of the group and probable personal experiences from family stories of refugees. The second cycle progressively incorporated drama techniques according to the IDM, reading, and inquiry of scenes from a theatrical play, whose plot ended and was dramatized in the third cycle in scenes, through drama techniques, provoking empathy, reflection, and brainstorming about immigration, deception or fulfillment of dreams.

Each intervention in every research cycle lasted three hours. Therefore, there were nine hours of activities (3 three-hour activities took place in each action research cycle), with necessary preparation, planning, and redesigning of activities by the research group according to the IDM. The subject of the inquiry in the interventions was immigration in the years 1920 and 1930, as it appears through the museum and, as support material, a theatre text with a similar context and written testimonies of refugees presented as autobiographies. Driven by dramatic and autobiographic texts of Armenian refugees, the reasons why so many people had to leave their homeland, lose families, and experience loss, insult, tolerance, deprivation, and death are analyzed. At the same time, the before and the after are explored: the immigration and the arrival in a new land, dreams, and disappointments, hopes and visions for a better future.

Environment for implementing the program

The project uses one of the main exhibitions of the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis, a city in Northern Greece, a regional unit in East Macedonia and Thrace. Alexandroupolis is the capital of Evros, a commercial center, an important harbor of north-eastern Greece, and one of the newest cities in Greece (19th century) with a multicultural heritage.



Figures 2 & 3. Permanent exhibition of the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis
(Source: Tetragon)

The Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis is a local museum with a modern museological approach with two permanent exhibitions about local history and heritage (Figures 2 and 3). It was built in 1995 in the center of the city. For the creation of the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis, the city's residents offered personal and family objects, artifacts, original photographs, and documents. A remarkable collection of paintings by local artists and a collection of significant books and essays about local history can be found in the museum library. There is also a conference hall, available for associations and organizations, as the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis plays its pedagogical role in the local community of Alexandroupolis. The museum is open to society and collaborates with other museums so many periodic exhibitions take place. It implements pedagogical programs of a variety of themes for all school grades (Figure 4), and it collaborates with the pedagogical community and the local community.



Figures 4. Educational program at the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis
(Agni Karagianni)

There are two permanent room exhibitions. The first room is about Helen Philippides' exhibition about the traditional community of Sarakatsani in Thrace. Sarakatsani is a Greek population subgroup of traditionally transient shepherds. In this exhibition, a significant exhibit is *Panaoula*, the Sarakatsanian female clothing with a specific decorative motive of the traditional Greek community, as cycles, crosses, or the tree of life as a prayer to the holy Mother of Jesus (the Greek word *Panagia*) so that Sarakatsana may complete successfully her cycle of life by becoming a mother with healthy children. The second permanent room is on the next (the first floor) and is organized into 5 thematic units (Antiquity in Thrace, the birth of the city, economy, political and cultural life) and refers to the history of Alexandroupolis from 1880 till 1970. The research

interventions exploited photographic material and family heirlooms from the refugee inhabitants of the city after the Armistice of Mudanya and the Treaty of Lausanne, which mark the Asia Minor disaster and the exchange of populations.

Results

A' Cycle

Aim – Implementation

The first cycle took place on April, 9th, 2019 at the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis in the presence of 25 students. Here is the description of the intervention:

A. CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR THE GROUP¹

Prof. Papadopoulos as the drama mediator welcomed the group to the area of the museum's exhibition, where he had already taken care of letting soft music play and having appropriate lighting. He invites the group to observe the exhibits and brings the public in touch with the first stimulus, asking the group to form a hypothesis about the possible identity of the people depicted in the photographs of the museum. Some of the figures are well dressed, a sign of a higher social class, whereas others are exhausted by the fight for life because they seem to belong to the working class. The group finds the differences and hypothetical scenarios regarding the life and the social status of these figures are expressed. The mediator calls the group to collect the information according to the informative captions of the museum: the well-dressed ladies belong to the Armenian community of the city, it may be that the Armenians are merchants. At the same time, the group moves towards the display with photographs of the inhabitants after 1920 and the differences in the social status of most figures are described again.

B. INTRODUCING THE INITIAL ENVIRONMENT

☒ *GETTING TO KNOW THE WORK*

The drama mediator lets the eyes and the thoughts wander. He begins to read an excerpt from the autobiography of a woman (Kourtian, 1980) and he stops reading just before the end of the event/incident. The mediator acts in an authentic and intermediary way and through the excerpt, he connected the pre-situation, the after-situation, and the situation that will result from the personal reading and reception of the members of the group. The mediator invites the group to continue reading the text and then to look for the connection between the story and the items of the museum: personal items of everyday use, and a religious relic such as an icon of the Virgin. The group is invited to write down on a one-meter sheet of paper how they expect the story to connect with the material from the museum and with the group itself.

C. CREATING THE DRAMATIC - NEW ENVIRONMENT

☒ *EXPLORATION AND REFLECTION in ROLE*

☒ *FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT I*

☒ *SHAPING THE STORY*

☒ *FORMATIVE ASSESSEMENT II*

There follows the integration of drama techniques and the creation of a new drama/stage environment. In particular, through the *thought-tracking technique* and social status, the students express their thoughts about the social, political, and

¹ During the implementation of IDM, after the third (C) stage: Creating the dramatic- new environment, we chose to pass to the fifth (E) stage: final assessment, leaving out the fourth (D) stage: presentation of new dramatic text (Simple, without thorough preparation staging of action), which was not an aim in any of the cycles of the Action Research.

geopolitical situation. Then, in groups, they are called to show a situation with the *frozen frame* technique and through this technique to *thought-tracking*.

It seemed appropriate to record in detail the thoughts of the participants to show the thinking that occurred naturally from the museum exhibits and the text, but substantially through the mediator. None of those thoughts could have been expressed if the persons hadn't been invited to express thoughts and questions *in their role*. The autobiographic text took a new dimension as an image, as a representation of a different life through the present and the participants themselves. In the inquiry process the development of still images in the thought tracking, the students in the role, provoked historical and cultural empathy, they created meaning during the museum experience which was obviously triggered in the museum, but they surfaced with the appropriate mediation.

E. FINAL ASSESSMENT

The intervention came to an end in a circle, in a central place of the room of the museum, where there is lighting directed towards the floor with a map of the area. The mediator gathers the group in that place so that they can perceive space and time, the landscape, and the borders that change since the map shows the area of Evros, the natural border that separates or brings together two peoples. Here are the last words of the mediator and the participants.

Mediator: *"Look at the map.... the present and the future... A huge collective responsibility is needed to understand our fear of the future.... a responsibility to be able to understand what it is that we call history, politics, geopolitics, theatre, culture, science, art... And each one of us expressed one thought..."*

Group: *"Our life changes constantly", "Everything happens for a reason", "Remember, not to forget", "I move forward, but I don't forget", "Only love will save us in the end", "There is no I can't, there is only I won't".*

These words were written on blank pages that were handed over to the mediator.

Assessment

The intervention turned out to be very interesting. During the recording of the intervention, the outside observer who was also the critical friend (as action research methodology requests) notes that, apart from the words of the group, the body language also confirms what had been expressed with words: thinking, questioning, and empathy. Obviously socio-cultural meanings were created, as the participants *within the role* expressed the hypothetical situation of the refugees through the photographs of the museum or through the woman's autobiography extract that the mediator read. The research group agreed that in the second cycle, the group would have to get more actively involved to bring out reflection with personal meanings, not only about the others but also about each one's life individually. This way, the understanding of the irrationality of war, the vanity, and the tragic consequences of political and strategic collusions becomes conscious. Causal relationships of a present-past-future type are created and the personal and collective responsibility is strengthened against managing the possibility of an unnecessary war or immigration.

B' Cycle

Aim – Implementation

Based on all this, the second cycle was designed in such a way that the participants would not remain spectators of the lives of others, but would create sequences with their own lives, with experiences of their family or friends to take a responsible stand in watching the world through drama and the museum. The design of the second cycle

concerned the inquiry of basic characters of a theatrical play with the title “The beast in the moon” (Kalinowski, 2009).

A. CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR THE GROUP

The second cycle of intervention took place on April 16th, 2019. Given the short length of time between this one and the first cycle intervention, it was decided that the intervention would start from the point where the previous one had stopped, in other words from the center of the room, where the floor is lit. The participants are already acquainted with the museum and they form a circle around the mediator. The mediator “absorbs” the dynamic of the group and, although a short recapitulation was planned concerning everything that had been said in the previous session, the mediator chooses to connect this action with the previous one in a special way. Standing in the middle of the circle, he tears irregular pieces of paper, those pieces of paper upon which the previous group had written their thoughts. He lets the papers fall on the floor with ritual movements. Each one randomly picks up a piece and remains seated on the floor on the lit floor map of the area. The mediator softly touches each person who has to read out loud the words that he sees. Random words can be heard: homeland, school, before, holds, new land, hand, little girl.

The group connected the previous museum and drama experience and expressed thoughts that related to the still images and the words that had been said during the first cycle. The following phrases were heard: “*he is missing school, a cycle closes and a new one opens, it is hard to say goodbye, to leave*”. The participants who are now standing, follow the instructions of the mediator, repeating the same word and then they are divided into two random groups.

B. INTRODUCING THE INITIAL ENVIRONMENT

☒ *GETTING TO KNOW THE WORK*

One group was composed only of two children, who stood opposite the other group and purposely undertake the main role in the dramatic text that the mediator would soon read. The excerpt from the theatrical play “*before 192... now those years were hard*” was heard. The text describes the journey from Armenia to America, where the main character finds the strength to start a new life –as a photographer–, despite the loss of his whole family who was decapitated by the Turks. The mediator encourages the group to ask questions to the couple.

C. CREATING THE DRAMATIC - NEW ENVIRONMENT

☒ *EXPLORATION AND REFLECTION in ROLE*

☒ *FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT I*

☒ *SHAPING THE STORY*

☒ *FORMATIVE ASSESSEMENT II*

The technique of semi-structured improvisation is used since the drama mediator gives the instruction that one group of the participants is *in role*-playing the members of a committee intending to organize the new country and asking to find what the two young people need to start a new life. During this, the groups chose to recall from memory what had happened in the first intervention, which proves that the students remembered a lot from the previous activities connecting the past with the present. In essence, the woman’s autobiographical text was developed by the participants into a dramatic text where the museum was the stage. From the improvised dialogue it turned out that the two young people were merchants in their own country and that they had taken with them their identity cards, golden jewelry, and a picture.

The mediator reads an excerpt from Chaïdemenou's book “*Grandma Filio. The Minor Asia Woman*” focusing on words and phrases that emotionally stressed. The group playing the committee asks questions to the couple regarding the way the child might feel. He uses

the participants' words and encourages them to dream of desirable situations to connect their dreams with reality, their presence in the museum with a dreamed future while being in the role. The mediator keeps reading another excerpt and asks the participants to make a list of the things they would take with them if they had to leave their country. He then asks a girl to the hot seat and tells the story of her life in the role. Then the group is asked to give her advice, using the technique of conflicting advice to guide the process in dramatic tension. The mediator uses the words and reads another excerpt and then asks the participants to create snapshots from the girl's life according to what she narrated so that they stage a set of still images (Figure 5).

The drama mediator remarks that the participants put forward values like the mother's love, family, and homeland. At the same time though, they deconstruct these values through the meaning of loss, which defines the situation of immigration. This is why the first image, which depicts the *before*, has elements from a wedding, and coexistence with beloved persons, whereas the next still image, the *after*, suppresses all the previous. In this atmosphere, he asks the group to sit in the circle and begins a new ritual: the members of the group read one after the other random excerpts, each person taking into his hands the book from the center of the circle and reading in a low voice. The last person is invited to do something different: in a standing position, he repeats phrases from the book or completes his own thoughts, completing the meaning of the book or bringing in personal experiences, or being in the position of the main characters in a situation of full empathy. This technique of first-person narrative emphasizes whatever is described, the person takes responsibility for his words, and at the same time, the mediator asks the group to gather around the narrator being in the role. In essence, the mediator in this action also brings the group in front of its own responsibility, recalling the comments they had made in the first cycle, regarding personal and collective responsibility towards the world, but speaking in the first person. Everyone lies on their back, closes their eyes, and says one phrase, according to the instructions of the mediator. One can hear the words "difficulties, I found an old neighbor, a new life from scratch, a life together, escape from poverty, the new neighbor, I have difficulties, I miss my mother, where are you mother? Mother I love you". The figure of the mother and the love towards this figure is repeated with an even bigger emotional intensity, where it is obvious that there is a change from the description of a social situation to the free expression of personal thoughts or experiences. The dramatic speech is authentic, and the environment of the museum brings up memories from the past and photographs of people who finally survived. What is interesting is that as the mediator invites the members of the group to slowly stand up and look at the girl who is standing in the middle of the circle, she said "*Hope, love for life, let's continue*".

While the group is moving towards the center, the mediator decides to change the dynamic of the stage and introduces a new stage item, the white masks. The drama technique of the mask is used here, particularly the white face. The mediator acts like the director of the action and the awkward feeling of some people is obvious. Everyone is standing opposite each other and after taking a mask and observing their expression, they wear it. The mediator intervenes and they hold hands for the beginning of a new life. The mediator says in a calm tone, with movements that are slow and completely ritual, as it should be for this technique of the white mask:

"You have thought of the past, your childhood years, your life. Now those masks can be placed on red fabric. Write on a piece of paper, whatever you like, write something that makes sense for you."

The faces aren't wearing masks anymore, the museum floor fills with masks like a stage with faces. The music changes and as a *mirolói* from Thrace is played with a *gaïda*, meanwhile, everyone writes down their thoughts. The papers are placed around on the floor and one person initiates reading as a conclusion to the action one more excerpt: "*I came back, homeland.... a gage of honor*" and invites the group to move rhythmically in the room, with their hands in the air, exchanging looks.



Figure 5. Snapshot (Freeze frame) from the Inquiry Drama Project in the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis
(Simos Papadopoulos)

E. FINAL ASSESSMENT

The experience is assessed through the following words of the participants:

“the image became words and led to a journey through time, there were people like us.... they lived in difficult times.... these things are happening now... let’s be grateful for everything we have”.

The second cycle used specific inquiry drama techniques. The flexibility and skills of the mediator, who could grasp the dynamic of the group, brought a new drama/stage atmosphere and created new meaning.

Assessment

The intervention of the second cycle received a new meaning. The efficiency of drama in the museum was visible, as the still images came spontaneously to life through the process of reflection and empathy. The researchers noticed the reflection of the young persons, who may not have been affected by the social status of immigration and may have been led to a typical theatre pedagogy action. On the contrary, they tried to track, reach deeper, to penetrate. The body language often indicated emotional baggage. It was noticed that in the action with the masks, some hands were trembling and some voices had a sound of desperation or fear. Admittedly, the girl gave hopeful messages for a new life and invited the group to continue. This particular action lasted nearly four hours (despite a program for three hours), and the participants themselves ran through one technique after the other. Even though a written assessment wasn’t expected, most students expressed some thoughts that were studied by the researchers. From a group of 25 participants, many people orally expressed their concerns about the change of life of all those refugees coming to Greece. Two persons brought in the experience of their own family, mentioning that they are Greeks from Pontus, whose families came to Greece in 1985. After the intervention, the creation of personal meanings was obvious, not only the acknowledgment of a social status beyond the limits of each one’s *personal space*.

C' Cycle

Aim -Implementation

After the session of the second group, the research group's opinion was that the techniques had the expected outcome and that in the third one, it would be interesting to use a dramatic text that wasn't an autobiography, as Filio Chaïdemenou's (Chaïdemenou, 2016), but that had a plot to begin with, and characters and hidden secrets that the participants would have to discover. Also, the researchers decided that in the next cycle, they would transform the museum into a theatre stage and incorporate authentic items from the past, which could also be items from the museum's showcases, such as an old light bulb (with a porcelain base), vintage clothes, and a quill.

The third cycle of intervention took place on May 7th, 2019. A theatrical play was chosen with a similar subject as the autobiography text "*The notebooks of Anzel Kourtian*" that was used in the second cycle, the theatrical play "*The beast on the moon*" by Richard Kalinoski, inspired by the events of the Armenian genocide.

A. CREATING AN ATMOSPHERE FOR THE GROUP

Prof. Papadopoulos begins the intervention from the same place in the museum where photographs from population groups from the area are exhibited and in which there were also Armenians. He invites the students to observe once again the showcase and there is as much optical stimulation (the photographs in the museum) as there is the appropriate sound background. In the meantime, the group's interest and mental processes are motivated as the mediator warns the participants that they will be involved in a theatrical play called "The Beast on the moon". He asks them to think and to make some hypotheses about the subject based on the title of the text, particularly on the word *beast*, which has a literal and metaphorical negative meaning and suggests intense images and emotions. Then, he reads an excerpt of the work, in which basic information is given about the main character's profession: he is a photographer, just like his father, and indirect information about his origins, since his name, *Aram Tomasian*, is pronounced. The previous experience from the second cycle helps some students to say the word *Armenian*. The mediator invites them to close their eyes and to think of images coming to their mind from everything that has been read, insisting particularly on the phrase "*And the son succeeds to the son*". At the same time, he asks them to create relationships and to express thoughts, in a form of a barrage of ideas and observes again the photographs of the showcase. One student replies "snapshots from life" and another "photographs that Abraham's father took".

B. INTRODUCING THE INITIAL ENVIRONMENT

☒ *GETTING TO KNOW THE WORK*

C. CREATING THE DRAMATIC - NEW ENVIRONMENT

☒ *EXPLORATION AND REFLECTION in ROLE*

☒ *FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT I*

☒ *SHAPING THE STORY*

☒ *FORMATIVE ASSESSEMENT II*

The mediator uses the last sentence and starts reading an excerpt from the theatrical play that gives information about another father, another family, and about everything that that family went through. The excerpt, that the mediator chose is central because it introduces the participants not only to the whole background that created these conditions of life, time, local, historical, political, national, cultural, and the people's intended or not behaviors but also introduces them to a new feminine character who is also a main character, the mother.

The excerpt was full of names, nationalities, origins, of individual, social, and group identities. The meaning of identity seemed to take over the text and to become like Ariadne's thread, that once it was untangled, it would lead to the beast.

The drama mediator sets his intentions very clearly to the group and he moves on to introduce the group not only to the text but also to the way that mediation drama and inquiry drama work as a theatre pedagogy method. The participants have already moved on from the first stage of the method, in other words, introduction to the environment and the other members of the group, to the second stage which is contact with the original stimulus and formulating a hypothesis and images about the characters and about the environment in which they move.

The students agree that the main character is Armenian. The drama mediator invites the students in role to position their bodies along cardboard to form the outline of a man's and a woman's body. When the outlines are ready and they are formed in this way, the mediator suggests reading excerpts from the book by the students, passing the book hand to hand. As they read the excerpts, either the narrator or the spectators are invited to note the outline words, keywords, phrases, snapshots, thoughts, or emotions.

At this stage of the inquiry, the excerpts are read according to precise instructions of pages from the mediator, since the plot and the characters are being progressively built. At first, while the first excerpt is being read, there is a dialogue between the couple, the Armenian painter, and his much younger wife. Her young age is noted by the students, as the girl wants to chew gum. Soon though, the readings of the theatrical play take a new dimension, when the mediator invites the group to deepen everything that is being said and to use the hot seating technique. In the museum environment, the chair is placed precisely at the showcase with the refugee pictures for the participants to create analogies. The students chose a man to sit on the *hot seat*, where an interesting and revealing monologue is created.

E. FINAL ASSESSMENT

The third cycle ended when the *hot seating* drama technique led to the evaluation of the drama museum experience. Most of the participants used the words "*new perspective, deep thoughts, emotions, new meanings, the decision for action and reaction*". Inquiry drama created new meanings through text, drama, museum environment, and interaction.

Assessment

The third cycle effectively created new meanings, as participants realized how life and human options change because of war. Participants tried to reach deeper, to take responsibility for their own learning through drama, empathy, and reflection. The drama technique of hot seating helped inquiry and deep understanding. It is significant to underline that in this cycle of inquiry, reflective and experiential learning were successfully connected with perceptual and intellectual curiosity, leading to meaningful engagement in the museum through drama. There for, it seemed that drama increased understanding of the relationship between human lives, options, and consequences, especially when war forces humans to become non-human, when victims are innocent people who try to "escape" from the past.

General Evaluation

Based on all accounts, evaluations, and interviews regarding the museum and theatrical experience, qualitative content analysis led to the creation of three categories: a. the creation of personal meaning on migration issues through museum exhibits as well as inquiry drama and facilitation b. the creation of sociocultural meaning c. cultural empathy.

It should be noted that IDM in museums fostered a variety of skills, additionally to the specific ones defined from the beginning to do research, that is the creation of personal and social meaning in the museum environment through drama facilitation in the context of the course “Drama and Group Empowerment and Resilience”.

For example, during the interventions the researchers inferred that the participants were actively engaged displaying alertness, they cooperated and exchanged views harmonically displaying respect, given that the facilitator showed a loving attitude, mediating the process and not guiding it. The engagement was obvious not only because the participants experienced the techniques in a joyful mood but also because they were all emotionally engaged, even if this was sometimes expressed in a non-verbal way. For instance, while a percentage of students’ assessments (10 out of 15) did not express personal thoughts and emotions and these students chose to describe only the facilitation process, yet (based on direct observation on behalf of the research team) they participated in the experience empathizing with the characters of the stories (autobiography and dramatic text). They were also concerned with the changeable and unpredictable element of human fate and life due to war and due to immigration even from the first cycle of facilitation. Gradually, in the third circle, they delved into situations hidden behind the words of the text, something that led to a sociocultural meaning and the connection of the past with the present. Therefore, it was found that skills relating to thinking and feeling were fostered as well as data analysis and synthesis to understand causality (e.g. war-immigration-difficulties-life change-irrationality-perpetrator and victim) and to critically approach the past and contemporary times. Creative thinking was obvious, especially in the technique of hot seating. Simultaneously, several students sought analogies (through facilitation in the 2nd cycle) of material evidence of the museum (exhibits) aided by the testimonies of the refugees who had taken with them whatever they could save from their lost homelands. This is why inquiry practices and facilitation were redesigned in the 2nd and the 3rd cycle as well as the correlation between the dramatic text (the photos of the Armenian photographer’s family) and the museum (the photos of the refugees from Thrace).

It should, also, be made clear that from the total of 25 participants (21 undergraduate and 4 postgraduate students), only the undergraduate students evaluated the facilitation in the context of the academic course. Fifteen texts were written describing the facilitation, and articulating of personal opinions plus three interviews in pairs (a total of 6 persons’ opinions), as not all of the participants were selected to interview to express their opinion or to explore others’ opinions.

Based on the participants’ reflections expressed during the interventions, evaluations of the experience as a whole (3rd cycle) and interviews there appeared the following:

A. In terms of personal meaning-making

1. From analyzing interviews, students’ empathic and critical reflective attitude was obvious, an element that also appeared in analyzing their reflections during the interventions.
2. During the interviews the students did not identify themselves with the refugees. This can be explained by the fact that undergraduate students (called to evaluate their experience) have never personally experienced something like that before, that is immigration. Yet, personal meaning-making is not limited to identification but also to the creation of a correlation between past and present and the creation of a relation of common fate among people. This was the conclusion in almost all the interviews and evaluations.
3. Personal meaning-making refers to the participants’ self-exploration, which was found out, especially in the second cycle where masks were used as a technique. Introspection was obvious in the participants’ words, especially in the repetition of words and phrases such as “*where do we go from here? ... united ...hope*” as well as in the use of the first person of the singular or plural form.

B. In terms of meaning-making about the social situation (in this case about immigration)

1. The participants explored in depth the refugees' characters through the hot seating technique, inquiring in essence, not about their identity outside the social context but as social and collective identities in the context of the social circumstance they experience. Both the questions and the answers did not focus on the man's or woman's psychological state but that of the refugee, thus the participants were introduced easily and consciously to the social situation and created a sequence of events.
2. The anthropocentric and not the ethnocentric approach of the participants to the social situation should be pointed out here. Although there was some talk about genocides, nobody made nationalistic comments on nations (Greeks, Turks), rather a few mentions were made of local ethnic groups (Armenians, Thracians). On the one hand, this could be explained as a lack of ethnocentric thinking on the participants' part and on the part of the facilitator, who chose to avoid making any hints about nations. On the other hand, the social situation was broadened through people, any person from any nationality, any culture, and any religion of any time in history.

C. In terms of cultural empathy

The aforementioned approach to the universal and intertemporal problem of immigration and the loss of beloved people and homelands was the basic element that brought to the surface reflection on the circumstances during such an experience. It is about a cross- and multicultural approach to this social problem, the emotional engagement, and the multifaceted view of the refugees having inquiry drama as a mediating tool in a theatrical and a museum context.

All the above led to the empowerment of the museum experience through the theatrical one, something that is confirmed both by evaluations and by the participants' gradual change and empathy from the first circle to the third one.

Conclusions

As an overview of this essay, the prospect of using IDM in the museum could be a promising and interactive pedagogical practice, a museum educational element that can increase self and other understanding, engagement, and comprehension of adults in museums. This prospect may transform the visitor's experience into an enriched, life-gaining experience through culture and experimental learning. Considering the universal perspective of inquiry-based learning, and interactive educational scenarios, as researchers we propose inquiry drama as a modern, holistic, and multi-essential approach to culture and heritage, history, humanity, and life stories. Based on Museum Studies, theoretical and empirical research about the connection between drama, theatre, and museum (Hooper-Greenhill, 2007; Bennet, 2012; Jackson & Kidd, 2007), this action research program led to the conclusion that inquiry drama gives voice and meanings to the museum exhibition through pedagogical tools and drama techniques. The research outcomes emphasized the pedagogical aspect of inquiry drama in the museum so that students have the opportunity to interact with the museum environment as inquiry drama consists of interactive participation in the museum and a deeper understanding of the past, present -or even- the future based on exhibits, exhibitions and drama techniques. Data collection also confirmed that drama techniques led to personal and sociocultural development of the students involved and confirmed visitors' responsibility for meaning-making and approaching holistic learning, a significant issue when students are visitors-participants in museums.

The prospect of art, inquiry, culture, and education connects Drama, Inquiry, and Museum as an interactive and promising approach to culture and as a modern perspective of museum and drama education. Therefore, the "hidden" perspective of life

and human psychology can be inquired in the museum through inquiry and drama techniques. The concept of inquiry in the museum experience - to describe a new perspective of the museum experience through drama- and the prospect of inquiry in the museum learning environment allows a different and meaningful way of interaction and communication with the museum exhibition. The project in the Historical Museum of Alexandroupolis also confirms that Drama and inquiry in the museum are a modern, holistic, and multi-essential approach to culture and heritage.

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