

The classroom as stage

Angela Pesci

Abstract

The work is divided into two parts. The first is dedicated to the description of the basic principles that gave birth to the project of training (Chapters 1, 2, 3), the second describes the project in detail, how it started and how it developed until its conclusion (Chapters 4, 5, 6).

The research about convictions and emotion in didactics of mathematics (Chapter 1) relates mainly to teachers and it is the background of the training intervention itself. The close connection between cognition and emotion is illustrated even by specific contributions from the neurosciences, in addition to researches in psychology and pedagogy. It stresses, with reference to different educational environments and different age levels, the impossibility to build knowledge disregarding the deepest emotional aspects of the people involved.

To activate a path that can act on such a deep level the use of non-verbal languages or of metaphorical language (among the verbal ones) is essential, because only with these modes our communication can reach the roots of our being.

In Chapter 2 the features of metaphor, its use in mathematics education and the value of metaphorical discourse in training project have been described.

Chapter 3 is dedicated to a quick look to theatrical mathematics experiences realized for school by theatrical companies or in school itself, with the collaboration of teachers and students. In both cases they are events created in order to increase the interest of public in this discipline, too often regarded as cold, abstract and just as a source of problems.

The general goal of our project of mixture of mathematics and performance, elaborated with Anna Gallo Selva, was the study of performative autobiography as a possible mediator in changing the teacher-discipline and teacher-student relationship. The starting point was found in our two different skills: that of Anna regarding theatre (particularly Playback Theatre) and mine in mathematics education problems.

The autobiographical discourse developed from each participant's reflection on his own relation with mathematics and through the choice of adequate metaphors, following specific Playback Theatre techniques. There was also the aim of actual results in the classes of the eight middle-school teachers involved in the project.

Chapters 4, 5 and 6 describe in detail the path we followed: how we got to the decision of the accomplishment of the project, the general ideas on which it was built, the planning of the activities, the diary of every single meeting, the performance offered to the public and a first evaluation of the experience, even through the opinions of the spectators and the 'actors'.

'The classroom as stage' expresses the final goal of the entire work: to communicate to the participants, apart from the importance of taking theatre to school, as it is more and more usual, mainly the need and the inevitability of living the classroom as a stage every single day, that is to say to live the classroom as a place where persons 'get on stage' with their whole being, where knowledge is built but also where one's own afflictions are elaborated and where health is searched.