Theatre of Possibility: Performative Inquiry as Heuristic, Holistic, and Integrative Learning

Dorothy Lichtblau, University of Alberta

ABSTRACT (Press Here for Sound)
This paper illustrates what Performative Inquiry, an embodied, interpretive and dialectical means of investigating curriculum, may contribute to teaching and learning. By contextualizing the discourse in a workshop on drama as a way to study Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl*, I demonstrate that Performative Inquiry builds on learners' experience and knowledge and recognizes their perceptions of who they are within certain contexts. I show, too, that this educative practice provokes critical thinking, increases self-understanding, and permits greater integration of mind and body. My overarching aim is to demonstrate that Performative Inquiry is a practice that fosters personal and community development.

Prologue

Imagine this: Sixteen women and men are spread randomly around a large classroom. They are standing quietly with their eyes closed. The open space they are occupying has been designated, some might say sanctified, for inquiry through dramatic play. During the previous few minutes they were guided through gentle stretches and breathing exercises intended to quiet their minds and relax their bodies. Now each person is listening to her or his breath enter and exit the body. Once most persons seem focused, the group facilitator asks them to note silently in which parts of their bodies they feel the greatest tension, stress, or discomfort as she guides them through a brief scan that starts with the toes, feet, and legs and gradually travels up to the shoulders, neck, face, and head. The participants are invited to breathe into any area that feels especially tight or painful. After providing time for the participants to release their muscles and become

more sensitive to their environment, the facilitator asks everyone to pay attention to his or her internal and external worlds in order to discern sounds on either plane. The participants are reminded not to hold their breath. As everyone and everything become still, background noises become apparent.

At the conclusion of this physical-sensory exercise the people in the group are asked to reflect on this experience. One person reports that he heard his heart beat, while another noticed her stomach gurgling. A few people mention that they became aware of the heating system shutting on and off and heard voices and laughter in the hallway. Others joke about the sound of traffic outside the building or the eerie creaking noises the floor makes. Several participants say they noticed that they felt more connected with their bodies, calmer, more at ease in the room, and attuned to one another. One or two people realize that the chatter in their heads has decreased.

The instructor thanks everyone for his or her contributions and reflects, "Isn't it interesting how much we may perceive when attending to our environment with our entire being?" The comment sparks a number of responses.

Neither a transcription or an exact reproduction, this scene illustrates a preface to the practice of Performative Inquiry (Fels & Belliveau, 2008; Pelias, 2008), an umbrella term that covers many genres and forms of drama and theatre used in social science research and in education. Teaching and learning experienced through drama processes is embodied, heuristic, interactive, and imaginative. It is an educational practice that seeks to build on what students know, on their current perceptions about themselves and their societies, and on their concerns and interests. It, therefore, prioritizes relationships with and among students. Experiential, holistic, and multi-vocal, Performative Inquiry is an alternate way of understanding and approaching curriculum studies.

The following depiction draws on several investigations of drama as/in inquiry that I have led, but is contextualized in an introductory Bibliodrama (Pitzele, 1997) workshop that I facilitated for a graduate class in education. What follows is an illustrative reconstruction of what drama as/in learning may offer. My aim is to show how Performative Inquiry is an enlivening and empowering developmental practice.

Dialogue One: Why Performative Inquiry?

We human beings shape our realities from the meanings we have derived from experience. Since we are situated in particular bodies, eras, geographic locations, cultures, and belief systems, what we know is not transcendent, objective truth, but a complex, limited, evolving, subjective, and contextualized interpretation of existence (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003; Gadamer, 2003). We, therefore, need pedagogies that will wake us to understanding epistemology (or how we know) as socially constructed and guide us to critical examinations of language and cultural narratives so that we may see beyond accepted systems and received knowledge (Freire, 1974; Greene, 1995). Due to the complexities and multiplicity of our worlds we need pedagogies that encourage embodied, holistic, multimodal and heuristic processes and demand attentiveness, reflexivity, and a "beginner's" mind.

As educators interested in human development, we are obliged to consider the educative quality of the experiences we offer and whether our students are gaining tools and competencies that will shift their understanding (Dewey, 1997; Freire, 1974). As well, we need to ask if we are attempting to cast out generalizations and assumptions about students to make room for their conceptualizations of who they are and what interests them. We need to ask, too, if we are helping individuals to perceive that they are capable of engaging in some form of critical dialogue.

For me, Performative Inquiry is a means of teaching and learning that is especially compatible with these criteria. Not formulaic or reductionist, it allows learners to physically, sensually, emotionally, and cognitively enter the circumstances they are studying as if they were there. These intimate and playful examinations of narratives permit students to notice the relational qualities of knowledge and that stories may be told in more than one way. They also may perceive that their choices and actions influence the direction of the account and/or the quality of the experience (Wagner, 1998). Through dramatic play, students connect their personal and social knowledge with curriculum material and thus engage in a dialectical process that shifts their understanding (Dewey, 1997; O'Neill, 2006). Additionally, Performative Inquiry is collaborative and invites multilateral and multi-vocal discourse. Players can participate according to their abilities and interests yet still be involved in the inquiry. By asking creative questions that lead to imaginative reconstructions learners challenge the taken-for-granted and attune to unconscious knowledge. Performative Inquiry thus provides a window through which to envision alternate existences (Greene, 1995).

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Dialogue Two: Performative Inquiry and Teacher Development

A couple of years ago I was asked to demonstrate a learning methodology to a group of educators, within the context of Anne Frank's *Diary of a Young Girl* (1997). The warm-up exercise depicted above is one I did with this masters level class as we embarked on the investigation. During the previous few weeks, the group, which mostly consisted of secondary school English teachers, had discussed the book and written responses to several of its sections. Now I was going to facilitate embodied, interactive explorations of a few scenes and some themes the group had been grappling with by looking at the narrative off the written page and in a tangible physical space. We were about to enter segments of the narrative imaginatively, as if we were currently experiencing them.

I had been invited by the professor of this class to introduce her students to drama in/as education. The aim of the course was to consider the association between adolescents' autobiographical writing and the formation of identity. The class was studying stories by young people to try to discover how these authors were interpreting who they were in the situations they were describing. The site of our investigation was the writing of Anne Frank, a young Jewish-Dutch teenager, who was approximately eleven years old when the Germans invaded Holland in 1940. On June 12, 1942, Anne's thirteenth birthday, one of the gifts she received was a diary. Written in the form of intimate letters to or conversations with a friend, her journal entries began on the day she received the book.

> June 12, 1942
> I hope I will be able to confide everything to you, as I have never been able to confide in anyone and hope you will be a great source of comfort and support (Frank, 1997, p. 1).

A few months after this birthday, Anne brought her diary, which she named Kitty, with her when she and her family escaped the Nazis by quickly moving to a hiding place in the old building where her father had worked.

I had corresponded and met with the class professor a few times before the date I was to work with her students because we wanted to exchange ideas about which themes and relationships to examine. We also wanted to converse about how to sensitively approach this work. My teaching practice involves coming to know the persons in my class. Since I would have only one occasion to work with this group,

I sought general information about the students and familiar learning modes of the class before meeting them. I also wanted to know if the students had any concerns about moving from the usual learning format.

Most of the students in the graduate class had little or no background in drama or performance and did not use drama in their professional practice; therefore the professor spoke to them about the types of activities I might ask them to try. I had requested that she explain that the work we would be doing focused on process. Acting ability or experience was not necessary, since we would view performance as embodied learning.

The students wondered: Would I treat Anne's story with respect? Would "acting out" scenes make them feel foolish or embarrassed? Would role-play trivialize the persons and the circumstances of the story? On the other hand, might I drag them through some form of emotionally grueling exercises?

These thoughtful questions made sense to me. They, along with the information and material the professor had shared, provided guides to follow as I planned the workshop. I definitely wanted to tell and show the students where I stood as an inquirer and as a teacher and the knowledge framework in which Performative Inquiry is located.

I choose to situate this discussion in work with educators because innovative approaches to teaching and learning require practitioners who not only have experience with and knowledge of alternate processes but also identify with the frameworks that these methods enact. As Giroux (1987) argues, teachers must understand themselves as agents of transformation. As such they are persons interested and willing to critique the narratives that shape their knowledge and their work and perceive themselves as co-inquirers alongside their students. Interested in growth, inclusivity, change, creativity and justice, these teachers are receptive to dialogue, emerging knowledge, and unplanned curricular directions. Understanding themselves as explorers motivated by curiosity and passion, they build learning communities engaged in creative inquiry.

Betty Jane Wagner (1998) states that the aim of drama in education is to shift understanding. To achieve this aim, teachers must move away from practices based on formulae or dedicated to the transmission of knowledge. Dramatic play is a vehicle for close examination of aspects of human experiences and a means for trying out alternate ways to enact these situations. This work delves into the complexities of issues more than it attempts to find neat resolutions for them. Greene (1995) writes that

the challenge for teachers is to "devise situations in which the young will move from the habitual and the ordinary to consciously undertake a search" (p. 24). Teachers who employ Performative Inquiry must take up that challenge.

Dialogue Three: Preparation

On the day that I was to explore *The Diary of a Young Girl* with the education students, I felt excited and nervous. I had read and re-read my translated version of Anne's diary and selected parts of the narrative that exemplified themes we would explore. To understand the larger context of Anne's life, I had researched the events that led to the Second World War and the rise of the Nazis in Germany. I also had dipped into the literature on Anne Frank's diary. Nevertheless, despite all my preparations and a firm sense of the directions I wanted to head with the class, I knew that nothing is predictable and that where we would travel would depend on how all the elements—the students, me, the room, and the circumstances—came together.

Another significant consideration was the itinerary of the exploration. I had to decide where and how to start our journey. Since the participants had already spent a fair amount of time closely reading and discussing the text, I decided to plunge directly into animating parts of the diary. Along the way we would pause to reflect on the processes in which we had been engaging. Afterward, there would be time to talk about ties between this work and theories about teaching and learning. One of the first things we did once the class had started was move the furniture to create room for play, movement, and interaction. It was a way to get bodies into action and to launch people into working together. I do not always use this tactic, however, in this case, not only was it a means to configuring the room to our needs, but also it was a signal that we were jointly preparing for a different way of learning. With tables out of the way, we formed a large semi-circle of chairs so that we could see one another and have a direct view of the playing space.

Once everyone was seated and seemed ready I thanked the class for the opportunity to work together and spoke briefly about why I engage in Performative Inquiry. I then invited each student to tell his or her name and to describe one thing he or she wanted to obtain from the workshop. Thus each person in the group was acknowledged and his or her interest recognized. At the same time the introductions initiated reflections about the process and where each person located him or herself within it.

When using drama in teaching and learning we need to make time for dialogue outside of role-play. Various forms of discussion and communication around and beside performative explorations allow relationships to develop between the teacher and students and among students. It is through caring relationships that trust, an important ingredient in learning, is built. As well, through articulation learners gain competency in different types of communication and begin to think about which form of language might be most appropriate to a given situation. By being attentive to students' responses to curricular material or classroom events, teachers may gain insight into individuals' subjectivities, students' self-perceptions, aims, or needs (Paley, 2005). This knowledge may guide curricular choices.

Discourse in the classroom allows all members to contribute and be heard. It also can be a process for inclusive decision making, working through concerns, and evaluating activities. Discussion also offers a forum for establishing ethical criteria and behavioral boundaries in the classroom. Taking time to communicate makes people and relationships priorities.

The first exercise we did aimed to attune participants to the environment and to thinking through the body.

"Let's get our bodies moving. Using all the open area start walking randomly around the room. Remain aware of other people and objects as you come across them but concentrate on walking. Avoid going around in circles, following others, or falling into any pattern."

After everyone was underway, I invited the group to try various modes of walking. "Walk as tall as you can," I called out. "Walk as small as you can. Now let your back lead you. Try letting your left shoulder point the way. Walk as quickly as you can," I challenged. "Can you walk as slow as molasses?"

During the exercise there were a couple of minor collisions and several times giggles erupted, nevertheless everyone was listening and enacting their version of the directions. Gradually we stopped and I asked the students to stand in a neutral position (feet hip width apart, arms at ease at the sides of the body, shoulders relaxed, and head and neck tall but not tensed) and to silently reflect on what they had experienced while walking. Soon after, I asked everyone to do a few limbering movements with me. These included neck and shoulder rolls, stretching arms upward and outward, bending forward, with flexed knees, to stretch out the spine, and shaking out limbs. Then we transitioned to the "listening" exercise I re-created at the

beginning of this paper. Afterward, I asked the participants to return to their random walk about the room.

The "warm-up" stages (all the preparations and exercises previous to investigating curriculum through role-play) are crucial to teaching and learning through drama. First, the teacher must have a strong grasp of the subject matter that he or she will explore with students as well as facility with performance tools and techniques (Pitzele, 1997). If these are lacking the teacher cannot adequately shape educative experiences that stimulate insights and questions about the curriculum. Secondly, the teacher must designate a fair portion of time for games and exercises that initiate cohesion among the participants, allow persons to become relatively comfortable with physicalized learning, increase spontaneity, decrease inhibitions, and catalyze imagination (Spolin, 1983). Since learning through drama is a holistic process that draws on the body, senses, emotions, as well as the intellect, the practice of Performative Inquiry includes the cultivation of alert and responsive beings.

Dialogue Four: Reflection, the Crux of a Developmental Process

Since we were looking at Anne Frank's story through the lenses of "freedom," "oppression," "hiding" and "resistance," I devised an activity that would allow us to experience these concepts physically and metaphorically. As they strolled around our performance area, I asked the participants to join me in setting the circumstances.

"Let's think about time and space in relationship to freedom, oppression, and hiding. First, we'll close our semi-circle by adding more chairs to create a bounded area. Please leave plenty of room in the centre. Good. Now, resume walking as before, but inside this space. As you walk I will retell parts of Anne's diary. I would like you to put yourselves in her shoes. Try to imagine the world she described as if you are experiencing it.

You are Anne walking in your neighbourhood in Amsterdam after the German invasion. In certain ways things are the same; in many ways they are not. Now you must go to a Jewish school. Former classmates shun you. Your neighbours avoid you. You may shop at Jewish stores only and within limited hours. You cannot own or ride a bicycle. You must be home by 8 p.m. because there is a curfew."

I ask the participants to stop and to listen to their breaths. Then together we tighten the circle of chairs and resume the exercise.

"Anne you no longer are allowed to attend school but must study at home. When out of doors you must wear a yellow star to indicate that you are Jewish. Your father has lost his job. Your family subsists on poor quality food. A number of people in your community have disappeared. Either they have escaped across a border or they were transported to camps by the Nazis."

We pause again. This time we bring the chairs in very close before continuing.

"Anne, now you and your family and four other people are hiding in the Annex of an old building. A secret passage leads to the rooms you and the others occupy. There is no other exit. You cannot go outside. You cannot make any noise during the day. All curtains must be drawn. You had to leave most of your possessions behind. Your friends do not know your whereabouts. You do not know what has happened to them."

Within the tiny area between the chairs people can hardly move. They bump into one another. One woman knocks into a chair. I ask everyone to stop and to take a deep breath. "Can you describe your experience?" I inquire.

After a several moments, a woman says, "I felt everything around me shrink. It was as if I was being squeezed into something."

"For me, it was like the world was being drained of colour. Everything was turning gray," another woman offers.

More voices contribute to the conversation.

"I felt I was losing my sense of who I was."

"I thought about my dog and how glad I was that we would walk to the park this evening."

I thank everyone and suggest that we reform our semi-circle and sit down.

"While keeping the concepts we're exploring in mind, let's create a living sculpture of who is in this account. Anne writes about two main groups: the persons

in hiding upstairs and a few trusted employees who work in the offices downstairs. The Dutch people who continue to run the business are safeguarding the lives of those beyond the passage while endangering their own.

Why don't we begin by considering who dwells in the Annex. I invite each of you, one at a time, to choose an individual who is in hiding and say his or her name out loud. Then come onto our stage and strike a pose that for you expresses that person in some way. Keep your position, but don't hold your breath, as other members of our group come forward to add to the sculpture. You don't have to choose a person of the same gender or age. You can represent anyone you want. After the first person comes to the stage, everyone else must place him or herself in relation to the others who are forming the sculpture."

I demonstrate what I have described. I call out Mrs. Van Daan's name and step into the area in front of the group. Planting my feet wide apart, I lean forward, raise my right arm and point a finger accusingly toward the audience. I hold the pose for a few breaths.

"Okay, whenever one of you is ready just stand up and say the name of the character you are assuming. Not everyone has to participate, but I encourage you to join in."

Once everyone who wishes to has added to the sculpture, I ask the people who are creating the image and those in the audience to briefly look up and around to perceive what has been depicted. I then ask those still seated to form a parallel sculpture of the people who work downstairs. After the sculptures have been constructed and experienced they are dissolved and we all sit down. Again we share perceptions, thoughts, discoveries, and feelings about our experiences.

"This time we'll remain in our chairs for a while but I want each of you to imagine that you are Anne living in the Annex. This afternoon you are sitting away from the others, pretending to read a book, but actually thinking about former school friends. Your mind wanders to the boy you were attracted to. Where is he now you wonder? You remember your circle of girlfriends. Your mind flits to the news reports about Jewish people being rounded up and taken to labour camps or being shot. The Germans have occupied much of Europe. Beginning with the word 'I,' Anne, say what you are thinking and feeling."

"I want to be outside," one fellow states. "I want to breathe fresh air and see what's going on out there."

"I hate being cooped up and isolated," I echo the participant's words to draw out the sub-text.

"Everything is so murky and confusing. I feel nervous all the time," a woman says.

"I don't understand what has happened. I'm anxious," I respond.

Another woman calls out, "I'm angry. My life has been stolen from me. I should be free and enjoying my adolescence. Why doesn't anyone understand?"

"Does anyone know or care how hard all this is on me? Do I dare hope to realize my dreams?"

A person at the back says, "I try to be cheerful and make jokes. I don't want to add to Mama and Papa's worries but inside it's a whole other story. Sometimes, I'm very sad."

"There's no one here I can really talk with. I feel very alone."

We continue until everyone who wishes has had a chance to speak and then let Anne return to her book.

As the participants become more comfortable with the Bibliodrama process and further immersed in Anne Frank's story, we move to exercises that let us consider people and relationships from different points of view. I also explain that just as in the fantasy play of our childhoods we can be anyone or anything we wish and objects may represent any place, thing, or person.

I lift a chair and place it centre stage in front of the group. "Once again each of you is Anne. You have just had another run-in with Margot and your parents because you took a book Margot was reading. In your diary you write that you only have contempt for your mother. You feel she is hard hearted and speaks to you sarcastically. She never sees your side of a matter.

Anne this chair is your mother. She is ready and willing to listen to you. What would you like to say to her?"

Immediately one person speaks up. "Why do you think everything Margot does is wonderful and everything I do is bad or stupid?

"*Don't you like me?*" I echo.

Another person responds, "I'll never be like Margot."

"Yeah," one of the men chimes in, "you don't know me. Why don't we ever really talk?"

"*I want you to see things from my point of view*."

After numerous lively interactions, we debrief what we discovered from this experience.

One woman confesses, "The situation took me back to when I was a kid, a young teen. I was so supersensitive. All the hormonal changes and life changes made my days one huge drama. Lord, I fought with my mother all the time. And Anne, she's going through all that and the insanity of war and persecution."

"Anne is an ordinary person in an extraordinary time," says another woman. "She's struggling to become her own person. It makes me sick to think how we older people twist kids' lives."

A thirty-something man sighs, "I have a seven-year-old boy. I think about all the times I did not stop to give him my full attention. I think about what my son will have to negotiate in this world … How can I be there for him …?"

Afterward, I offer another way to examine a relationship.

"I'd like to invite someone to come on to our playing area to represent Anne." A young woman steps up. "Thank you. Now, would someone like to be Margot?" A second woman volunteers. "Great. Now if you would stand back to back. Yes, like that. I'd like each of you to take turns starting a sentence with, 'You don't understand that …' and complete it with something you want your sister to know. Let's start with Margot, the eldest, then it's Anne's turn, and then go back and forth."

After a slow start the two actors find they have much to say to one another.

Margot: You don't understand that my insides feel shredded because I'll probably never see Nathan again.

Anne: You don't understand that I care about you, but I can't control my emotions like you do. I need to talk.

Margot: You don't understand that I feel guilty because I'm the reason why we're all trapped here.

Anne: You don't realize that life would be so much worse; it would be hell if we had allowed the Nazis to take you away.

Margot: You don't understand that I feel responsible for you and wish I could change all this.

Once they each have had a roughly half a dozen turns, I ask them to pause and to turn and face each other. I place them about three feet apart and ask them to hold hands. Then I tell them to resume the exercise.

Anne: You don't understand that I wish we could share our experiences and feelings.

Margot: You don't understand that I want to reach out to you … I just don't know what to say.

I let them continue the exercise for another minute and then ask them to stop and to step closer to one another. I ask them to look at one another and to give each other's hands a squeeze. I then thank them and invite them to go back to their chairs. When we reflect on this experience, I first ask the two players if they could share what they experienced.

In another scene we employ a technique called "doubling" (Pitzele, 1997). This time we turn to the two secretaries downstairs. Miep baked bread for Pentecost and has brought a loaf for the families in the Annex. Bep chastises her for doing too much. Besides, food is scarce and Bep feels that her friend should consider her and her husband's needs first. Miep views things in an opposite way.

Two volunteers are on stage playing the secretaries. I asked Bep to argue that Miep must consider her own welfare. Miep is to insist that she is doing too little. The two players are doing a fine job but we would benefit from hearing other possible ways to negotiate the relationship and tackle the issues. I ask the actors to freeze and ask if another participant wishes to play Bep. I choose one of the persons who has raised her hand and she switches places with the first Bep. A little later, I ask if there is someone who would like to offer another view of Miep. Actors are interchanged two

to three times; therefore we witness a few ways to interpret the characters and the circumstances.

I expand the role-play further by creating a scene that includes all the upstairs residents. I set the scene at dinnertime. I ask the students to choose what the meal consists of and who made it. Once all the players have come forward and are sitting around the dinner table, I ask the audience to give each character an action to play, while eating and interacting with the others. For instance, the person playing Mrs. Van Daan might continually reminisce about the excellent chicken and dumplings she used to cook on Friday evenings and the person who is Mr. Frank might obsessively refer to the news reported on the radio the night before.

Our final scene takes a different perspective on Anne's world. Once again I place an empty chair in the centre of the playing space. I turn to the students and say, "Each of you is a resident of the secret Annex. The chair represents pre-invasion Holland. As you look back on that time what do you remember? I invite each of you to say who you are and one of the things that you recollect."

"I'm Mrs. Frank," someone calls out. "I remember the tiny vegetable garden outside our kitchen. It was peaceful there. The air was sweet."

An older woman declares, "I'm Peter. I recall playing rugby at school. We had a strong team that the whole school cheered on. That was before Hans van Liefe told me and Alex that no one wanted to play with chimpanzees."

"I'm Mr. Van Daan," another person says. "I remember the pub where Eric and I would meet on Thursday afternoons. We'd gossip, tell jokes … I remember Eric."

Performative Inquiry investigates customs, language, speech, physical habits, ideas, relationships, and other large or small facets of human life. No matter from what vantage point, a teacher facilitates dramatic inquiry, a key aim is to enhance students' cultural literacy. Often Performative Inquiry begins with some form of "text" study. This may be a "reading" and examination of written, oral, or visual material from any genre of communication including historic account, memoir, anecdote, poem, short fiction, novel, journal, film, song, mural, or essay. Whatever kind of work, all its nooks and crannies are scrutinized and questions are posed about what they contain: Who was there? What season was it? How did they drink their tea? What was the name of the dog? Why did she wear those shoes? What happened before the story began? Why was he careless with his gift?

Every exploration is a convergence of the reader's experience and knowledge with the experience and knowledge of the character she/he is playing, the context in which the material is read, the author's intentions, the contents of the narrative, and much more. In other words, most sites of learning about people and societies are dense and complex. To confront this is to realize that what may be known is limited in scope and related to time and place. This information, however, does not diminish the value of reflection, analysis, or interpretation of facets of existence. However, the accumulation of knowledge is not the aim of inquiry. It may be helpful to ascertain how to build a fire, win friends, or make a fortune, but there is no definitive recipe for any of these. Though I am not dismissing the necessity and benefits of practical knowledge, I wonder if the significance of reflection is the discovery and rediscovery of who we are as human beings and how we act out the stories we live by (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000) in diverse life contexts. When we investigate stories are we not conjecturing how we would deal with these circumstances? Concurrently, are we not envisioning a shifted story of who we are, and in so doing, shifting? (Wagner, 1998) And, though questions may range from the seemingly banal to the seemingly sublime, do they not imply movement in thinking, some reforming of consciousness?

Teachers need to allow students' interior or tacit understandings to surface and crystallize into tangible material with which learners can interact. Teachers also must guide students to seeing how their daily existence and interests connect with larger issues and systems and how the personal and political impact one another.

In our example, "The Diary of a Young Girl," Anne Frank's writing reveals a bright, lively, cheeky, and playful thirteen year old, who is riddled by the concerns and anxieties typical to her age. Her questions about sex and sexuality; her conflicts with her sister and parents; her frustrations and hopes are states and situations with which contemporary youngsters may relate. However, Anne's stories about daily life in the Annex depict more than the trials of coming of age. Performative Inquiry is a vehicle that allows students to act as if they were in Anne's circumstances to discover what thoughts, feelings, and actions the situation elicits from them. With their teacher's guidance they may reflect on the significance of social-political constructs to individual lives and possible personal responses to these conditions.

When stories are taken into a performance space they gain dimensions. Inquirers not only are enacting plots but also relating to other living bodies physically, emotionally, intuitively, and spatially. Each player brings his or her subjectivities to the circumstances and is in dialogue with others' perspectives. Everything on stage is at once symbolic and interpretive.

At times, to enhance or deepen understanding about the lives and contexts we are considering, it may be worthwhile to depart from the narrative as it is written. Doing so provides additional paths to explore. For instance, if I create a scene between two people who, in the text, never meet, it is to consider how this encounter can illuminate the story told. These "what if" exercises point out who or what is missing from the text or suggest another way to conceive the experience described. In Performative Inquiry we need not stick with the letter of the script. We can play with time, place, points of view, or relationships in our search for the worlds within the cosmos of the narrative.

The performative learning space is highly demanding but also stimulating, provocative, and resonant. It is a location in which players may dare to fully be themselves and in so doing discover who they may become. Reflection on embodied experience permits integration of internal knowing with external being and external learning with internal states. This fusion of understanding illuminates what it means to be fully alive. I suggest that these are the kinds of experiences we want to evoke and have students learn from.

> *People say that what we're all seeking is a meaning for life. I don't think that's what we're really seeking. I think that what we're really seeking is an experience of being alive, so that our life experiences on the purely physical plane will have resonances with our innermost being and reality, so that we actually feel the rapture of being alive. (Campbell, 1988, p. 2)*

Dialogue Five: Curriculum Studies and Performative Inquiry

At the end of the exercise, I ask everyone to stand and to shake out their arms and legs and to stretch in any way they desire. "Good. Take a step forward. Now take a step back. You are no longer a person from Anne Frank's diary. You are yourself, back in your classroom, at your university, in the present time. Please be seated. Thank you for all your hard work and wonderful insights. I'd like you take out your pens and paper. Think about Anne Frank in the Annex, writing in her notebook. Is there a brief message you would like to send back to her? Could you please write it?"

I give the group two minutes to create its messages and then ask if anyone would like to read his or her note. This time, we just listen to one another, but make no comments.

Later, I give each person a piece of blank paper and some crayons. I ask everyone to find a spot in the room where they can comfortably draw. I give the participants five minutes to draw an image that represents their experience of the workshop. They must also give their work a title. Afterward, the participants present their work and explain what it signifies.

Our study of Anne Frank's diary is over, but I have left an ample amount of time for questions about Performative Inquiry. During this phase of the workshop, I also ask the students to brainstorm ideas about possible implications this work has for teaching and learning.

It is late, time to leave. We all have worked very hard even though it seemed like play.

A conscientizing (Freire, 1974) endeavour Performative Inquiry is a non-normative approach to learning in which teachers, students, classrooms, resources, courses of study, and learning strategies all matter. A way to study curriculum, Performative Inquiry also is curriculum. Investigative and analytical, it also is interpretive.

Performative Inquiry is a practice founded on the notion that learning is a lifelong process of change and growth. Ironically, as teachers and students venture into new knowledge territories, they re-create the landscape as they tread it. Fels and Belliveau (2008) explain that Performative Inquiry is situated in a paradigm that understands existence as a process of "generative unfolding" (p. 28). In learning through drama, coming to know a phenomenon entails changing it and it changing you. In this system, curriculum may be described as emergent, dynamic, co-constructed, complex, tied to context, shaped by subjectivities, intertextual, and relational.

On this voyage there is no promise of a grand revelation at the end of the road. Along the way travelers are shaped by what they make of the experiences they encounter.

We are the echo of the future

On the door it says what to do to survive
But we were not born to survive
Only to live.

W.S. Merwin "The River of Bees" (Merwin, 1973 as cited in Libby, 1984)

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Dorothy Lichtblau is an arts-based inquirer who studies the construction of identity, integrative interdisciplinary learning, and personal, professional, and community development through the literary and performing arts. Currently, she is the Horowitz Postdoctoral Fellow at the Centre for Research for Teacher Education and Development, at the University of Alberta.

A certified teacher for over thirty years, Dorothy has worked with persons of all ages and from diverse cultural backgrounds in the public and private school systems. Her recent teaching has been at the postsecondary level. She also has designed and led workshops for adults in Bibliodrama, improvisation, acting techniques, and writing.