

Professor Marié-Heleen Coetzee
Professor and Head: Department of Drama

Enfleshment: towards an embodied pedagogy in drama/theatre and performance studies in higher education and training (HET)

Abstract

Against the backdrop of the broad historical developmental trajectory of drama departments in the context of the HET sector in South Africa, it becomes apparent that drama often stands at the periphery of the academy. Whereas the HET sector primarily favours intellectual development, reason, rationality and the cognitive domain as basis for teaching, learning and research, the mode of engagement with knowledge that drama/theatre and performance studies require is exploratory, experiential, expressive, visual, spatial, temporal, affective and somatic. These requirements resonate with the learning preferences of drama students as reflected by the outcomes of a learning preference evaluation executed in 2000 and repeated in 2013. From this, it becomes apparent that there is a distinct tension between the expected modes of engagement with knowledge in the HET sector, on the one hand, and the modes of engagement in drama/theatre and performance studies on the other hand. This sets up a centre-margin relationship in which drama departments at times have to demonstrate their academic validity in ways that are incongruent with aspects of the discipline.

As demonstrated by the learning preference outcome and the 'ways of knowing' embedded in the discipline of drama/theatre and performance studies, the discipline is inextricably interwoven with the body. A multitude of approaches to performer training, theatre-making, directing and choreography foreground the body as the centre of disciplinary knowledge – whether through training or studying the body 'in' performance, 'for' performance or by positioning the body 'as' performance. In spite of this, the body is often rendered silent as a mode of pedagogical engagement and knowledge creation on the HET level. This paper advocates the 'enfleshment' of drama/theatre and performance studies in HET by positioning the body and knowing/learning in/about/through the body as centrepedal forces in teaching, learning and research – an embodied pedagogy. Such a pedagogy may offer possibilities for optimising student performance and expand research possibilities by creating a more navigable pathway for students and lecturers to develop their practice as research within the discipline as observed in the marked increase in the departments' postgraduate activities.

Professor Marié-Heleen Coetzee
Professor en Hoof: Departement Drama

Vergestaltung: op pad na 'n beliggaamde pedagogiek in drama/teater en uitvoerende studies in hoër onderwys en opleiding

Opsomming

Teen die agtergrond van die breë historiese ontwikkelingstrajek van dramadepartemente in die konteks van die hoër-onderwys-en-opleidingsektor in Suid-Afrika word dit duidelik dat drama dikwels op die grens van die akademie staan. Terwyl die hoër-onderwys-en-opleidingsektor primêr ten gunste is van intellektuele ontwikkeling, rede, rasionaliteit en die kognitiewe domein as basis vir betrokkenheid by onderrig, leer en navorsing, is die modus van betrokkenheid by kennis wat drama en uitvoerende studies vereis, ondersoekend, eksperimenteel, gerig op uitdrukking, visueel, ruimtelik, temporeel, affektief en somaties. Hierdie vereistes weerklink in die leervoorkeure van dramastudente soos blyk uit die resultate van 'n evaluering van leervoorkeure wat in 2000 uitgevoer is en in 2013 herhaal is. Hieruit blyk dit dat daar 'n duidelike spanning is tussen die verwagte modus van betrokkenheid by kennis in die hoër-onderwys-en-opleidingsektor aan die een kant en die modus van betrokkenheid in drama/teater en uitvoerende studies aan die ander kant. Dit skep 'n middelpunt-grens-verhouding waarin dramadepartemente soms hul akademiese waarde op maniere moet demonstreer wat uit pas is met aspekte van die dissipline.

Soos blyk uit die resultate van die evaluering van leervoorkeure en die 'maniere van weet' inherent tot die dissipline van drama/teater en uitvoerende studies, is die dissipline ten nouste verweef met die liggaam. Vele benaderings tot die opleiding van uitvoerders, die skep van teater, regisseurswerk en choreografie plaas die liggaam in die middelpunt van dissiplinekennis – hetsy deur afrigting van die liggaam of die bestudering daarvan 'in' uitvoering, 'vir' uitvoering of deur posisionering van die liggaam 'as' uitvoering. Ten spyte hiervan word die liggaam dikwels voorgehou as swygend as 'n modus van pedagogiese betrokkenheid en die skep van kennis op die hoër-onderwys-en-opleidingvlak. Hierdie referaat bepleit die 'vergestaltung' van drama/teater en uitvoerende studies in hoër onderwys en opleiding deur posisionering van die liggaam en kennis/leer in/oor/deur die liggaam as senterpedale kragte in onderrig, leer en navorsing – 'n beliggaamde pedagogiek. So 'n pedagogiek mag moontlikhede bied vir optimalisering van studenteprestasie en vergroting van navorsingspotensiaal deur 'n meer bevaarbare pad te skep vir studente en lektore om hul praktyk te ontwikkel as navorsing binne die dissipline soos blyk uit die toenemende nagraadse aktiwiteite in die departement.