



Simulations, Scenarios and Role-play: Applied Theatre in Training Peace Practitioners

Jeff Aguiar/Peace and Conflict Studies/The University of North Carolina at Greensboro

Peace and Conflict Studies

Expanding Ways of Knowing:

PACS serves to broaden personal and shared conceptions of knowledge, particularly within an institutional context, and examines multiple levels of interactions to amplify social interdependence.

Exposure to Global Perspectives:

While liberal arts education is directed toward a globalized worldview, PACS specifically considers individual needs in achieving such perspective.

Educating the Whole Person:

PACS aims toward holistic education, an integrative model that considers multiple intelligences and a broader understanding of how the practice of peacebuilding, community organizing and conflict resolution or transformation is highly contextualized.

Can we increase the efficacy of experiential education methodologies in Peace and Conflict Studies?

Experiential Education

Understanding and Intentionality of Focus:

EE settings often call for specific, finite completion of tasks, promoting understanding and intentionality through teamwork. Depending upon the desired learner outcomes, simpler tasks often grow to complicated, overlapping problems.

Emphasis on Experience and Unpacking:

Within EE, reflexive processes are necessary, alluding to a specific challenge faced in simulations: due to the overarching narrative, the experiential framework is somewhat disturbed when creating space for reflection. What is more valuable--the natural atmosphere or the evaluation of data?

Multiplicity of methods informing practice, theory and research: Allowing for individual contributions to the overall experience, EE accepts and invites the various responses of participants. This raises a question around the validity of learner outcomes in EE: can such experiences be quantified and/or qualified in such a way as to be credible and reproducible?

Applied Theatre

Art Imitates Nature:

Engaging in simulation, play or game as learning process, relies on an acceptance that choices made under imaginary or false pretense reflect reality, necessitating trust and authenticity.

Conflict Provokes Catharsis:

Conflict structure demands transformations which are essentially based on relational power dynamics with an understanding that decisions and action propel toward catharsis for all involved.

Personal is Political:

Individual experiences are not standalone; they are connected to and determined by the distribution of power in political systems and in society.

Yes, and...here's how:

Examining Performativity within Traditional Theoretical Frameworks:

Performativity as expressed in psychology and in the creative and expressive arts identifies both natural and artificial methods with which individuals, groups, cultures and structures interact with one another; this provides deeper meaningful access to and addresses the internal conflict of participating in artificial circumstances (as in simulations, etc...) while attempting to gather real, or natural, data.

Structuring PACS Curricula:

The examination of performativity requires introduction and contact time; creating space for such exploration within PACS curricula is vital to gaining the skills in observation, reflection and participation for meaningful learner outcomes.

Building Community Connections:

Arts-based organizations and academic programs are some of the many partners that are exploring facets of this work.