

Storytelling as a Pedagogical Tool

by *PLATON*

Introduction

The recent years, there has been an increasing interest in the storytelling method. More specifically, the narrative as art and technique as well as a means of entertainment, both in education, and in the realm of culture, is gaining ground worldwide.

Storytelling today is associated with a variety of factors, such as entertainment, education, awareness and expressing concerns about issues such as the environment, diversity etc.

This study aims to briefly outline the value of storytelling through the emergence of the term, the need for it and its role in the education sector as well as to summarize proposals for didactic applications related to narrative texts, such as those taking place in the Private kindergarten 'PLATON'.

The Art of Narration

The art of storytelling appeared in the form of oral language and it dates back to the emergence of humanity, i.e. when the first attempt of oral formulation of a story took place. However, the mere narration has evolved and over time it was abandoned. The dynamics of the narrative, however, is kept and is trying to be spread, under new conditions, and reaches the current era where it holds an ambiguous role.

Language, free expression, communication, imagination, entertainment etc. is cultivated through the stories. In this way, the usefulness of narration changes over time and requires a different approach. Specifically, in the era of globalization, through the art of storytelling the meeting of different cultures and at the same time the difference as a sign of respect and knowledge is established. At the same time, through the narrative stories,



the cultural identity and the culture of different countries, is preserved, eventually making this technique, a positive and effective way of social contact (Tsilimeni, 2007).

To conclude, at this point, it is necessary to clarify what the term narrative means. From time to time there have been different opinions about it. One of them claims that the oral narration (storytelling), is the narration and the transmission of a real or imaginary story in front of a live audience (Nanson, 2005). Another opinion, gives the word the importance of art that one holds so that he can be able to describe verbally, real or imaginary events (Tsilimeni, 2007)

Thus, through the conceptual definition of the term narrative, it is clear that this technique does not only refer to literature or linguistics, but it is also contained in everyday life, where it offers only positive elements. (Parisis I.& Parisis N., 1999, as it is referred in Tsilimeni,2007).

Narration in Education

The narrative is a widely used educational strategy, both in Greece and in the whole world. More specifically, in our country it became a great educational value mainly in the field of early childhood education, as opposed to the global level; where very early it became part of the respective curricula and was associated mainly with the development of language and the spoken word.

It has been found that the narrative in education attracts the interest of the audience and also assists in the better understanding of the information obtained through this. This is because people tend to memorize and recall information more easily that were learned through a story, especially if the story is related to the prior knowledge and experience of the trainees (Erpestad, 2013). However, and beyond any pedagogical goals, the storytelling of fairy tales in the educational process, creates a pleasant and creative learning environment, and a more general constructive and enjoyable atmosphere for the students themselves (Nanson, 2005).

We often see the emergence of the narrative technique, to all the levels of education throughout the world. Of course, at this point it is useful to highlight the fact that the manner of implementation varies each time, depending on the target audience, as well as



the educational goals that have been set by the individual teacher. World widely the narrative technique is exploited pedagogically both in primary and secondary education. Nevertheless, the dynamic inclusion of the narration in our education system with a simultaneous interdisciplinary approach was allowed only recently and only with the latest changes that were performed on the detailed curricula for the primary and secondary education in our country. (Tsilimeni, 2007).

The combination of storytelling and education can influence and simultaneously intervene in the idiosyncrasy of the youngsters, while it can focus and give a different perspective on contemporary issues that the education community is facing, such as illnesses, communication, diversity, etc.(Alessandro, D., Lewis, T. & Alessandro, M., 2004). Furthermore, the usefulness of storytelling is undeniable, as it is an important tool to get to know other cultures, a medium of language development, and helps in the proper adoption of values, opinions, in the development of imagination and creativity, in the acquisition of communicative experience as well as in socialization (Tsilimeni, 2007).

The Position of Narration in Pre-school Education

It is a fact that narration constitutes a very important tool at all levels of education. However, with an emphasis in Early Childhood Education, it is observed that the educational character of the narration, brings significant benefits to children.

Generally, the flexibility which is provided by the curriculum in the Kindergarten, enables Preschool teachers to shape their daily schedule, depending on the requirements and the capabilities of their classes. For this reason they have the freedom to narrate stories to children even on a daily basis and then devote some more time on creative expression (Koulouby-Papapetropoulou, 2007 as it is referred in Tsilimeni 2007). Meanwhile, the pre-school area, even if it is not used appropriately, has places where the activity of the narration can take place. More specifically, a typical example is the corner of the library, and the corner for discussion, which can be configured in such a way as to highlight the educational processes that take place there (Tsilimeni, 2007).



Then it is known that nowadays, the teachers-narrators have at their disposal a rich narrative material from which they can choose. Of course, kindergarten teachers today often prefer storytelling or reading a fairytale, based on which they design and implement educational activities. The pedagogical value of the fairytale, brings together the student with the narrator, with a single sentence: "Once upon a time" In this way the children feel the new knowledge and values being transferred effortlessly from the fairytale. Thus the narrator lays the foundations in order to support later the perception of life and other important issues (Kready, 2008 as it is referred in Papaggely & Athanasopoulou, 2012).

Moreover, the fairytale is a source of knowledge for children as it is introducing them to cultural elements and traditions, and helps them to enrich their vocabulary. However, at this point it is necessary to emphasize the most important objective which is achieved by the use of the fairytale and is no other than the entertainment of the children. Preschool students tend to identify with the heroes of the fairytales and they are transported mentally in a fantasy world, where they feel peace, joy and optimism. Finally, let's not forget the fact that the fairy tales, beyond the fictional element, contain moral truths as well which are transferred to the children in order to have images of what they will face in the future, in the wider society (Georgiadou etc., 2008 as it is referred in Papaggely & Athanasopoulou, 2012).

Narration in the Private Kindergarten "PLATON"

In this section, we will highlight the role and position of the narrative technique, through the way it is applied in the Private Kindergarten "PLATON" while at the same time a summary of educational applications will be made about the fairytale.

To begin with, a bright and quiet spot in each classroom of the kindergarten school has been selected to host the storytelling corner. The area forms a Greek letter "Γ" so that the children can be gathered there. At the same time, the corner is covered with comfortable cushions for all children, from where the children carefully watch the narrative events. Moreover, the upper part of the roof is covered with tulle with hanging ribbons, which selectively opens 2-3 times a week and essentially marks the beginning of narrative or



reading sessions. More specifically, this corner is operated flexibly, about 2-3 times a week, and it is where narrations take place, as well as educational activities before and after the narrations or even simple readings of fairytales. Teachers have adopted the phrase "tied red string wrapped on the reel ..." with which they essentially inform their students that it is time for storytelling. In this way, a beautiful climate is created in the class, with a great anticipation on the part of children and a different respect for this corner.

Telling a fairytale to children is often accompanied by various activities, both to induce the children's expression and also to form an aesthetic side of the children, towards the fairytale. There are two types of activities though, those preceding the storytelling and those that follow it. To begin with, the activities carried out before the beginning of the narrative aim at preparing the audience and integrate it smoothly into the atmosphere of the story. In contrast, the activities following the narrative, aim solely to highlight the knowledge and the ideas of the children about what they have heard. Usually, the activities that precede the narrative are focused on the characteristics of the cover (title, picture, heroes) in order to detect either prior knowledge or some ideas of the children through their description. On the other hand, the activities which are designed to follow the narrative, could be characterized as exercises for comprehension, or creativity. In short, these activities may be dealing with the representation of scenes through dramatization, or referring to narrative and theatrical game on the part of the students, or to the general debate focusing on the illustration of the fairytale, or to the artistic expression of children, or to the retelling of the story from the side of the heroes etc.

In conclusion, it should be highlighted that a fairytale, even when read repeatedly by the teacher, each time can approach differently the psychological mood of the children and thus automatically acquire a different value for them.

Conclusion

The educational system is directly related to the social reality and so the use of appropriate learning strategies, serves the needs of society, while preparing the citizens



of tomorrow. One of the learning tools which is flourishing in recent years, is the narration (storytelling).

In conclusion, the narration is an important learning tool, particularly to preschool education, where the young students are taught through tales and stories from a very young age values and ideals of life which they will face in the future.

