1. AN IDENTITY CARD IN THE MAKING

Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education

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Reading a book is the most impressive game that people have yet invented maintains Wislawa Szymborska in the preface to her book, Nonrequired Reading (2002). I would like to echo her words by considering the idea of writing and asserting that writing a book is a similarly impressive activity created by people seeking to enjoy themselves. It is a demanding enterprise that entails concentration, dedication, restraint and patience. It demands creativity with thoughts that soar freely as well as utterances that are sensibly controlled. It is an activity that serves as a womb for the birth of the human spirit. With this thought in mind, I approached a number of the sixty authors now participating in this book; I was hoping my colleagues would join me in a journey of writing to convey the spirit of the times in our field of theatre/drama education.

What would happen, I asked them, if we wrote a book on theatre/drama education through an organic process of identifying, creating and engaging a community of scholars willing to share their wisdom and knowledge in an open process of negotiating meaning? In this process, I proposed, authors could choose the topic that they wanted to discuss, circulate it among all the participants, offer their comments and develop dialogues that would continue up to the point when each author felt that his or her entry was ready for publication.

Everything that I wanted to know on theatre/drama education is dispersed among many journals, books and reports but I could not find one volume that aims to convey the zeitgeist of the field. This is why this book is so needed.

I soon realized that if we wanted to compile a substantial body of knowledge in the field, we needed to propose different epistemological rules with which all participants agreed in order to set out on an intellectual journey together while not knowing exactly what or who we would meet along the way. What would be included? Who would participate? And how and when would it end?

Here it is: the story of a flow, a process, how this book was created and why, a new way of constructing knowledge as well as its merits and some of its problems. This exposure of how we created the book is an integral part of the game that Wislawa Szymborska mentions. Our process in writing the book is innovative in the sense that the list of the authors participating in this volume and the resulting entries developed in an organic, cumulative fashion.
I admit that the image of writing a book as a journey of adventure is a conventional one and thus might be seen as too simplistic; however, it contains one clear truth that helps to clarify the process underlying this project. It is an exciting, intellectual enterprise which contains a balance between searching and finding, between dialogue and defining, between closeness and detachment. This book, Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education, is a journey across three fields of scholarship: theatre, education and modes of knowing.

Constructing a list of contributors via a network was the first step toward defining a community of researchers in the field and it is a kind of study in itself. Identifying potential contributors through networking gives us a good idea of who is “out there”, who is concerned, and who has an interest in developing the field in this way now. I approached only a few of the writers and then asked each one of them to suggest five other people who he or she considered to be good scholars, people with something interesting to say. The individual could be a well-known figure in the field or a PhD student, or a new researcher whose work is outstanding. I wanted the book to give voice to old and young, novice and expert and to include as many ideas as we could think of collectively. I regard it as a matter of great importance to open the door to young researchers so that they can be involved in a project portraying the present state of the field and its future. I wanted our project to be true and authentic, not bound to any pre-determined topic as is so often the case in our conferences, in our research books and in the special issues appearing in a journal.

Everything started with my first letter to participants sent on 12th March, 2009 which explains the raison d’être of the book which then evolved:

Dear colleague and friend,

I have the pleasure to invite you to join me in an intellectual adventure and to be one of a group of scholars who wish to contribute to a new book entitled: Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education

Why did I say “intellectual adventure”? What would be new in the concept of the book?

It will be new in the way in which the book will be developed and thus new in its scope and its content.

Key Concepts in Theatre/Drama Education, for which I have a signed contract with SENSE PUBLISHERS, is now ready to get started.

I have decided to compile this book, as I believe that there is no contemporary resource to convey the core, and the scope, as well as the developments and the intricacies of our field. Such a book, I believe, cannot be written by only one author or even by two or three. It should be written by a large number of scholars, in order to present a comprehensive picture.

By 14th April, 2009, I had received from my colleagues an evolving list of 140 names. The many encouraging, cheering and helpful replies indicated that there was a real “thirst” in the field to explore a wide range of topics. Forty-three colleagues who immediately sent positive and enthusiastic responses started the project rolling. An eclectic list of various topics was generated which served as an excellent starting