

Review Of Swaroop Rawal's Doctoral Thesis, The Role Of Drama In Enhancing Life Skills In Children With Specific Learning Difficulties In A Mumbai School: My Reflective Account.

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Swaroop Rawal's doctorate was awarded by the University of Coventry in collaboration with the University of Worcester in 2006. I had the pleasure of being one of the examiners who all recommended that the degree should be awarded. The pleasure continues as I engage with today's relevance of Swaroop's Thesis for Living Theory research and for the generation of living-educational-theories.

In her Abstract, Swaroop explains that her thesis is a reflective account of an action research project set in a drama classroom. Her living-theory questions include 'How can I improve my practice?' and 'How can drama be used to enhance life skills in children with specific learning disabilities studying in a school in Mumbai?'

What makes Swaroop's thesis so relevant to today's global context is her commitment to living her values of love, care, empathy, compassion, justice and democracy as fully as possible with her students. As Swaroop says, 'This was accomplished through augmentation of creativity, emotional understanding and development, improved self-esteem and a notion of the joy of autonomy to enable the students to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of everyday life' (p.ii).

Swaroop's enquiry is grounded in her experience of the phenomena she wants to influence. This experience included seeing children in need suffer due to insensitive teaching practices and uncooperative peers and family. Swaroop's concern and commitment were focused on responding to the trauma faced by students in the prevalent educational setting in India by seeking to live the above values as fully as

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possible. This concern and commitment resonated with Swaroop's belief that what she does in education should help make changes for the better in society. Hence Swaroop's focus on life skills enhancement as a way to alleviate the stress the children experienced. Swaroop researched her educational influence in a life skill educational programme to promote mental well-being in young people and behavioural preparedness. The promotion of mental well-being in young people is a high national priority in the UK and around the world.

As a drama teacher Swaroop uses drama as tool for education:

It is a natural vehicle for explorative and experiential learning. The aim of my thesis is to describe and reflect on the learning process and the context in which it occurs. I present the critical points with close analysis of the choices made by me as I taught my pupils using drama as a learning medium. (p. ii)

Swaroop's thesis could be helpful to Living Theory researchers who, as well as narrative research, find useful insights from action research in the creation of their living-educational-theories. Swaroop analyses the influence of engaging in the stages of action research and explains how these provided a methodical structure for implementing and analyzing the teaching and the learning process. Swaroop describes how this methodical structure guided her through systematic and conscious data collection, data analysis and reflection. The data gathered included classroom observations and transcripts, a collection of the students' and Swaroop's work and interviews with their schoolteachers and parents.

Because of the relevance of Swaroop's actions, values, and understandings in carrying hope for the flourishing of humanity, I do hope that this brief review of Swaroop's thesis will captivate your imagination and motivate you to engage with her thesis.



Video 1: Swaroop Rawal introducing her thesis <http://bit.ly/25HoAqe>

Reference:

Rawal, S. (2016) *The Role Of Drama In Enhancing Life Skills In Children With Specific Learning Difficulties In A Mumbai School: My Reflective Account*. (Doctoral Thesis, University of Coventry in collaboration with the University of Worcester, UK.) Retrieved May 18, 2016, from <http://www.actionresearch.net/living/rawal.shtml>