RoSE
Research on Steiner Education

Volume 7 Number 1
pp. 111-123
July 2016
Hosted at www.rosejourn.com

Narrative Predicament in a Waldorf Classroom

Kate Giljam

Qualified Waldorf and main stream primary school teacher, about to graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Education from the Centre for Creative Education, Cape Town, South Africa.

Abstract: This paper looks at the role of predicament in the context of story in a Waldorf classroom. It focusses on the breakdown of story into three main elements: character, predicament and solution. It specifically focuses on predicaments created by the teacherand how they help to facilitate learning in the classroom. Through observation conducted in a classroom it defines different types of predicament that were observedand attempts to analyse their effect and usefulness.

Key words: Story form, narrative predicaments, classroom research, facilitating learning

Part One: Introduction

What is a Story?

The research theme explored in this paper is the work of story or narrative – in life, in the classroom and particularly in a Waldorf classroom

Stories are not limited to the pages of the book resting next to your bed. Stories cover a lot more than classically hard or soft cover bound books. The plans you lay out for the day ahead are your story of your day. When you relate to your friend a funny, sad or mundane event you are telling a story. Similarly when a person in your life tells you something they are telling you a story. Watching television at night you're watching a story that is interrupted by little stories, little stories that are trying to convince you to buy a product. Our lives are filled with stories, not all of which come from books with set titles.

If every day we listen to stories and tell stories, can our lives then be shaped by stories? I would like to argue that they can be. Every story we hear comes with a message, be it obvious, hidden, unimportant or earth shattering. According to Gottschall (2013), story -whether delivered through films, books or video games - teaches us facts about the world. Most information gleaned by the human mind is conveyed through story. Stories of events both current and past given by news readers, actors, writers, teachers, parents or peers are where we gather our information on the world. Whether these facts are always true or unbiased is irrelevant, they help us shape how we feel about the information.

These stories that we are told and the stories that we live have an effect on people. These individual effects in turn have an effect on our society and culture, how we interact and live. Through reading books we are given the opportunity to see how fictitious social interactions occur. From these stories we learn what is appropriate socially and more importantly what is not. Stories are able to guide us in our thinking; popular opinion is only that because people enjoy the story.

If stories dominate our everyday learning then surely it should be stories that dominate the schooling system and perhaps they do. We may not be aware of them as they work their magic on a deeper, unseen level. This is what I would like to explore and understand.

Bruner (1996) talks of classrooms where children are asked to think and not just memorise. Through teaching with stories the children are given the opportunity to be mentally in the moment with the information. They connect to it and are shaped by it and from that they are able to form their own opinion on it. This livened and interpretative way of teaching allows the children to be interested and involved; to seek their own answers and not be forced to regurgitate unemotional facts presented to them. The stories sink deeper and last longer, forming into 'implicit memories'(Gottschall, 2012).

Implicit memory is memory that the child simply knows intuitively and is part of its everyday thinking. The concepts of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division taught in class two sink down and settle in the child to become implicit memory. When in class seven the child is learning negative numbers these memories are drawn on and applied to the new context without much thought. Stories aid the child in creating implicit memory. The stories live inside the child's mind allowing them to become flexible concepts that the child can apply to various aspects of everyday life. The child no longer has to struggle to call up a fact once memorised in isolation for a test but rather understands the fact and is able to apply it to any situation.

The concept of story in the classroom is not only about the stories told by the teacher. Story reaches much deeper than that -it encompasses the individual story of every person in the room. This endless network of stories that we as humans normally take for granted and don't even notice is vital to our existence. To be an effective teacher one would need to be able to grasp the power of the 'story form' so that it can assist the learning happening in the classroom.

Exploratory Reading

To deepen and expand my initial understanding of the research theme, I undertook the reading of a selection of books and articles. Below is a summary of those I felt to be most helpful in moulding my final research question.

The Storytelling Animal: how stories make us human by Jonathan Gottschall had a profound effect on me. It entirely shifted my thoughts and feelings on what I thought lay ahead. The word 'story' took on new meaning. My new-found concept was that story permeates every part of my life and holds truly monumental importance in our everyday lives. This revelation is that we as humans, and the society that we live in, could not exist were it not for the power of stories: "humans are creatures of story, so story touches nearly every aspect of our lives" (Gottschall, 2012, p.15).

Gottschall's words made me re-see the world around me as not just social interactions but rather as intricate stories that overlap and shape the way we think and understand. While stories are intertwining, relating and responding to each other in reality they are also flourishing in fiction. Mentally we create stories to help us make the correct choices in life or we create stories in which we lie to ourselves to justify our actions. I found Gottshall's concept of 'implicit memory' particularly interesting (Gottschall, 2012).

In Jerome Bruner's book, *The Culture of Education*, I discovered that both Gottschall and Bruner talk of stories as following a universal sequence within a set number of genres. Both authors maintain that without fail or deliberate design all stories across all cultures follow a certain formula. Gottschall describes the sequencing as

"Story =character + predicament+ attempted extrication" (Gottschall, 2012, p.52).

Bruner says more simply that there always needs to be trouble in a story to make it appealing. "At a minimum, a "story"(fictional or actual) involves an Agent who Acts to achieve a Goal in a recognizable Setting by the use of certain Means. What drives the story, what makes it worth telling is Trouble..."(Bruner, 1996, p. 94). Both agree that without "trouble" or some sort of "predicament" the story will not be appealing

to its listeners –and would not be a "story". Gottschall and Bruner also agree on the fact that all stories are focused on a small number of themes. Bruner(1996, 94) defines four: 'tragedy, comedy, romance and irony'. While both agree that there needs to be a sticky situation for a story to work Gottschall also points out that we engage in stories to escape our own problems: "fiction may temporarily free us from troubles, but it does so by ensnaring us in new sets of troubles - in imaginary worlds of struggle and stress and mortal woe" (Gottschall, 2012, p. 49).

Teaching as Story Telling by Keiran Egan also managed to bring about a shift in my way of thinking about concepts with which I had become familiar during my teacher training. Egan criticises two popular principles of teaching that I had become accustomed to and taken as fact. The first is the principle of moving from the concrete to the abstract: the idea that a teacher needs to work first with what the child has experienced and then move onto more abstract concepts. Egan argues that in fact a child is able to comprehend much more than it is able to articulate: "there is confusion between children's ability to articulate abstractions and their ability to use them" (Egan, 1989, p.12). He argues that instead of moving from the concrete to the abstract children should rather be exposed to a variety of both, where in fact the child engages with the concrete through the abstract and vice versa. Secondly, Egan disputes the assumption that children need to move from the known to the unknown: the opinion that the stepping stones to new information are created by what the child has already been taught by the teacher. In his view, the child already possesses concepts and ideas at an intuitive level that can be stepping stones in their own right.

Egan's definition of the story form is a more detailed and classroom-friendly model than the simpler versions of Bruner and Gottschall. His outline takes the form of the following steps the teacher might take in planning a lesson: identify importance; find binary opposites; organise into story form; conclude; evaluate (Egan, 1989, p.41).

Egan defines identifying the importance of the story to be about weeding out other motivations for telling the story and focussing only on the children's interaction with the story and the effect it will have on them.

He sees binary opposites as helping the children grasp the meaning of the story using the abstract concepts that they already own. Good and evil, though never so abstractly expressedin a story, come through strongly in the characters and their deeds. The opposites allow the children to understand and engage with the story on an emotional level.

How the teacher chooses to organise the story into content form is about creating the rhythm of the story, the simple plot of beginning, middle (trouble) and the end. This allows for all elements to be present as otherwise the child will not be able to engage with the story and not be able to absorb the information presented.

In its conclusion a story simply needs to end; not fizzle out or come to a stop but have an ending that satisfies all problems that occur during the story "…stories end; they do not just stop but rather they satisfy some conflict set up by their beginning" (Egan, 1989, p.30).

Finally the evaluation of the story allows the teacher to establish whether or not the story told and lesson taught has indeed reached the children, allowing the chance for the teacher to ask whether the method could be improved and whether the affective meaning has been brought across to the child. By affective meaning Egan is referring to whether or not the children's emotions were activated during the telling, because without emotion there will be no meaning for the children (Egan, 1989, p.30).

The Place of Narrative in Teaching by SigrunGudmundsdottir brought both the Bruner and Egan readings together in a very different teaching-centred light. Bruner speaks of the link that narrative creates between culture and individualism. Gudmundsdottir brings across a strong sense of the culture that the teacher needs to create in her classroom. A teacher cannot separate herself from her beliefs and ideals when teaching. They are as much part of her in the classroom as they are outside it. The content that the teacher chooses to teach and the approach she takes to it will always be linked to her own core values. Egan's classroom-friendly approach of the story form fits perfectly with Gudmundsdottir's ideas that the teacher needs to look at all

new experiences and information with "pedagogically-seeking-eyes"(1995, 32). She needs every story that she brings to the classroom to hold an appropriate learning moment for the students. Any knowledge that the teacher has obtained on a particular subject cannot just be regurgitated back to the children. The teacher instead needs to take that learned information and understand it fully herself before presenting it to the children in a manner she believes to be the most appropriate.

A final reading I found to be of importance was Natalia Gajdamaschko's *Vygotsky on Imagination: why an understanding of the imagination is an important issue for schoolteachers* (2006). All the theory of story form and its implementation in the classroom is for naught without looking at the main goal: the nurturing and development of the child's imagination. In fact both Vygotsky and Egan lean heavily on the importance of imagination when educating a child. Vygotsky speaks of the importance of feeling: "every construct of the imagination has an effect on our feelings" (in Gajdamaschko, 2003, p.19), without which children cannot imagine and without imagination there can be no learning. "From the point of view of development, creating an imaginary situation can be regarded as means of developing abstract thought" (in Gajdamaschko, 1978, p.103). The story form structure and its implementation are all centred on the developing and feeding of a child's imagination.

Exploring the ideas of these five writers allowed me to gain a much greater understanding of how I might study how the story form works in the classroom and define my research question.

The Research Question

Our class research theme was "the work of stories in the Waldorf classroom". We whittled this topic down to one question: "how does the story form work in one particular Waldorf classroom?"

To start to answer this question one first needs to have a confident understanding of what "story form" means and what sort of work is being investigated. I take the view that story form refers to the teacher's choice and arrangement of the content given to the children, content that will be structured by the underlying principles that all stories adhere to. Gottschall (2012) defines these as:

Character,

Predicament and

Attempted extrication (solution)

In the classroom the characters can be seen as the children and the teacher; the predicament will be developed and then resolved by those in the classroom. The predicament and the solution will be moulded by the teacher as she will be introducing the content. The teacher will bring to the classroom the information that she has selected to present to the children and she will choose the method to convey this new information. The teacher may choose to take a more back-seat approach, where the children question and discover the content themselves and form their own understanding, or she may prefer to be the driver, feeding children the information. With all of this in mind I have refined and sharpened the focus of my research question in the following way: *How are narrative predicaments created by the teacher and how do the children engage with them?*

Research Process

My research site was a class 4 at an established Waldorf school taught by a very experienced teacherand located in a middle class, residential area in Cape Town.

My research approach was qualitative. The qualitative research approach is an open approach, which enabled me to observe and try to understand the underlying dynamics of the situation presented and allowed for a certain amount of flexibility as the investigation unfolded. A good qualitative researcher becomes both immersed in the world she is studying while at the same time being careful to stay removed when it comes to interaction and opinion.

My research methods were systematic classroom observation and teacher interviews. My main observation categories were narrative predicaments and how the children engage with them.

I conducted two interviews with the teacher using an open interview guide that facilitated in depth conversation.

I attempted to have as little impact as possible on what happened in the classroom. I believed that during all my interactions with the class and the teacher the most important word to keep in mind was 'respect'. As long as I acted in a respectful way towards the school, the students and all the teachers, I would be behaving in an ethical way.

Part Two: Research Findings

Two forms of research data emerged from my study: data from systematic observation over a ten-day period and data from two interviews with the class teacher.

Observation Data

Everyday during my period of observation I observed the teacher presenting a lesson. In the case of my host teacher the lesson involved a large number of questions; these questions involved the children in the lesson. This dynamic of interactive learning over the duration of the lesson I have chosen to define as the teachers 'story' of the classroom. While there is class involvement 'the story' is always led by the teacher therefore making it predominantly the teacher's story. In each story the teacher placed predicaments for the children. These predicaments were always present as without them the children would not be challenged and there would be no learning.

The following summary of observations shows the different forms and uses of these predicaments and the pitfalls that they can create.

In an attempt to lay outin a coherent way the data I have selected I have chosen to group similar predicaments together under broad headings.

Predicaments

1)*Predicaments which permeate the lesson*

During the 'story' of the classroom these are the predicaments that permeate the whole lesson. They include every instruction the teacher gives to the class or an individual child. They need not necessarily be verbal, in many cases a gesture can be an instruction. Every time the teacher asks something of a child it is faced with a predicament to which there is a response. On one particular day I chose to record a handful of such predicaments:

"Please take out your crayons"

"Open your book on a clean page"

"Take your darkest colour and put it in your left hand and put it in the air, take your lightest colour in your right hand and cross"

"Please be silent"

"Find where in the page to draw a circle"

"When finished crayon down and fold your arms"

"Listen carefully"

"Using blue"

Unspoken predicaments took the form of the teacher holding up her hands to stop the children from asking questions.

Each of these instructions caused a reaction from each child. Without these predicaments the 'story' would fall apart or be unable to continue.

2) Predicaments that cause problems

Predicaments are not problems, though they might cause them. When the teacher creates a predicament it is not there to try trick the children but rather to hold value, to help teach the children. The following example looks at the derailment of the 'teacher's story' through the implementation of a predicament that the children were unable to handle.

The class had been working with the student teacher to create a map of the school. They had been exploring sections of the school in small groups and now they needed to put their information together to create one large map of the school.

Each child was given a piece of A3 paper. The student teacher created the map on the board with the help of the students. As she drew, the children made the same picture on their pages. First the class divided the page into three sections, each third represented a different section of the school. Next they marked out the main entrances. As the student teacher started to draw in great detail an area of the school that the children were not very familiar with, the class became unsettled. Very quickly hands started being put up as the children needed to ask questions as they tried to understand the drawing. The children began arguing with each other and the teacher about what should be drawn where. The predicament the teacher had created was too difficult for the students to overcome. This made it impossible for the teacher to continue with 'the story' and she was forced to stop the lesson.

'I know, but I don't go there that much", "I still don't understand" were examples of the children's comments.

Eventually the student teacher was forced to go outside with the class and revisit the area they were attempting to draw. After this did not work the student teacher gave the instruction: "…by copying, follow what I am doing."

As the main lesson drew to a close during my first week of observation time started to become an issue. The children were asked to paste the key (A4) of their map and then the map itself (A3) into their books. This predicament was clearly not as simple and clear cut as the student teacher had expected it to be. Children's hands were raised to ask exactly how to glue the pages in. Some had writing on both sides of the pages and many of the children were in different places in their books. The time crunch did not allow for the clarification of the point so instead the teacher chose not to spend time, as it was limited, on guiding the class through the process but rather did all the pasting herself.

3) Predicaments with purpose

Any predicament created by the teacher had a purpose to it. To present the children with a predicament that holds no meaning or value would be a pointless task. The following is an example where the student teacher presented a predicament but her 'story' had not allowed the children to connect and properly understand the predicament.

To round off the main lesson the children and the student teacher created on the board a mind map that represented all geological issues that had occurred in Cape Town during the main lesson. Once the mind map on the board was created she instructed the children to copy it into their books. The children seemed

overwhelmed by the task given and there was already a flurry of questions as to how they should go about it. At this point the host teacher interrupted. She started her instructions by asking the class exactly what it was that had been created on the board? What were the key elements to a mind map? To this question she did not receive the answer she was looking for so she continued to ask what they noticed about how the information was arranged. Finally the word "categories" arrived and she then drew out of the children synonyms for categories. Then she asked questions on the groupings chosen. Very quickly the children began to engage with the information on the board and were excited to begin their work. The teacher finished off by telling the class that there would be no more questions because now it was time for them to make the mind map their own.

One of the many purposes of predicaments is the facilitation of learning in the classroom. Predicaments were a deliberate and essential part of the 'story' created for the children. In my second week of observation, for example, where the main lesson concentrated on how verbs are spelt when they changed tense, specifically when the word contains a vowel (nod = nodded).

The task of the day was to convert such words into the past tense with examples that closely related to the examples worked on in class. The class was presented with this predicament in their classroom 'story' and they were able to work with it and learn.

4) Predicaments which perplex

I found predicaments not always to be task based, they also pushed the children to understand new content. In most of the lessons I observed the new content and recall were brought across in a similar manner. The teacher would present a small amount of information and then through questions she would engage the children and lead the class to the next snippet of information. After the presentation of the new information more questions would be asked which would lead to the next section of teacher information. These questions presented a 'maintenance predicament' for the children as they needed to be able to answer them but the teacher would always try to gauge the questions at the correct level for the children making them neither too easy nor too hard.

One of the grammar lessons started with the questions:

"Does a noun change?"

"I want you all to listen carefully, can a noun have a past, present, future tense?"

"I don't want to hear no unless you tell me why?"

The children at this point were hesitant but still trying to answer the questions.

"Now we are in a little bit of a fix, now let's go back to what we know, what are the noun rules?"

Answering the questions becomes easy again and the children felt confident in their knowledge. The teacher then returned to her previous line of questions

"Can we say they (nouns) have a tense?"

"Tell me why?"

"Grapple, grapple a little."

"Can adjectives have tenses?"

No answers were offered by the children.

"What is a verb?"

Many answers from the children so the teacher continues on to ask:

"…which part of speech do the tenses belong"

To this question there was only silence. So she continued

"Do they belong to the nouns?"

Silence from the class

"Do they belong to the adjectives?"

Silence from the class

"Do they belong to the articles?"

Silence from the class

"Do they belong to the verbs?"

Silence from the class

The children became totally unwilling and unable to answer the last few questions and the teacher was forced to approach the subject from a different angle.

5) Predicaments of perception

In the classroom where I was observing there were children with very different ability levels. It was easy to sense that during the 'story' of the classroom the predicaments presented were being felt on many different levels by the children.

At the end of each day students were expected to have completed their work to a certain level. For the fast working children this predicament would hardly register but for the slower working children it became a crisis.

In my first week of observation the class werecompleting atask in their geography main lesson books. The teacher showedme the book of a child who struggled to finish his work. Most of the notes taken in the main lesson had been completed by the teacher. She explained that there was no need to put pressure on the child to finish the work himself as he tried the best he could and she would rather he felt a sense of completion than of disheartenment.

In the second week of my observation for two days the children worked on drawings as their tasks for the day. It was immediately evident that the task was accessible to all students.

To try to maintain an equal predicament level, where all children were challenged with a predicament that best suited their learning ability, I observed the teacher construct a series of different endings for her 'story'. The class was instructed to finish a worksheet and for many their 'story' ended there. Those who completed the task quickly continued on the 'story' and were asked to write the words in their books in alphabetical order. Only a select few were given the last section of the'story' where they were asked to add their own words to the list.

During a particular 'story' the teacher chose to leave some of the class out. In the second week of my observation the teacher spent a lot of time playing with verbs. This was mostly done through the teacher asking the children questions but every now and again it was led by the students asking the teacher questions as they tried to make sense of the new content. The lesson started off on a level playing field where all of the students felt comfortable and were connecting with the 'story'. The lesson continued into less charted areas where only a few children were able to follow and many of the class were left behind. Before the completion of the lesson the teacher would always make sure to return to concepts with which the whole class was comfortable.

The above examples express a tentative exploration of my categories which I will continue to analyse further in chapter three.

Interview Data

I was able to meet my host teacher before entering the classroom and on both Fridays of my observation period. These meetings allowed me the chance to share my observations with the teacher and validate what I had observed.

I entered my first Friday interview with the phrase: "the predicament of task". This opening thought led to many insights from the teacher. We spoke of specific instances that had occurred during the week. We focused on the mind-map incident. The teacher informed me of her motives for interrupting the student teacher. She felt that the children had not been given the chance to engage properly with the work "making it their own". As the children enter class four they are starting to see themselves as individuals and separate from the rest of the class. No longer can they simply be asked to complete a task but rather they need to understand the task and why they are doing it. A task would have no purpose for a class four child unless there is room for both "engagement and imagination" for the child. It is important for the teacher to "take the predicament out of thinking and into feeling" allowing the child to "take ownership of their work". When working from the heart, during activities such as drawing, the children will find themselves all on the same playing field.

On the second Friday I entered the interview with the phrase: "the predicament of questions".

My host teacher explained that as the children were now seeing themselves as individuals, questions allowed the children to "bring something of themselves into the classroom" and give them the opportunity "to say what they need to say".

The conversation led to the impact that the mood of the teacher can have in the classroom, which in turn will dictate the predicaments presented that day. She explained that on a Tuesday and a Thursday she tended to enter the classroom in a choleric way to ensure that lots of work would be completed.

I found each interview with the teacher helped me to understand the less obvious predicaments present in the classroom. They also helped guide me in my collection of data. I was very fortunate to have had the opportunity to observe in this Waldorf classroomand discover a teacher with such passion and openness.

Part Three: Discussion and Conclusion

Part Two presented a selection of examples of predicament drawn from the data. While working through this selection and grappling with its different aspects I became aware of threefurther categories emerging. The more I contemplated these new categories the more I began to feel that they possibly held more practical teaching insight than those set out in Part Two. These three categories essentially look at predicament as the building blocks of the story. Predicament is essential in every story and the three predicament types I have identified each plays a different role in the classroom story.

I will summarise these new categories and, in addition, look at predicament and the advantages it holds in the classroom.

To create a summarised representation of the three predicament types I have created a simple table to help clarify the difference between them.

Predicament Type	**Level of frequency**	**One word description**	**Impact on story**
Routine	1	Foundation	Allows story to flow
Maintenance	2	Learning	Momentum of story
Intervention	3	Problem	Derail story

1=most frequent, 3= least frequent

This table represents the three different types of predicament and ranks them according to the frequency of occurrence in the classroom story and the effect they have on the story of the classroom.

Routine predicaments are present throughout the school day. Examples of this type of predicament were classified under the heading of predicaments which permeate the lesson in Part Two. The teacher creates these kinds of predicaments to keep the class under control so that learning may occur. If these predicaments were not present in the classroom the children would have difficulty identifying the boundaries of the classroom, what behaviour is acceptable and what is not. These boundaries exist to create order and guide the children in understanding the classroom set-up and appropriate social interaction while in class. While these predicaments are essential in the classroom so that the teacher is able to teach and the children can feel safe in the environment,it is important to take note of the impact that these seemingly unimportant instructions have on the children. Any instruction given by the teacher will evoke a feeling within the child: happiness, annoyance, frustration, joy… These feelings will affect how the child reacts to the predicament and this reaction in turn may affect the story of the classroom. At this stage in its development the class four child is starting to identify itself separately from the group. This new discovery of identity comes with its own problems. The teacher needs to be aware of this change and the different effect that her routine predicament will now cause within the child. While a teacher's simple and often used appeal for silence in a classroom seems like a reasonable request to an observer it is in fact calling up a range of emotions and reactions from the students in the class. These reactions will be impacted by the age of the child.

Maintenance predicaments are created by the teacher to facilitate learning. They are represented in Part Two by the 'nod-nodded' task and also by the question-based learning of predicaments that perplex. They often take the form of questions where the teacher draws knowledge out and imparts knowledge through a discussion with the class or in a task such as completing a worksheet or doing work in the main lesson book. These tasks and questions are predicaments that are specifically formulated by the teacher to help the children learn. The difficulty level of the task will be different for each child as mentioned in Part Two. Without these maintenance predicaments there would be no momentum in the classroom.

Intervention predicaments are predicaments where the teacher has created and presented the predicament to the class but the class's reaction shows that some aspect of the predicament has been wrongly judged. Examples from Part Two would be 'predicaments that cause problems' and 'predicaments that perplex'. Intervention predicaments occur when the teacher has created a predicament that is not suitable for the class; they can be seen as 'failed predicaments'.The predicament may have been intended to be either routine or maintenance in function but the children's reaction to it indicates that the predicament was not well thought through. When such a predicament occurs the story of the classroom is completely shifted. A story is unable to continue with an unrealistic predicament. The teacher is forced to do damage control.

As indicated above predicaments will not always stay neatly within their categories. The teacher may think that she is presenting a routine predicament but the class's reaction will show that it is in fact a maintenance predicament. The story of the classroom is an ongoing interaction between the students and the teacher;and this dynamic will cause many changes to the trajectory of the story.

When a predicament shift occurs it is important that the teacher is able to identify the shift and act accordingly. In Part Two, under the heading predicaments that cause problems, is the example of pasting in maps and keys. Here a routine problem is seen to have become a maintenance problem. The teacher identifies this shift and acts accordingly. Were the teacher not to be able to handle the shift, frustration in the classroom would have risen possibly elevating the problem to an 'intervention predicament'.

On the contrary, if the teacher creates a predicament that is too undemanding for the class maintenance predicament may be converted into a routine predicament. The class will not be challenged and there will be no momentum carrying the lesson forward. Students who feel they are not being challenged enough will not properly engage with the work and limited learning will take place.

These three predicament categories serve to identify the outcome or objective of a predicament but as indicated there is fluidity between the categories. This fluidity is present because although the classroom story may be created by the teacher it is manipulated by the class as well.

Establishing these new predicament categories and indicating that they hold value for a teacher leads to the question: why are predicaments crucial for learning?

The simple answer is that predicament is needed in the classroom in order to provide the need and incentive for the children to learn. Vygotsky describes predicament as being like a bridge(Gajdamaschko, 2003). One bank of the ravine represents what is known by the child, through the challenge of the predicament the child is able to create a bridge leading it to the opposite bank where a new understanding lies. Without the bridge the children would be struggling against a great current in the pursuit of understanding and learning.

This explanation then leads to the question whether all predicaments are good. Do they all enable the child to construct a bridge? I believe in Part Two I have outlined situations that clearly indicate that the answer to the above question is no. What makes a predicament good or bad can only be determined by looking at the story as a whole: story= character + predicament + solution(Gottschall, 2012).

The characters in this story are defined as the children and the teacher and they are essential for the growth of the story. It is not just their attendance or existence but their participation and understanding that need to be present. For any good story the characters need to be well defined so that they become relatable to the reader. The teacher needs to have a clear understanding of the children in her class. Her understanding of who they are and the developmental stage they are currently in is essential for the story to proceed. Were the teacher to create a story that meets the needs of a Class 1 student nothing would be learnt by her Class 4 students.

The children are not the only characters: the teacher is indispensable too. In a teacher-centred approach to looking at story the teacher needs to hold a constant for the children. Her character needs to be fun and entertaining but always hold a stable tone so that the children can feel safe and secure in the environment of the classroom. A teacher who creates a classroom environment that is forever shifting and never settles will cause the children to feel that they are standing on shaky ground. They will find in difficult to create their bridges on a crumbling bank.

As the teacher creates her story she always needs to be aware of the characters involved. To keep a keen eye on the class and foresee what they need from the story, to give them the equipment to help them built their individual bridges. However, at the same time she needs to keep the classroom exciting for the children, to inspire them and create a love for learning.

Once the predicament has been presented to the characters it needs to be asked: was the predicament created useful or not? This can be determined through the solution reached. In the classroom the outcome should always be learning: the predicament is the bridge to new concepts. The solution needs to indicate that this has happened. The best way to determine the effectiveness of the predicament is to look at whether or not each child was able to solve the predicament in its own way? I believe that in the classroom the solution will be different for every child. Each child will approach the predicament differently and therefore always cause a slight variation in solution. This variation is essential as well as good. To ask 30 or more students to think in the same way and understand in the same way is an unrealistic expectation. A teacher who expects this type of outcome will greatly diminish the impact of predicaments. Some children will be too limited and their thinking stunted while others will be asked to create bridges that connect continents and not just cross small ravines.

However, it is possible that no children are able to create a bridge to new understanding and this simply means that the teacher has created a predicament not suited for her characters. Here the teacher needs to help the character create its bridge by assistance through the creation of scaffolding. The original predicament is held but the teacher assists the children through the presentation of more information. Otherwise the predicament can be completely abandoned and any infrastructure the children have created for their bridge, the time they have spent grappling with the predicament is wasted. This can cause relief in some but frustration in others.

The above questions of why predicaments are crucial for learning, and whether all predicaments good and useful, were all created and answered from a teacher dominated perspective. I maintained a substantial bias

by looking exclusively at predicaments created by the teacher and the children's reactions to them, always focusing on how the teacher can use predicament to make the classroom a more comfortable place for her students. However the instances I have focused on are a small fraction of the predicaments presented in the classroom. It would be a very interesting question to look at the predicaments that the children create for the teacher. An even more monumental task could be to look at the predicaments that the children create for each other. These different aspects possibly have their own fascinating effect of the story of the classroom.

The more I find myself immersed in this world of predicament the more captivating I am finding it. When looking back I feel there is one clear message that shines through with regard to how story works in a Waldorf classroom: There can be no story without predicament. The more engaging the predicament is the better the story will be.

Acknowledgements: I would like to thank Professor Millar for all his help and guidance as well as my host teacher for welcoming me to her classroom.

References

Bruner, J. (1996) *The Culture of Education*, Harvard University Press.

Egan, K. (1989) *Teaching as Story Telling: an alternative approach to teaching and curriculum in the elementary school.* University of Chicago Press

Gajdamaschko, N. (2005) 'Vygotsky on imagination: Why an understanding of the imagination is an important issue for schoolteachers', *Teaching Education*, vol. 16, no. 1, p. 13– 22

Gottschall, J. (2012) *The Storytelling Animal: How Stories Make Us Human.* New York, Mariner Books

Gudmundsdottir, S. (1995). The Narrative Nature of Pedagogical Content Knowledge. In Egan, K. & McEwan, H (Ed). *Narrative in teaching, learning, and research* (pp. 25-38). New York & London: Teachers College Press.