

## **Drama Education: Towards Building Multicultural Adolescent Peer Relationships**

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**Abstract :** Drama education is increasingly understood as a useful tool in promoting positive social change and cultural awareness. The effects of both positive and negative peer relationships are also a researched facet of education systems. Despite this, very little research has been conducted in the intersection of these two areas, even given current, significant public interest surrounding multicultural relationships. This research addresses a problem faced by educators and students: facilitating meaningful multicultural relationships. The research explores the following question in an Australian context: in what ways does Drama education affect peer relationships between culturally diverse students? In doing so, the study explores the various challenges and experiences of a multicultural group of adolescents, in terms of forming and maintaining effective intercultural friendships, while participating in a series of drama workshops. The project presents a starting point for providing educators with strategies for inclusivity and relationship development amongst diverse student populations. Findings show that Drama education can positively affect culturally diverse young people's peer relationships; interactions between participants and data collected in focus groups throughout the eight-week Drama program show a steady improvement in sense of trust, support, tolerance, empathy, familiarity with other participants, and enjoyment. Data also points to a positive correlation between the Drama activities and improved conflict resolution and communication skills, as well as an improved understanding of the other participants' cultures. Diversities and commonalities within the group were explored, with similarities encouraging social cohesion, and decreasing cultural 'cliques'.

**Keywords :** cultural diversity, drama education, friendship, multicultural, peer relationships

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