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Teachers' Attitudes Toward Theatrical Laboratories and Experiential Learning: Lithuanian Case

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Experiential education

The challenges facing the contemporary teacher are to respond effectively to the diversity of learning style and successfully engage students in active learning approaches.

Experiential learning instils positive, confident and enquiry focused attitudes in student building on their inherent experience to make sense of the world around them, and thus provokes increasing depth of understanding [Braid, 2018].

Theatre as Experiential Learning

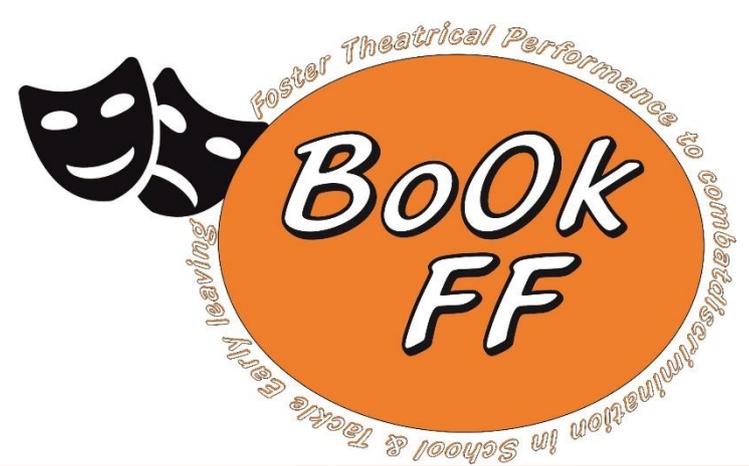
Theatre has been demonstrated as one of the best ways to acquire knowledge and, at the same time, to tackle the problems our society faces by developing students' personality, contributing in this way to a decrease in the number of drop-outs or absentees in schools. Thus, theatre has proven to be one of the most effective methods for experiential learning [Chemi, 2017].

Teachers use the Theatrical Laboratories as pedagogical methods to create a better understanding and environment in classrooms, thus enhancing teachers' capacity to involve and motivate students in their learning processes.



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PROJECT „OFF-BOOK“

Objective: Foster theatrical performance to combat discrimination in schools & tackle early leaving

Aims

Improving secondary school teachers' intercultural competences in new educational methods (non formal education) to make education less 'judgemental' and more inclusive, thus promoting non discrimination and reducing early school leaving.

<https://off-book.pixel-online.org/TG03.php>

Project partners (Lithuania-Italy-Romania)



Aim and goals

The aim of this research study was to explore teachers' attitude toward theatrical laboratories (TLabs) method and experiential learning.

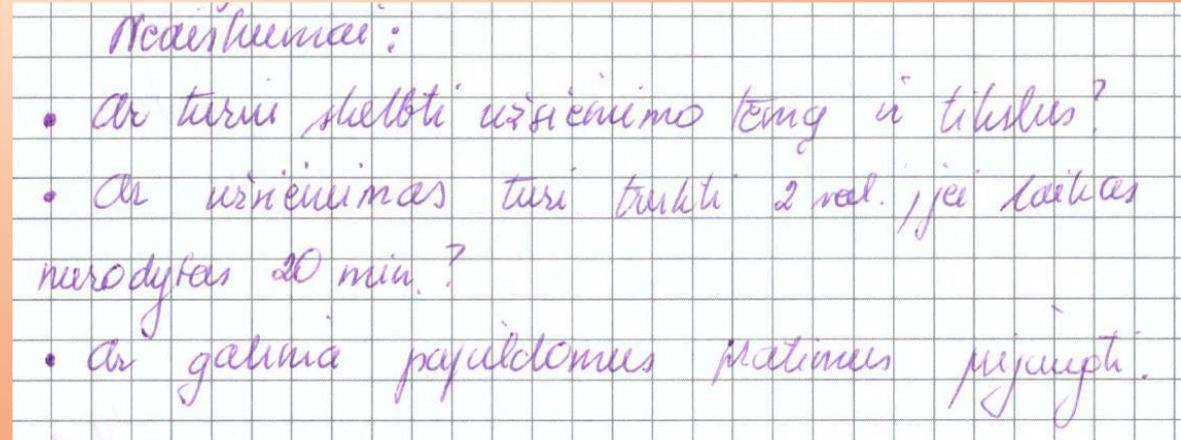
This way we would identify the kinds of relationships that occur in the meeting points of theatrical activity and experiential learning and the way teachers perceive or identify such relations.

Furthermore, the one more goal of the TLabs method implementation was accomplished: to instill inspiration to the teachers and encourage them to implement this method in their teaching practice.

Methodology

The data was collected and analysed using qualitative diary research design and focus group discussion.

3 focus group discussions was designed and structured on 5 topics: expectations, evaluation of the implementation, impact of the activity, suggestions for improvement and other commentary.



Participants

Age	Pedagogical experience	Theatrical experience	Teaching subject
up to 30 years - 3	Up to 10 years - 6	1	Science (biology, chemistry) - 2 Humanities (languages) – 6 Art (drama, music, fine arts) - 7 Ethic, social pedagogue - 4
31 – 40 years - 5	11- 20 years - 9	4	
41 – 50 years - 7	21 - 30 years - 4	0	
Over 50 years - 4	Over 30 years - 0	0	

19 teachers (female-18; male-1) from 7 schools

Results. Expectation

The teachers mostly expected to learn about TLabs method and how to use this method but also to get new ideas and learn about new teaching techniques in general.

“Did the TLabs method implemented in OFF-BOOK project met your expectations?”

A great part of the teachers (16) evaluated positively, and several teachers expressed a negative stance in terms of their expectations.

Some of teachers were expecting exchange of experiences with colleagues from different disciplines and schools.

However, based on the diaries notes and spontaneous reactions of the teachers, it seems that focus easily slips on doing theatre/drama and being creative, while the TLabs ideas somehow gets forgotten on the way.

Results. Implementation

The general impressions are positive, the implementation period are perceived as quite useful and mostly very enjoyable for students.

5 teachers highlighted the efficiency of the method in integrating alternative ways of active learning in the educational process.

The teachers indicated the collaborative nature of this method and its significance in building students' collaboration, also its contribution in setting a friendly classroom environment.

In general, the implementation of the TLabs method had a positive effect on the teachers who expressed strong intention of implementing this method into their teaching practice in future. The majority of the participants (15) stated that they were inspired by the TLabs method and they had gained knowledge (12).

Results. Evaluation

16 teachers indicated the game nature of this method as a major advantage.

5 teachers highlighted the efficiency of the method in integrating alternative ways of active learning in the educational process.

The most common answers (14) referred to learning to connect TLabs with experiential learning, learning to organize and create TLabs in the classroom and to use in a way that will get students more interested and motivated.

2 answers replied that they had not learnt anything new.

The focus group discussions disclosed that teachers believe that the TLabs method advocates experiential learning as well that this method could result in enhanced learning motivation.

Results. Barriers and suggestions

15 teachers indicated as a barrier for the implementation of this method the **lack of financial support**.

10 teachers stated the **lack of time** as a problem.

2 teachers stated that the **lack of skills and knowledge** were difficulties during the implementation period.

In general, the participants had a positive stance on this method and expressed their satisfaction.

Most recommendations addressed the issue of presenting the TLabs examples in a real classroom or video before the implementation starts on (in the project OFF-BOOK).

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC8U4Q8k-0yrJeJSRtzhe38w>

Final remarks and recommendations

The findings of our case study have shown teachers' positive stance and reaction towards the TLabs method.

In terms of possible improvements on the implementation of the TLabs methods, the research findings have shown that more focus should be given on the elaboration of the main principles of experiential learning and their recognition in drama activities.

The overall impression suggested that in general teachers have positive attitude toward Theatrical Laboratories as pedagogical instruments. Teachers who reported less experience in theatre/drama teaching was found to hold more positive attitude toward Theatrical Laboratories. Moreover, the teachers who already have positive attitudes toward students with special needs or problems may be predisposed to seek out additional experiential education practices and be more willing to use TLabs methods. This should be kept in mind while conducting training activities for teachers in future.

Thank you



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