

**USING THEATRIC PEDAGOGY TO DEVELOP SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL SKILLS IN
ORDER TO IMPROVE EMPLOYABILITY OF ENGINEERING STUDENTS****PERTEA Alina***Department of Didactic Personal Training, "Lucian Blaga" University, Sibiu, Romania, e-mail:
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Abstract: *This research is the result of intense concerns about the role of theater in society beyond the theater show, from the creative process of analysis and introspective psychological insight, to the side effects of theater as a form of expression of the individual, and reception, assimilation and processing of theatrical codes and messages. The paper focuses therefore on theatric pedagogy, the forming tools and the size of the theater, and its value as a means and as a didactic factor for personality stimulation and development, both in terms of form and content. To this end, there are presented both theoretical perspectives and an exploratory study, which aims to verify the applicability, usefulness and effectiveness of theatric pedagogy means as an additional training method to facilitate the integration of graduates in employment and a successful professional collaboration, in an industry mainly in the field of real profile*

Key words: education, theatrical pedagogy, active learning, skills for employability

Introduction

Active learning has received considerable attention over the past several years [12]. Often presented or perceived as a radical change from traditional instruction, the topic frequently polarizes academic staff. Today's students are bombarded with plenty of information and are distracted by technology gadgets (such as smart phones) or suffer from attention deficit disorder [7]. Thus, academic staffs are challenged to capture students' attention and to engage them in the didactic process [5].

Students learn in many ways— by seeing and hearing; reflecting and acting; reasoning logically and intuitively; memorizing and visualizing and drawing analogies and building mathematical models; steadily and in fits and starts [5]. Teaching methods also vary. Some instructors lecture, others demonstrate or discuss; some focus on principles and others on applications; some emphasize memory and others understanding. How much a given student learns in a class is governed in part by that student's native ability and prior preparation but also by the compatibility of his or her learning style and the instructor's teaching style [5].

2. Motivation

This study is the result of intense concerns about the role of theater and the prospects that it opens in the social and professional life. Among the topics that were to raise many problems in the recent years, all over the world, is the development of educational tools as a process of sustainable pedagogy in order to meet the needs of a generation whose social processes deploy mostly in virtual environments. Beyond the benefits of information and fast communication, the dynamics of the cyberspace dominate the driving force of reality. This means that, to a close look through the parks we observe more young people accompanied by the ubiquitous screen of their notebook or smartphone and we become witnesses to communication processes and that are deprived of the complexity of the language. Alarm signals in this regard do not cease to appear, but although renowned companies have engaged in such advertising campaigns, the need to support the rediscovery and development of social- emotional competence of the persons concerned is visible. These skills are not only useful in the processes of healthy personal relationships, but turned out to be extremely necessary professionally in various fields - evidenced by the 8 key competences for lifelong learning [4].

Therefore, in order to meet the professional requirements, but not exclusively, the need to develop social and emotional skills, aiming primarily to improve communication processes among youth

is obvious. Here the theater, specifically theatrical pedagogy as a form of education through theater, has an important role to play. Theatre thus appears as a window into the mind, spirit and soul, giving “life to learning” [1] and acting in support of life values, such as knowledge of others, awareness of body posture, ways of verbal communication, self-confidence and social behavior [10].

3. About the experiment

Starting from the statement approved by the ATHE Board of Governors (www.athe.org), arguing that higher education in theater and performance studies offers students the opportunity to develop "key skills for life" useful not only in relation to everyday life, but also in a wide range of professions, this study has proposed to research the applicability and usefulness of training techniques used in theatric pedagogy in personal life. The research was carried out in an experimental workshop that embedded exercises practiced in the process of training actors, but were used to support the theater of the world in order to discover the applicability in preparing for a stage in life: the one to enroll into the workforce.

4. Methodology

There was conducted an exploratory study with mixed research methods inspired by elements specific for the direct active experiment [2], and by action research. Thus, during the experiment, the participants were assigned as co-researchers thus providing the opportunity of direct reflection on their activity [3].

Collection, analysis and interpretation of data was done both by observation in comparative analysis with specific reasoning for each exercise and feedback directly and through a questionnaire inspired by the longitudinal studies. The questionnaire with open and closed questions was administered online, before the start and after the end of their activities. In order to facilitate the interpretation of the before and after ratio, but to assure the anonymity of the respondents each participant used a pseudonym. Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel and SPSS.

5. Deployment of the experiment

The workshop was organized in Sibiu, on 10/05/2013, with a group of 12 students, of which 8 boys and 4 girls, enrolled in an engineering specialization (the third year of the specialization "Economic Engineering in Mechanical Field ") and lasted about two hours and a half.

The first phase lasted about 55 minutes and had the first aim to inform the participants about the nature and manner of the experiment, but also to accommodate and remove false barriers between individuals. The second phase took place after a ten minute break and focused on more educational-instructional items within 85 minutes. The activities carried out in the first phase were: Presentations of the participants and of the activity; Moving around the room; Meeting and greeting; Circular game with the ball; Marionette; and saying “Yes”. In the second phase, the participants were involved in the following activities: Tag and rhythm; Mirror with pairs of two; Statues; Advertising; Fears; Representation on stage: self-confidence; and Final feedback.

6. Results

In terms of empowering students and raising their awareness regarding the importance of social and emotional skills, the results of the research suggest a 50% increase in the importance given to social skills (skills that were considered by the participants to be very important) compared with the results obtained before the experiment. Concerning the importance given to emotional components, the growth was of 75% (increase of the number of “very important” answers on the Likert scale) (see figures 1 and 2).

The evaluation of the importance of social and emotional skills in relation with interpersonal and intrapersonal attributes which were subject to research shows the consistency with which the participants responded to the questionnaire. Attributes pursued in the experimental workshop and subject to observation show an increase as a result of triggering a process of awareness of the importance of nonverbal communication, self-awareness, self-confidence, recognition, recovery and control of emotions, empathy, corporal attitude etc. (see figure 3).

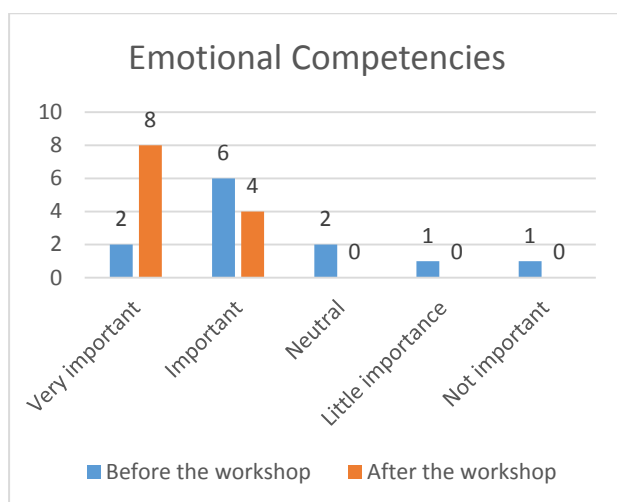


Figure 1. Emotional competencies

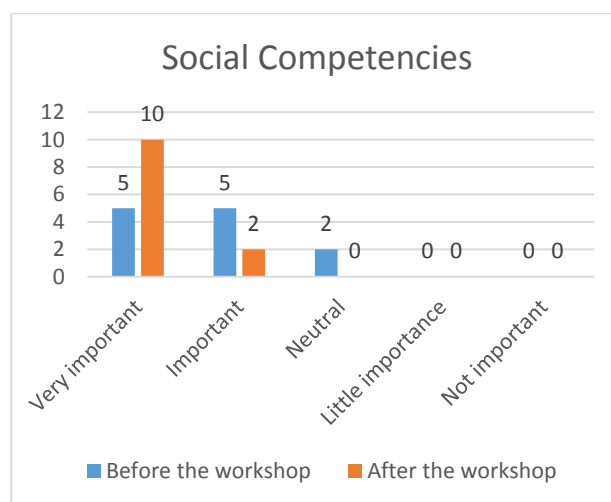


Figure 2. Social competencies

"It helped me personally, because I learned things that I encounter in daily life and that I have not paid any attention to until now because I have not considered them important." (response of student no 5)

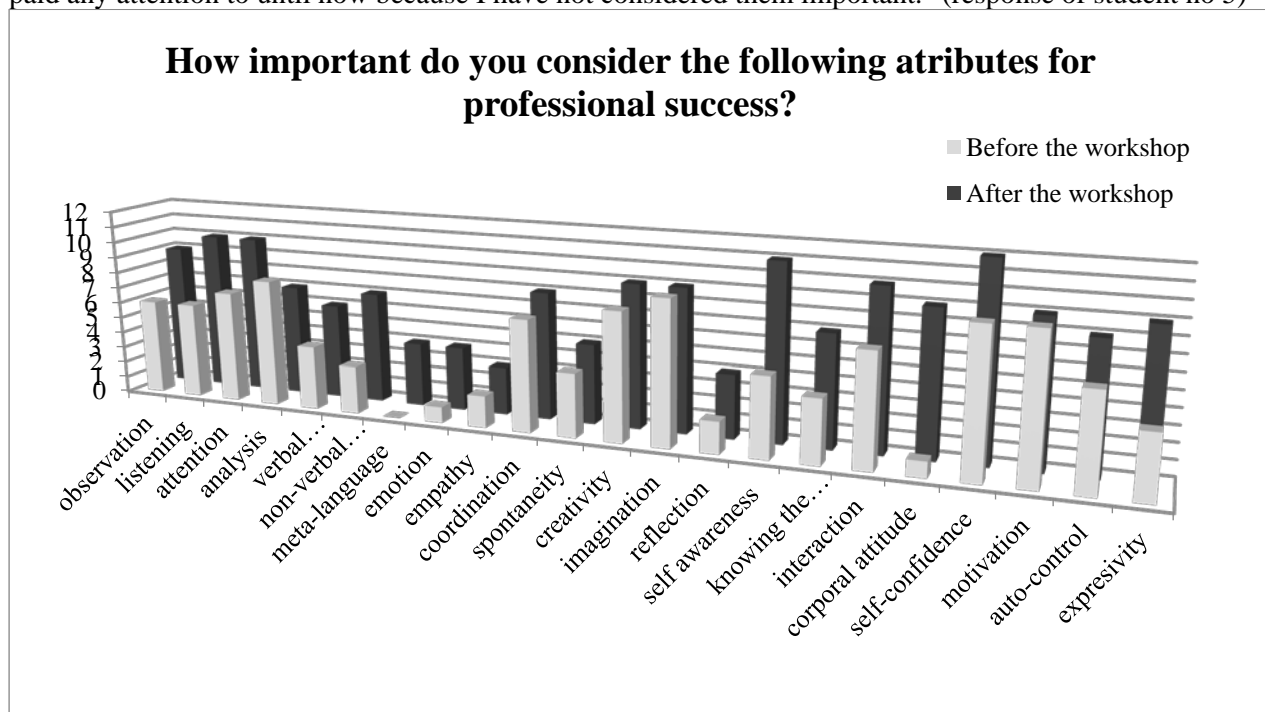


Figure 3. The importance of social and emotional skills for professional success

Changes observed by participants' self-evaluation on communication as an assembly of verbal communication (value that remained unchanged before and after the experiment), nonverbal communication (from a mean baseline of 7.58 to 8.08) and meta communication (from an initial average of 6.67 to a final average of 7.25) on body attitude (from a mean baseline of 7.33 to 8.08) and interaction (from a mean baseline of 8.00 to 7.67) indicate awareness of these attributes. Also it can be seen a raising interest on the means used in the processes of increasing the efficiency of communication, the workshop raising "questions in the positive sense"(student 9). The scores obtained on the importance of these attributes have shown a significant increase after the workshop, recording values of 2 to 9 times higher than those obtained before the experiment. Regarding the effectiveness of the method of learning these skills by means of theatrical pedagogy, students wrote that they acquired new knowledge from the workshop on specific areas like: communication, body attitude and interaction:

"You learn how to communicate with others" (student8)

"I learned more about body language and how it can betray our true intentions" (student 4)

"I learned more about my peers and how to interact with them" (student 8)

"I am more attentive to every word you utter"

7. Limitations

The limits of this exploratory research emerge primarily around the investigative tools used, but also in terms of the poststructuralist nature of the experiences in theater and applied performance [11]. Thus, this study does not claim absolute knowledge and can't guarantee similar results for reproduction but provides the results of an analyzed working model.

Conclusions

According to Rugarcia et al [13], traditional instructional methods "will probably not be adequate to equip engineering graduates with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes they will need to meet the demands likely to be placed on them in the coming decades, while alternative methods that have been extensively tested offer good prospects of doing so".

The complexity of determinant factors, of the goals and of the collateral effects of the pedagogical-theatrical processes gives the domain a range quasi-impossible to replicate written [6:120]. Theatrical pedagogy arises where theater ceases to be just show, where the creative process becomes the process of development and the processes of reception, processing and assimilation of theatrical codes and messages transcend artistic representation and not least where theatrical art meets the art of living and becomes a guide to humanity. Theatre becomes the action in the area of theatric pedagogy and the process of artistic creation becomes a theatrical art through specific means, as Kant said about education, an "activity to discipline, cultivate, civilize and moralize of man" to "develop in the individual the whole perfection which one is susceptible" [9].

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