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**Teacher training in pedagogical
communication through drama-
based practices**

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PROBLEM & RATIONALE

- Reduced face-to-face communication in digital environments (Woodruff et al., 2024; Selwyn, 2024)
- Risks: decline in emotional intelligence, empathy, and social sensitivity
- Need to foster: Empathy; Critical reflection; Positive relationships
- Teacher as communicator, mentor, and emotional guide (Tokhirova, 2023)

EDUCATIONAL DRAMA

WHAT: Improvisation, role-play, simulations, forum theatre.

WHY: -Creating a safe, inclusive, creative environment.

-Encourages participatory attitudes, constructive dialogue and critical reflection.

-Fostering empathy and developing interpersonal skills.

-Increasing motivation for learning.

HOW: Through the key concepts of

-Dorothy Heathcote (Mantle of the Expert) - empowering students to feel and act as experts

-Augusto Boal (Theatre of the Oppressed) - theatre as rehearsal for reality, opportunity for dialogue and social change.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Participants: undergraduate students in pedagogy programmes (Portugal, Bulgaria, Romania, Slovenia, Spain)

Programs:

- Long-term: integrated into curriculum (Polytechnic of Porto)
- Short-term: Blended Intensive Programme (BIP)

Data collection:

- Feedback questionnaires
- Reflective journals

Analysis: Mixed methods (descriptive statistics + content analysis)

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

- **Positive impacts of educational drama:**
 - Increased confidence and self-esteem
 - Emotional awareness and empathy
 - Interpersonal competence
- **Drama techniques help students:**
 - Explore diverse perspectives
 - Engage in meaningful dialogue
 - Strengthen social and emotional skills
- **Training for both digital and face-to-face educational contexts**

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

QUOTES FROM THE REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

"The work carried out throughout the course taught me that Drama Expression is much more than performance: it is listening, it is empathy, it is presence." - Participant A

"Observation proved to be a powerful technique for understanding others better. I realised that each person has their own unique way of expressing themselves: some use their entire body to communicate, while others convey emotions with just a glance, a facial expression, or a simple gesture." - Participant B

"By observing them, I first learned that we are all capable of bringing out things in ourselves that are as spontaneous as they are beautiful, that we all have the chance to fail but also another opportunity to try again, and mainly that if we contribute our opinion, we can improve something." - Participant C

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

QUOTES FROM THE REFLECTIVE JOURNALS

"I discovered that I am more creative, more open, and more capable of engaging than I thought. I can work well with others, even when barriers arise"- Participant D

"I realised that I don't need to be perfect or know everything to be present in the moment. I can be nervous, I can make mistakes, but that doesn't prevent me from growing." - Participant E

"Throughout this course, I learned through the body, gestures, gaze, and presence. And that taught me more than many theoretical contents. I realised that dramatic expression is not 'theatre to show to parents'; it is a language for personal and collective development" - Participant F

CONCLUSIONS

- Educational drama fosters holistic learning and growth.
- Develops cognitive, emotional, and social competences.
- Raise awareness of the relevance and potential of Drama/Theatre activities as a tool and as a subject in a modern school.

RECOMENDATIONS

- It is important to keep on questioning the essence of the teaching-learning process and the role of the teacher.
- To recognize the role of drama-based activities for initial and ongoing training in education and social studies.
- To encourage collaborative and international learning experiences.

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