



## The Strength of European Diversity for Building Children's Resilience through Play and Drama

A collection of articles from the  
EU Erasmus Plus ARTPAD project 2015-2018





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**Peter Duncan** is a trainer based in Swansea. Active in training since 1985, he works using social circus to engage young people. A qualified social worker and trainer, he specialises in designing and delivering courses using circus to work on issues such as self-esteem, physical and cognitive impairments, risk taking, isolation, challenges for refugees and asylum seekers. Peter works in co-operative education looking at student voice, teamwork and engaging in learning, and takes a keen interest in brain science and teaching effectively. He was a founder of Circus Eruption, is on the board of Circusworks (UK youth circus network) and contributes to European Social Circus Masterclasses.

**Emina Eppensteiner** graduated as a teacher in the field of drama in education. She came to Austria 25 years ago as a refugee from Bosnia. Ten years ago, she discovered theatre as her second profession. Previously, she worked as a geometer. She gained her degree in Academic Drama and Theatre Pedagogy in 2014, and in 2018 her Masters degree at KPH Vienna. She now leads children's and youth theatre groups, directs amateur theatre groups, and runs workshops in schools and social institutions. She is a Board member of ATINÖ (National Association for Non-Professional Theatre in Lower Austria) and ÖBV (Austrian Federal Association for non-professional theater). "Our children are provided with tools that make life a little easier and certainly more beautiful and exciting!"

**Margitta Glawe** is a rehabilitation pedagogue, primary school teacher and child (7-12 yrs) care worker. She looks back on 15 years of professional experience in a school for children with mental and learning disabilities. For the last 22 years she has worked with mentally and socially ill offenders in forensic psychiatry at the forensic clinic in Ueckermünde, Germany. In addition to her daily work as 'adult care worker' she has led a small theatre group for over 15 years in the forensic clinic. During the last 6 years she has also worked for UWEZO GmbH on European projects like "Writing Theatre at School" and **Achieving Resilience Through Play and Drama** (ARTPAD). Her focus has always been on supporting, promoting and rehabilitating disadvantaged children and adults.

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Besides that, she is qualified to work as a drama/theatre teacher. She passed an academic education in Theatre Paedagogy and got a Master of Arts degree in 2014. Since then she has organised various projects for pupils, students and teachers. She works for the advanced education of drama-/theatre teachers in Austria, in that role she is part of BAGTIS (Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Theater in der Schule) which is an organisation implemented by the Austrian Ministry of Education dealing with the interconnection between all drama/theatre teachers in Austria.

In 2015 she became chair of IDEA Austria, the Austrian part of the international organisation IDEA (International Drama/Theatre in Education Association). An international congress (Drama in Education) takes place every two years in Austria, (the next is due in April 2019).

*Publications:*

Länderbericht: ÖSTERREICH. Dagmar Höfferer-Brunthaler (2016): Schultheater und Darstellendes Spiel – in Österreich. In SCENARIO Journal. Language. Culture. Literatur. ISSN 1649-8526 Volume 2016. Issue 2, online verfügbar unter [research.ucc.ie/scenario/2016-02/08-HOEFFERER-2016-02-de.pdf](http://research.ucc.ie/scenario/2016-02/08-HOEFFERER-2016-02-de.pdf) [Zugriff 27. Juli 2018].

Günter Frenzel: Das Schultheater im deutschsprachigen Raum: hier, in Österreich – Fragen an Dagmar Höfferer-Brunthaler, Sprecherin der Bundesarbeitsgemeinschaft Theater in der Schule, Landesgruppe Wien. In: Spiel & Theater. Die Zeitschrift für Theater von und mit Jugendlichen 68 (2016). Heft 190. Seite 30ff.

**Adam Jagiełło-Rusiłowski** is an educator, researcher and social entrepreneur working in the field of youth resilience and innovation competences. He ran 3 youth NGOs, was Fellow with



Ford and Ashoka, worked as an expert for Soros Foundations in Eastern Europe, European Cultural Foundation in Amsterdam and UNWRA in Gaza Strip. His idea of self-sustainable system of training young actors as youth workers using drama to promote social and civic competences among the socially excluded (working class) children was scaled through Ashoka, Soros and Odyssey of the Mind programmes in South Eastern Europe, USA, Russia, Peru, Indonesia, Uzbekistan and Palestine (Gaza Strip).

**Maria Kaźmierczak** is an Associate Professor at the Institute of Psychology, University of Gdansk in Poland. Her research focuses on personality, family processes, and femininity and masculinity. She has written books on empathy in marriage and in transitions to motherhood and fatherhood, co-edited books on gender and culture, and published numerous articles on interpersonal relationships. She has received several scholarly awards and research fellowships for her work. She served as a member-at-large for the International Association for Relationship Research. Currently, she is a member of the management committee of European Cooperation in Science and Technology COST Action IS1405, Building Intrapartum Research Through Health.

**Tristan Middleton** has worked as an actor in Theatre in Education and No.1 Theatre tours, a Teacher and Assistant Headteacher and is now Senior Lecturer in Education at the University of Gloucestershire. His research interest is Special Educational Needs and Nurture Groups. He has recently published in the International Journal of Nurture in Education and is currently co-writing a book about inclusive approaches to reduce school exclusion for nasen/Routledge .

**Paulina Pawlicka, PhD** is a developmental and cross-cultural psychologist, researcher and educator at the Institute of Psychology, University of Gdansk, Poland, 'Gedania 1922' Kindergarten and creogedania Elementary School in Gdansk. Her research interest focuses on child development psychology, perinatal psychology (including birth satisfaction and the importance of labour and birth experience for parental sensitivity and self-efficacy) and factors important for development of resilience in infants, toddlers and preschoolers. She is an active member of the International Association for Cross-Cultural Psychology, Society for Reproductive and Infant Psychology and the Polish Doula Association.

**Dr Wendy Russell** is Senior Lecturer in Play and Playwork at the University of Gloucestershire, UK. She has been working in the children's play sector for over 40 years in research, training, education and development with local, national and international organisations. She is on the Editorial Board of the *International Journal of Play* and is a co-founder of the biennial *Philosophy at Play* conferences.

**Dr Paul Schober:** PhD in economics, post graduate in academic education management, practitioner in playwork, more than 10 years as a volunteer in Montessori School, public relations and accounting for a non-profit organisation in health and handicapped sector, head of educational department of a vocational training centre, development of workshops & training, trainer, coach, development of an elearning centre. Currently: chairman of the Society for Research and Education (GeSoB), development and management of EU-projects and Innovative Research projects, lecturer at University Innsbruck and Management Centre, publications in the field of education, apprenticeship, entrepreneurship, knowledge management, change management and innovation strategies.

**Kees Schuur** is manager of UWEZO GmbH and works as senior expert, researcher, trainer and consultant in national and international projects in the field of Valuation of (Prior) Learning (VPL) and new approaches for lifelong learning. He focuses on the formal, non-formal and informal learning and valuation of children and young adolescents (0-18), the tension with education and the effects of learning and development, also by using drama and play, on the resilience and potential for further development of a person. He is co-founder and board member of the European Centre of Valuation of Prior Learning and emphasises a holistic approach to lifelong, formal, non-formal and informal learning and valuation systems, in response to the demand of an ever-faster-changing social, economic and technological society. Target groups vary from vocational schools to universities, unemployed, school leavers, reintegrating women, companies, etc.

As co-founder and board member of the Foundation CH-Q NL/B he supports a bottom-up approach to competence development and the implementation of sustainable bottom-up competence management and as a certified CH-Q portfolio-trainer he emphasises the need for bottom-up approaches in competence development. He is co-author of the book "The Unfinished Story of VPL" (2005), and, together with Dr. R.C. Duvekot, author of "Building Personalized Learning"(2014) and "Affording the Desire to Learn" (2017).

**Virag Suhajda, PhD** has been an adult educator and trainer for 25 years, building up more than 10,000 contact hours in education starting as a peer facilitator, mentor, and training adults and teachers. She is also a trained person-centred counsellor, a symbol work counsellor, and a counsellor in Metamorphosis Folk Tale Therapy. She is currently undergoing training in somato-therapy called Body-Mind Centering, as well as a therapist-training in Psychodynamic Dance and Movement Therapy. She earned her PhD in social communication on the issue of embodied learning and communicative agency. She is a trained playworker and works on the dissemination of the idea of freely chosen play in Central Europe. She is a mother of three.

**Eszter Szekeres:** I love to work with teenagers and young people, I love playing and outdoor activities too. As a psychologist, I have been organizing team building games for teenagers and adults for years. I feel that common experiences and encounters with others strengthen trust and confidence and provide a colourful and exciting way to develop, both at an individual and a community level. Now I am working as a trainer with the Rogers Foundation for Person-Centred Education. In our projects and workshops, we like to provide similar experiences for teachers and youth workers to inspire them to use child-centred methods in their daily work.



# 1. Introduction: The Strength of European Diversity for Building Resilience in Children

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**Wendy Russell and Kees Schuur**

## About the ARTPAD project

The ARTPAD (Achieving Resilience through Play and Drama) project was funded through the European Union's Erasmus+ programme and ran from September 2015 to August 2018. It brought together five partners from Austria, Germany, Hungary, Poland and the UK (as lead partner) with expertise and experience in educator training, drama and play.<sup>1</sup> The project aimed to promote awareness and skills development for practitioners in formal and informal education settings in terms of how play and drama techniques can support the development of resilience in pupils struggling with formal education (particularly disadvantaged children), thereby increasing their motivation to engage with education and addressing issues of early school leaving.

The project had three key objectives:

1. to undertake a transnational research and development phase of the project to enable understanding between partners and to identify best practice in their delivery of drama techniques and children's play facilitation;
2. to create a Guide and a learning resource to inform, inspire and enable leaders of schools and youth projects to deliver the above practice;
3. to place emphasis on developing the practice for disadvantaged children and young people to aid the building of resilience and engagement for learning.

The project carried out transnational research visiting projects that were using play and drama in formal and informal education settings with children and young people, using this to inform the production of a *Best Practice Guide* and a training course for education practitioners and youth workers.<sup>2</sup> The training course was developed from this and partners' own expertise, and was piloted and delivered as a 'training the trainers' course at the

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<sup>1</sup> A full list of partners can be found in Appendix 1.

<sup>2</sup> Both publications, together with a list of projects visited and an evaluation report of the project, can be found at: [www.artpadproject.eu](http://www.artpadproject.eu).

University of Gdansk, Poland, in March 2018 to a group of play, drama and education practitioners.

### **Top-down and bottom-up actions**

The analysis carried out across the five European countries showed that the aim of supporting children's resilience through play and drama can best be met through working both 'top-down' (changes to education systems and at policy level) and 'bottom-up' (through practice).

In terms of top-down data, the project's desk research showed a lack of structural support for play and drama, including:

- less time and space for children to participate in play and drama both within and outside of school;
- a growing focus on cognitive development, achieving results, getting good grades;
- a lack of understanding of the value of play and drama for children's social and emotional development, resilience and enjoyment of school;
- a lack of confidence and skills amongst, and support for, practitioners to facilitate play and drama.

The situation in terms of support for play and drama in schools varied across each of the five countries. For example, in Hungary and Austria, it is possible for play and drama to be incorporated into the school day, but there is no clear infrastructure to do so. In Poland, there are no formal strategies for the inclusion of play and drama in schools. In Germany, play is not part of teacher training. In England, there has been some support for play in primary schools, but this varies across the country. Generally speaking, the availability of space for play and drama is less in cities than in rural areas.

In terms of bottom-up approaches, ARTPAD partners analysed 18 case studies of practices supporting children's play and drama across schools, youth and play services, with more being introduced in each country's 'multiplier events' aimed at promoting the work of the project. These analyses brought to light how effective play and drama can be: their impact on the mood, learning and resilience of children; the role of the school, youth centre, playground and other adults in providing opportunities for play and drama. The results showed a variety of approaches to incorporating play and using drama techniques in different contexts (as part of education, during breaks, after school, in youth centres, at playgrounds), the age of the children, the context (for example, space and light, support, finance). They highlighted the need for children to relax, to expend lots of energy, to change their mind-set, to discover, to develop certain competences like improvisation, presenting, creating, working together.

## The book

This book provides a collection of articles written by partners and participants on the ARTPAD training course. They include academic articles and reflections on practice, offering an eclectic mix of perspectives on the three core concepts (resilience, drama and play) and how education practitioners can work with them.

As the ARTPAD project evaluation report notes,

*Partners brought with them high levels of skills, experience and knowledge in specific approaches to teacher and youth worker education, drama and/or play. Such skills were highly valued, and at the same time, different approaches, practices and organisational and cultural contexts meant that it was clear that the three core concepts needed further debate in order to agree how to present this in the Best Practice Guide for education leaders and practitioners in a way that could be useful across European countries.*

For this publication, contributors were given free rein to play with the concepts and their application in any way that worked for them, as there is no necessity in this publication to present a singular perspective. In this way it presents diversity as a strength. Readers will learn about different theoretical perspectives and also very practical ways of using play and drama to support the development of resilience.

The examples show a great diversity of needs, possibilities and solutions. They illustrate knowledge about play and drama techniques and raise awareness of the need to understand each other and the many stakeholders involved in the process of supporting play and drama in education contexts. The articles in this book give examples of how top-down and bottom-up meet each other halfway, empowering all those working directly with children to support play and use drama techniques, and empowering institutions, organisations, research, training of teachers, carers, theatre pedagogues and governments by defining and creating zones of mutual trust and demand for the use of six principles which are defined in the ARTPAD project. These principles are: the importance of a specific methodology, an environment that supports play and drama, the attitude of adults, the individual within the group, empowerment and alignment. These principles are discussed further the *Best Practice Guide* (ARTPAD Consortium, 2017) and in chapter 5.

The intention of the authors of these articles is a better understanding of the power of play and drama techniques inside and outside of school and later in life, and that their articles will ignite and inspire others in their work with children. We hope that you enjoy reading them as much as we have enjoyed exploring the whole realm of play and drama in supporting children's resilience. And we also hope that you can take something from these examples into your own work in support of children's right to play and to participate in

cultural life and the arts, as article 31 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child states. This is not a luxury, it is fundamental to children's well-being and to what it is to be human.



# PART ONE: REFLECTIONS ON RESILIENCE AND ARTPAD

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2. Between emotions and cognitions: exploring the concept of resilience  
*Paulina Pawlicka and Maria Kaźmierczak*
  
3. ARTPAD: A UK practitioner's reflection on the creation of a community of shared practice  
*Tristan Middleton*
  
4. Changing the Focus to Resilience  
*Pete Duncan*
  
5. A Benchmark for Play and Drama  
*Kees Schuur*



## 2. Between Emotions and Cognition: Exploring the concept of resilience

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***Paulina Pawlicka and Maria Kaźmierczak***

Polish researchers, Ogińska-Bulik and Juczyński (2008) postulate that there are four major factors of resilience: 1) optimistic attitude and energy; 2) grit and determination in action; 3) sense of humour and openness to new experiences; 4) personal competences and negative affect tolerance. The distinct aspect of the resilience phenomenon is the context in which it is activated – it is most clearly manifested through experiencing (serious) difficulties and/or threats (Fredrickson, 2001). Therefore, in this paper we focus on the emotions and cognitions of more or less resilient people, with special attention given to children and young people, that are related to the abovementioned four factors and are important for adaptation processes.

Resilient people ‘befriend’ emotions. This unique contact with emotions is a basic ability of highly resilient children and adults. They do not shrink from analysing emotions, either their own or others’, both positive and negative. Therefore, resilience means awareness of experienced emotions and making use of them in unfavourable conditions (Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004). Whereas positive emotions can help a resilient person to find meaning in a particular situation, negative affect might also become an important guide for specific actions. However, negative (but also positive) emotions should be well regulated. Due to the mechanisms of affective self-regulation, children can manage their emotional experience and focus their attention on these aspects of a specific problem that might be crucial for its resolution (Luthar & Eisenberg, 2017). Thus, resilient persons, including children, may display higher abilities to modulate their emotional arousal, especially in difficult circumstances.

Referring to social intelligence theories, effective emotional regulation and management facilitates social adaptation (Bracket, Rivers, Shiffman, Lerner & Salovey, 2006). Therefore, high levels of resiliency, as with other competencies connected with social intelligence, enable optimal adjustment to a given situation. However, as has been mentioned, what is crucial to the concept of resilience concept is the fact that it involves perceiving various situations, including those new or threatening, as a challenge to be coped with (Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2008, 2011). Resilience involves openness to experiences (Kobylarczyk & Ogińska-Bulik, 2015; Tugade & Fredrickson, 2004) and perseverance when the situation becomes more difficult to deal with. This also means not avoiding experiencing failure,

which leads to a better adaptation to setbacks that are a natural part of everyday life. Which leads to the question of how resilient people perceive themselves and their experiences in the social environment, starting from childhood.

Resilient children show a higher sense of purpose and meaning when undertaking goal-oriented activities and demonstrate a positive life attitude (Klohn, 1996; Robins, John, Caspi, Moffitt & Stouthamer-Loeber, 1996). What is more, they see themselves as more autonomous, which means having an internal locus of control (Kobylarczyk & Ogińska-Bulik, 2015). That further means self-trust, which facilitates full engagement in activities undertaken (e.g. Klohn, 1996; Robins *et al.*, 1996). A child that is resilient thus see herself/himself as capable of fulfilling various tasks, even demanding ones, as they believe in their own abilities. That does not mean that this child is more educated or demonstrates more knowledge in any particular domain. Instead, it is about a child's (and later an adult's) positive self-image. In consequence, such children react appropriately to changing circumstances, undertaking preventative actions/countermeasures in difficult situations (Ogińska-Bulik & Juczyński, 2008, 2011) or sometimes manifesting a sense of humour when appropriate (Kobylarczyk & Ogińska-Bulik, 2015).

Resilience is connected with positive changes after experiencing trauma (e.g. loss of a close friend or relative; recovering from serious illness), which in psychology is called post-traumatic growth in youth (Ogińska-Bulik, 2013; Levine, Laufer, Stein, Hamma-Raz, & Solomon, 2009). Positive post-traumatic changes (post-traumatic growth) are: increase in psychological immunity (resistance, endurance), emotional maturity and empathy; deeper understanding of personal values, goals and meaning of life; higher appreciation of life and more satisfying relationships with others (Salter & Stallard; 2004; Meyerson, Grant, Smith-Carter, & Kilmer, 2011). Due to an internal locus of control, resilient young people appreciate life more after experiencing trauma, as opposed to external locus of control that lowers resiliency level and openness to new experiences (Kobylarczyk & Ogińska-Bulik, 2015). Additionally, resilient traumatized children (e.g. in children from orphanages) can attract others from whom they might receive social support and consequently experience lower psychological stress after experiencing trauma. Furthermore, after traumatic experience young people more often notice their own positive changes in appreciating life than in appreciating/valuing themselves and relationships with others (Kobylarczyk & Ogińska-Bulik, 2015).

Taking into account the above conclusions it is understandable why the development of resilience in children and young people has become a popular and highly esteemed goal of social interventions. Practitioners aim at supporting self-efficacy and goal-setting or

encourage the development of empathy or positiveness in thinking and attitudes among others.

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### 3. ARTPAD: A UK practitioner's reflection on the creation of a community of shared practice

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**Tristan Middleton**

There is a growing impetus within the education community, in its broadest sense, to develop approaches which support the development of resilience for those in school settings. Resilience in the context of school-aged learners needs to be considered within the wider context of issues including: curricula which focus on formal learning environments, normative outcomes measured in the context of testing and target setting, exclusion and notions of educational inclusion, teacher workload, and the growing expectation that schools need to play a leading role in promoting the mental health of the learners they work with.

Notions of educational sustainability recognise the need to develop our education system to move away from a model where there is teaching towards a defined set of outcomes, encompassed within knowledge and skills which, whilst relevant at the point of design, become rapidly outdated in the context of complex and changing world. “In times of change, learners will inherit the earth, while the learned will find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists” (Hoffer, cited in Askew & Carnell, 1998, p.151). Within this context, discussions of pedagogy and teaching are becoming more concerned with the ‘how’ of learning rather than the ‘what’, through including a developing focus on factors such as self-esteem, characteristics of learning, managing stress levels, metacognition and motivation (Claxton, 2006).

As the debate around the focus of education shifts towards learner competencies and capabilities and ‘deep learning’ (Fullan and Scott, 2014), with aspirations towards graduate employability (Scott, 2016), notions of resilience become more relevant and prescient. Up to now, these reflections have not acknowledged particular learner needs and contexts, however this perspective was a significant and unifying factor within the delegates involved in the ARTPAD project.

As the group of practitioners came together for a week of learning in Poland and shared their values and experiences, the common themes of working to ameliorate outcomes for children and young people subject to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) (Felitti *et al.*, 1998) emerged as a key motivator in our work.

We shared our drive and passion which leads us to work with children and young people facing challenges such as seeking refuge from war in their home countries; being at risk of exclusion from education settings; having been excluded from education settings; experiencing learning in the context of having been identified as having special educational needs; being 'looked-after' (by the state); and having experienced abusive relationships.

The importance of focusing on practical ways to support the development of resilience had brought us together at the University of Gdansk to work together within the Erasmus Plus funded ARTPAD project. Our participation enabled us to learn together, developing our understanding of the theories and principles of play, drama and role play, and how these could be applied within the context of children and young people's resilience. These considerations sat within the overarching context of the empowerment of learners being a critical element in effective pedagogical approaches. Delegates practising in youth work contexts brought complementary perspectives to develop the understanding of those with a background in formal education approaches, prompting discussions around voluntary and sporadic involvement in learning opportunities and the complex and varied role of the practitioner. Furthermore, we reflected on our shared understanding of the importance of attachment needs and the role of practice informed by therapeutic approaches to education.

This broad range of perspectives and influences, brought together through a shared goal of enabling children and young people to overcome the challenges they experience in their lives, was effectively contextualised with reference to attachment needs and emotion regulation, at the follow-up launch event at the University of Gloucestershire, UK, by keynote speaker Kate Cairns.

As a result of the connections made and shared learning experiences, resulting from the ARTPAD opportunity, we as diverse practitioners are more able to provide opportunities for "second chance learning" (Winnicott, 1965) for a range of children and young people. By empowering children and young people to take ownership of their own learning activities in play and drama contexts, we enable them to develop protective resilience factors (Mitchell, 2011), in the contexts of physical, intellectual and social development (Elkind, 2008), by being "present in life" (Siegel, 2017 p.119).

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## 4. Changing the Focus to Resilience

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**Pete Duncan**

In this paper I will look at how exploring resilience may allow trainers/educators to change the focus of workshops.

### Context

I am a social circus trainer with over 25 years' experience in teaching circus skills to a huge variety of groups. When trying to teach people I am often faced with the challenge of "self-disabling". What I mean by this is that people say – and believe – that they will never be able perform particular circus skills.

People often face a range of challenges including physical impairment, cognitive processing, learning difficulties. I have tried and tested a range of ways of teaching core skills. Learning likely routes to success and "blocks" which need to be overcome, I have a range of games and activities which keep people enjoying the activities, and focussed on building the skills and competencies. Having attended the ARTPAD course I was interested in changing the focus from 'learning a circus skill' to 'exploring resilience'.

In June 2018 I had the opportunity to pilot this workshop with students from the performing arts group at the University of Gloucestershire in the UK.

### Part 1:

#### *Circus focus workshop*

In this workshop I wanted to focus on building competence in circus skills. Here is a brief outline of the workshop:

- 1) **Welcome:** meet and greet people - put them at ease, reassure them it will be OK, nobody will be put on the spot. Introduce myself and the aims of the workshop.
- 2) **Gaining entry:** physical warm up, using a whole group exercise to stretch muscles. Wake up co-ordination, and make people laugh.
- 3) **Balance:** demonstrate the principles of balance (look at the top; large things that are light and with a big surface area are easiest to balance; physical demonstration using peacock feather).

Balance on hand, elbow, foot, chin – increasing challenge of balance with tutor support/advice/encouragement.

- 4) **Juggling:** scarf juggling – learning to throw and catch using a light square scarf (slower than balls). Ball juggling – one ball, two, three; people to practice with tutor support.
- 5) **Reflection:** do you understand how to balance things. Do you feel closer to juggling?

### *Resilience focus workshop*

In this workshop the focus changed to resilience. Here is the adapted outline:

- 1) Arrival: when people arrive hand them a spinning plate on a stick, show them how to start the plate spinning.
- 2) Ask what it is like to start with something you can't do yet. (discussion on the odd start of the workshop, whether people persisted and if they encouraged each other).
- 3) Introduction of self and workshop
- 4) Looking at resilience: what attitudes does it contain, why is it good to be resilient?
- 5) Balance: explain the principles of balancing.
- 6) Provide groups with a list of body parts (hand, knee, shoulder, chin, foot) and a list of objects (feather, broomstick, plastic bag, pen, page of newspaper).
- 7) Can you order these in order of easy to hard to balance?
- 8) Ten minutes of experimenting to test if the order is correct.
- 9) Discussion on testing hypothesis, problem solving, creativity.
- 10) Juggling: demonstrate – look at skills and competencies we need (throw and catch both hands, juggling in a pattern).
- 11) Skills part one: juggling games in one hand , and in pairs; juggling with ball and ring – practice accurate throws
- 12) Skills part two: three ball patterns
- 13) Challenge: side by side juggling and reflection on why pattern breaks down.
- 14) Reflection on focus. Time on task, enjoyment, progression
- 15) Return to their thoughts on resilience – also ask 'how were your circus skills?'

### **Part 2: Reflections after the workshop**

I ran the workshop twice in Gloucester for an hour as part of a weekend about engagement in education. The first group was 14 young women aged 14/15. The second group was 5 males and 10 females aged 14/15.

#### *Initial responses*

- People were startled by a start of being given circus equipment with no introductions.
- 5 minutes of trying to spin a plate with some modelling and advice.

- There was lots of negative self talk: “I can’t do this”, “It’s not for me”, “It’s not working”.
- However, many participants were able to spin plates independently within the time.

***What is resilience and why is it good to have?***

- “It’s pushing through when you fail.”
- “If you don’t have it you probably won’t accomplish much.”
- “Having another go – solving a problem yourself.”

***What was it like to start with something you can’t do?***

- Stressful and difficult
- Fabulous when you get it
- “It felt OK as we were asked to try and I thought it was planned.”

The discussion here was on negative language and its consequence on your mindset and chances of success. We looked at a diagram of confidence --- competence --- motivation as a cycle.

***Balancing:***

Groups were confident on their listing of easiest to hardest balance. They enjoyed testing the balances and debates took place about when the order was changed from their expectation. (Plastic bags were much easier to balance than expected, balancing objects on your foot was much harder.)

***Juggling:***

A check-in showed many people felt it was unlikely they would be able to juggle. (One young person could already juggle three balls and chose to learn juggling clubs.)

Again, there was lots of negative self-talk. One young person would say “NO” loudly every time she dropped a ball; after discussions she agreed to say “YES” each time she caught one. This proved much harder for her. Another young woman was laughing and explained “I am not hating this.”

All participants progressed in their competency of throwing/catching and understanding the sequence of juggling; some could juggle in pairs and some had their first sequences of juggling 3 balls alone.

***Wish fairy: a graphic evaluation***

**What did the session make you think about?**

- “That nothing is impossible it just needs you to be focussed and motivated.”

- “Resilience – what it means to me.”
- “It was fun but hard.”
- “Confusion.”

#### How did the session make you feel?

- “I felt like I couldn’t do it, but I could.”
- “I felt amazed.”
- “Wow.”
- “I can do some things I thought I couldn’t.”
- “Less of the negative vibes.”

#### What will you take away?

- “Better balance, how to juggle – sort of!”
- “How to juggle clubs.”
- “How juggling can help my brain.”

I chose to use the last few minutes to run a skipping challenge. This consisted of long line skipping and a challenge for the whole group to learn the timing of running through a turning rope then go through in groups of two or three (this requires communication and teamwork), or with no gaps – one person running through each turn (requiring teamwork and timing). Both groups had lots of laughter, enjoying the “fails”; both groups had much more positive language, with much encouragement and support.

One group gathered to support one member whose challenges of autism and dyspraxia made the task harder. A positive conclusion to the workshop.

## **Conclusion**

I was pleased with the progression in thinking and skills during a brief session and I would look at running more sessions with a focus on resilience.

Further information from: [pete\\_cotrain@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:pete_cotrain@yahoo.co.uk)

## 5. A Benchmark for Play and Drama

**Kees Schuur**

The driving concept behind developing the 'Achieving Resilience Through Play and Drama' (ARTPAD) 'Principles for Play and Drama' is the recognition that effective play and drama arrangements support children<sup>3</sup> in becoming and staying strong, resilient, happy, lifelong learners. This empowerment of children in the face of coping with the high demands of society with an increasing pace of change in social and economic systems, remains a principal focus of these arrangements.

The five organisations have developed six Principles. These principles are:

	<i>Principle</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>1</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	Both drama and the creation of spaces where children can play have specific approaches and methodology that need to be understood. They also require a particular mind-set in order to support the development of resilience and child-driven, self-initiated learning.
<b>2</b>	<b>Environment</b>	The creation of an environment that considers both the human and physical aspects of the space will best support resilience and the engagement of children in formal and informal learning.
<b>3</b>	<b>Attitude of the Adult</b>	The respect, relationship and support developed through a positive attitude from the adults around them plays a huge part in children's self-confidence, resilience and overall development.
<b>4</b>	<b>The individual in the group</b>	An understanding of the impact of wider influences on the child, both from home and society is important when considering their development of resilience.
<b>5</b>	<b>Empowerment</b>	Play and drama support resilience through developing competencies in making individual choices, being in control of things happening around them and having an ability to influence these things.
<b>6</b>	<b>Alignment</b>	Alignment as a final principle: All our efforts should be aligned to support and facilitate the development of resilience for children.

<sup>3</sup> In this text "child"/"children" is used. This includes all persons younger than the age of majority.

The ARTPAD project supports educators and youth workers to work with children in their participation and performance in (formal/ non-formal) education and training and to prevent early school leaving. Student motivation and engagement is a vital component in reducing school drop-out which is identified as one of the key targets of the EU growth strategy for 2010-20, '*Reducing school drop-out rates to less than 10% and increasing the share of the population aged 30-34 having completed tertiary education to at least 40%.*' (European Commission, 2014).

During the project it was found that the drop-out rates in the represented countries had already fallen to around and under this 10% mark. Analysing the literature and the findings of the research during the first year of the project, other, more alarming, signals and problems were identified, such as the increasing NEET<sup>4</sup> group of 15-24 years. In 2014 this group was 12.4% of the total group of 15-24yrs in Europe, a figure that varies per country (Dumcius *et al.*, 2014). And a third group giving cause for concern are those children who are still at school, but who are not engaged, not motivated and/or are frequently absent from school.

The ARTPAD project aimed to increase children's motivation through the development of skills and competences of educational staff and youth workers. The programme covered 3 complementary aspects: using drama techniques, understanding and providing opportunities for freely chosen play, and understanding resilience and children's behaviour and development.

The benchmark offered here uses the outcomes of the project research in a trial to cover all forms of play.

Peter Gray (2013) summarised in his meta research, that In the period 1981 – 1997 there was a reduction of time for play for 6-8 year old children and an increase in time for obligations:

Time to play: <b>-25%</b>	Time at school: <b>+18%</b>
Conversation with others at home: <b>-55%</b>	Schoolwork at home : <b>+145%</b>
Watching television: <b>-19%</b>	Shopping with parents: <b>+168%</b>

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<sup>4</sup> NEET = Not in Employment, Education or Training

When we discuss 'play' with parents, most of them state that they played more outside than their own children do now. Rhonda Clements (2004) found in her research with 830 mothers who were the same age as their children now:

<i>Mothers:</i>	<i>Their children (3-11 yrs):</i>
58% played more outdoors than their children now	
70% played daily outdoors	31% played daily outdoors
56% played more than 3 hours outdoors	22% played more than 3 hours outdoors

As reasons for this they pointed at:

- seductive qualities of television (85%)
- computer play (81%)
- restrictions by parent for safety concerns (82%).

In other surveys, children have said they would rather play outside than on the computer. For example, in a survey made for the *Make Time 2 Play* campaign (2103), almost two-thirds of parents felt that it more dangerous for their children to play outside. Their main concerns were traffic and strangers (each being cited by just over half of the parents), not being able to monitor their children or fear that they become involved in or be confronted by gangs (each being cited by just over a third of parents) and preventing them from study (just under a fifth of parents).

Parents, educators and child carers are watching, controlling and directing children and depriving them of freely chosen play, joy, discovering, making mistakes and learning from them. In addition, spaces to play, especially in cities, are decreasing and the distance to safe places is increasing.

Play is a right of a child. The UN convention on the rights of the Child states (article 31.1):

*States Parties recognize the right of the child to rest and leisure, to engage in play and recreational activities appropriate to the age of the child and to participate freely in cultural life and the arts.*

It is of the utmost importance for each child as an individual, and for society, that children are exposed to and experiment with freely chosen play and different forms of drama techniques and play.



The European Commission emphasises in *the European Guidelines for Validating Non-Formal and Informal Learning* (Cedefop) the key competences a person should have:

- 1) literacy, languages and linguistic diversity (mother tongue and two other languages)
- 2) maths, science and engineering
- 3) digital competence
- 4) personal, social and learning competence
- 5) civic competence, 6) entrepreneurship and cultural awareness and expression.

Play, including drama, is an essential basis for all these competences. In freely chosen play, children can discover, explore and build the core of these competences. And it is a lot of fun!

The benchmark below could be a helpful means for analysing the opportunities children have for play and drama. The benchmark can be used in different ways

- a. as self-assessment instrument, for parents and/or professionals working with children
- b. as a support for creating and/or using a play environment and work with children, and
- c. as basis for a peer-review / audit of the environment in which children play.

The child lies at the heart of the six principles – but the idea of ‘play-culture’ suggests that a supportive framework of arrangements can be constructed and maintained by specific social structures and by educationalists, trainers, youth workers, playworkers, parents and extended family, other adult guidance professionals and others supporting individual learners. This culture should be based on shared values, common practices and commitment to their social standards, although it also can be based on continuously renegotiated values. The set of Principles is one way in which such a play-culture can be created, sustained and grown.

### **The benchmark**

The outcome of the 'Achieving Resilience Through Play and Drama' (ARTPAD) project is a list of 6 principles, which can be used to optimise the opportunities for play and drama by children. Each of the six Principles is important for a pedagogical approach that recognises the role of drama and play when working with children in (re-)engaging them in formal education and strengthening their informal learning.

The questionnaire is a self-evaluation tool with a focus on outcome statements. It indicates the added value for the individual and – at the same time – for the institution or the provider involved. It suggests the kind of evidence relevant to estimate the extent of ,good

practice in play and drama' and an indication of the level of achievement that should be met.

In the questionnaire it is possible to give a value to each item. The values which can be given are: 0 – Not at all; 1 – Slightly; 2 – Fairly; 3 – Reasonably; 4 – Very well; 5 – Completely.

The second use of the benchmark instrument is to ask the other actors / stakeholders involved in provision of play and drama also to fill out the questionnaire. The responses that are consistent across all those completing the questionnaire are the strong points where mutual trust can be further built upon and a real play and drama community of practice can develop. Those areas where the actors / stakeholders have a different point of view are points for discussion and can be used to give transparency in these differences and either be used to make this clear to all or to work on overcoming these differences. Examples in the ARTPAD Best Practice Guide (ARTPAD Consortium, 2017) show that more actions are needed to comply with the principles, like for instance:

- Accompanying structures have to be set up to make it possible for children to fully exploit the potential of play and/or drama for themselves. All actors should be made aware of their role in this system.
- Governments, organisations and institutions should change their mental model for organising and financing play and drama from formal structured and protective training towards alternative financing structures for awarding (and recognising) other ways for children to play.
- More concrete examples of success stories, but also of the failures, from an individual and organisational point of view should give more insight into a very abstract concept.

Much attention is given to the informal learning and development that is happening in play and drama, the recognition of the importance of play and drama for the development of a child.

This benchmark will be continuously under development. Your suggestions for improvements are highly appreciated. Please send your constructive comments / ideas to Kees Schuur: [schuur@uwezo.de](mailto:schuur@uwezo.de)

Also, appraisals are most welcome, as it will show us that this instrument is useful. And above all, it is the best way to show that many, like children, are concerned and playing the 'game' to learn, develop and improve.

## The benchmark

1	<p><b>METHODOLOGY</b></p> <p>Both drama and the creation of spaces where children can play have specific approaches and methodology that need to be understood. They also require a particular mind-set in order to support the development of resilience and child-driven, self-initiated learning.</p>		
	<i>Do you ... / are you ...</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
1.1	...engage children's' expertise, initiative, imagination, responsibility, strengths and diversity of learning styles for problem solving?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
1.2	... encourage unusual and creative ideas and risk taking?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
1.3	... ensure time for intrapersonal reflection and insights?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
1.4	... use constructive and non-punitive evaluation and feedback?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
1.5	... balance and support the group with respect to individual strengths	0 1 2 3 4 5	
<p>Actions to be taken:</p>			

2	<b>ENVIRONMENT</b>		
	The creation of an environment that considers both the human and physical aspects of the space will best support resilience and the engagement of children in formal and informal learning.		
	<i>Do you ... / Are you</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
2.1	... support children's access to freely chosen play through the provision of space, time and resources that encourage independence and choice?	Space 0 1 2 3 4 5 Time 0 1 2 3 4 5	
2.2	... create environments that are safe both physically and emotionally whilst balancing them with the need to take risks and experiment?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
2.3	... leave space open for children to follow their own interests and/or being open to uncertainty?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
2.4	... consider the needs of individual children as well as the whole group?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
2.5	... remember that it is OK to fail and try again?  And do you let it go?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
2.6	... aware of the impact of the adult in spaces created by and for children?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Actions to be taken:			

<b>3</b>	<b>ATTITUDE OF THE ADULT</b>		
	The respect, relationship and support developed through a positive attitude from the adults around them plays a huge part in children’s self-confidence, resilience and overall development.		
	<i>Do you .... / Are you...</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
3.1	... positive and flexible in your approach?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3.2	... value and respect each child as a unique individual?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3.3	...a consistent and empathetic role model?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3.4	... reflect on your behaviour, your practice and your relationships with others?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3.5	... share the responsibility of learning and developing resilience with the child?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
3.6	... attuned to the need for children to take physical and emotional risks?		
3.7	... intervene with care and considering always the impact of the adult on the child?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Actions to be taken:			

<b>4</b>	<b>THE INDIVIDUAL WITHIN THE GROUP</b>		
	An understanding of the impact of wider influences on the child, both from home and society is important when considering their development of resilience.		
	<i>Do you ....</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
4. 1	... respect individuality and support equality and inclusion?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4. 2	... challenge sensitively remarks and attitudes that impact on individuals?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4. 3	... balance the needs and dynamics of the group with those of the individuals?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4. 4	... support opportunities for socialisation and individuality?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4. 5	... enable children as far as possible to resolve their own problems?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
4. 6	... co-operate and give value to significant individuals in a child's life?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Actions to be taken:			

<b>5</b>	<b>EMPOWERMENT</b>		
	Play and drama support resilience through developing competencies in making individual choices, being in control of things happening around them and having an ability to influence these things.		
	<i>Do you ....</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
5.1	... support learning from different and multiple perspectives?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5.2	... engage (drama) or support (play) children in designing their own learning process or facilitating their own activities?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5.3	... find a balance between increasing independence (identity, self- esteem, self-awareness) and interdependence (socialisation / shared responsibility)?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5.4	... give each child the right and opportunity to develop in their own unique way?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5.5	... attune to the need for children to take physical and emotional risks?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
5.6	... intervene with care and consider always the impact of the adult on the child?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Actions to be taken:			

<b>6</b>	<b>ALIGNMENT</b>		
	Alignment as a final principle: All our efforts should be aligned to support and facilitate the development of resilience for children.		
	<i>Do you ....</i>	<i>Mark</i>	<i>Remarks</i>
6.1	... have a commitment to a whole organisational approach to the methodology and best practice as set out in the above Principles?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.2 a	... commit yourself to alignment Personal alignment: the principles of attitudes, empowerment, trust and social aspects?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.2 b	... commit yourself to alignment Structural alignment: the principles of environment, methods and tasks?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.3	... develop a resilience framework with indicators for individual children?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.4	... have a flexible, diverse and holistic approach?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.5	... understand at all times the importance of a happy childhood?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
6.6	... have an unconditional positive regard for children?	0 1 2 3 4 5	
Actions to be taken:			



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## PART TWO: PERSPECTIVES ON PLAY, RESILIENCE AND ARTPAD

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6. The Internal, Neural Dynamics of Play, Learning and the Agency of the Child  
*Eva Virag Suhajda, PhD*
  
7. Putting the Playwork Principles in Practice  
*Karen Benjamin*
  
8. The Power of Play  
*Margitta Glawe*
  
9. Working with Symbols as a means of strengthening resilience  
*Paul Schober*
  
10. Social Circus and its Links to ARTPAD  
*Pete Duncan*
  
11. Thinking a little differently about resilience and play  
*Wendy Russell*



## 6. The Internal, Neural Dynamics of Play, Learning and the Agency of the Child

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***Eva Virag Suhajda, PhD***

Modern neuroscience provides a deeper understanding of play, although for practical and ethical reasons most of what we know comes from research on animal play. Play is usually studied in terms of its relation with evolutionary needs, and its positive effects in evolutionary terms, namely better survival and adaptation skills. However, this is not at all clearly proven as there are several animals that do not play, but still survive. At the same time all mammals do play, although at very different levels.

Therefore, what can be considered as play is a real puzzle for scientists. Does it have to have an evolutionary goal (such as preservation of the self or survival of our species), or can it include anything which is for the pure joy of experiencing Pellis and Pellis (2009), who study the playful brain, ask: when two cockroaches are pushing each other with their antennae without any visible reasons, is it play? Their answer is that we don't know as we are not privy to their communication clues, which we usually use when we decide what is a playful behaviour. Nevertheless, what we can build upon is that play is something that evokes joy – activates the reward systems of our brain – again, without any obvious immediate link to survival or evolutionary needs). Still it has a clear advantage, which can be found in more in-depth analysis of how mind and self is built up.

### **The development of embodied play**

The two-week-old baby turned her head to the right and looked at her straight right arm and hand. Stretched the fingers, and then closed them. We would say, the baby was playing with her hand, but from another perspective, the baby was building up her own self and identity. She saw her hand moving, but at the same time she also felt it through her proprioceptive sensing. Proprioceptive senses are special senses we tend to forget about, as they report not from the environment, but from our internal body: they include the senses of position and movement of our limbs and trunk, the sense of effort, the sense of force, and the sense of heaviness. These senses report to us on our body, and are very important in our understanding and control of the environment with regard to ourselves.

Turning back to the baby girl, for her seeing was a reassurance for proprioceptive sensing. Yes, if she **does** something which **feels** this way, it **looks** this way. By stretching her fingers she connects muscular activity and internal senses with sight and also with cause and effect: if she stretches her fingers, they touch the pillow. This is a very different sense to that when the pillow is put there by the parent – then there is no internal sensing of movement and action. The baby girl connects in her mind these actions, which develops her amodal sensing (which is innate): she is able to use information from one sense (like touching) in all other senses (like seeing). This amodality will later be very important in more complex ways of play and also in life.

Another case is when the baby (let the baby be a boy this time) finds his thumb and puts it into his mouth. The feeling is different from the one, when the same is done by the parent, although in both cases the thumb gets into the mouth. When the baby, first by chance, puts his thumb into his mouth, it has a lot of special feelings at the same time: the contracting arm muscles, the position of the arm and the fingers, the feeling of moisture on the thumb, and the touch of thumb on the mouth (try it!), which evokes the sucking reflex (this you cannot try, sorry). He likes it, as sucking is a basic reflex which reassures that he will survive, and it is soothing by itself, so he will try to do it again. Will is a good word in English, as it has the root meaning of “will”, wanting. He wants to do it again. When the arm is put there by the parent, there are some of these senses missing, like the feeling of the action of the muscles, and also this “will” is missing.

In both of the described cases there are activities which have no direct immediate relation to survival, they are play, but are very important in the development of the mind and the body. These and similar processes are the very basis of the formation of the self – a self within a body, so-called “embodied” self – and the formation of the feeling of agency. Stern, a psychologist who based his theory on infant research, names this very early period the “emergent self” in his famous work “The Interpersonal World of the Infant” (1985), during which the infant is integrating and organizing physical experiences into coherent ones.

Stern says, that by around 2 months babies already reach a point when they have more or less integrated physical experiences, which provides the basis for an understanding of the self as different and separate from the surroundings: the core self. This means, for example, that sucking is no longer by reflex, but by intention. Also, the baby by this age has a basic awareness of their body. This is a very important moment for development, and in the upcoming months (until around 8 months) this is what babies do mostly: they strengthen their “knowledge” of their core self and its interactions with the environment (usually the caregiver).

However, says Stern, it is important to note that the core self does not “disappear” after month 8, but all other layers of self are built on it: the subjective (recognizing our internal life that differs from others), the verbal (symbolic thinking), the narrative (identity based on the stories of ourselves). This is very important when we talk about play: basic play activities (like rough and tumble play) are very physical, and are connected to the core self, while more complex play activities (like social and role play, rule-based play) are connected to the next layers. But the next layers of play are not independent: they are built on bodily feelings too, including emotions, which work as a reward system.

Davis and Panksepp (2011), neuroscientists, actually claim that PLAY (deliberately presented in capital letters by them) is one of the primary process anoetic subcortical brain emotions systems. This means that PLAY, together with other primary processes (SEEKING, RAGE, FEAR, LUST, CARE and PANIC/GRIEF), are basic neural patterns that develop alongside the emergence of physical self-awareness discussed earlier. They use CAPITAL letters to distinguish the primary processes of these emotions from their more developed and complex forms, which they call secondary and tertiary play (with small letters); there are clear connections here to the Stern model of higher-layer selves.

Panksepp calls PLAY anoetic, meaning that there is no consciousness involved at this primary phase. Also, it is important to emphasize the word ‘subcortical’, which means it is very deeply rooted. The cortex, the outermost area of our brain is the one that really distinguishes humans from other animals, as it is much more developed. The cortex is responsible for “thinking”, analysis, problem-solving, decision-making. The brain areas under the cortex (and above the brain stem and cerebellum) are more ancient and can be found at around the same development level of other mammals too (that is why they are often referred to as the “mammalian brain”). They are responsible for emotional tasks, like the ones Panksepp listed: based on the sensing of the internal (proprioceptive) and the environmental (sights, smells, touch, sounds, tastes) information mid-brain areas set up emotions to react adaptively to the senses. Panksepp argues that indeed PLAY is such an adaptive mechanism, the same way as FEAR or RAGE (or the others).

The Pellises have shown that play is indeed subcortical. They were researching rats (which, as they found were much, much more playful than mice), and they also carried out experiments with their play. What they found is that even if the cortex is removed, the rat stays playful (demonstrated through the motivation to play-fight). The cortex, they say, is visibly not involved in generating play, but has a role in the regulation and modulation of play behaviour according to the perceived social environment (such as in play in non-equal social relations), as well as in changing play behaviour and motivation according to age.

Why is it so important that play is subcortical? Because it supports the assertion that play is a biological need for humans (and also several animals). Not only an instinct: a very deeply rooted default mechanism of the brain. Therefore, while most probably not only play was crucial for the evolution of human mind (but also the use of tools, or living in social organization, or language as other scientists argue), it still has an evolutionary and biological importance.

## Play and agency

We now turn to the issue of agency which occurs as part of self-development. The baby has learned to make a difference between the experiences when it is her (or him) doing it, or when it is done to him (or her). Agency is the feeling of recognizing that we are the authors of our voluntary actions, when cause and effect are clearly there and we – and our intentions – are the cause. Agency and the development of self cannot be separated, as self (the I) itself contains the idea of being capable of doing something voluntarily. Voluntarily (by our own will), but also intentionally: to reach towards an end. While the baby at two weeks still experiences the pillow, later she will try to reach the pillow by the intention of experiencing the nice feeling it provokes. While the baby first puts the thumb involuntarily into his mouth, later he will have the intention of doing it to feel the same way.

Melanie Klein, a psychologist, claims that at the very first months of life the baby in normal caring circumstances experiences that they are the one moving the world around: they cry and the good mother turns up and solves all problems. They feel omnipotent, which gives a strong feeling of agency. At the same time there is a deep trust about the world, which later changes, when they learn that not everything happens this way, which is perfectly ok, however there is a loss of agency that comes with this realization. (This deep trust is something called basic trust by another psychologist, Michael Balint, and this is something we so much want to get back to in all our lives). This feeling of omnipotent agency returns later only in one area of the child's life: play. Actually Klein made her conclusions by observing free play of children (Klein, 1929).

The child builds up this feeling of agency and intentionality during the first year of life, and it keeps on developing through his or her whole life. Slowly the child learns that others also have intentions, which might differ from his or hers, and also experiences both the limits of his / her agency by other agents, as well as develops a more complicated internal agency feeling, for which internal modelling is needed, of which we talk later.

A child, being so dependent on caretakers, has few areas of agency other than their own body, but to develop into a mature, problem-solving, autonomous adult, this has to change. That is



why there is an inner need for learning more complex agent roles, but at the same time avoiding the dangers that real-life experience brings with it, for which the most perfect, or maybe only really available area is play.

### **Play as a transient space of learning**

The idea that play is a basic adaptive and learning mechanism is already taken as common sense by most neuroscientists researching play. As Chan and Siegel (2018, p. 39) say, “From evolutionary vantage point at the genetic and cultural levels, play is activity that enables individuals to engage creatively in new situations, generating new, adaptive responses in potential future interactions and environments”.

This means that play is an activity through which we learn to adapt to new situations. Winnicott (1971), the famous psychologist, analyses play as an action in the transitional space: it is not internal to the self, however it is not in the “real life” either. An in-between space, a fusion of body, mind and the environment. A special learning space.

In real-life actions we (non-consciously) connect information from our body and environment (physical and symbolic areas), based on which (still mostly unconsciously) our brain decides what is the difference between what would be ideal, and what is the reality, and based on that an action occurs. Like information on a drop in blood sugar levels shows that food is needed, and based on that hunger occurs which pushes us to eat.

However, in most cases before we take action, other steps occur. At first we mentally build alternative scenarios (mental models) to analyse the possible consequences of an action. This is the level of cognitive (symbolic) trial, what Holland (1992), researcher of complexity theory, called anticipation, and named as the most important factor of complex adaptive systems such as humans. Coming soon after, the next step is decision-making between the scenarios and action, called implementation.

Internal model building is indeed a skill that seems to be innate. Even with new-born babies, researchers have found that they have some kind of internal modelling of the environment. Gopnik (1999), a cognitive researcher of babies, called it „naive biology, physics, psychology”. More detailed models develop through experience, as does the model-building ability. This is where play has an importance.

The three steps of modelling and implementation deserve a deeper look.

This internal model building is very important for long-term strategies, and people do need long-term strategies for success. With long term situations feedback comes some time after a series of steps of implementation, providing delayed feedback (and reward) (Holland, 1992). In these cases, the person is very much dependent on their internal model. The weakness of this internal model building can be one cause of poor performance in delayed gratification, something that is strongly linked to adult life success. Stronger performance in delayed gratification situations (like building up a social media network and becoming a multi-millionaire, or climbing up on the career ladder) needs a much stronger feeling of agency and feeling of control over our lives.

During decision-making between the alternative internal scenarios (models) we again draw a lot on our bodily sensing. Although many people believe in 'rational' decision-making, emotions prove to be of much more importance than people might think (see among others Damasio, 2006). Damasio for example describes a case when someone whose prefrontal brain area was damaged, and he was unable to decide about which restaurant to choose. He was able to list the pros and contras to all (that is, rationality worked), but was unable to put that extra positive push which comes from the emotional mind.

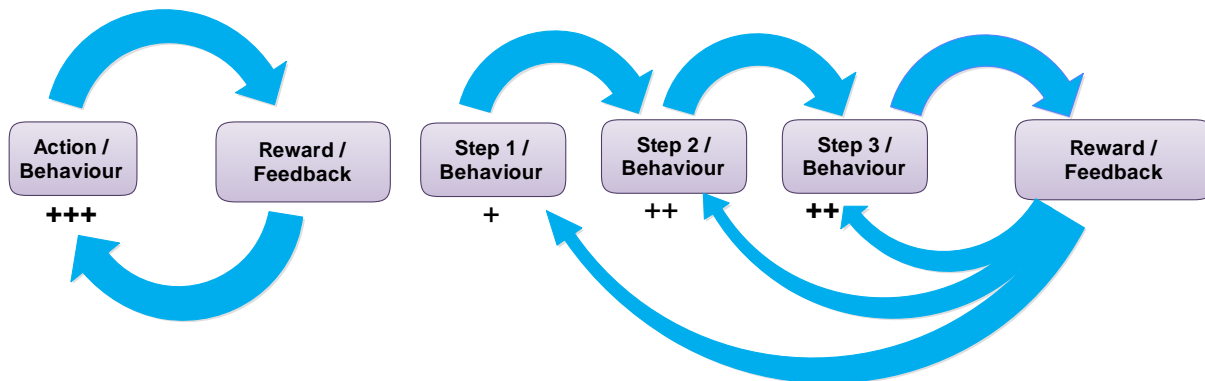
The last phase is implementation of the decided scenario. During this phase we (as "agents" with agency) build upon our internal systems of rule: we can make predictions upon previously experienced if-then relations. On the other hand these if-then rules have to be flexible in order to cope with change. In cases where during implementation (problem solving) there are situations which were not planned or incorrectly planned, then we must adapt to them to reach the goal (of the ideal body state).

During planning there are a lot of situations that are hard to anticipate correctly. Holland says that in these cases we all can depend on **credit assignment**: how strong is an if-then rule, how much we can build on them. We assign credits to a rule by previous experience. Our baby boy from the previous example feels that if he contracts the arms, he can put his thumb into the mouth, which will lead to gratification/reward. If he moves the arm differently, the reward will not come, no credit is assigned.

In long-term strategies the final outcome (for example winning a chess-game) gives positive or negative credits to all steps leading to that outcome. The more such positive credits an if-then rule has, the stronger it is, so we can build upon them more safely. Other rules are overthrown by credit assignment and new rules are made. This credit assignment process was well-proved by Green's team (1994), who also found a discounting effect of these credits based on time. That means that the longer the delay between the step (action) and the reward (feedback), the

more the value of the credit is discounted. So the same present behaviour needs higher level of reward in long term strategies.

This is illustrated in the model below: if there is clear link between the action and the reward (contracting my arms, being able to suck my thumb), there are several credits given. If I have to do more steps to reach an award, I need a bigger reward because cause and effect are not clearly there, and my feeling of agency is not that open.



So implementation is always learning, as it gives feedback on all the rules the agent used during planning, and leads to the development of new rules. These cognitive changes also occur at the neural system, as when the same steps and models are experienced, and the same temporal neural networks are formulated (Greenfield, 2000). As Hebb (1949) said: if neurons fire together, they wire together. The more we have an experience, the more times the same temporal neural networks are formulated, and our neural system “learns” how to make them up the most quickly, and they become constant neural networks. That is how we build up all of our skills from being able to suck our thumbs to completing PhDs in neurobiology.

During play, in a transient what-if world, we strengthen these crediting systems, building up mental models, as the body makes no difference between actions made for play or for “real life”, as it experiences the raw feelings in both (the same neural processes are generated). Therefore, if during play we build up strong internal mental models (which are demonstrated in quickly-firing neural networks), they can be used for problem-solving in later life, and for long-term actions with delayed gratification and upheld agency, which are basics for life success.

## Play deficit and the decrease in agency

By now we have seen how our agency and self is developed through embodied play and how it is strengthened and developed further by later forms of play. But what if there is not enough space and time for play? Play activists, rightly, say that our social and physical environment is built up to discourage play.

Parents as well as teachers seek to provide a safe environment for children, however the level of this safety can very much be questioned. In their review of play literature, Lester and Russell (2008) conclude that according to research findings, physical safety – avoidance of risks – comes at a cost. However, it often causes a “parent paradox”, as parents’ own play memories include strong positive memories of playing outdoors with other children and without parental control, but they feel their children have to be more protected. The fear of parents and teachers of the outdoors as a dangerous place is also mirrored by the children themselves. O’Brien and others (cited by Lester and Russell, 2008 pp. 13) found that a third of the interviewed children themselves have an anxiety about some places in their neighbourhood as well as about unknown youths and adults.

Lester and Russell also conclude that “a considerable amount of research over the past decade indicates that children’s opportunity to range independently in many industrialized societies has significantly diminished” (2008, pp. 144).

The other trend of parenting, which considers a good parent to be one who provides as many organized developmental activities for their children as possible, also significantly constrains the amount of time provided for children to play. The combination of the avoidance of risks and the focus on instructional development opportunities means that children’s lives have become highly institutionalized. “It is not just an issue of parents taking direct control over individual children, but also of other forces in the wider society exerting greater influence, intruding more directly into the childhood experience” (Thomas and Hocking, 2003, p. 23). Thomas and Hocking also cite research which shows that the average UK parent spends 85 minutes with the child daily as compared to the 25 minutes average in the 1970s.

Brussoni and others (2012, p. 3138) state that

*Parents' perceptions about danger can be disproportionate to actual dangers. While traffic concerns are borne out by statistics, child abductions by strangers are exceedingly rare. Ironically, “stranger-danger” concerns have resulted in increasing volumes of traffic, with corresponding increases in traffic-related dangers. (...) Current Western middle class social pressures to maximize children's opportunities and adhere to practices of “intensive parenting” support the notion that parents should have children attend the “best” schools, participate in a multitude of*

*organized activities, and provide as much protection as possible —potentially more than they personally perceive as necessary. The result has been creation of a “backseat generation” with little unstructured play time and reliance on automobile-based commuting from one activity to the next.”*

This trend, called by Gray (2013) a “play-deficit”, has a great impact not on learning in itself, but on the development of the self and of agency. If we look back to the previous section about making up internal models, we can see that it is not play dependent. Through organized classes we do learn, and build-up internal models. But at the same time we build up a very basic internal model: that the initiation of activities comes from outside. From others. Others are the ones to decide what is good for us.

This is also a basic mental model, also neurally stored. Even if a child enjoys being in the drama class her mother takes her to, the model itself will contain **the action of the mother** taking her. This is not a bad thing in itself, but becomes a problem if this external decision making is the only model children have.

To turn back where we began: we build up our agency by experiencing our inner actions and making up an internal model of our body. This is the basis of embodied agency. **Self-initiation** is a must in this process. By only moving the baby’s body, the self is not built up. S/he must be the one who initiates.

This is true for later activities as well. Self-initiation (referred to as “freely chosen” in the play literature) comes genetically at a very basic level. But it needs to be nurtured and strengthened in order to develop into complex agency-feeling and complex actions.

The three characteristics of play set up in the Playwork Principles (2005) that play is freely chosen, intrinsically motivated and personally directed - all come from the embodied agency of the child. If the child is the one who is making up the movements, the scene, the process of the play, s/he has control and knowledge of that control, which is reinforced both cognitively and neurally. If not so, s/he experiences a loss of the feeling of being able to have an impact. While the basic agency, which is stored in the core self, cannot be touched, at more superficial level there is a feeling that a next level of agency, which Ballard calls “*the ability to find a response that seems personally meaningful*” (2005, p. 142) is definitely damaged. By having the feeling of agency and control decreased, self-motivation is lost, and self-initiation diminishes. A vicious circle. This is how children de-learn playing.

As agency is embodied, the feeling of decrease in agency is also embodied. It is already clearly shown that damaging our feeling of agency at a very bodily level (control of what happens to us through accident, war, abuse) is traumatizing (see among others: Levine, 2010, van der Kolk,

2014, Herman, 1994), it is not yet clearly proven what impact play deficit has on the feeling of agency at a bodily and mental level. What is already visible is that children with play-deficit have problems with their bodies: higher rates of obesity, asthma (Strife and Downey, 2009). Panksepp (2018) even claims that play deficit can be a root of attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

We also know that at social level the impact of loss of control is alienation, estrangement of communities, of nature, and the feeling of being a tool instead of the actor. Samman and Santos define agency as “an actor’s or group’s ability to make purposeful choices” (2009, pp.3.). They also quote Sen (1985, p. 203) who defines agency as „what a person is free to do and achieve in pursuit of whatever goals or values he or she regards as important”. It is important to underline that the feeling of agency comes with the sensation that there are available choices and actions to be taken in order to reach one’s goals. This means that for agency, the level of belief is also needed, as well as a freedom of processes and opportunities (Samman and Santos, 2009; Ballard, 2005). If this belief is already thwarted in childhood by not being allowed to play, mature agency will not be able to develop, which will lead to less initiation, creativity, problem-solving – skills which are so much needed in our ever-changing social and natural environment.

Letting the children play therefore is not only important for them, but for all of humanity.

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## 7. Putting the Playwork Principles in Practice

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**Karen Benjamin**

In the UK a specific methodology exists that describes the approach of supporting children's play. This approach is termed Playwork and is undertaken by playworkers who support play in a range of settings from adventure playgrounds to outdoor park spaces, as well as in Out of School clubs and holiday playschemes. All of which provide spaces in which children can play with a range of resources.

The Playwork Principles were drawn up by the Playwork Principles Scrutiny Group in 2004. This group consisted of experienced playworkers and playwork trainers from across the UK representing the majority view of the playwork profession from an intensive consultation process. They establish the professional and ethical framework for playwork and are therefore the basis for job descriptions and all policies and procedures within playwork settings.

The Playwork Principles describe what is unique about play and playwork, and they provide the playwork perspective for working with children and young people. They are based on the recognition that children and young people's capacity for positive development will be enhanced if given access to the broadest range of environments and play opportunities.<sup>5</sup>

This article will consider what the Playwork Principles might mean for playworkers. Although this focuses on the UK context, where playwork is an established, although not always well known, approach to working with children, the principles are adaptable and applicable in other European contexts, as we have shown in our previous European funded VIPER project.<sup>6</sup>

The Playwork Principles guide us as playworkers and inform best practice.

The first principle states:

*All children and young people need to play. The impulse to play is innate. Play is a biological, psychological and social necessity, and is fundamental to the healthy development and well-being of individuals and communities.*

What is paramount within this first statement is the word 'all'. Play is not a privilege for the few, or the rich or non-disabled, play is an essential element for every childhood and therefore from the start playworkers need to ensure that they are inclusive, unbiased and fair in

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<sup>5</sup> The Playwork Principles are available at <http://www.playwales.org.uk/eng/playworkprinciples>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.viperproject.eu/>

supporting all children's access to play opportunities. The principle also expresses through the use of the word 'need' that play is not something to be considered as a treat for being good, earning a child golden time in school on a Friday afternoon. Play is what children do from the moment they wake, and indeed what they would continue to do if other things didn't get in the way. The principle also states that it is a need of young people too. There is often an assumption that play is only for young children before they grow up, become more serious, perhaps have 'better' things to do, however the need for play and the inherent desire to play continues as children grow into adults.

*We don't stop playing because we grow old, we grow old because we stop playing  
(George Bernard Shaw, poet and playwright).*

This desire, or need, to play is interpreted in the principles as an innate drive. This is based upon the belief that playing is an inherent human feature and also largely dominant in the lives of many mammals. We only have to watch puppies playing to know that this is not just a human condition.

Play is defined further as a biological, psychological and social necessity. Often the playwork sector is called upon to justify why time and money should be spent on supporting children playing when it appears chaotic, unfruitful and sometimes even dangerous. Many adults provide opportunities for children to keep fit and active and children and young people are encouraged to undertake sports for exercise and team building co-operative skills. The childhood obesity statistics that have resulted in a plan of action (HM Government, 2016) from the UK Government will emphasise this further with schools undertaking the Daily Mile<sup>7</sup> initiative where pupils run a mile round the school playground every day. Whilst obesity is an issue and the risks to health that being overweight can bring are of concern, it is essential that play is seen as a natural antidote to this. If children and young people can play out in their neighbourhoods and environments, climb trees, run, chase, skip, roll and engage with others in spaces and places then a natural by-product of their play will be physical activity. When you are overweight then sports often become something you fail in or can't be good at – this isn't something attributed in playing where competition and specific skills are not a requirement for engagement.

The term biological doesn't just apply to the physical, it concerns the whole development of a child and young person from co-ordination and dexterity, to sensory perceptions. The perspective view from up a tree gives a very different feel of your environment and the space in

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<sup>7</sup> [www.thedailymile.co.uk](http://www.thedailymile.co.uk)

which you can be. Similarly rolling down a hill or splashing in muddy puddles provides a more sensory experience of the constituents and feel of the natural environment.

Bob Hughes suggests that through play children draw on experiences from human evolutionary stages and explore further their relationship with the natural world, thus discovering their identity within it. He sees this type of play, which he terms as Recapitulative Play as a way to understanding our ancestral early beginnings, 'we have a physical and psychic manifestation of the direct link between the playing child and the lineage of its ancestors' (Hughes, 2001, p. 200). Whilst history and artefacts can inform us, playing brings us the experience, it is essentially a part of being human.

The psychological development achieved through playing includes the growth of resilience, cognitive skills and emotional regulation. Falling out with friends and making up again, learning to take the knocks, empathy when others get hurt, being scared when trying out something new or risky, laughing – all these aspects of playing support overall growth and development before the adults get involved in any of it. And if these things are important for overall growth and development then it is also essential that those less able are also supported in gaining these opportunities. This can be an essential role for a playworker.

As a social necessity, playing can be how we make friends, learn about other family cultures, beliefs and relationships. Again, another argument for inclusive play, for disabled children to play alongside their non-disabled peers leads to friendships and understandings that support inclusive societies. Children can choose also to play alone, finding time for self-reflection and thought through immersion in something specific to them in that particular moment in time. Cloud watching, making daisy chains, focusing on a particular opportunity or self-directed task.

Whilst Principle one lists these factors there is great evidence and depth to these words that take time for the playworker to explore and understand through observation, research, reading and guidance from playwork theorists, such as Hughes, Else, Lester, Russell and Sturrock<sup>8</sup> amongst many others.

In summarising, Playwork Principle 1 expresses the impact that playing has not only on the individual but society as a whole for we are part of communities and a human race that interacts and responds to each other. Children playing out in their local environments is often an indicator of a happy safe community where people know and trust each other. The first

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<sup>8</sup> Bob Hughes, Perry Else, Stuart Lester, Wendy Russell and Gordon Sturrock are all acknowledged as theorists within the field of playwork

principle acknowledges the importance of play as a natural and essential way that humans learn, grow and build relationships.

And if we are to acknowledge that an intrinsic drive to play is beneficial to the human species then perhaps we need to consider the consequences of not playing, of play deprivation. The UN Convention of the Rights of the Child sees play as a human right (Article 31) and we can only assume therefore that its importance for all children worldwide is acknowledged. Without good quality play opportunities children may well be deprived of experiences that are seen by Hughes (2001) and others as an integral part of human development and essential for the survival of the human race.

Sturrock and Else (1998) are in agreement. They cite evidence of 'dys-ease' through a rise in the diagnosis of ADD/ADHD, mental illness in young people, increasing criminality and the current high levels of obesity. If play is an innate drive and essential to human evolution, then its deprivation can only result in negative factors in young people. Evolutionary play is important 'for our psychological well-being' Hughes, 2001, p. 16) which Hughes believes that we 'ignore at our peril'.

Playwork Principle 2 states:

*Play is a process that is freely chosen, personally directed and intrinsically motivated. That is, children and young people determine and control the content and intent of their play, by following their own instincts, ideas and interests, in their own way for their own reasons.*

After establishing the importance of play the Principles continue by defining play for the playwork sector. Most professionals working with children will see play as important with a particular emphasis mostly for younger children on learning through play. Playworkers see the learning as a by-product and not always something that has to happen. Play can be experiential, routine, chaotic, ridiculous, in the moment. What is should be as far as possible is in the hands of the player, freely chosen, not adult led, timetabled or guided. Often the choice is not entirely freely chosen by the child as compromises may need to be made in order to play with others, however the essence of Principle 2 is to understand that children are in control; it is their choice in how they play, where they play and what they play with that are important. Playworkers supporting play in play settings should therefore understand that they need to observe and be guided by the children and not plan programmes of activities that have no flexibility or are of no particular interest to children – it is not about teaching them things, unless they ask! Playwork is a complicated and frustrating profession that takes a life time to understand and even then we may never get it right!

Understanding the importance of play and that the power lies within the choices of the children leads the profession into an understanding of their role through Principle 3:

*The prime focus and essence of playwork is to support and facilitate the play process and this should inform the development of play policy, strategy, training and education.*

With the definition of play from the principles and an understanding of its' importance for all children and young people, the latter who may well play very differently to younger children and therefore need their own space, time and acceptance to follow their own instincts and ideas, then the purpose of playwork is to support this process. All policy should be underpinned by this understanding and all development and training of playworkers should adhere to these first two principles. This is important because it can easily be corrupted in the struggle for funding where targets are set and evidence required that may be in tension with the ethos of essential playwork.

This is anticipated in Playwork Principle 4 which states:

*For playworkers, the play process takes precedence and playworkers act as advocates for play when engaging with adult-led agendas.*

It is important that as playworkers we stick to our belief in our principles because they define the uniqueness of the profession and are the guidance for playwork. Lack of funding or understanding from other sectors or professionals can at times create pressure to provide alternative provision or support for children. Adventure Playgrounds who provide free access to play for children and young people can often find themselves balancing this provision with other services, such as hiring out the space to schools for educational projects, in order to subsidise the free play. The benefits however may not only be financial, for after a while schools begin to understand through observing how their children develop or behave, that maybe there is another approach to working with children other than a predominantly adult guided way.

Adventure playgrounds are spaces specifically for children to play freely but are not the only spaces and may not be available around the country for all children and young people to access. What is important is that spaces are created in which children can play according to their needs and wishes.

Playwork Principle 5 states:

*The role of the playworker is to support all children and young people in the creation of a space in which they can play.*

This acknowledges that spaces are important for play to be supported. However, play will happen anywhere from the supermarket to the street as children follow this innate drive and desire to play. Schools provide playtimes within the school day – in fact a third of time spent at school is for play and yet very little consideration is given to it at times. Projects in the UK like OPAL<sup>9</sup> and Scrapstore Playpods<sup>10</sup> are addressing this with targeted training and resources implemented to improve playtimes and adhere to a playwork approach within schools. Often a good play space is not about all the wonderful equipment or resources within it but it more about the attitude and approach of the adults. A good space requires consideration of the physical and the human aspects. Lester (2012) has also written about play in other spaces, for example museums, as a reflection and challenge on the human aspect of the play space.

It is not only the space itself, but what affordances that environment provides for children and that will be as unique as each individual child. Interactions with the environment create attachments with space and also with objects within that space as much as attachment with other human beings.

*If, as Sutton-Smith suggests, play is about the development of emotional experiences and repertoires of responses, then we may see the play space as an 'affective topography' (Sturrock 2003), a place that is vibrant with vivid emotional content (Lester, 2010, p. 194).*

Feelings are the essence of what it is to be human and when we share emotions we develop an empathy with others and through developing friendships and understanding of others children are more likely to consider a range of responses and retain a flexibility in their approach to challenges and interactions.

The environment can also support children whose individual behaviours may lead them to be diagnosed with ADHD. These children who find difficulties remaining still and concentrating in certain restrained and adult dominated spaces can often benefit from large outdoor spaces with more freedom for physical mobility and a more complex environment. Often the behaviours displayed could be viewed as playful within an alternative environment with particular affordances and there is some concern about the use of psycho-stimulants on these children when the long term effect may well be the reduction of neural plasticity in the brain.

*This idea also forces us to consider what types of beneficial effects for brain development might be advanced by allowing natural abundant play during*

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<sup>9</sup> [www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk](http://www.outdoorplayandlearning.org.uk) OPAL project in schools

<sup>10</sup> [www.playpods.co.uk](http://www.playpods.co.uk) Scrapstore Playpods in schools

*childhood, and whether administration of play-reducing psychostimulants might reduce such benefits (Panksepp and Smith-Pasqualini, 2005, p. 16).*

Playwork is a complex and serious business. We are human beings ourselves with our own emotions, feelings and responses that operate within an environment that is shared with children, who in turn have their own emotions, feelings and responses.

If we believe, as we do, that play is vital to children's well-being and that significant developments are made to children's brain growth through the act of playing, then we have a responsibility to support play and create environments that will enhance opportunities for children to fully engage in a range of play types (Hughes, 2002).

Whilst children can and will play without adult presence or interference, playworkers are in their space and therefore their role in that space needs to be a positive one. The relationship with the children and the levels of intervention are a priority in providing the appropriate human environment, one that supports children's freely chosen play and responds to children from a child-centred perspective that values and empowers them. Too nosy and we run the risk of dominating and imposing ourselves on what essentially should be a private and intimate space.

*Children do not want to be overheard when they are interacting and negotiating (Hughes, 2001, p. 174).*

However too indifferent and playworkers may be seen as not caring. Hughes defines the indifferent approach though as one where the playworker 'may give the impression of being otherwise engaged' when they are in fact 'focused on the children and their "state"' (Hughes, 2001, p. 172). In this way the competent playworker can observe and reflect on practice and the impact of the provision with regards to resources, play opportunities and how relationships are developing, thus making changes when appropriate, and monitoring risks and challenges in order to prevent hazards. Remembering also that they work as part of a team in this process.

This is the importance of Playwork Principle 6:

*The playworker's response to children and young people playing is based on a sound up to date knowledge of the play process, and reflective practice.*

Each principle builds upon the previous one for if we are to create spaces then we need to understand the play we are intent on supporting and the essential nature of that play. To support play opportunities, we need to observe children playing, believing them to be the experts and learning from them about their needs and desires, as well as their struggles. Our presence in that space has an impact on children and we need to be aware of when and how we intervene as well as why. For whose purpose are we intervening? Play sessions have to

come to an end when it is time to close or the school bell rings so recognising this type of intervention can support how it is done. OPAL and Scrapstore Playpods have in some schools done away with bells in order to make the transition from play back into school time smoother. Reflecting on how we do things and why both as a team and as an individual is a constant part of a playworkers job.

Thus, Playwork Principle 7 states:

*Playworkers recognise their own impact on the play space and also the impact of children and young people's play on the playworker.*

There may well be children that are difficult to work with, there may be those who need a little time or a relationship with the adult. Playworkers need to recognise their own needs which may be in contrast to the child's. Sturrock and Else (1998) have written about how the playworker may be looking for their own therapeutic healing in the play space which can impact on relationships with children if we as adults are looking for our own needs through play. Again, there needs to be consideration of the appropriate human environment and the awareness that an adult presence in a play space will impact on how children and young people play, which may limit or suppress the freely chosen aspect of playing and the innate drive. Good playworkers will become invisible to children, being there when needed, providing resources and sparking play opportunities, responding to play cues, but generally enabling spaces for play to happen.

Finally, Playwork Principle 8 says:

*Playworkers choose an intervention style that enables children and young people to extend their play. All playworker intervention must balance risk with the developmental benefit and well-being of children.*

If playworkers acknowledge the importance of play for all children and the essence and nature of freely chosen play for the player then any intervention in children and young people's play must be based on a sound knowledge of the theory and experience through reflection both self and with others, in order that the purpose is to extend the play rather than inhibit it. This may simply involve re framing the play, moving it to another space where it can happen. For example, often water play will occur in toilets at the wrath of the caretaker, moving it outside with hoses, buckets or water shooters enables the play to continue. Boredom with something that has become too easy, or outgrown by the children, will require an extension of the play type by playworkers exploring other opportunities to provide similar experiences through different stimuli or equipment such as making it higher, faster or scarier. All of this will be



balanced with good knowledge of risk benefit assessments<sup>11</sup>, an understanding of the children themselves and with good playwork practice and a desire to support play opportunities balanced with the care and well-being of children and young people.

Playwork is a serious profession; it is based on sound knowledge and evidence; it is supported by groups, organisations,<sup>12</sup> individuals and theorists of great experience and knowledge; and it needs protecting and valuing if we are to support children in their most natural of states.

*'Play', said Froebel, '...is the highest form of human development in childhood, for it alone is the free expression of what is in the child's soul. It is the purest and most spiritual product of the child and at the same time it is a type and copy of human life at all stages and in all relationships .... For to one who has insight into human nature, the trend of the future life of the child is revealed in his freely chosen play' (Jenkinson, 2001, p. 50.*

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## 8. Social Circus and its Links to ARTPAD

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**Pete Duncan**

In this paper I will look at the idea of using circus activities with children and young people to help build resilience. The article will look at what “Social Circus” is, offer some examples, and explore how it might offer opportunities to support young people at risk, and act as an agent for social change. Threaded through it are links and key resources that have influenced my work. I will conclude by looking at where the ideas and skills from the ARTPAD course are being integrated into a range of ongoing projects.

### **Social Circus**

*Social circus uses circus to create positive social change. Targeting at-risk groups, the goal is not to learn the circus skills, but to allow participants to change their lives through the passion it brings. It encourages personal and social development by nurturing self-esteem and trust, helping participants to acquire social skills, become active citizens, express their creativity and realize their potential (MODO, Circus with a Purpose website).*

There are lots of social circuses across Europe doing amazing work, from integrating refugees, to providing diversion opportunities for young people involved in crime and drugs. As Steven Desanghere (2016, p. 8) says in his useful booklet *Look at Me!*

*The circus arts as a method of working can be particularly successful. Those who have taken part in circus workshops or projects, afterwards often are very enthusiastic about their experience. They refer to the power of Playing, conquering their insecurities and fear while Learning and Practicing numerous circus techniques, or the excitement and the tension of Showing their newly acquired skills. Playing, Learning, Showing – the Holy Trinity of the circus approach. The beauty of this approach is that it translates well across a broad spectrum of special target groups, who aren't always easy to reach through regular channels or youth, sports and culture programmes. Think of newcomers to a place, who speak a different language, the socially disadvantaged, children or young people with learning or behavioural disorders, autism or ADHD, people who are overweight or of an older age, those who are less able to walk or see properly, or have a mental illness or are in prison, children in special youth care or arriving from warzones, and numerous introverts or those that don't quite fit in. In short, the circus works for (almost) everyone.*

I have been involved in social circus since 1992. I was one of the founders of *Circus Eruption*, which has used circus to offer integrated opportunities to teenagers in Swansea, South Wales,

for over 25 years. We support young people with a range of impairments and challenges to meet and develop together.

*A place where young people can challenge their fear of failure in a safe, non-competitive environment. By empowering young people we believe they will flourish and make a difference in the world (Circus Eruption website).*

Circus Eruption has proved successful in supporting, inspiring and developing young people and adults and has proved it can make changes in people's self-esteem, health and wellbeing.

The Welsh Government has been increasingly concerned about childhood obesity and made a commitment in 2013 'to make physical literacy as important a development skill as reading and writing'. I was involved in designing a training course for teachers to look at Circus as a way to engage young people in moving more, enjoying physical challenge and exploring opportunities other than through traditional sport. A short video was made of the experiences of teachers in learning and then presenting and using circus skills with a range of young people:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9sbFG2g9y3M>.

## **How Social Circus builds resilience**

In Social Circus, a safe non-competitive environment is created where people feel motivated and supported to have a go at a range of circus skills such as juggling, stilt walking, unicycling, human pyramids. Though the activities focus on developing specific circus skills, much more is going on. People work to build their skills and competencies, creating a cycle of confidence and competence and motivation. This process builds resilience as people can see themselves improving: for example, achieving more throws, or balancing more steadily. People can get instant feedback from their bodies, peers, tutors/facilitators.

Building trust and teamwork, conditioning and physical competence are all foundations for developing circus skills and then creating and presenting performances. People gain resilience from the process as well as the end result.

In Circus Eruption we run an outreach project where we meet groups facing challenges and then run a course of ten sessions. At the end of the course some groups of participants opt to run a workshop rather than a "show", preferring to share their experiences and what they have learned rather than demonstrating their own skills. Committing to teach others adds more transferable skills: gathering and using information, presenting, encouraging others, taking responsibility for the safety of others, and so on. Again, these are elements of resilience that are transferable to other areas of participants' lives.

## Two ideas for how I present resilience: “I can’t do this yet” and a growth mindset

I am interested in how people learn, or perhaps how people tell themselves they can’t learn, and the language people often use to disable themselves. When people first encounter juggling balls, a very common opening line is,

“I can’t juggle, I have no hand and eye co-ordination”.

I often ask adults if they drive a car, and when they say they do, I ask again if they feel they really have poor hand and eye co-ordination. Other times, I ask how they might respond to the children in their group disabling themselves with this language and self-labelling.

When people are scared their mind “goes blank”. All the blood rushes to the back of the brain and “fight or flight” responses kick in. In this state of mind, people have little chance of solving problems. Yet the paradox is that people’s brains are designed to keep them alive by solving problems!

Two books that have influenced my practice are Eric Jensen’s (1994) *The Learning Brain* and Paul Ginnis’ (2002) *The Teacher’s Toolkit*. Eric Jensen’s book looks at brain research, its implications, and how you might use this as a trainer (for example why you should keep students hydrated). Paul Ginnis’s book looks at learning and memory, and offers a range of activities. It is good for reflection and consolidating learning and ways of assessing learning.

Getting people to feel relaxed, positive and receptive early on is critical. One way I help to create an atmosphere where people want to have a go is simply by adding “YET” or “LIKE THAT” to their defeatist statements. For example, people are only allowed to say “I can’t do that” if they follow it with “YET” or “LIKE THAT”. Often, when we have worked with schools, teachers and tutors tell us that this language carries on between sessions or after we have completed our direct input.

Getting people to reflect on their success or to analyse their blocks is also helpful in maintaining motivation. For example, when they say, “I threw the ball too far forward from my left hand”, this can help them on the road to self-awareness and self-correction.

Laughter is also very important, as is continual positive encouragement.

Additionally, some people may need adjustments, or grading of challenges, for example in pace, of materials, or the size of objects, to enable them to succeed. If people feel they are achieving something, they are more likely to carry on wanting to improve.

Establishing a growth mindset is critical, where people can see themselves as capable of solving problems, of persisting, rather than seeing their capability as “fixed” in a mental or physical sense.

My practice in this area has been influenced by Carol Dweck’s (2017) book *Mindset – Changing the way you think to fulfil your potential*. This looks at how people limit themselves by having a “fixed” mindset and view of their capacity and potential, and what facilitators/trainers can do to change the language, perception and thinking of learners.

## **Some examples of how social circus programmes have worked to build resilience**

### *1. Fragile learners – looking at school transitions (South Wales)*

Circus Eruption was funded from the charity “Children in Need” in 2017 to run a course of ten sessions for “fragile learners” (lacking in resilience) young people aged 10 and 11 who were struggling academically and socially. Professionals had concerns about their transition from primary to secondary schools. When we first met the group all of them looked at the floor, any eye contact was difficult to obtain, and when asked to do something some began to cry.

In the first school we worked with, pupils gained so much confidence and recognised the value of circus that they approached the head teacher and asked for money to buy circus kit. They offered to run circus workshops for their peers at lunchtime. It was felt this confidence and resilience would change their self-image, peer status and make smooth transition between schools more likely.

In the second school, a showing of skills culminated in young people writing about the things they had learnt in addition in circus skills. They wrote things like, “Keep trying, be persistent, take small steps, encourage yourself and others, it’s not as bad as you think – have a go”.

However, the biggest insight from this work was from the head teacher who commented on the improved handwriting of pupils, something that had also been noted by staff and parents. The following discussion tried to find a cause for this outcome. For example, was it because they had better hand and eye co-ordination? Or was it because they had improved tracking (the ability to follow a moving object with the eyes, for example in juggling), a key skill for competence and speed of reading? Or was it because they see themselves as capable learners? In the end, the consensus was it didn’t matter what the reason was, as all these elements helped them as learners and would stand them in good stead as they progressed in their education.

## *2. Engagement – looking at challenges in arriving at Key stage 3*

This was a project set up by University of Wales Trinity St David, and it looked at engagement in secondary schools when children first arrive in Year 7. Some children fail to get involved in their new school, struggling with new ways of learning, expectations, responsibilities. There is an increase in challenging behaviour and absences from school. In Wales, Key Stage 2 is for young people aged 7-11, Key Stage 3 is 12 to 16 years of age. The transition from KS2 (primary school) to KS3 (secondary school) is challenging. At primary school children are with the same people and have one teacher all day, whereas at secondary school, pupils mix with lots of people for different subjects, in different rooms, taught by specialist teachers.

Pupils moving from Key Stage 2 to 3 were arriving at school with a reading age lower than expected for an eight-year-old. It was proving a challenge for them to access the curriculum, leading to problems with behaviour and attendance. Two specialist teachers were engaged with circus tutors to run a unique 'Key Stage 2.5' group that used the physical activities in circus and linked these to learning. For example, pupils would learn circus skills (balancing, juggling, stilts, unicycling, etc.) and then have lessons with content related to the circus, for example, ticket sales, fuel consumption, international touring and time zones, etc. Early indications are positive for engagement, motivation and focus. Young people are proud of their achievements in circus and learning.

## *3. Circoarts - Art space and a fire circus (North Wales)*

Circoarts uses circus, contemporary performing, and visual arts to encourage and enhance community and individual engagement, participation, and wellbeing through the delivery of events, projects, and programmes in communities throughout North Wales and across the UK. They are working with young people in Snowdonia, a mountainous rural area, to build an arts community. The group were supported in participating in a 6-day train the trainers course supported by the Welsh Arts Council and No Fit State Circus.

A young person commented "I learnt more in 6 days than the last 4 years at school"

The journey of engaging young people excluded or getting little from school involves:

1. engagement in arts/circus classes
2. taking on the role of support worker/mentor for their peers or younger children;
3. the group of young people begin to self-manage their practice;
4. rehearsals and working with directors to create their own shows;
5. creating shows which are professional enough to be marketed to events and festivals;
6. building skills and developing ideas (one participant has just been accepted to audition in a Portuguese Circus school).

This link shows them performing at Y Ffestri (an arts initiative in Llanberis, Wales):

<https://www.facebook.com/yfestri/videos/776367969212946/>.

#### 4. MODO - Circus with purpose (Aberdeenshire, Scotland)

Modo circus works in partnership with the education providers in Scotland for young people aged 5-14 who are facing challenges or offering challenges to schools. The circus works through Learning Pathways Plus, a local education authority commissioning scheme, offering opportunities for these young people from half a day to five days a week.

Vulnerable young people see failure as something to be feared, and something that is happening regularly for them. Circus Modo takes a different perspective. A key element is that the “fails” are explicit. When playing sport, although your team may win or lose the fails are not so clear, whereas when you are struggling to learn a new skill the fail rate is high and clear, you can look at it and make adjustments. The circus shows that you can succeed through perseverance, lessons that can be taken back into school and into life.

Young people get motivated to learn, they can identify where they are failing, and create solutions so they can succeed. 16-19 years olds defined by the education authority as having “no positive destination” get involved in the project and a range of activities are put on targeting disadvantaged young people. The circus is using a variety of circus skills including fire juggling, fire swinging, and fire breathing to help young people build resilience. Their confidence and organisation are so high they attend UK Youth Circus festivals and support others in learning and presenting fire shows.

#### Some anecdotes from a decade later: how resilience emerged in surprising settings

Circus Eruption has been going since 1992, and so “generations” of children have moved through the 12-18 age range. Some have come back as adult volunteers, and sometimes we receive news of the surprising impact of circus.

After a circus festival we co-ordinated we were reviewing the impact of circus with volunteers.

One said,

*“My little sister came to the circus, it was her first exposure to the ideas including: equality, rights, identity, belonging, and to befriending people labelled disabled. Now ten years on she is a foster carer for children with autism – it is a really hard role, but I am convinced she would never have seen that as an option without circus.”*

Whilst watching an outdoor spectacular a professional photographer approached us, saying,



*“You don’t remember me – I was in the circus ten years ago. You won’t remember because I was a shy crumpled up small person (she mimics this body state being small and looking at the floor, then stood tall again). I can’t tell you how much the circus did for me – I have just come back from 6 years as a cast member at Disneyworld Florida. I am now making my way as a freelance photographer.”*

### **Looking at how playing with skills – the flexible approach, the inclusivity of circus – can help build resilience**

One of the key elements for me is the creativity/inclusiveness of Circus. People involved in sports will have rules and governing bodies, within Social Circus there is a “yes let’s” attitude: people are creating new acts, combinations, fabricating new equipment, blending and integrating different disciplines. People play with ideas, creating new challenges – particularly evident in juggling where new patterns are named after their creators/popularisers.

Here is a creative juggler! <https://www.facebook.com/nofasterdna/videos/419911265107265/>.

### **Looking at telling your story – how owning and valuing your journey in shows has gains**

I have been involved in using circus and drama to help people tell their story, working in partnership with Mess Up The Mess Youth Theatre in Carmarthenshire, Wales. We created pieces to perform at an awards ceremony for “looked after children” (children whose parents are unable to support them and are in the care of the local council). The show was written and presented by young people aged 6-16 supported by facilitators, artists and a theatre director. It was presented twice to an audience of over 500 people.

In “The Land of Future Champions”, a young person lived in far, far away land, her house and family were washed away. The heroine escapes to Tricksville, a new land where she learns lots of tricks. These include stiltwalking (take small steps), human pyramid building (trust others), juggling (learn from your mistakes), slapstick boxing (get up again and again). She then realised you can’t run away for ever and using her skills she returns to create a “Land of Future Champions”.

Young people having their voices heard, creating stories, celebrating their journey and presenting them to a prestigious audience was very challenging and empowering. The participants felt their experience was heard and valued. Evaluation showed how challenging and moving the performance was for the audience, and how powerful the process was for the performers.

## Looking at where the work from ARTPAD might take me – working with refugees across Europe

- I am working in a range of settings. I am working with staff in nursery settings developing ideas about young children, play and physical literacy, looking at how we can support children's play outside so they can develop physical competencies, problem solving and creativity.
- I am working with healthy schools and sports projects to develop training for adults to value play, including the development of a phone app for teachers.
- I am working with social circuses across Europe to look at work with refugees, with the potential to create a training course for people prior to them working in camps to help them understand the importance of play and drama.

The thinking and techniques learnt on the ARTPAD course held in Gdansk in March 2018 are being integrated into my thinking and practice.

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## 9. The Power of Play

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**Margitta Glawe**

*Man does not stop playing as he gets older.*

*He gets old because he stops playing.*

*(Oliver Wendell Holmes)*

This article considers the developmental psychological importance of play and its role and meaning in the life of adults, in this case the everyday life of psychiatric patients in the penal system<sup>13</sup>. Forms of play are categorized, and the board game Ludo is used to explore play's functions in this context. The importance of computer games is also considered. The article highlights the pedagogical effectiveness of drama and theatre as well as the benefits of physical play, using the example of volleyball.

I would like to make the readers of this article more aware of the importance of play in their pedagogical work. I show how play and drama contribute to improved social behaviour and a greater enjoyment of learning, and argue that it is not just an interesting pedagogical method, but an existential need to develop people, especially their resilience and core competencies.

As a staff member of UWEZO GmbH, I have been able to participate in the EU Erasmus+ funded ARTPAD project (Achieving Resilience Through Play and Drama). Among other things, the project investigated how play and drama in both formal and informal learning settings can help prevent early school leaving of children and young people from socially disadvantaged families. Since I also work as a pedagogue in the forensic psychiatry residential group service, I asked myself to what extent the ARTPAD research could be transferable to the clientele in the clinic, how play in forensic psychiatry can be used and, above all, what it effectuates. I would like to share my thoughts and my experiences here. More than 20 years ago, when I ventured to take my first steps in forensic psychiatry, observing, fascinated, and cautiously beginning to develop this whole new field of work for me, I made an astounding discovery right at the beginning. Often, early in the morning, I saw the patients playing the board game Ludo with the staff, and

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<sup>13</sup> In German "Massregelvollzug", also called "forensic psychiatry", people are judicially admitted who have committed a criminal offence and are not punishable by criminal conviction or due to their mental illness, according to paragraphs 63 and 64 of the German Code of Criminal Procedure. The essence of this facility is based on security and healing.



playing with enthusiasm. The German name for Ludo is *Mensch ärgere Dich nicht*, which translates into English as 'don't get angry, mate', and I found this name bizarre given the forensic patients' backgrounds and their reasons for being admitted. But what I observed was that this simple children's game gave them great pleasure, and was clearly more than just a way of passing the time.

There is no doubt that play is a phenomenon in itself and is an important factor in the evolution of humanity, and consequently in the life cycle of every single human being. Learning and work are purposeful activities, carried out for an end goal, and although these may at times be enjoyable, play, by contrast is always pleasurable, purposeless and self-determined, and is done for its own sake. In early childhood (in our culture), play, learning and work are experienced as an inseparable unity. Peter Gray writes in his prologue to the book *Free to Learn*:

*Children come into the world burning to learn and genetically programmed with extraordinary capacities for learning. They are little learning machines. Within their first four years or so they absorb an unfathomable amount of information and skills without any instruction. They learn to walk, run, jump and climb. They learn to understand and speak the language of the culture into which they are born, and with that they learn to assert their will, argue, amuse, annoy, befriend and ask questions. (Gray, 2013, p. x).*

Ideally, this symbiosis of play, work and learning will last for a long time.

Research has shown that creativity and curiosity in children are especially strong when they are able to play for long periods and are allowed to direct their play themselves (location, content, game partners and without the instructions and performance fixation of adults). The learning and *joie de vivre* created in this way continues to work throughout life and also plays a key role in the development of resilience. Those unable to experience free play in early childhood have difficulties with playing, discovery and creativity in their school years. As an adult, s/he will be a bore, a slowpoke, who cannot do anything with the abundance of stimuli and lives his life determined by others.

In my nursing, educational work I have often had the opportunity to work with the same patients over a period of years, allowing for a mutual trust to develop in the complexity of professional closeness and distance. So I have often been in a position to understand the people entrusted to me in their whole, entangled, intermeshed life story. Included are, among others, particularities, characters, behaviour, competences, offences, illnesses, family histories. Meeting their families was very informative, something that was possible within day

trips with the patients. Here relationship-constructions became readable like an open book, as well as the intellectual, cultural and financial milieu. In these moments, I often had the impression that our patient clientele, regrettably, played little in their childhood. I was already well informed about school disaffection through the discussions I had with them.

No one can escape the experiences of their childhood, the prevailing values, roles, traditions, joys and fears. I believe even the games played, films seen and books read, as well as all encounters, leave a lasting impression on every personality. Children understand, taste, experience, observe and copy their environment right from the start. The copying and experimenting happens first in play, and then in reality. In reality, in the context of its possibilities and the prevailing conditions, everyone has to create their own role in life.....

Play is unique to all living beings. It does not end with childhood, but is found in many variations in adult life. Play is recognized by society and by focusing on selected basic principles, the game and entertainment industries (football, gaming, TV games and shows, etc.) have grown enormously and have significant market value.

But what makes play so special, what gives it its deeper meaning despite its apparent purposelessness?

In a lecture in 1922, Groos outlined three functions for play. First, play allows us to practice and adapt instincts, developing skills necessary for real life; second it allows us to experience something more than everyday life can offer; and third, we can recuperate energy through engaging in play as something that stands in contrast to work and to serious life (Schäfer, 2006). Many forms of play can be linked to these three functions. Take the board game mentioned at the beginning: Ludo. The desire to win is a basic human desire. Learning how to cope with losing at this game is as important for adults as it is for children. Many adults have big problems with this because of their personality structure. Even malicious joy needs to be moderated! "Kicking out" at an opponent can sometimes become a moral issue, if you do not want to upset or "hurt" one of the other players. Sudden defeats can undo past successes. Losing is allowed, as in real life, but in play, this can be played full of emotions, without 'real' painful consequences, and with the knowledge that one can always start over again.

Also, Ludo offers the opportunity to experiment with one's own abilities. Half-hearted play does not win. The player must act according to a strategy, must be vigilant, communicate, combine and interact, think (especially in cognitively disadvantaged patients it is interesting to observe how far the number of points on the dice are visually detected and then how with the counter is moved: whether they count or anticipate).

Rules must be defined, adhered to, monitored and, if disregarded, sanctions must be brought to bear. New rules can be created, questions can be asked, a whole range of practices are offered up for observing, evaluating and thinking. There are also choices to be made (different coloured counters, perhaps a metaphor for selecting a role, a point of view, a good or bad position). The players are in a different space and time frame during play. The chances of winning are the same for everyone! The encounter is on an equal footing, without hierarchy! An excellent foundation of a solid base for later, in other encounters. And the game releases resentment and pain.

To know when a game is over, and the players again take on other roles and tasks, must be clear and does not always end with the removal of the board and pieces.

Last but not least, this game also has valuable recreational value. The momentary respite from reality allows a shutdown, rethinking and deceleration. The game thrives on a positive tension and has an effect on well-being. In particular, patients with many disadvantages and difficulties can temporarily stimulate their self-esteem and self-belief. Joyful shared experiences also provide security and confidence in the institution and in other people. All this shows how a simple game of Ludo can provide all three functions highlighted by Groos.

In forensic psychiatry, however, Ludo (which can be put in the category of ‘play with rules’) is not the only form of play that takes place. In the following table I have drawn on Freya Pausewang’s (2006) model to list types of play/games, their characteristics and examples used with forensic psychiatric patients.

Type of play	Characteristics	Examples engaged in by forensic psychiatry patients
1. Practice play	A functional or psychomotor form of play (without and with materials or other people)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• interaction games</li> <li>• badminton</li> <li>• cycling</li> <li>• swimming</li> <li>• ice skating</li> <li>• hiking</li> <li>• running</li> <li>• singing, dancing</li> <li>• making and listening to music</li> <li>• playing with animals</li> </ul>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• wordplay games of proximity and distance (jokes, stories)</li> <li>• rough and tumble (very much controlled)</li> </ul>
2. Symbolic play	Games of make believe, fantasy play, pretend play	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• some board games (e.g. monopoly)</li> <li>• computer games</li> <li>• playing with toy animals</li> <li>• collecting miniatures (e.g. cars)</li> </ul>
3. Construction play	Designing and making things with materials according to own, given or jointly developed ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• building</li> <li>• painting</li> <li>• handicraft</li> <li>• tinkering</li> <li>• sewing</li> <li>• repairing</li> <li>• baking, cooking</li> <li>• landscaping</li> <li>• interior design</li> </ul>
4. Games with rules	Recognition of rules, reinvention and variations of rules	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• board games</li> <li>• card games</li> <li>• sports games (e.g. volleyball, football)</li> <li>• games for limited space e.g. croquet</li> </ul>
5. Role play	Putting oneself into the role of other living beings, designing action strategies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• drama</li> <li>• role playing games</li> </ul>

However, play does not only have the functions of practice, 'as if' and recreation, but can also be of value for diverse forms of educational development through its content and through the process of working towards individual goals. Let us consider the effect of a computer game from this perspective. As many research studies show, computer games offer excellent opportunities to immerse oneself in another world and take on a role that is often impossible for players in real life. Without real consequences, these games allow players to experiment, make decisions and be successful, providing pleasure and relaxation. Players can choose their own games to play, choosing the level of challenge, and progress as skills develop. The player himself searches out his game (for the 'age group' up to 16<sup>14</sup>) which is at his level, and also is

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<sup>14</sup> Over 16: Games have the depiction of violence (or sexual activity) reaches a stage that looks the same as would be expected in real life. The use of bad language in games with a PEGI 16 rating can be more extreme, while games of chance, and the use of tobacco, alcohol or illegal drugs can also be present.

Over 18: Games are not a depiction of gross violence, apparently motiveless killing, or violence towards defenceless characters. The glamorisation of the use of illegal drugs and explicit sexual activity should also fall into this age category. (Source: Pan European Game Information (PEGI) [pegi.info/page/what-do-labels-mean](http://pegi.info/page/what-do-labels-mean))

challenging. Levels increase with an increase of the playing skills, and vice versa. They are the mark of learning progress.

A patient, for example, who likes to play Football Manager on the computer, always tells staff in great detail which match he has just won, which players he has bought and generally how his life as a manager is going. In these moments we see a happy, relaxed person, although all involved know, it is only a play ...

The learning factor here is clear. The above-mentioned patient may be illiterate, yet he manages to solve the tasks and challenges of the game with his specific skills. He remembers, compares, looks for pictures and familiar structures, remembers words without being able to read them, and is success-oriented.

Of course, as is well known, there are also dangers, particularly in computer games, if under certain conditions and with certain patients, players become addicted. These cases, as with pathological gambling, must be treated therapeutically and are not the aim and content of my discussion here. For these cases, it is usually the special kick the games offer that players cannot do without. A feeling of happiness is triggered by playing and gambling, a feeling no longer or too weakly created in "real" life, ending in addiction and more and more flights from reality.

Even a "good" strategy game can lead to a loss of reality in everyday clinical practice. I remember a patient who cancelled an appointment with the therapist because he had to "unload" his truck quickly. It started to rain in his game and the cargo was in danger. For this patient, the game was his created reality, a form chosen by him to counteract the adverse circumstances of his life, one which makes him feel able to act, important and strong. His chosen opportunity to feel good! He has thus created a "pseudo-resilience".

*Resilience is the quality that allows the individual to persist in the face of challenges and to recover after difficult situations. Resilience strengthens the child, allows him/her to try new experiences, to accept challenges and to cope with situations of frustration and failure... and supports the achievement of dreams and personal aspirations." (Folostina et al, 2015: 2364).*

In the study by ARTPAD, the use of play and drama education and youth work is the crucial means to develop resilience in children and adolescents. How far this may apply to adults is an unanswered question, especially since the clientele in the forensic clinic tend to be mentally ill people or less cognitively able.



## Drama

From my experience, drawn from 15 years of work in the theatre group of forensic psychiatry in Ueckermünde, Germany, the following basic aspects of theatre education are also applicable, or transferable. To engage in the theatre, to deal with a role, to communicate in a certain public space, all require a multitude of abilities and skills that can only be developed in such a concentrated way within the particular fluidity of play. These include the following aspects that are expandable and interdependent:

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Psychic aspects</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Learning aspects</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• development of self-confidence</li> <li>• learning to empathise with another person, e.g. to understand action patterns, to deal with oneself</li> <li>• observation of people / self-observation</li> <li>• awareness of objects and spaces</li> <li>• developing respect for fellow actors</li> <li>• developing the ability to describe feelings</li> <li>• learning how to follow instructions</li> <li>• motivation</li> <li>• self-confidence</li> <li>• curiosity</li> <li>• problem-solution-oriented attitude</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• reading</li> <li>• speaking</li> <li>• writing</li> <li>• singing</li> <li>• learning by heart</li> <li>• understanding (semantics)</li> <li>• learning in a team</li> <li>• learning to learn</li> <li>• developing motor skills in making the costumes and stage designs</li> <li>• acquiring new knowledge and skills</li> <li>• social learning</li> <li>• self-directed learning</li> <li>• seeking advice taking advantage of advice given</li> <li>• using and applying other competences in a variety of situations / contexts</li> <li>• building on previous learning and life experiences</li> <li>• learning continuously</li> <li>• the ability to focus for longer time periods and critically reflect on learning purpose and learning goals</li> </ul>
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Communicative aspects</b></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Social aspects</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• speaking</li> <li>• reading</li> <li>• listening</li> <li>• writing</li> <li>• using body language as nonverbal communication</li> <li>• using the voice as a means of communication in a variety ways (e.g. singing)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• attending rehearsals and arriving on time</li> <li>• respectful action</li> <li>• responsibility</li> <li>• helping each other</li> <li>• consultation ability</li> <li>• teamwork</li> <li>• honesty</li> <li>• criticism</li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learning to accept touching and to touch others</li> <li>• introducing yourself (formulate wishes ...)</li> <li>• complying with specifications</li> <li>• understanding (semantics)</li> <li>• learning in a team</li> <li>• learning to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• experiencing shared experiences of excitement, joy, success / failure and how to handle it</li> </ul>
<b>Creative aspects</b>	<b>Motor aspects</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• designing costumes, set designs</li> <li>• dealing with media</li> <li>• developing own stories and plays</li> <li>• imaginary action</li> <li>• expressing their own experiences artistically / creatively</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• body awareness</li> <li>• moving to music</li> <li>• space perception / use of space</li> <li>• endurance</li> <li>• force</li> <li>• rhythm</li> <li>• coordination</li> </ul>

This table is not exhaustive, but it is inspired by the EU's key competences for education and training<sup>15</sup> that every human should acquire:

1. Communication in the mother tongue;
2. Communication in foreign languages;
3. Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology;
4. Digital competence;
5. Learning to learn;
6. Social and civic competences;
7. Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship; and
8. Cultural awareness and expression.

Here I would like to introduce the first competence in more detail, that of communication in the mother tongue. This competence and other ways of communication are essential our work with the patient, their social behaviour in the Forensic Clinic and especially for when they return in civil society.

*Communication in the mother tongue is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and*

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<sup>15</sup> The 2006 agreed competences can be found here: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/PDF/?uri=CELEX:32006H0962&from=EN>. However, these key competences have been revised and a new list published in May 2018, although 'languages and literacy' is still the first competence in the revised list [https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/education/policy/school/competences_en)

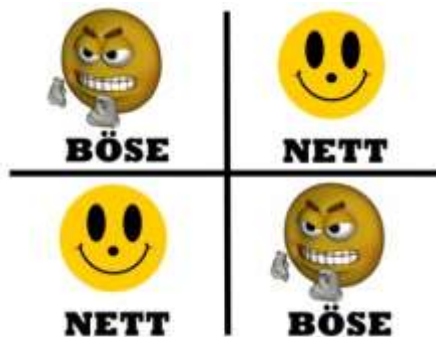
*creative way in all societal and cultural contexts; in education and training, work, home and leisure (European Parliament, 2006, L314/14).*

It is clear just how important this competence is for the treatment of and working with the patients and for their successful return to and participation in society. Underdeveloped communication skills, a missing, distorted ability to gather information for everyday life and misinterpretation of situations and people have often led to crime. The effectiveness of communication exercises in role-playing is clear.

One aspect of theatre in forensic psychiatry that should not be underestimated is that working together in play is always connected with a lot of fun and joy.

Here are two examples:

### *Warm-up Exercises*



Before the actual rehearsals I enjoy doing "warm-up exercises". There are many ideas for these in theatrical educational resources. Among others, I liked to use the "behavioural cross". A cross of images of states of mind (e.g. "nice" and "evil") are placed on the floor. Each two players have to place themselves in a box, which they choose themselves. A number of scenarios can be played. For example, one player is the passenger who has lost his

ticket and the other is the ticket inspector. According to their box, they then have to act out the situation of the ticket checking in that mode. After a short time (20-40 seconds), they change boxes/mood states and another role, another character must be played. The quick changes of the way they talk to each other raises awareness of the things they say to each other and their impact. The patients love this game. I am always very touched by the serious and almost childlike joy they display when playing this and other games at the beginning of the rehearsals.

A particular favourite, repeatedly demanded, is a circle game to learn names (or hobbies, likes, etc.) with the rhyme "Mein rechter, rechter Platz ist Leer; Ich wünsche mir <name> her" ("The place to my right, to the right of me is empty; I want <name> here").

### *Neutral masks*

They also like practising with neutral masks. Showing moods like grief or nervousness without facial expressions is not only a challenge: observing is always exciting and interesting, as when



masked, these states are very similar in appearance. Patients learn how to understand and use their own body language, and to better understand the body language of other people and to classify this emotionally.

## Theatre

The goal of theatre is the end performance of the piece in front of an audience. Preparing for this is always difficult. Rehearsals focus on actors and the play itself, whereas the performance in front of the audience becomes a completely new situation. The audience reacts. They laugh! This creates hesitation and I can remember a very funny situation when a patient performed his speaking role very well, but the comedy of his playing made the audience (patients and staff) laugh loudly. The patient did not find that funny. He had not yet internalized that the audience were appreciating his portrayal rather than laughing at his efforts. So he stood in the middle of the stage, angrily put his hands on his hips and stated very loudly: "There will be no laughter here!" (*Hier Wird nicht gelacht!*) Suddenly there was silence in the room, which made this situation even more strange .... After the performance, a new pedagogical approach to learning and understanding began straight away.



I have been able to reach quite a large number of interested patients with drama. Also revealing is the fact that it was mostly men with intellectual limitations, illiterate and autistic. There was one autistic patient who wanted a washing machine to be present in the play. So we created a play with this machine. The allocation and creation of roles was handled similarly.



Participation is on a voluntary basis. Volunteering and joy have always been the main priorities. They are also pre-requisites of good learning and good results.

All in all, drama is an excellent means to work in an ambitious and simple, joyful and highly personal educational way. It has a long-lasting, sustainable effect that can make people strong, happy and content.

## Psychomotor games

Active games also help people become strong and content. Examples include all kind of sports games, such as table tennis and volleyball, which are often played by the patients. Also in this category are exercise and control games, since both elementary forms of movement and behavioural sequences are embedded in a rule structure. It should be noted that every movement engages the whole person: senses, will and thinking, feelings, attitude to their own body and the desire for self-expression. This perspective originated in the United States in the 1970s coming to Belgium, France and Germany, and consolidated in the work of Ernst Jonny Kiphard (Jaszus *et al.*, 2014). He had already realised in the 1960s in his work on behaviour and development with disabled children, that trying to teach physical skills does not work if children are forced to practice things they find difficult. Therefore, freedom of choice in play is important, as this builds on self-motivation and positive experience.

In the following example - the volleyball game - these positive experiences are nourished by the feeling of *joie de vivre* and freedom and they also develop through group dynamics and the opportunity for self-expression. Participation in competitions inside and outside the clinic (e.g. Selters-Cup in Rostock) have their own particular dynamics and motivations. The players are not super athletes, but they get the chance to develop their playful and physical abilities voluntarily through the game, in the game, for the game, something that happens easily and readily.

*Example: volleyball*



<b>Physical aspects</b>	<b>Health aspects</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• endurance - power – concentration speed - agility</li> <li>• psychomotor component of movement: refinement of the senses, balance, sense of touch, hearing and sight</li> <li>• coordination (interaction of eyes, hands, legs, brain)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• positive effects on posture and weight</li> <li>• positive influence on cardiovascular system</li> <li>• experiencing tension / relaxation</li> <li>• interplay of bodywork and voice</li> </ul>
<b>Social aspects</b>	<b>Learning aspects</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• feeling of team affiliation / shared experience</li> <li>• social experience / strongly emotional</li> <li>• nonverbal communication</li> <li>• self-awareness</li> <li>• experience of zest for life</li> <li>• possibility of positive self-presentation</li> <li>• acceptance of leadership and leadership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• cognitive experiences: capturing material properties and space</li> <li>• body experiences and movement experiences</li> <li>• recognition, execution and control of game rules</li> <li>• self-control</li> </ul>

## Final remarks

So what can play do ...?

Play is a fundamental expression of the human spirit; it is not a luxury but a vital dynamic of healthy physical, intellectual and social-emotional development. Brown and Vaughan (2009, p. 40) state “The truth is that play seems to be one of the most advanced methods nature has invented to allow a complex brain to create itself”. So, in our work, we "create" a new understanding of play! Let us take our time and give the people entrusted to us more time and opportunities for play. Because play is about discovering the original, healthy and strong part of every human being and accepting it as a basis for positive development.

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Games for many: <http://www.spielefuerviele.de/katalog/kategorien/index.asp>

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Drama Resource (English) <http://dramaresource.com/drama-strategies/>

# 10. Symbols as a means of strengthening resilience

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**Paul Schober**

This article seeks to describe a specific approach that uses symbols to guide young people in difficult situations, and to focus on strengthening resilience. In the opening paragraphs, we describe our understanding of symbols and their unique value for expressing feelings arising from adverse situations. After this short introduction we describe the approach we use to support young people and to create a setting that gives them the framework to reflect on coping strategies and to develop their resilience.

Finally, we present a short case study to bring theory into practice.

## **Our understanding of symbols**

With the help of symbols we are able to provide young people with an additional language when they cannot find the right words. In this context, symbols work similarly to an interpreter; furthermore, they transmit information one cannot or does not want to share. According to individual experience, a symbol may have many if not infinite meanings and is interconnected with multiple feelings, depending on the context. Each situation and each interplay of meanings and feelings is different, so there would never be the same meaning ascribed to a corresponding symbol.

Donald Sandner<sup>16</sup> describes a symbol as follows: “A symbol is something that can communicate a concept. It might be a word, a mathematical formula, an act, a gesture, a ritual, a dream, a work of art, anything that can convey a concept of a linguistic-rational, imaginative-intuitive or emotional-evaluative nature. The key is that the symbol can do this effectively on its own. The concept is the meaning of the symbol.”

In a nutshell, symbols help you to get in touch with yourself; there is no extrinsic goal to be achieved. Furthermore, working with symbols is always about “grasping” something, in both meanings of the term. Symbols step in when there are situations that are hard or impossible to

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<sup>16</sup> Sandner, Donald: „So möge mich das Böse in Scharen verlassen – Eine psychologische Studie über Navajo-Rituale“, Walter Verlag, Solothurn und Düsseldorf, 1994, p. 22



describe through other means of communication such as verbal communication, gestures or facial expressions.

### **Our approach on symbol work**

To support young people in adverse situations and to provide a framework where their resilience is able to develop, we developed a five step approach:

For about 10-15 minutes and without spectators, a young person sets up symbols they have been chosen so that they can express a specific situation or an important question for that person. When they have finished, a group of peers join, sitting down around the young person and their work.

In our work, we always use the following 5 steps:

#### **1. Presentation**

**The young woman:** presents the heading/topic of her presentation and talks about what she has displayed.

**The group** (if the group is too big, 3 people are selected): Everyone listens carefully to what is being told, they pay attention to the young woman's presence. While she is speaking, the group observes her gestures, facial expressions, posture, breathing, the pitch of her voice. Does she show emotions, does she touch a symbol, which one?

#### **2. Factual questions**

**The Group:** asks factual questions. These questions only refer to the symbols, to "what is visible". No "why" or "how come?" questions are asked. This stage is not about interpretation but understanding only.

**The young woman:** answers the factual questions.

#### **3. Perception**

**The Group:** addresses the young woman directly. They describe everything they have perceived and everything they have observed while they were being told the story. If someone detects emotions, he or she should be able to explain how they were perceived (facial expression, gestures, pitches of the voice, etc.).

**The young woman:** Listens attentively but she is not allowed to react or feedback anything at this point.

#### 4. Interpretation

**The Group:** talks about the young woman. They are thinking aloud, asking questions like "What is the problem?", "What should be different?", "What would she want to solve, understand, do?", "Where could the difficulties be? Where not? "

**The young woman:** listens attentively and does not respond for now.

#### 5. Agreement on actions

When the group has finished "thinking aloud", the young woman talks about her thoughts regarding the considerations of the group. What is true? What is not? Where are her insecurities? Are there doubts? What did she like about what they were saying? What did she not like? What is especially important from the things said? Where would she like to begin?

At this stage the young woman should identify and make a commitment to the next (small) steps to improve the current situation or to clarify her questions in the near future.

#### Case Study

Here is an example of the method in practice. To begin with, the young person chooses a set of symbols. We call them "islands of emotions", consisting of a blue denim cloth (representing the ocean) and some wooden islands, each depicting a single emotion.



Figure 10.1: Case Study

**Presentation:**

"I've chosen the island of pleasure, because I feel the pleasure of change. And there are joy and happiness. I'm looking forward to moving house with my family and attending a different class in a new school. But there are also anxiety and worry. I wonder if and how I will do it all."

**Factual questions:**

There is a factual questions about the figures on the islands.

Question: "Who are the three figures on the island of happiness?"

Answer: "These are my three siblings. They are looking forward to our house move with me and will support me."

**Perception**

The peers say what they have perceived during her story.

"You spoke clearly and slowly, with little emphasis."

"While you were talking, you had two figures in your hands and put them from one hand into your other hand. You spoke quietly, with little change in the pitch of your voice. When you were talking about the island of joy and happiness, there was a little smile on your face. At the end, when you talked about worry and fear, you rubbed the figures together in your hand."

**Interpretation**

Now the peers talk about the young person.

"Fear and concern are the nearest islands to her. Nevertheless she began her story with the island of pleasure. I thought she spoke with little emotion. Her story sounded a little dry and distant."

"It is good that she has three supporters at her side on the Island of Joy. Maybe a part of her fears and worries can be contained here?"

**Agreement & action plan**

There are changes in her mood after hearing all that. She is now more and more confident about her first day at the new school. In a first step, she puts anxiety and worry to one side. In the picture, pleasure, joy and happiness remain. And her siblings now appear on all the islands.

In the end she agrees to talk with her siblings about her worry and to ask them to go with her on her way to the new school for the first week.

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This approach to work with symbols was originally developed by the German social therapist  
Wilfried Schneider <https://www.psychologische-symbolarbeit.de/>

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# 11. Thinking a little differently about resilience and play

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**Wendy Russell**

As the evaluator of the ARTPAD project, I followed with interest the lively discussions about how the project would define the three core concepts of resilience, play and drama. My own area of interest is children's play: I have spent most of my life involved in this in, first as a child, and then in my work for over 40 years, the last 16 of which have been as an academic. During this time, I have been privileged to have the opportunity to debate with colleagues (particularly my colleague Stuart Lester who introduced me to some of the ideas presented here) and to look at what a range of academic disciplines have to say about play.

What has happened is that I have become increasingly dissatisfied with the single, dominant and exclusive narrative about play that comes from often over-simplified and technical renderings of developmental psychology and education studies, and so I have been exploring what other perspectives might say, including philosophy, geography, anthropology and even theoretical physics. Here, I draw particularly on the philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and his collaboration with Felix Guattari,<sup>17</sup> and on works that have used their thinking. This account, brief and partial as it is, inevitably also over-simplifies complex (and at times shifting or even inconsistent) concepts, but I hope it is faithful to the spirit of the original. So, in this short article, I hope to disturb some of our habits of thinking about play and resilience, not because they are wrong, but because they obscure other ways of thinking and doing. What is offered here is additional (and/and), not oppositional (either/or). I will start with a story:

*I am travelling on a train through central London. It is the kind of train with sliding doors that open on to a large vestibule with a pole in the middle. It is early afternoon, so the vestibule area is empty of its rush hour commuters. A young girl boards the train. She is about 6 or 7 years old, and she is wearing a full skirt and sparkly shoes. The pole in the middle of the vestibule area is irresistible. She grabs it and does a little twirl around it, then lets go and does a full twirl and her skirt billows. I was so enchanted by this that I tweeted the story with the hashtag #momentswherelifefeelsgood.*

This is an everyday moment of embodied joy, infectious for people like me who pay attention to the ways that children move through their environments. And it matters. Greatly. It is very

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<sup>17</sup> For example, Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1988) *A Thousand Plateaus*, London: Continuum

ordinary, so ordinary in fact that usually adults pay very little attention to such moments. And in its very ordinariness lies magic.

### Resilience as 'ordinary magic'

The child development and resilience expert Anne Masten coined the term 'ordinary magic' to refer to resilience, which she defines as 'the capacity of a system to withstand or recover from significant disturbances that threaten its adaptive function, viability or development'.<sup>18</sup> She describes these capacities not so much as skills or competences but more as common adaptive systems that can act as protective factors. They include learning systems and the ability to process information and solve problems; attachment systems; mastery-motivation systems and self-efficacy; stress response systems; self-regulation systems; family systems; peer systems and cultural and societal systems. Where these adaptive systems are healthy, children can be proactive not only reactive: rather than being passive recipients of what life throws at them, they can actively influence its course, as well as having resources to cope with those things that are beyond their control.<sup>19</sup> From this perspective, resilience is not a fixed individual human trait, it is dynamic and relational, appearing differently in different contexts and times.<sup>20</sup> Anne Masten points out that 'resilience doesn't require anything special or unusual, it requires the operation of these basic systems.'

### Play as 'ordinary magic'

Some ten years ago now, my colleague Stuart Lester and I were commissioned by Play England to undertake a review of contemporary literature on the benefits of playing that could inform the planned English Play Strategy.<sup>21</sup> We found that the benefits of playing accrue more from the *process* of playing (its affective capacities) rather than its content, and from its key characteristics of being self-organising, emergent, spontaneous, autotelic, goalless and so on. This raises a challenge to the dominant rationalisation of play that interprets its content as preparation for specific skills needed later in adult life. Yet the research from fields as diverse as

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<sup>18</sup> This definition is taken from a very clear and useful short lecture entitled *Inside Resilient Children* given by Professor Masten in 2013, outlining the history of resilience research: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?reload=9&v=GBMet8olvXQ>

<sup>19</sup> Alvord, M. K., & Grados, J. (2005) 'Enhancing Resilience in Children: A proactive approach', *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 36, p. 238-245.

<sup>20</sup> This point is made by Michael Rutter (2006) 'Implications of Resilience Concepts for Scientific Understanding', *Annals of the New York Academy of Science*, 1094, pp. 1-12.

<sup>21</sup> Lester, S. and Russell, W. (2008) *Play for a Change: Play, Policy and Practice – A review of contemporary perspectives*, London: National Children's Bureau, available at <http://www.playengland.org.uk/resource/play-for-a-change-play-policy-and-practice-a-review-of-contemporary-perspectives/>

neuroscience, ethology, biology, psychology, sociology, geography and folklore suggested that the process of playing *in its broadest sense* makes a major contribution to the very adaptive systems identified by Anne Masten as the foundation for resilience. Consider, for example, rough and tumble play, or play fighting. Some adults are uncomfortable with this form of play, as they read it literally as practising aggression, and are concerned that children may be hurt. Yet much of the research shows that for most children (and there are exceptions), it is the reverse. Children tend to play rough and tumble with friends or siblings they trust; behind the sometimes alarming vigorous physical movements we can see the signs that this is playing, it is 'as if' behaviour (it is these play signals that some children have difficulty reading). Rough and tumble is usually accompanied by much mirth and other signs of positive affect, stronger children 'pull' punches and self-handicap in order to keep the play going. The primary emotions of anger or fear can play out safely because of the rules that hold the playing together: rough and tumble play is 'a sane and safe way of putting our vulnerabilities on the line'.<sup>22</sup> So we can see, with just this one example, how playing offers links to adaptive systems such as stress response systems, emotion regulation, mastery-motivation systems, attachment systems, peer systems and cultural and societal systems.

### Resilience as relational

But there is more going on here than changes to the brains and bodies of individual children. Anne Masten notes that 'human life is embedded in many other systems'. Extending the notion that resilience is dynamic and relational, 'embeddedness' may be seen not so much *in* other systems, as *with* them. The idea of embeddedness highlights the importance of 'context' and relationships with other people, material contexts and social systems, but the Deleuzian concept of *assemblages* takes relational thinking a radical step further. Bodies, minds, ideas, objects, social systems, etc., do not exist in isolation from each other, they develop through relational encounters that transform their capacity to act, emerging through intensive and extensive relations of various kinds. These relations are *assemblages*, dynamic networks of connections and disconnections, always moving, always changing. Bodies (themselves assemblages) are constantly moving and changing through encounters that both affect and are affected by other bodies, things and desires. This capacity to affect and be affected arises in-between encounters, meaning that 'agency', rather than something possessed by individuals, is also relational, emerging from assemblages in flux. Affective flows (or 'agency') can go in any direction, they may align with the social order (what Deleuze and Guattari call 'molar lines') or

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<sup>22</sup> Sheets-Johnstone, M. (2003) 'Child's Play: A multi-disciplinary perspective', *Human Studies*, 26(4), p. 412.

create more fluid 'molecular lines' or 'lines of flight'. This is not to deny issues of power, but it positions power also as relational, in-between.

Nick Fox illustrates the concept of the assemblage using a very ordinary example:

*If 'John' is hungry, he and the apple on his table become part of an 'eating-assemblage' in which John is affected by the apple's nutritional and other capacities, while he also has the affective capacity to change the apple by digestion. If, on the other hand, John has just consumed a three-course meal, the apple has less affective capacity, and a John/apple eating-assemblage may not materialize. In an assemblage, there is thus no 'subject' and no 'object' ..., only a confluence of elements in affective relationship to each other which changes their states, and their ability to act – what they can do.<sup>23</sup>*

Let's return to the twirling girl. She is affected by the capacity of the space and the pole for twirling, and she has the capacity to transform the affective tenor of the space, to turn it temporarily into a play-space. We cannot know the full extent of the assemblage and affective flow in this moment, but it probably includes her own embodied desire to feel the twirl, the empty space, the pole, the knowledge that her skirt will billow and her shoes sparkle if she twirls, and the anticipated pleasure that offers. It may also include memories of other twirling moments or moments on trains (and the molar social conventions of how to behave on trains, which, usually, do not include twirling), the proximity of her caregiver(s) and their relationship.

In the girl-pole-twirling assemblage, changes emerge. The girl is deliberately seeking out uncertainty through twirling and the dizziness it induces, for the pleasure of the feeling of being out of control and then regaining control.<sup>24</sup> We might assume changes to, for example, her mastery-motivation systems and stress response systems linking to resilience. (There was a change for me too: I was affected by it, momentarily enchanted by the scene, and now here it is, forming the basis of an article about play and resilience, making its way who knows where.) Yet, from the perspective offered here, human development is less a question of what a body is, and more about what a body can do, its capacity to seek out and connect with whatever will enhance life. 'Good' encounters engender joy, enhancing a body's capacity further; 'bad' encounters engender sadness and a reduction in the capacity to act. Here, as elsewhere in their work, Deleuze and Guattari draw on the work of seventeenth century Dutch philosopher Baruch Spinoza. For Spinoza, joy is not so much our contemporary idea of happiness, but a broader sense of what we experience when we feel we can affect and be affected by things – the desire and the capacity to act. Sadness is the sense that such a capacity is reduced. For

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<sup>23</sup> Fox, N. (2015) 'Emotions, Affects and the Production of Social Life', *British Journal of Sociology*, 66(2), p. 306.

<sup>24</sup> Spinka, M., Newberry, R. and Bekoff, M. (2001) 'Mammalian Play: Training for the unexpected', *The Quarterly Review of Biology*, 76(2), pp. 141-168.



resilience, and for common adaptive systems to be in good working order, we might assume that a sufficiency of good encounters is necessary across those adaptive systems.

For the fleeting mo(ve)ments<sup>25</sup> of twirling, the girl momentarily becomes more than the limits of her daily existence. Another world is brought into being from the humdrum of everyday routines and the adult controls of time and space, it is a small line of flight, where life feels better. Playing is co-created from everyday things to become something out of the ordinary, moments when life can flourish. These moments are important in terms of increasing desire, understood here as the body's capacity to seek out and connect with whatever will enhance life, the desire to persevere in our own existence. The joy of playing engenders the desire for more playing. As the play scholar Brian Sutton-Smith says, the opposite of play is not work but depression.<sup>26</sup> Such moments can appear wherever and whenever the conditions are right.

### **Paying attention to conditions that support playing**

The relational perspective offered here moves attention away from play as an activity that is time and space bound, and towards seeing it as a dispositional orientation, a potential for action, that emerges from current conditions. Given play's capacity for joyful encounters and for increasing resilient capabilities, then adult responsibility becomes one of working to co-create conditions that support playing to emerge. We can do this in the family, the institutions of childhood and in the public realm; given the focus of ARTPAD on working with educators (formal and informal), this section considers the middle one only.<sup>27</sup>

The institutions of childhood (for example, kindergarten, school, playground, childcare centre, health centre, youth centre) are increasingly held responsible for supporting children and young people to 'achieve their full potential', to progress from immature to mature, from irrational to rational, from incompetent to competent, from dependent child to independent adult citizen.<sup>28</sup> Play, if it is recognised at all, is usually presented within this frame. The forms of playing that

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<sup>25</sup> 'Mo(ve)ment' acknowledges the entanglement of time, space, bodies and movement, and is taken from Curti, G. and Moreno, C. (2010) 'Institutional borders, revolutionary imaginings and the becoming-adult of the child', *Children's Geographies*, 8(4), pp. 413-427.

<sup>26</sup> Sutton-Smith, B. (2003) 'Play as a Parody of Emotional Vulnerability', in D.E. Lytle (ed) *Play and Educational Theory and Practice, Play and Culture Studies*, Vol. 5, Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, pp. 3-17.

<sup>27</sup> For a discussion on children's right to play and the wider public realm, see Russell, W. and Lester, S. (2017) *Playful movements and the creation of play-spaces: exploring the dilemma of 'planning for play'*, paper presented at IPA Triennial conference 2017, Calgary, Canada, available at: <http://canada2017.ipaworld.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/8A-Playful-movements-and-the-creation-of-play-space....pdf>.

<sup>28</sup> Lester, S. (2012) *Vibrant spaces: re-configuring adults 'providing play'*, paper given at ICCP conference, Tallinn, Estonia, available at <http://www.iccp-play.org/documents/tallinn/lester.pdf>.

are seen to progress children are promoted, whereas those that give rise to adult discomfort, anxiety or offence – those forms of playing that are seen as disorderly, disrespectful, dangerous or just a non-productive waste of time – are discouraged. As Sutton-Smith says, ‘the adult progress rhetoric [of play] has actually disguised the understanding of what childhood is about as a way of maintaining adult power over children’.<sup>29</sup> This is an example of what Deleuze and Guattari call *molar* assemblages: powerful, essentialising and habitual doings that represent and fix the order of things and that become standardised norms against which children and adult practices are measured. We have become so used to this common sense way of viewing childhood and play that often it is difficult to think otherwise. Molar assemblages are useful for ordering life – we couldn’t be without them – and they can also be limiting, constraining the capacity to act.

In terms of adult designated play spaces, these molar assemblages can be seen in design intentions that assume specific resources will facilitate particular play forms with attendant benefits. A study that used video footage to track the causes of accidents in children’s playgrounds in the USA reported that the most frequently viewed cause was ‘improper use of equipment’.<sup>30</sup> This is a telling statement. I explored it further, using the idea of a playground slide:

*When playground designers design something called a slide, the focus is on its ‘slidiness’. They enhance its features for sliding, perhaps making it steeper, longer, twistier for older children (to be age appropriate), or wider (to be inclusive), or making it in the shape of an animal (to encourage imaginative play) ... The function of a slide is to be slid down; this is ‘using the equipment properly’. And much of the time, this is what children do.*

*Yet anyone who has watched children at play will know that once they have used the slide in this way and have a feel for it, they will often then explore its potential beyond just sliding. Coming down in different positions, maybe, or climbing up the chute, coming down on roller blades, sending different objects down the slide, sitting on the end chatting, or building a den underneath. Not limited as much as adults to predetermined ideas of what constitutes a slide, children seek to actualise whatever the space affords at that time. From an adult perspective, because the purpose of a slide is to be slid down, these alternative uses could constitute ‘not using equipment properly’.<sup>31</sup>*

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29 Sutton-Smith (1997) *The Ambiguity of Play*, Cambridge, Ma.: Harvard University Press, p. 111.

30 Coppens, N.M. and Gentry, L.K. (1991) ‘Video Analysis of Playground Injury-Risk Situations, *Research in Nursing & Health*, 14, pp. 129-136, cited in Ball, D.J. (2002) *Playgrounds: Risks, benefits and choices*, Health and Safety Executive Report Number 426/2002.

31 Russell, W. (2017) ‘When is a slide not a slide? (Or what happens when we think differently about and beyond design)’, in Cummins, E. and Masiulonis, K. (eds) *How to Grow a Play Space*, London: Routledge, pp. 219-220.

These alternative usages of the 'slide' are lines of flight from the adult plane of organisation. It illustrates how adult molar assemblages are always open to deterritorialisation: children can often find cracks in the adult orderings of time and space where play can erupt, moments that offer joy (an increase in the capacity and desire to act).

There is a paradox here for adults though: how can adults support children's play if playing represents a line of flight from adult organisation of time and space? We cannot design and plan lines of flight, and nor should we. We need the plane of organisation: space has to be planned, resources have to be provided, certain rules and habits for getting along are necessary. Children need it too, it provides stability, consistency, predictability, security. Yet they also need the plane of immanence, to have the capacity to explore other possibilities, other virtualities, to create worlds that are not as boring or scary as the 'real' one.

The ideas presented here can help us to think away from the habitual straight molar line from planning/design to play type to outcome and begin to think of space as relational, as something that is produced through encounters in-between bodies, material objects, affective flows, movements and so on. Space is always under construction, always in the process of becoming. Assemblage thinking draws attention to those relations, the movements, flows and forces that co-produce a play space, resisting the temptation to colonise or overcode what we see. Witnessing children's ingenuity and playfulness helps us look at how the space works, how it is co-produced in the here and now, looking at the relational qualities rather than properties of individual items or children. Here is how one playworker put it when I asked him how the children use the slide on his playground:

*'I can't list all the games, because the children haven't decided what they are yet.'*<sup>32</sup>

Given this, perhaps what our adult role is in terms of supporting the development of resilience through play, is to pay attention to twirling moments, to the conditions in which playfulness can emerge, and use what we learn from this to inform how we can provide time, space and resources and help build an atmosphere that supports such mo(ve)ments.

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<sup>32</sup> Playworker John Hale, *Somerstown Adventure Playground, Portsmouth, UK*, cited in Russell, W. (2017) *op. cit.*, p. 226.



## PART THREE: PERSPECTIVES ON DRAMA, RESILIENCE AND ARTPAD

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12. Multiplier Workshop reflections  
*Susanne Gruber and Mag. Dagmar Hoefferer-Brunthaler*
  
13. Can drama work analogically to the family in supporting resilience?  
*Maria Kaźmierczak and Adam Jagiełło-Rusiłowski*
  
14. When the Zoo needs help  
*Eszter Szekeres*
  
15. Planning my Theatre Workshop with Children  
*Susanne Gruber*
  
16. 'Opportunity Drama': The experience of self-efficacy  
*Emina Eppensteiner*
  
17. When my love for youth theatre began...  
*Susanne Gruber*
  
18. Supporting German as a Second Language  
*Dagmar Hoefferer-Brunthaler*
  
19. A Healthy and Safe Environment for Children  
*Kees Schuur*



## 12. ARTPAD Multiplier Workshop reflections

**Susanne Gruber and Dagmar Hoefflerer-Brunthaler, MA**

Achieving Resilience Through Play And Drama (*Resilienz Stärken Durch Spiel Und Drama*)



**R**espectful rearranging of attitudes  
**E**xpectations  
**S**upport  
**I**nspiration  
**L**aughter  
**I**nput  
**E**xperimenting with failures  
**N**ew ideas and practical possibilities  
**C**ircle clapping  
**E**valuation

The ARTPAD Train the Trainer Workshop in Gdansk was the beginning of a successful collaboration between the three of us (there's also Emina who was the third participant in Gdansk). We knew each other before but organising the journey to Poland and working together for a whole week on achieving resilience through play and drama made us become friends.

We met several times to plan the workshops we held on 12th of May and 9th of June 2018. About 40 persons in total, most of them teachers, social pedagogues and theatre players participated in these two workshops. We tried to follow the concepts of ARTPAD that were presented in Gdansk, but all the methods and exercises, all the theory and all additional topics – so much information made it hard to realise everything we were taught; we were not able to show all of the fascinating tools mostly because of not having enough time. So there should be more of it!



The concept of ARTPAD is very good, we enjoyed the training in Poland so much. All the feelings came back by talking about it, by planning the workshop, by the way we made the one-day-draft out of the one-week-material. We love the concept, we love the games and exercises given to us, we love to see the fascination in working with the tools. It was great to have so many interested people in the workshops. And we want to move on and develop – have more focus on some topics. That's – to both of us - specifically positional drama and its methods (for example “teacher in role”).

In our Workshop on 9th of June we offered following content:

- theoretical input about the principles of ARTPAD, about resilience and the ideas of Carl Rogers, about play and the play cycle and "Considering the Environment", about drama and play and their benefits for the development of children and young people and their resilience;
- practical techniques: What-if-Worlds - Freeze frame, Lost & Found, Positional Drama, Mantle of the Expert and building the Bamboo tent – including participants’ extensions and reflections;
- talks about participants’ resilience and internal and external resources and about their play as children;
- several games for warm-up, concentration, ... in order to learn that play is a process, not a product and that failure can be fun.

Hopefully ARTPAD will go on! Walking on the well-known path and probably finding new ones! We are grateful for being a small part of it, to both of us it was enriching to get to know so many enthusiastic people and to see how the methods can be used! We are hopeful to keep the fire burning!





After our workshop, two participants immediately went to the hardware store and built the tent made out of bamboo poles for a birthday party next day. That's definite confirmation to us – we're on the best way to bring tools for achieving resilience to the people! Go, ARTPAD!

## Statements from participants

*I attended the ARTPAD seminar held in Vienna on June 9th, 2018 and greatly enjoyed the wealth of inputs and ideas offered there. How and where can we find resources for resilience in our lives? This was the main question that connected the various activities and discussions. The fact that the participants came from different cultural and professional backgrounds added an extra dimension when we discussed memories of childhood games and other personal topics. The great joy we experienced while playing energizing games and solving creative tasks together certainly motivates me to try out these methods with the students at my school.*  
Gertrude K. (Vienna)

*The workshop "Resilience through play and drama" - held in Vienna on June 9th, 2018 - was an excellent opportunity to playfully assess my own habits and strategies in stressful situations, opening doors and windows for an easier way of dealing with them, thus hopefully not just beneficial to myself, but also to family, friends and more.*

*This empowerment was made possible through theoretical input and games, by the experienced workshop leaders Dagmar and Susanne, as well as the interactions of a great group of participants, with a variety of educational backgrounds and professions.*



*Everyone was making the most of the manifold workshop offers and the breaks in between, culminating in a spontaneous, eye-opening drama situation that I would before have considered a failure.*

*The workshop atmosphere was full of respect for each other and we left as friends. I hope there will be more of it.* Gerlinde R. (Vienna)

*Thanks, Gerlinde for the Akrostichon!*

*Vielen Dank für die Unterlagen. Es war ein sehr tolles Seminar, wo man auf jeden Fall so einiges mitnehmen konnte. Spitze!*

*So viel, dass Katja und ich gleich nach dem Seminar in den Baumarkt fuhren und bei einer anschließenden Geburtstagsfeier im Prater für Spiel und Spaß sorgten :-)- wie ihr sehen könnt, war es also sehr inspirierend ;-)*

*Alles Liebe euch beiden und vielen Dank nochmal für diesen tollen Tag.*

*Liebe Grüße, Angela u. Katja*

*(translation: Thanks for the papers you sent. The workshop was great, we could take so much with us. Marvellous! It was so good, that we went to the hardware store immediately after the workshop on Saturday, and some hours later we could show the tent made out of bamboo poles to the guests. Yes, it was inspiring that much! Thanks again for the great day! Greetings A. & K)*



## 13. Can drama work analogically to the family in supporting resilience?

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***Maria Kaźmierczak and Adam Jagiełło-Rusiłowski***

The shortest definition of drama is ‘no penalty zone’ (Heathcote, 1990). It is any action of significance which can be explored in time and space in a fictional context so the participants can distance themselves and feel safe about their choices as they do not cause any negative consequences. Drama offers shared experience among those involved where they suspend disbelief and imagine and behave as if they were other than themselves in some other place at another time. Activities are sequenced in drama sessions so that they build trust, concentration, collaboration and free flow of unrestricted creative ideas and initiatives. Role-taking allows the participants to respond as if they were involved in an alternative set of historical, social and interpersonal relationships so that no response can be judged in terms of being the only right, correct, appropriate, polite etc. one. Any ambiguity, provocative actions, diversity of behaviours and attitudes explored in imagined action can be the source of dramatic tension but also humour, which both lead to discovery, new insights and increased sense of efficacy and resilience (Jagiełło-Rusiłowski, 2016).

Drama is based on heuristics, mental ways of holding two worlds in mind simultaneously: the real world and fiction. The meaning and value of drama lies in the tensions but more importantly in a dialogue between these two worlds and the human persons behind its representations: the real and the enacted; the spectator and the participant; the actor and the audience (Boal, 1995). Dramatic situations invite us to find out more about the causal relationships between human actions and their successes or failures, they encourage us to shift perspectives in the here and now, identify and sometimes solve problems and deepen our understanding of them. The focus during drama sessions is on process: it is a social activity that relies on many voices and perspectives, and on role-taking; that focuses on task rather than individual interests; and that enables participants to see with new eyes. This approach creates an opportunity to probe concepts, issues and problems central to the human condition, and builds space for reflection to gain new knowledge about the world.

Drama is more concerned with providing the child with lived-through experience, with the enactive moment, rather than with performing the rehearsed moment. It encourages improvisation, identifying opportunities for learning and becoming more resilient through participation and observation, in a process of percipience (a process of both observing and

participating). Dramatic art connects thought and feeling so that participants can explore and reflect subject matter, test and try out new ideas, acquire new knowledge, create new values, and build self-efficacy and self-esteem.

Psychologists observe that families react differently in the face of adversities. In her extensive work Froma Walsh (2003) postulates that the quality of some families' functioning can not only decrease, but sometimes increases after the experience of negative events, proving that not all families are doomed to suffer disintegration in such unfortunate times. Therefore, the family might become a crucial source of support for individual resilience, including that of a child. Through commitment to mutual communication, sensitivity to each others' needs, and by creating a secure attachment base in the family, its members gain an important resource for resilience development (e.g. Fonagy *et al.*, 1994).

However, the family system itself might be treated as a unit and be characterized as more or less resilient. For example, while dealing with a serious health condition of a relative, the family might display perseverance and determination in not only supporting the suffering person, but also in enriching and developing communication between relatives, finding broader meaning of the situation, or by adhering to family values whilst simultaneously being open to changes that might come. This perspective of looking at the concept of resilience, as Walsh (2003) states, does not limit the family environment to analyses of destructive factors or influences that might exist in that system (as alcohol abuse, poverty, troubles with law), but instead it mainly focuses on its strengths.

Referring to a family-systems approach, a well-balanced family unit with high adaptability potential is the most beneficial for its members who all, with their mutual interactions and many experiences, influence each other (Fonagy *et al.*, 1994). Additionally, the family functions within social and cultural influences. Hence, family systems have boundaries differentiating them from others as well as defining roles and relationships within the system. Psychologists emphasize that during the family life cycle the system is constantly subjected to changes that might be normative – connected with life and family development (e.g. the child's birth, the empty nest) or non-normative – unplanned and unwanted (e.g. divorce) (Goldenberg & Goldenberg, 2012). Therefore, with all its dynamics it is sometimes difficult for the family system to both preserve homeostasis (stabilization) and to simultaneously adapt to challenges (Whitchurch & Constantine, 2009).

Walsh (2003) describes the most crucial processes that are involved in family resilience, grouping them as follows: 1) family belief systems, 2) family organisational patterns and 3) communication/problem solving. Referring to this conceptualization of three domains essential in family resilience, let us consider the situation of a teenager dropping out of school, and

his/her family. The family that becomes resilient (for example through intervention), will draw on specific well-functioning processes and systems. The resilient family thus might:

(1) find meaning in this difficult situation by seeing it as, for example, one of many developmental challenges experienced by different family members (in the past and present), which can be managed without damaging the family's coherence; there is hope and confidence while dealing with this challenge, sometimes with the help of spiritual resources (e.g. prayers);

(2) flexibly change some roles (or ways of fulfilling them) in the system, e.g. parents' work schedules or a relationship between parents (like increasing partnership in parenting), to focus more on their teenage child, to increase connectedness, and to offer mentoring (the importance of role models); it might be beneficial to join a community of families with similar challenges to gain social support; and sometimes financial security is an essential factor;

(3) communicate in a clear and empathic way to appreciate both the child's and the parents' emotions (e.g. fears) and try to analyze their sources; share emotions, especially when they are intense; avoid controlling of the teenager, show tolerance for differences in views, avoid blaming each other for the situation (neither a parent nor a child); try to cooperate in decision-making process with the focus on mutual goals.

Henry *et al.* (2015) add that family adaptive systems are: the emotional system, the control system, the meaning system and the maintenance system; and the stress response system is placed at meta-level. In other words, and still referring to the school truancy example, in the resilient family there are close emotional bonds, and our teenager would be not afraid to express their feelings about the situation. Various emotions experienced by involved parties would be accepted and emotional support would be provided. The teenager together with the parents (and maybe other relatives) would seek a solution to this stressful situation. Moreover, while mutual respect for each others' views and needs should be displayed, parents should also provide clear rules of conduct and boundaries should be installed – for example, a teenager has a right to make their own decisions, but parents have the authority and set limits. The family identity is important and therefore values or ideals should be analyzed in this challenging situation. A shared meaning of school truancy for this family, for parents and for the child, should be found. Social and economic influences might be also worth examining. By implementing different systems, the family is able to adapt to changes that are inevitable.

The most comprehensive EU supported research on the use of drama for improving educational competences (DICE project – Drama Improves Key Lisbon Competences in Education, [www.dramanetwork.eu](http://www.dramanetwork.eu)) provided both quantitative (5,000 students) and qualitative (cases from 13 countries) evidence on how drama works as a complex didactics which allows

educators to become relators aligning dialogical pedagogy with a progressive system, democratic choice of significant concepts and material with experiential techniques. The study examined over 100 international teachers using drama with young people and concluded that their universal strength was the ability to maximize learning by making it relational and inquisitive. They use drama because they believe it empowers the students to creatively explore life beyond imposed curricula and liberates the entire community of learners from the fear of educational failure installed by oppressive social structures (Heathcote, 1990). Even short-term drama sessions impacted students' level of competences, most effectively the social ones including ability to build and sustain trust, initiate inquiry to find out truth, critically choose and translate values into actions, respect diversity, take responsibility and learn from failures, engage in civic activities and mobilize peers to take risks to defend transparency, fairness and dignity (Jagiełło-Rusiłowski, 2010).

Some previous studies explored the potential of drama to reduce fear of performance and transform self-efficacy beliefs of young people into more constructive attitudes where beliefs about personal integrity are correlated with other educational competences (Jagiełło-Rusiłowski, 2010a). It is important, however, that drama activities are aligned with other elements of didactics aimed at the development of resilience and self-efficacy. Such activities are mostly based on highly interactive forms, preferably based on improvising around seemingly unsolvable problems and dilemmas. The sessions must also include reflective and debriefing techniques which encourage students to challenge inadequate ethical stances or choices leading to failure, exclusion, etc., revealed on the spot (Sims, 2004).

The key rationale for using drama for developing resilience is that it facilitates deep learning (Campbell, 1998). Divergent problems further complicated by dramatic positioning in and out of roles motivate the students to be inquisitive, critical and answerable for their own spontaneous choices. Drama engages students in dialogical relationships through which they are able to inductively discover innovative solutions and create new knowledge. Edging-in drama games and exercises result in group trust and willingness to share risks. Dramatic structures alternating between emotional engagement in role and rational distancing facilitate re-examining of what is viewed as failures or misfortunes and any other stereotypical assumptions.

Drama activities require a high level of mindfulness and mutual care. They focus on the problem and how fictional characters would try to solve it under particular circumstances rather than on presenting themselves as skillful performers and competent problem solvers (Spolin, 1999). The "Golden Rule" of improvisation is unconditional acceptance (Gessel, 1997). Improvisers succeed in advancing the action only when they automatically say "yes" to a new

idea from other players, explore its potential to continue with “yes, and . . .,” meaning, “I accept the offer to improvise (using ideas, words, or movement) and must build on it.” This attitude facilitates attentive listening and collaboration. Each improviser is responsible for making the performance dramatic: developing the story-line, character motivation and amazing conclusions. The flow that the players experience may result in some creative and possibly novel strategies of action (Koppett, 2001).

Participants of drama sessions are consistently discouraged to block the chain of ideas and rewarded for initiative and the contribution of generous offers. Students learn to appreciate each other as co-creators. They accept developments of action on the spot, without the need to revise. Their motivation increases with experience and is fueled by the feedback of delighted peers or the friendly audience. Trust in the team’s spontaneity results in more effective production of ideas, even if some of them fail to advance the action (Keefe, 2002). Improvisers deter criticism or rejection of ideas before they are tried for triggering action. They are encouraged to show a positive attitude to what teammates say or show with gestures until the debriefing part of the session.

In the ARTPAD (Achieving Resilience Through Play and Drama) project, best practices in five European countries were researched to find out how educators and youth workers conceptualize resilience and support it in children and youth during their interventions.

In the Best Practice Guide (ARTPAD Consortium, 2017) basic principles for educators were published and especially in the part referring to how drama can support resilience many analogies to family system can be found. Drama should adhere to humanistic values and the hierarchy of needs. Creating a safe environment for exploration supports the development of a community of learning similar to the family eco-system, that can search for meaning and develop mindsets allowing the children to deal with adversity, reduce the fear of failure and raising self-efficacy beliefs, making the children more optimistic about facing challenges and obstacles.

Drama teachers, like sensitive parents, know the value of partnership and democratic relations. They both model and ensure flexibility and a wide range of roles and perspectives to be explored by the children. In this way they enhance the chances, especially for those underprivileged ones who do not find it at home, to experience connectedness, make up for the lack of early attachment and seek mentoring help from peers and other adults. Fiction and improvised relationships in drama become valuable inspirations and vicarious experiences changing children’s self-efficacy beliefs. Drama teachers are also very good at interpersonal communication since they focus on the person and use the whole spectrum of human expressions of facts, states, needs, emotions, beliefs, dreams, hopes etc. Drama is based on

empathic understanding and shows how to reduce fears through dialogue and safe experimentation. It teaches tolerance of diversity and alternative patterns of behaviour resulting from specific cultural sources. Finally, it encourages learners to analyze and share emotions, especially when they are intense. Reflection sessions during and after drama sessions focus on causal relationships rather than blaming anybody for who they are. Narratives used in drama usually promote cooperation in decision-making processes with the focus on mutual goals, making the processes of drama facilitation analogous to resilient families.

As Froma Walsh emphasizes in her publications, the family resilience framework allows for supporting close relationships in times of adversities, not only by “rescuing” the destabilized systems, but also by developing tools that increase the resilience needed in every family throughout its life cycle. Therefore, interventions should not be focused solely on individuals suffering difficulties, but be directed at families as well. However, the support of family resilience should be wisely implemented to avoid, as Henry *et al.* (2015) warn, long-term maladaptation despite reaching positive short-term outcomes. Similarly, drama instills the appreciation of positive relationships instead of imposing any ready solutions or quick fixes. Both families and drama specialists can benefit greatly from further analyses of analogies between the eco-systems for resilience at home and at school or in spaces for informal education.

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## 14. When the Zoo Needs Help

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**Eszter Szekeres**

The Baross Gábor School is an elementary school in the 7<sup>th</sup> district of Budapest. This area is one of the most multicultural and poorest parts of Budapest. The Baross Gábor School has many children from disadvantaged families. These children live with poor economic and social possibilities, but they form strong attachments to their school where they can experience a warm and affectionate atmosphere. This institution appeared to be a perfect place to try out the methods and practices of ARTPAD. As we have been cooperating with Budapest Zoo and Botanical Garden on different projects for several years, we decided to invite them to help us in our first trial of the Mantle of the Expert method in Baross School. The school became enthusiastic as well. So the three organisations worked together towards the same goal: to offer the opportunity for the Baross children to experience themselves as effective and capable persons who have the chance to choose freely and look for the possibilities most attractive for them. Firstly, we started to work with one class, class 3/c. The children are well known to us, because we regularly run classes about 'tales' in their class. So a good, warm connection was already there for collaborative work. (In the Hungarian school system, the 3rd class is for 8-9 years old pupils and usually 20-30 children belong to the same class. In this case the class 3/c means 25 children between 8-10 years.)

The process became part of the official project week of Baross School: each year the school provides five days for project-based learning. In this time the teachers offer a theme for their classes and the children co-work on the same topic in different lessons. (Of course, the teachers have the freedom to teach using projects throughout the rest of the year if they prefer holistic approaches.) The form teacher of class 3/c had a dream of a week-long earthworm project. The Zoo and our organisation helped her to map out and bring to fruition her idea using the Mantle of the Expert method.

In line with the goals of Mantle of the Expert our main aspiration was to create a situation for the children where they feel they are needed and they can help to make the world better. Therefore the Zoo wrote an official letter (with the official postmark of the organisation) to the class that contained a request for the children to explore the real life circumstances of earthworm. The reason for this, the letter mentioned, was that the zookeepers – even though they are taking care of hundreds of different species of animals and plants – somehow are unable to take care of earthworms. So they desperately need information about the natural behaviour of this animal. The letter confirmed that zookeepers had confidence in the

capabilities of class 3/c and they invited the children to present their future results about the earthworm species at the Zoo. Thanks to a lucky coincidence, class 3/c had been interviewed on television during a frog rescue just a few weeks earlier, so the Zoo had a reference point for trusting the children.



We, as familiar people known by the children, delivered this letter to class 3/c a few days before project week started. Alongside this, we facilitated some group play between the children together with the form teacher to support the pupils in taking the role of researchers. After the session the class became deeply involved and ready to create plans for the research. The atmosphere of the play and the whole lesson was somewhere on

the border of a 'what if' world. On the one hand we let the children be aware that the request from the Zoo was some kind of play, but on the other hand they knew that the invitation for the challenge was real: they would work with earthworms for a week and then present the results to the Zoo.

The offered and facilitated searching exercises, group work and all the learning process were inspired by the ELENA-project (Experiential Learning and Education for Nature Awareness<sup>33</sup>). The pupils built a special, darkened terrarium for the earthworms that the form teacher brought for the class. The children observed the animals during the week and took care of them.

(Considering that most of the children live in small flats it would have been really difficult for them to procure earthworms for themselves.) They worked together in small groups and experimented with the worms and they used the internet to collect more information as well. The pupils became more and more knowledgeable about these animals and documented everything for the Zoo. After the week they were able to answer the potential questions that the Zoo might ask:



<sup>33</sup> <http://www.elena-project.eu/>

How do the earthworms move and adapt to the different spaces?

How do earthworms move and air the soil?

What is the perfect habitat for an earthworm?

How do earthworms work in the soil?



The week with the cooperative learning processes was amazing. The children enjoyed the common work that required them to behave both actively and proactively. They paid careful attention to the animals in the same way as to each other. The supportive presence of the form teacher (who sometimes helped them complete tasks) ensured a secure base for the project. The respect for earthworms became a key value of the

cooperation as well as the respectful listening to the ideas of others. The final presentation to the Zoo and our curious visits during the project week helped the children feel important and respected. The final surprise made the project week unforgettable: after their presentation, the Zoo invited the children to try out their new playpark, and next day their teacher organised a ceremonious releasing of the earthworms in a park near the Baross Gábor School.

We can see that this project week that was built on the methods of Mantle of the Expert contained extra elements over and above the original conception. During the school year it would be hard to work together always with an organisation like the Zoo, something that was so attractive in the eyes of the pupils. This method however made this work even more attractive for them. This first encounter with this method can mean a long term emotional engagement for the pupils and also gave an opportunity to learn a new, participative method for both us, and the teacher. The project was delivered by Eszter Szekeres and Virag Suhajda, both ARTPAD trainers, as well as by Ms Margit Komáság, form teacher.

# 15. Planning my Theatre Workshops with Children

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**Susanne Gruber**

Since 2012 each summer I – together with some theatre colleagues from the group I am part of – offer a theatre workshop for children. We start the workshop at 2pm, it lasts four hours and at 6pm there is the performance – parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, friends ... of the children come and watch the play.

You may wonder how a play can be produced and on stage in such a short time? The answer is very simple: it's all in the pre-planning.



Three to four weeks before the workshop takes place, each child chooses a character she or he wants to perform. Every year there is a colourful mix of fairy tale characters like Cinderella, the Bad Wolf or a Wicked Witch; of Disney characters like Donald Duck, Ariel, Hulk or Elsa the ice queen; of book characters like Pippi Longstocking or Pooh Bear and “everyday roles” like a cat, a hunter or a teacher.

So there are – depending on how many children have registered – about 10 to 20 roles and then it's my turn to write a story where all of them have a part. Every year some children choose characters I've never heard about before, so it is very important for me to figure out who and how they are, what they do, what attributes they have – what they stand for. When I know “my” characters I think about them for two or even three weeks and slowly they begin to link together in my thoughts and a story emerges. When the story is ready my team and me come together, read it, discuss it and if necessary change something. Then we start looking for costumes, props, sounds and music and to plan a few warm-up-games. We like this part of the process because it's a great pleasure to see how the written story gradually comes to life.

On the day, we have to prepare the venue, which is a big barn with a stage in one corner. We also prepare food and drink, we have fruit, bread and cake for the breaks.

At 2pm the children come, each of them brings a drawing of her or his character with them and we hang them on the barn door – our art gallery. 😊 The reason why I ask them to draw their characters is because I want each child to face up to the chosen character – to her or his role in the play, to “spend time with it” – in order to prepare themselves just to be that character.



When the group is complete, we introduce ourselves and we play some games – the children don't like this very much because they actually want to go on stage. But we explain that it is very important to warm up body, mind and soul before acting. After the games we warm up the voice too and then ... I read the story. This is a special moment for the children because they hear about their part in the story and have to deal with it and to decide if they are satisfied with it. At this point I want to say that I really try to put something typical for the character in the play and hope that the children can somehow “find themselves” in the role they have chosen. I think there is always a special reason for their choice – the children do not necessarily know it, but I'm sure it exists. And I also think that it can be both satisfying and inspiring to assume this role, to be this other, this chosen character for once. At any rate every year I can see that a small smile scurries across every face as their character appears in the story.

After this the rehearsal begins. I read the story – the children act. If some of them want to say something, I work out one or two sentences with them, if they don't want to, they don't have to – the story is anyway read by me. During and after this rehearsal the children put on their costumes, take their props and our make-up-artists complete their appearance. We also rehearse light and sound. This part of the workshop is very dynamic, you can even say it's a bit of a mess, but I love it. There is so much positive energy, so much “working together on one thing”, so much trial and error, so much excitement and even thrill – it's great fun.

There is only this one rehearsal and after a break we have a general rehearsal, I read and the children act – without interruption. Afterwards, we briefly discuss the small mistakes and the children have the opportunity to talk about their difficulties and anxieties. We answer all questions and try to clear all uncertainties, play a last relaxing and/or inspiring game and then

it's 6 pm and our audience comes and fills the rows of seats, we greet them and ... action



Every year I'm really speechless how much the young actresses and actors concentrate, how professionally they move on the stage, how authentically they embody their role and how convincingly they tell a story they didn't even know 3 hours before.

This year in August our 7th workshop will take place. As we started in 2012, we created this concept because we were looking for a way to bring a play to the stage in only four hours. It was an ambitious experiment and it could have gone wrong, but it was a great success – from the beginning. We haven't changed anything in these seven sessions, the children love it, many of them come three or four times until they are too old for it. And my team and me love it too and it has grown into a family, where everyone knows what to do.

Nevertheless, I have to say that it is a great challenge every year, we can never be sure it will be successful. Working with children means always having to be flexible, to be open, to be authentic, to be watching, to be sensitive, to be responding and it is absolutely essential to love children – as they are.



# 16. 'Opportunity Drama': The Experience of Self-efficacy

**Emina Eppensteiner**

*Theatre education develops all the senses - including the „hidden“ senses of movement and emotions. It gives access to memories and to the unconscious . Theatre education develops familiarity and relationships with people, place, and one's own situation, providing a safe base for exploration. (Rellstab 2009, p. 194, author's and editors' translation.)*

This article presents a theatre-pedagogical model designed by the author, which allows children and adolescents to take responsibility for developing their own plays from the beginning of the theatre work to the performance. The model is divided into three phases: initial phase, main phase and final phase, which are briefly presented here. Each phase is broken down into elements of developing the play, and for each area of play development one of the children's favorite games is described in italics. The role of the facilitator is explicitly outlined.



In the theatre workshop I like that: We are allowed to invent our own plays. We have many costumes. We let our imagination run wild. Play, play, play, play, play

## The role of the facilitator

The attitude, skills and knowledge of a facilitator are crucial for the success of such a theatre project. The tasks of the facilitator are to work on theatrical craft as well as to develop and stage these crafts, together with the cast and their artistic suggestions created in improvisations.



In addition, the facilitator is responsible for:

- finding a balance between direction and support
- creating a space in which creativity can unfold
- helping each member of the group feel safe and secure
- the atmosphere in the group
- clarity
- rules

## How the model works in practice

There are many ways to approach the process of developing a theatre production. This is just a suggestion to sculpt a model. Each facilitator should develop their own style. It is important to focus on process, to be prepared to question your chosen approach and, if necessary, to change the approach. Here I introduce some of the key elements of my model.

### Interviews

Interviews are conducted sitting in a circle on the floor with a recording device placed in the middle. When the children answer the questions, they behave as if they were "talking" to the recording device. Here, they support and encourage each other, whereas in feedback situations everyone is more focused on themselves.

Three interviews are planned through each project:

1. At the beginning of the project<sup>34</sup> an interview is conducted and recorded with the following questions: What experiences of theatre have you had? What does theatre workshop (*Theaterspielen*) mean to you? What expectations do you have? What do you expect from the facilitator?
2. Halfway through the course, it makes sense to have a five-minute interview again, asking: what have we done so far? What else do we have in mind? How far are we from our goal? What are the difficulties and what are the suggested solutions? How do you feel about the atmosphere in the group?
3. After the last performance, the children listen to the recording of the first interview and say how far their wishes and expectations have been fulfilled, and then a second question asks them about their experiences and their impressions about the joint work.

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<sup>34</sup> Each project takes about 2-5 months

## *High energy games*

Theatre and movement are inseparable. It makes sense to start each rehearsal with games that involve movement for several reasons. First, children sit for too long in school, their natural urge to move is suppressed. Second, many of the silly games give rise to much playfulness, which has a positive effect on the atmosphere and the theatre work. Games should be chosen with care. The facilitator consciously selects games that either fit the focus of the particular rehearsal, serve as a preliminary exercise for planned improvisations or can be drawn from the artistic material. Above all, these games promote playfulness in children and adolescents. Most games are played simultaneously, which leads to cognitive and motor overload and makes all players quickly aware that so many tasks cannot be performed simultaneously and that the method is all about "playing" and not "creating". It is important not to interrupt this playfulness with discussion, but to immediately translate the energy into planned games or improvisations. High energy games should be played after each break, and also when the mood and energy in the group subsides and boredom sets in.

## *Elements of developing the play:*

Drama, in all its complexity, presents a psychological and physical challenge to the players. Given this, it is helpful to divide the theatrical craft into different elements.

Initial phase:

- perception & sensitization

Main phase

- movement, rhythm & space
- breath, voice, speech & choral elements
- relationship, status & role of the audience
- dialogue, text & history
- costumes, mask & props
- sound, music & light

Final phase

- rehearsing individual scenes
- runs
- rehearsal
- performances and
- follow-up

Many exercises and games fit into several of these elements because the contents overlap. However, at the start of the session, it is important to explain the aim of each exercise. Depending on the schedule, each element can be dedicated to different games.

### *Improvisations*

*Everything in the performance of the actor that takes on rigid, immovable forms, takes him away from the essence of his profession: the improvisation (Čechov 1990, p. 105).*



Improvisation is an integral part of theatre work. It is a valuable gateway to the creativity and spontaneity of the players. During rehearsals, improvisation plays an important role in the search and discovery of the process, as well as in the development of a piece. During the performance, it can bring things to life.

*Improvisation is an essential element if the actor is to develop the spontaneity necessary to produce the 'illusion of the first time' in every performance (Strasberg 2000, p. 133).*

This model uses a mixture of Spolin improvisation techniques (described in more detail later in the article), Johnstone status games, Lecoq's mask work, Boal's image theatre (statues), Maïke Plath's cards (described in detail later) as well as games and exercises by other theatre practitioners.

### *Feedback*

The feedback sessions take place at each rehearsal, either through discussion or in the form of a game. Discussions always takes place in a circle, so that the facilitator and the players are at the same level. The circle also allows the facilitator to have an overview of the group. With imagination and creativity, the facilitator can turn many theatre games into "feedback games". The only rule is: the feedback should not turn into point scoring. It is about individual players' perceptions in terms of their own feelings or their impression of working together. This promotes the competence in giving and receiving feedback.

### *Group dynamics*

Producing a play is a process and processes are rarely without problems. Problems are solved in the group, with the children making suggestions for improving the atmosphere.

## Model Description

The proposed model spans one semester, with 90 minutes of rehearsal each week. It includes three phases:

Initial phase: getting to know each other, sensitization, perception, setting up rules, finding a group, finding a theme, basic rules of improvisation, research.

Main phase of the theatre work: theatrical foundations, development and emergence of the artistic proposals of the group through improvisation, scenic design, development and creation of the stage design, costumes, music, light.

Final phase: rehearsing scenes, run throughs, rehearsals on stage with light, sound and technology, full rehearsal, dress rehearsal, performance.

### Initial phase

This phase includes introductory games and exercises as well as games for developing self- and group awareness. In addition, the required activities in this phase are: to develop a sense of being a group, to create a playful atmosphere, to create rules and thus to facilitate friendly cooperation, as well as to collect as much material as possible for the improvisations.

### Rules in the group

There are only three rules in a theatre group:

- treat each other fairly and with respect;
- nobody does things "wrong", only "differently";
- it is better if only one person speaks at the same time, unless we are practising choral speaking.

### Welcome and getting to know each other

As a starting game, the *Welcoming Clichés* is a proven success. The game breaks down fear of contact, without players being explicitly aware of this. It quickly creates a fun, energetic playful atmosphere. *The rules of the game are very simple: different types of greeting, such as like two Chinese, rubbing back to back, singing, etc., are proposed by the facilitator. The greeting should always take place within 30 seconds and with as many people as possible.*

The introductory game *Name, Character and Gesture* is played in a circle. *The facilitator asks the children and young people to say their own name and to give a quality to the name, such as "Emi the energetic", and to make a gesture that represents that quality. The whole group repeats name, quality and gesture.*

Then the game *Monster* is played. *The game leader stands in the middle of the circle and slowly moves with outstretched arms towards a person who can only be "saved" by someone else calling their name aloud. If no one in the group calls their name, that person also becomes a monster. The game ends when everyone in the group is monster.*

### **Group feeling, self-perception, perception of others**

In *Bubbles on the Journey*, calm music is played and there is an absolute ban on speaking during the exercise. *Six players form a circle and hold hands. A player stands in the middle of the circle, closes his eyes and moves around the room with his eyes closed. He tries to clear his mind of all thoughts. If a thought arises, he acknowledges it, lets it move on, and thinks of nothing again. It is as if the thoughts were written on a blackboard and are simply wiped away. The players in the circle form a protective bubble around the player, move with the player without touching him, and protect the blind player with their bodies from bumping into other people, objects and walls. What is it like to be able to rely on the group?*

An absolute favorite game of many children is the *Museum Guard*. *The children spread out evenly across the room and each child takes a pose and stays frozen. One child is the museum guard and moves through the room. The children are only allowed to move behind their backs, being careful not to be seen by the museum guard. If a child is "caught" in the movement, they become the next museum guard.*

As a preliminary exercise to the final game and also to relax before the performance, a good exercise to use is *Peripheral Vision*. This is an exercise in which the parasympathetic nervous system, the so-called "rest and digest system" is activated at will. *You look straight ahead and focus on a point at eye level. Now turn your attention to what is going on to your left and right, but don't move your head. To begin with, you can use your hands by moving them sideways to the left and to the right of your head so that you can just about see your fingers wobbling. Now your attention is on your peripheral vision. Breathing automatically slows down and you can feel relaxation of the whole body (see Naughton 2012, p. 210f).*

### **Find a topic**

Here is one of many ways in which the group can agree on a topic. *Each child writes on a piece of paper two topics that interest them. On a signal from the facilitator, each person gives the paper to the person on their right. Everyone reads the note they have received and if they are interested in the topic, they put a dash beside the topic. Finally, the dashes are counted and the topic with the most dashes is used as the basis for further work.*

## Improvisation rules

Improvisation serves as a working principle in this model. It is important to make sure that the children are focused. This is only possible if everyone is relaxed and not afraid of criticism and judgment. Only then can they spontaneously react to the other players, playfully deal with the text and develop creativity and imagination.

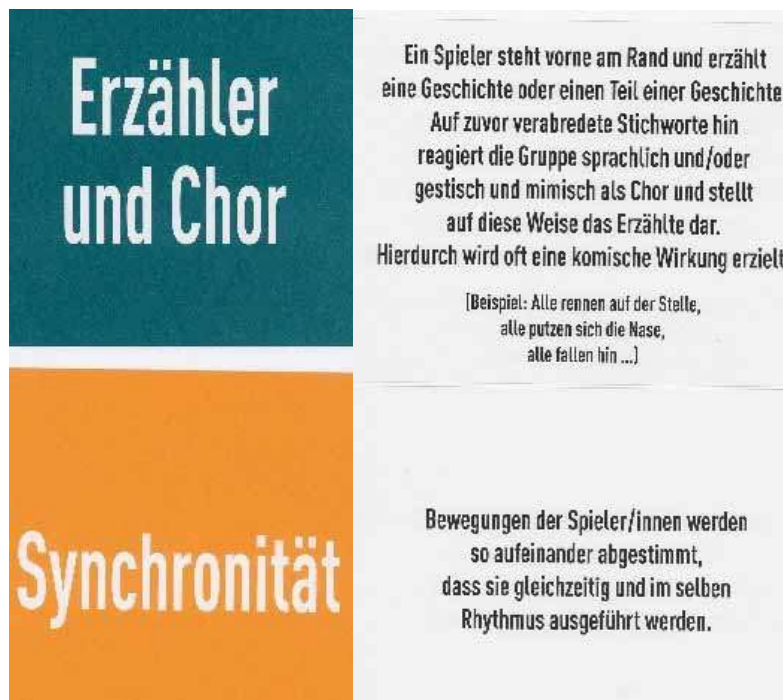
Andersen's (1996, p. 21) six basic rules are simplified and shortened to four:

- respond with a "yes" to suggestions from other players;
- trust your own imagination;
- do not plan in advance;
- implement the "first idea" immediately.

The Point of Concentration is a concept in Spolin's (2010) work. Its function is to develop the capacity to focus, in order to:

*isolate complex and intersecting theatrical techniques in order to thoroughly explore them [...] It provides control and artistic discipline in improvisation, avoiding situations where an untamed creativity becomes more of a destructive rather than a stabilizing force. [The facilitator] develops the student's capacity for involvement with problems and relationships with his fellow players [...] The point of concentration is a springboard into the intuitive (Spolin 2010, p. 37, author's and editors' translation).*

The facilitator acts as a sidecoach, giving instructions for action using 'short commands'. These are always given when the actor is in role. For example, "Be part of the stage design!" "Concentrate on things around you!" It is important that the players do not interrupt the activity but integrate the command into the activity. A variety of resources are used in improvisation. Another is the cards from Maïke Plath's (2011) *The Method Repertoire for Performing Arts and Theatre Lessons*. These cards allow children and adolescents to familiarize themselves with the different aesthetic methods. By doing so, the players learn to 'direct their own direction and develop significant parts of a theater production themselves' (Plath 2011, p.2).



2 cards from Maike Plath (2011) collection " from the categories Production Joker (top) and Aesthetics (bottom)

### Main phase

In this phase, the theatrical basics, divided into elements of play development, and using the improvisation techniques introduced above, are worked up. The play develops through improvisation and experimentation, the collectively produced material is turned into a scripted scenes. The role of the audience as an important factor of theatre is discussed. The stage design is created and, if possible, the use of music and light is considered and rehearsed. Again, here, games used for each area of the development of the play are described.

### Movement, rhythm & space

*Players move at three different speeds, making sure that the areas between the individual players are the same size.*

*This exercise offers many variations. The children enjoy acting out emotions (for example, happiness) at the different speeds, especially with the added task of not letting others know what that emotion is.*

Another game the kids love to play is *The Temple of Silence*. Participants are scattered around the room. One player tries to get from one side of the room to the opposite side, to a place where our Temple of Silence is. e.g. a chair on which he can stand. The others try to stop him by crossing his path: they can form a wall, build a circle around him, distract him with various loud

*noises. Touching is absolutely forbidden. The participant considers strategies for the best ways to overcome these obstacles. The moment he reaches the Temple of Silence, there is absolute silence in the room. After a few seconds of silence, the next player can start, and the one who has reached the target returns to the group. The exercise is ended with a final reflection (Ferrucci, 2009, p.105).*

### **Breath, voice, speech, vocals & choral elements**

This is an attention game by Boleslawski (2001, p. 111). Exercise for two players: *Players describe their activities from getting up in the morning to the moment of the story, but in reverse order. (The facilitator can sometimes perceive the strengths and weaknesses of the players.)*

*A variation would be the description in a certain mood e.g. very funny, very fast talking or singing. For example, the whole group respond to previously agreed words by repeating the word in chorus.*

Another game that gives children great pleasure: *To give compliments, only expressed in vowels, or tell someone off only in consonants (tss, pff, chch, klmn, rtsch, ...) or in numbers.*

And one more: *One person walks faster than the other. The players guess what relationship they have with each other and what characters they might be, just by the difference in pace, showing the status of the figures.*

### **History, dialogue & text**

The improvisations can be recorded on mobile phones and transcribed. Every "aa, hmm" is written down and memorized. Or the whole play is only written in key words and during the performances it is ensured that the keywords are used and the rest of the text is improvised.



For some children, whose first language is not that of their country of residence, practice has shown that keeping the dialogue simple is essential. These children are often "forced" to speak before they know the basic language skills, which often leads to insecurity. The dialogue is read aloud, repeated together and then played in a dramatic situation. It is often very helpful for children with a migrant

background to act in their mother tongue. But there are also children who are ashamed to speak their mother tongue on stage.



## Costumes, Props & Mask

Making the costumes yourself is a lot of fun for most children, especially if you are allowed to "transform" cloth scraps or old clothes. Newspaper costumes are also very popular, but they can be noisy during acting. They can also be "used" to make the children aware of their own volume of voice. For some children, props are very helpful as they allow them to focus more easily on what is happening on stage and on their own performance. The children enjoy wearing masks. Many feel "protected" because they can "hide" behind the mask.

## Final phase

If the group chooses to conduct a performance (of approx. 45 minutes), the final phase is the time for: detailed rehearsals - rehearsing individual scenes, run throughs, full rehearsal, dress rehearsal, performances and follow-up. The set design is fixed earlier and if possible, the use of light and music are rehearsed and agreed.

*Fast-track: It's great fun for the kids to play the whole piece in just three seconds, then in a minute and finally in 30 seconds.*



## Performance

After the performance, the group's favourite games can be played together with the audience. An absolute favorite game is *You are Late*. It is very entertaining for younger as well as older audiences. *Two players, one of whom is a student late for class, and the other the teacher, must leave the room. The audience is invited to invent a short story that includes the reason for the delay. The two players come back into the room, the rest of the group has to mimic the story behind the teacher's back, which the teacher has to "translate" according to the teacher. Fun guaranteed!*

## Postprocessing

At the latest one week after the performance, a follow-up is carried out with the group using drama pedagogical methods. Many drama games and exercises can be converted into feedback games. One example is *Making Faces: The group is in a circle. The facilitator asks a question about the common theatrical work, to which the players "grunt" and make an appropriate facial expression. A participant makes a face, pulls it symbolically with one hand from the face and throws it to another participant in the circle. This player captures and mimics the face. Then he makes up a new face and throws it on.*

Finally, this comment from an actor shows how theatre can give young people more confidence and self-esteem:

*What I dared to do on stage at school would have been unthinkable in school life. Suddenly there was applause, for one who was always inconspicuous. This has encouraged me to grow beyond the role of the introverted outsider. (Josef Hader, on [biondekbuehne website](http://biondekbuehne.at)).*

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## 17. When my love for youth theatre began ...

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**Susanne Gruber**

The story began in 2007, when I decided to rehearse a play with young people. I lived in a small village with about 300 inhabitants and I asked all teenagers from the age of 14 to 19, if they wanted to adopt a role in the play. Six young women and one young man signed up for it and I began to look for a play with this cast. It wasn't that easy, but I found one: it was about a middle-aged professor of history, who lived at the countryside in a small house with a house keeper. He had always studied and studied and studied ... and had forgotten that he would actually like to have a wife and a family. Because he couldn't imagine meeting one at the University or in the small village he lived, he put an advertisement in a newspaper. Five women answered and wanted to visit him. And so the blind dates with five very different women began...

One of the young actresses – in this article I name her Linda – was a rather calm and shy 16-year-old girl. She was the second of three sisters, who were both more dominant and loud than she was. Her mother said that she sometimes had the feeling that Linda is kind of invisible, that she seems to walk below the ground level.

In the play Linda took on the role of another professor of history, who was very well educated and inspired by history. This character had one scene – it was the 5th of a total of 8 scenes in the play – and Linda was pleased with the role; after approximately 3 weeks of rehearsal it was her turn for her first time on stage. In her scene she had to argue with the professor about a historical issue in a very loud and bossy manner. And there she stood, at her first rehearsal, with her fellow actor – who had already had 5 to 7 rehearsals and already felt very comfortable on stage – and he began to shout at her and she actually had to shout back, but her voice was very low, she wasn't very present and she somehow seemed like a shy deer, not like a self-confident professor. In this moment a soft voice inside of me said: "Give her time, let the scene develop, let her develop..." and so I let her act the scene the way she could and trusted in her. And in each following rehearsals she became a little bit louder and three weeks later she stood there on stage firmly on her two feet and made up her mind and shouted at her fellow actor and he shouted back and she shouted again and then left the stage with a banging door – it was great. And I watched her and I saw that she enjoyed raising her voice, being strict, daring to be unfriendly, to stand up for her opinion and I saw that something had changed in her.

At the performance when the audience was there, she acted very well – she was nervous like her fellow actors and actresses – but she did it very well. We performed the play three times and I saw that she loved to be on stage. And when I met her later on in a private context I noticed her upright attitude and her positive charisma. She played two more times with the theatre group and once she said to me, that this first role was the greatest for her and she likes to think back on it.

Experiences and statements like these encourage me over and over to take up the work and challenge of working with children and youth in theatre context.

... and – by the way – the professor of history married his house keeper 😊

# 18. Supporting German as a Second Language

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**Dagmar Hoefferer-Brunthaler, MA**

I am teacher of German language and literature, therefore I also have to deal with students who cannot cope very well with the language they will need for their future. Of course, there are methods to learn and practise erudite language (called *Bildungssprache* in German), such as: repeating structures, learning vocabulary, reading and speaking, writing and listening. But for students obviously it's hard to keep the target in mind because it's far away and sometimes not very clear.

It needs some years to learn a language as a second language – scientists and language researchers say about three to seven years minimum – to be able to use the language not only in everyday situations. If students want to apply for an academic qualification they need to use the target language in an academic way. That needs more practice, the ability to speak coherently, background knowledge and knowledge of technical terms / special vocabulary.

All this might be hard to manage over a longer period of time – ordinary grammar lessons, vocabulary training, listening and speaking, reading and writing are valuable – but there are methods for language teaching that are much more fun, and the result can be more than just “language in use”: Drama Teaching Methods can help with this and also influence personality skills and develop resilience.

## **Students without adequate German language competences - what can be done?**

For two years I have been teaching a number of students from Syria. They have no regular status: they are called „außerordentlich“ – extraordinary – and not placed in any grade at school because of their missing language skills. Most of the young people have experienced escaping from their home; some have been in refugee camps for a long time. It's not easy for some to concentrate on their future; what I sometimes see is just happiness in being secure.

The students are provided with German lessons (called *Sprachstartkurse*) because their first intention is to learn as much German as possible. They get about 11 lessons a week, and they are taught by five different teachers.

## How do we increase language abilities?

**1. Begin to learn a language without using words!** – First steps always are hard, after about four weeks the students become frustrated and annoyed because they can't express what they want to say. At this stage, drama/theatre teaching can help avoid frustration by playing without words – explaining a game without words, only by watching; presenting themselves with gestures, facial expressions and try to be able to repeat all the (non-verbal) movements in the group. Developing an awareness through carefully watching the group members can be taught and learned very easily.



**2. Develop competence in paying attention to the group!** – Empathy and compassion are very necessary to create a good learning environment; games and play help to develop these attitudes; in combination with training on emotional expressions (by playing with different emotions), the students learn to watch how they can feel and get words for these emotions, slowly getting more and more precise.

**3. Give the students a positive attitude to the whole learning process!** – The most important thing is to be honest, to say that learning German as a second language is not easy, they need to be focussed, to be persistent and systematic and to have these attitudes for a sustained period of time, if they want to succeed. Giving them the chance to comprehend what they are doing, why they are doing these exercises and what the outcome is, makes them stronger. Laughter always is welcome! This is work on resilience!

**4. Start to learn vocabulary with games and play!** – There are different games coming from “drama in education” and “improvisation”, which make vocabulary visible; e.g. different ways of greeting / everyday life / „Ich bin ... ich bin ... ich nehme“ / „Was machst du da?“ / Hot chair / emotional vocabulary (*Gefühlswand*) / looking for synonyms / etc. always combine training in basic vocabulary with writing things down – clustering and grouping are methods of visualisation, they should be used whenever possible.



**5. Invite the students to use all possible learning strategies!** – Make them aware which types of learners they are, help them to get visualisation skills, offer methods of learning through movement and body work; give them confirmation that learning is always about trial and error; turn failure into something positive! Laugh and resilience will increase!



**6. Make grammar structures visible by playing with them!** – Grammar structures can be embedded in playing methods; e.g. find out which words have to stay together to build correct sentence sections (*Satzglieder*); try to find all the places in different sentences, where „nicht“ (not) can be said; dealing with the mysterious „es“ in weather description (e.g. „es regnet“ / „es ist kalt“). Sometimes students need explicit grammar structures and lists (e.g. irregular words in German), but every student has a different way to learn effectively (learning by reading / by hearing / by moving / by discussing / by a combination of learning strategies); training / repeating / testing is also necessary for the learning process.

**7. Train and repeat – even test knowledge with playful methods!** – Training can motivate when done using playing skills: use rhythm, use movements, use body language to memorise; use visualisation and pictorial learning. Use fun and laughter!



**8. Make status visible, try to bring it to mind and act with it!** – Status is always part of our



awareness and influences our behaviour often more than we expect, it might happen that we do not recognise how and how much. Being able to analyse status behaviour (inner and outer status) and the ways of “playing with” this helps people become self-conscious. This is work on resilience too!

**9. Get students together to learn from each other!** – There are so many abilities in the group, you (as a teacher) cannot provide everything. Use students as teachers, make pairs or small groups, give responsibility for the learning process to the students. The learning groups can be kept for some weeks (called “Tandem” learning). Let them use digital media to improve - but always look for positive communication and involving everybody!

**10. Let the students create scenarios, where they can show all the knowledge they have (listen / speak / read / write)!** – After having practised many different exercises, played many games, etc. they are able to create a small dialogue / a small scene. First improvisation will take place, the scene can be written down to prove grammar rules. Other groups can read and play! The students have to take care of the language in the end! Scenes can deal with a special topic (e.g. The murder of Caesar / economic difficulties of farming in Africa / planets around the sun / etc.) This is called “positional drama” and is a very strong tool.

# 19. A Healthy and Safe Environment for Children

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**Kees Schuur**

## Introduction

A school must be a safe and healthy environment for children to mentally and physically develop and grow stronger. In the ARTPAD Best Practice Guide<sup>35</sup> this is described in the principle of “the Environment” as:

*The creation of an environment that considers both the human and physical aspects of the space will best support resilience and the engagement of children and young people in formal and informal learning.*

During the project study visit to a primary school in Gdansk, Poland, we were received by enthusiastic teachers, whose drama lessons we were able to observe. The demonstration took place in the drama classroom, located in the basement of the school, which only had top-hung windows. It was the only room that was available for drama. The 23 children, together with the 11 adults, engaged in drama and while doing so produced within 20 minutes enough warmth and CO<sub>2</sub> to make it stuffy, causing headaches. The second example aroused during the ARTPAD training of drama pedagogues and trainers at the University of Gdansk. With 26 persons active in a classroom it was getting warm and 3 people started to complain of headaches. It was very cold outside, so opening the windows also caused complaints. After showing some of the data presented in this article, it was immediately agreed that whenever it was possible (short and long breaks; during activities where part of the group was in another classroom) to fully open the windows for a couple of minutes. These two examples and further experiences working with groups, showed the necessity of providing a healthy and safe environment.

This article discusses the ambivalent situation of the healthy environment for the children (and for the teachers). When introducing drama and play as an integral part of education, we also have to consider the environment in which it takes place. Every day the air in the classrooms of many schools becomes polluted with CO<sub>2</sub>. The Federal Environment Agency of the UmweltBundesAmt (UBA) reports that in approximately 50% of the schools the CO<sub>2</sub>

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<sup>35</sup> ARTPAD consortium (2017), ARTPAD Best Practice Guide, University of Gloucester, UK

concentration was above 2,000 ppm<sup>36</sup>, rated as “hygienically unacceptable”, at levels that are dangerous. In fact, 80-90% of the schools had levels above 1,000 ppm, which is rated as: “hygienically conspicuous”. And children are every school day exposed to this environment....

Together with other air pollutants, like (fine) dust, germs, mould and mildew in classrooms and in older buildings PCB (polychlorinated biphenyls, used in sealants, paints, electric machinery, etc., but banned in the EU since 1987), this dangerous environment can have an overwhelming impact on the health and learning ability of the children. Some of these problems are: lower concentration, lower cognitive functioning (7-25% lower test results), lower ability to learn, asthma and allergy attacks, increased frequency of illness and absenteeism. And this all also has an effect on the health, concentration and learning ability of the teachers and other adults who work with the children.

Stimulating the use of drama techniques and play at school and in youth centers, means also dealing with the problem of bad air. The children have no option: they must go to school. And the adults have to make a decision: do they want to hold drama activities and other lessons in poor ventilated rooms and/or classrooms in which they were already exposed to extreme conditions? Or is play used as a recovery moment, to get some ‘fresh air’ and then going back into the bad air in their classrooms? Or perhaps the first step is to improve the indoor climate before drama techniques and play can really be used effectively for developing resilience and increasing engagement with school.

## CO<sub>2</sub> levels

Data from all over the world, for example, Denmark<sup>37</sup> and the UK<sup>38</sup>, all point in the same direction: that unfavourable air conditions and indoor climates in classrooms are contributing to an increase in health problems, lower ability to learn, less attention, increased absenteeism.

This problem has been studied for many years. As long ago as 1857, Dr. Max Pettenkofer measured the CO<sub>2</sub> levels in a college room for 250 persons. At the start of the presentation he measured a level of 1,080 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>, after 30 minutes 2,260 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> and 3,320 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>. Actually, the levels should have been higher, according to the calculation he made, but he

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<sup>36</sup> ppm = parts per million

<sup>37</sup> Swegon Air Academy, *Problems with classroom air quality* [http://www.swegonairacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Problems\\_with\\_classroom\\_air\\_quality.pdf](http://www.swegonairacademy.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/Problems_with_classroom_air_quality.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Mumovic, Prof D.M. a.o., (2018) *Indoor Air quality in London's Schools*, UCL & University of Cambridge [https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/qla\\_iaq\\_report\\_with\\_nts.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/qla_iaq_report_with_nts.pdf)

found that due to the bad insulation a natural draught kept the levels lower. He advised already 160 years ago as maximum limit 1,000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>.

Aus diesen Versuchen geht zur Evidenz hervor, dass uns keine Luft behaglich ist, welche in Folge der Respiration und Perspiration der Menschen mehr als 1 pro mille Kohlensäure enthält. Wir haben somit ein Recht, jede Luft als schlecht und für einen beständigen Aufenthalt als untauglich zu erklären, welche in Folge der Respiration und Perspiration der Menschen mehr als 1 pro mille Kohlensäure enthält.

Figure 1 from "Besprechung allgemeiner auf die entilation ezüglicher Fragen" Dr. Max Pettenkofer, 1857.

"From this experiment it becomes evident that no atmosphere which, as result of human respiration and perspiration, contains more than 1 part per mille (thousand) carbonic acid, is comfortable for us. Thus, we have a right to declare every atmosphere as bad and unfit for any length of time, which as a result of human respiration and perspiration, contains more than 1 part per mille carbonic acid."

The table below shows the results of an experiment in Germany<sup>39</sup> with a class full of pupils, without proper ventilation.

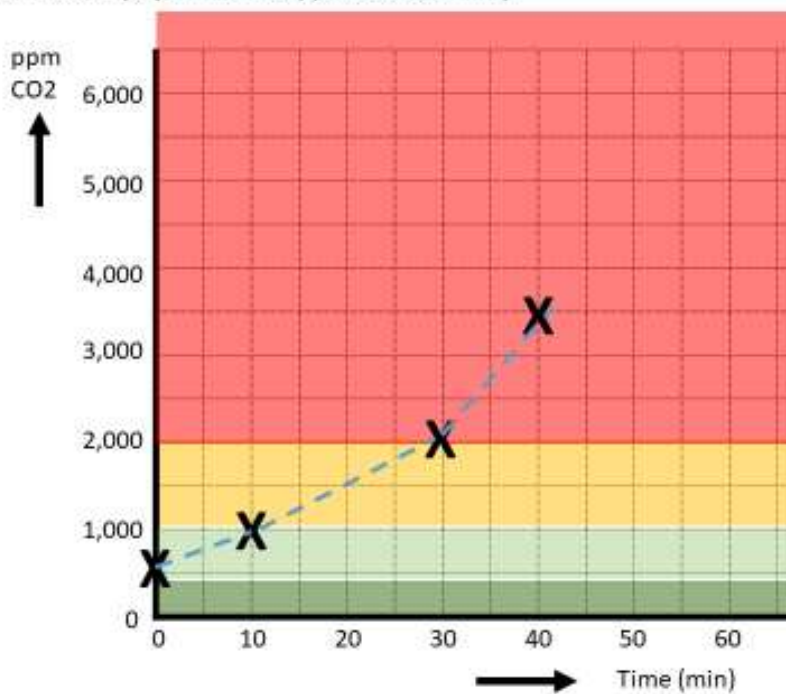
Some remarks about the table:

1. The dark green area at the bottom of the graph (from 0-400 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>) is the area of CO<sub>2</sub> in nature. The light green area from 400 – 1,000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> displays the safe area. In most offices and houses with sufficient ventilation the level is around 800 -1,000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>. In most recommendations the level CO<sub>2</sub> ppm between 1,000 and 2,000 is already considered as 'questionable'. Above 2,000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> is considered as hygienically unacceptable.
2. The graph on the left shows the result of an experiment with a classroom full with closed windows. The experiment has been stopped after 40 minutes, because the CO<sub>2</sub> levels rose to dangerously high levels.
3. The graph on the right shows the results of highest measured CO<sub>2</sub> levels in classrooms in some of the big cities in Germany.
4. In that study it showed that in 79-89% of the schools the CO<sub>2</sub> level was above 1,000 ppm.

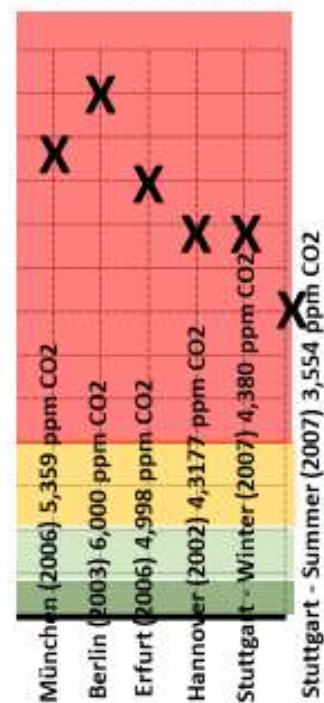
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<sup>39</sup>Gesundheitliche Bewertung von Kohlendioxid in der Innenraumluft Umweltbundesambtes, Bundesgesundheitsbl - Gesundheitsforsch - Gesundheitsschutz 1, 51:1358–1369, Springer Medizin Verlag 2008

CO<sub>2</sub>-level (ppm) in full classroom without proper air ventilation (experiment stopped after 40 min.)



Highest measured values



The Building Research Establishment (BRE, 2010) in the UK released the results of analysing more than 70 research studies and documents in its paper, Health and Productivity Benefits of Sustainable Schools. Two of the conclusive research findings were: 1) In tests, cognitive function was 15% worse with CO<sub>2</sub> at around 945 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> than it was in fresh outdoor-fed air, and 2) 50% worse when CO<sub>2</sub> reached concentrations of 1,400 ppm CO<sub>2</sub>.

An additional problem is that many schools are located in areas with a higher air pollution, due to their proximity to major roads or industrial areas. These schools often care for socially marginalized populations, who are getting the worst exposure<sup>40, 41</sup>.

## Other environmental exposures

The studies above were mainly researching the effect of children's exposure to high and hygienically unacceptable levels of CO<sub>2</sub> due to poor air ventilation on the health and

<sup>40</sup> Laville S. (2018) Air pollution worse inside London classrooms than outside study finds *The Guardian*, 24.05.2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2018/may/24/air-pollution-worse-inside-london-classrooms-than-outside-study-finds>

<sup>41</sup> Mohai, P. a.o. (2011), 'Air Pollution Around Schools Is Linked To Poorer Student Health And Academic Performance', *Health Affairs*, May 2011 p852-862)

performance of children. This is only part of the problem of low air-quality in schools and at universities. Some of the other issues in the air quality are:

- toxic fumes and chemical exposure, for instance PCB (a probable carcinogen, causes irritation to the nose & lungs, skin irritations, immune system, etc.);
- germs;
- mould and mildew (asthma, coughing, eyes, fatigue headache);
- dust (asthma/allergy attacks).

Some examples:

- In one school in Germany a PCB-level of 5,200 nanogram / m<sup>3</sup> was measured, almost twice as much as permitted (300 Ng/m<sup>3</sup> is the recommended maximum level; at 3,000 Ng/m<sup>3</sup> the user is required to take action)
- In a USA study Rudnick & Milton<sup>42</sup> researched the relation between CO<sub>2</sub> level and the level of germs. With 30 persons in a classroom it showed that one person got influenza, at a level of 1000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> five people got influenza and at 2,000 ppm CO<sub>2</sub> 15 people got the flu.
- And another issue is exposure to enough daylight. The BRE (2010) and other surveys showed for instance that increasing daylight increased the performance in cognitive test with 20-25%.

## Conclusion and some recommendations

It is clear that many classrooms are unfavourable for learning and developing. They are places where children (and teachers), having a lower cognitive functioning and ability to learn, are becoming fatigued, and are more likely to get ill. As teacher, trainer, theatre pedagogue or playworker you are responsible; it is your duty to offer an optimal environment during the hours you are working with the children. Some improvements in the environment you can do yourself. Some are the responsibility of the management of the school. And some are laws and regulations which have to be obeyed.

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<sup>42</sup> Rudnick SN, Milton DK. 'Risk of indoor airborne infection transmission estimated from carbon dioxide concentration', *Indoor Air*, 13(3):237-45.

- If financially possible, install mechanical ventilation with enough capacity (optimal: more than 54 m<sup>3</sup> air per hour per person; sub-optimal 36-54 m<sup>3</sup> air per hour per person) and filters for cleaning the air.
- Accept for drama and play (and for all the other classes) only rooms that have enough mechanical ventilation or where the windows can be opened.
- Ventilate<sup>43</sup> for at least 5 minutes at the beginning of the session.
- Open the windows at least every 20 minutes for at least 2 minutes.
- After each hour, ventilate for 5-10 minutes

And as researchers we should question ourselves to what extent an improvement in learning outcomes, in health, in absenteeism is caused by which variables in an experiment. For instance: playing outdoor offers breathing a large amount of fresh (clean?) air. Is the improvement in cognitive functioning, feeling less fatigue, caused by the play or by the fresh air or by the combination? What would be the effect of applying drama techniques in a classroom where the windows are regularly opened?

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<sup>43</sup> *Ventilate = complete opened windows*

## Appendix 1: Project Partner Contact Details

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