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Vzt'ahy s verejnou a vzdelávanie divadelného ústavu pre školy, marginalizované skupiny a pracovníkov manažmentu

PR and Education of the Theatre Institute for Schools, Marginalized Groups and Management Staff

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Abstract

The aim of the paper is to introduce the reader to the activities and diversity of the Theatre Institute in Bratislava in the field of non-formal education for children, youth, professionals, as well as the wider public in the field of performing arts on specific educational projects. The study also attempts to define non-formal education as an activity that develops young people's traditional knowledge and experience of theatre, connecting and enriching their knowledge of contemporary theatre production. It also intends to name informal education as a possible source of information, a tool used to link theoretical knowledge of theatre with lived experience and personal experience. The study assumes that the use of a non-formal education method can provide a space for the active leisure of youth developing creativity, communication, and a diversity of thought, and at the same time serve as an enrichment of the educational process in the field of performing arts in schools.

Keywords: Management. Non-formal education. Marketing communication. Creativity. Schools. Marginalized groups. PR.

Introduction

The subject matter of leisure-time pedagogy is educational issues in the sense of education, that is, the education and training of children and young people outside compulsory school and out-of-school education. Leisure pedagogy deals with issues of purposeful educational activity with children and young people, aimed at meaningful and valuable leisure time and at the formation and development of individuality. This activity takes place through participation in organized activities in their leisure time and in indirect educational action by creating appropriate conditions for spontaneous use of leisure time, for example in cultural facilities and the like (Kratochvílová, 2004, p. 64).

The paper is focused on informal education in the field of performing arts. The paper discusses the field of non-formal education in a cultural institution, which is the Theatre Institute, and about theatre, which stands outside the sphere of the teaching process in schools, but also outside the filling of interest circles and primary art schools. The authors' intention is also to open a dialogue on informal education about theatre for young people, which would be the responsibility and direct responsibility of the state, municipal and independent theatres themselves, and various organizations active in culture, i.e. institutions whose main task and activity is the artistic creation, presentation, preservation and promotion of the values of the performing arts.

By the term non-formal education we understand all forms of education that do not belong to the official field of competence of the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport of the Slovak Republic. (Blašková, 2013 p. 32) The individual activities of the educational process should be based on the principle of experientiality, group work, and mutual interaction of participants and creators of theatre art. The intention of the educational process is also to link the theoretical knowledge of certain aspects of theatre art acquired in the educational process with practical experience passed on from theatre makers and practitioners, or the empirical experience of their own work.

The actual creation during the educational process is based on the solution of specific creative tasks, assignments, or problems and its intention is to arrive at a solution and a result for the participant. An important aspect of the non-formal education process built in this way is that it is carried out directly in the theatre environment and the lecturers of the individual educational activities are theatre makers, practitioners, theoreticians, and critics. At the same time, informal education about theatre is understood as a form of active leisure, which presupposes the interest of the participant to deepen his/her talents, abilities, skills, as well as theoretical knowledge and thus develop his/her individuality.(Civáňová, 2011 p. 103-104). Non-formal education projects are undoubtedly an interesting product for student teachers, to whom theatres and cultural institutions offer, in addition to the theatre performance, an added value in the form of an educational project linked, for example, to a specific theatre production that the students visit or to a certain aspect of theatre production, such as creative writing, etc., in the framework of organized visits. It is assumed that the recipient, who is offered such a complex experience, has the opportunity to build a positive leisure habit in the form of participation in a cultural event, learning in the field of theatre arts, or their own creative work based on leisure art activities.(Civáňová, 2011, p. 104).

The Theatre Institute and Education

The Theatre Institute (Divadelný ústav, 1961) is a specialized institution with nationwide outreach, directly subjected to the Ministry of Culture of the Slovak Republic. It conducts comprehensive research, documentation, scholarly analyses and provision of information on theatre culture in Slovakia dating back to the establishment of the first professional scene in 1920. The Institute administers the cultural heritage in all Slovak theatre genres (drama, opera, ballet, dance, puppet theatre, modern performative forms). As part of its expert activities, the Institute systematically collects, scientifically processes, protects and makes accessible collection funds (archive, museum and documentation items) about the history and present of Slovak professional theatre. It also runs a comprehensive information system about professional theatre in Slovakia. The Theatre Institute collaborates with its partner institutions in Slovakia and abroad, especially with partner institutes and museums in the V4 countries. In international cooperation, the Theatre Institute can take advantage of its membership in international non-governmental organizations ITI, ENICPA, IETM, SIBMAS and ICOM. This cooperation allows the Institute to engage in specialized international theatrological events and projects – alongside other regular activities, this allows the Theatre Institute to present Slovak theatre abroad.

One of the most important activities of the Theatre Institute in Bratislava is to support education in the performing arts. Educational activities are intended for a wide range of recipients, namely children and young people, professionals, educators as well as the general public. The basic categories of educational activities in which the Theatre Institute operates are art education and civic awareness. The modalities of these activities are conceived as multifaceted. They are mainly creative workshops and seminars, conferences, symposia, colloquia and discussion panels, courses, information and presentation activities or artistic productions. Recently, digital and online learning platforms have been gaining in popularity, enabling instant feedback and expanding the pool of active users. Programmes of educational activities are tailored to different age and educational categories:

- Preschoolers: offers organized performances with tutors and creative workshops.
- Primary 1st cycle pupils: programs focus on creative writing workshops exhibitions, and debates.
- Primary 2nd cycle pupils: this group, in addition to the Theatre Institute offers selected performances in Studio 12 with an accompanying discussion program, as well as methodological guides in the field of theatre and drama.
- Primary and secondary art school pupils: programs for this cohort of pupils are aimed at improving skills in leisure education and involving students in artistic and international grant programs.

- Education for professionals and the public: the concept of education for these groups is broadly conceived, combining all the opportunities available to the Theatre Institute. In addition to traditional forms of education, the online database *etrheatre.sk* is used extensively for education. It links photographic documentation about Slovak theatre and documentary materials that the institution collects. The result of this grouping is a knowledge database that is a tool for research and study purposes.

Educational activities can be divided into two groups: one-time activities and those to which the institution is committed on a long-term basis. The first group mainly includes lectures, conferences, critical seminars, one-off educational cycles for pupil-teachers, and existing artistic activities in education and edification. This category includes an educator training series called *Educators in the Backstage Theatre*. It is a project for the systematic training of educators in the field of theatre and drama. The initial course for educators from all over Slovakia presented the entire rehearsal process from the first reading rehearsal to the premiere and subsequent critical workshop at the Theatre Institute, using the production of *Arcadia* at the Slovak National Theatre in Bratislava as an example. The project was carried out in five stages, in 2015, and involved over twenty applicants. Each candidate, after successfully completing the above course, received accreditation from the Ministry of Education of the Slovak Republic (Fekete, 2021, p. 131).

Education and training for theatre professionals on social media

In 2022, the Theatre Institute reflected on the long-standing need to educate theatre professionals on communication strategies and social media. This resulted in two workshops:

The workshop (on February 24, 2022, in Studio 12 of the Theatre Institute in Bratislava) focused on social media. The workshop was focused on social media and was attended by 30 participants, mainly from the marketing and PR departments of Slovak theatres. The aim of the workshop was to help the participants orient themselves in the rich and structured world of social networks and to promote skills in their use. Matúš Gajdoš and Jiří Lebiš were the lecturers of the workshop. The workshop lecturers focused mainly on choosing the right online platform, creating a communication strategy, creating, and planning content, setting the time of posts, comprehensive use of social networks, business goals, advertising campaigns, and current trends (Annual Report, 2022, p. 33). The second workshop focused on Educating theatre professionals on communication strategies.

The workshop was on educating theatre operations professionals on communication strategies. The workshop was attended by 38 participants, mainly employees of the marketing and PR departments of Slovak theatres. The aim of the workshop was to provide a structured guide on how to create

a communication strategy for theatres and to inspire theatre marketers while providing them with a simple and logical process on how to create a communication strategy and plan for theatres. The lecturers of the workshop were Zuzana Ďurčeková and Alexandra Martináková, experts who have been working in the field for a long time. The lecturers focused on the ambivalent relationship between culture and marketing, on examples of communication of cultural institutions abroad, on the importance of branding and communication strategy of the theatre, on target groups and consumer behaviour and trends, on the current state of marketing communication of theatres in Slovakia and finally on the effectiveness and measurement of campaign results (Annual Report, 2022, p. 33).

Education for marginalized groups

A special chapter in the organization's educational activities is its relationship to marginalized groups and topics that are fundamental in society but have been neglected in the long term. These are topics for the visually or hearing impaired, people with mental disabilities, for national minorities, LGBT groups, or for persons without a home. For these target groups, the Study 12 project called *Peripheral Vision* (*Periférne videnie*) works. This is a special series of productions that provides theatre groups and creators to present and at the same time educate the public on topics that society does not seem interested in. So far, *Nomantinel Theatre*, *Tiché iskry* (*Silent Sparks*), *Zrakáč* (*The Seer*) and *Homeless Theatre* (*Divadlo bez domova*) have used this platform (Fekete, 2021, p. 75).

The most common model used is long-term projects, which are not only carried out at the Theatre Institute, but also at partner educational and cultural institutions. Very often these are grant projects and co-production projects. Two such long-term exemplary activities are two focal educational projects for secondary school students called *Dramatically Young/Creative Writing Workshops* and *Classics in the Graphic Novel*.

The theoretical background was in accordance with the ideas of well-known authors and researchers who have written about drama education for handicapped people. For example, Joe Salvatore is a theatre educator and researcher known for his work in inclusive drama education. He has written extensively on the subject, exploring the transformative potential of drama for individuals with disabilities. R. Keith Sawyer: R. Keith Sawyer is a renowned scholar in the field of creativity and learning. He has written about drama and improvisation as a means of enhancing social skills and self-expression for individuals with disabilities. Diane Conrad is an author and professor who has focused on drama education and special needs. She has written books that emphasize the importance of drama in promoting inclusive education and engaging students with disabilities. Rhonda S. Black: Rhonda S. Black is an

expert in special education and theatre arts. She has written about using drama as a tool for inclusion, communication, and personal growth among individuals with disabilities. Kathleen S. Kniepmann is an author and educator who has written about drama therapy and its benefits for individuals with special needs. Her work highlights the role of drama in fostering creativity, social skills, and emotional well-being.

It's important to note that the field of drama education for individuals with disabilities is diverse, and many researchers and practitioners contribute to this area of study.

Creative Writing Workshops for Pupils and Students

The aim of the project is to promote creative writing for children and young people by popularising drama and theatre in this age group. The project runs throughout the theatre season in selected creative writing centres. In 2022, four centres have been selected: the Drama Theatre of the Slovak National Theatre, the J. Palárik Theatre in Trnava, the Municipal Theatre in Žilina and the Puppet Theatre at the Crossroads in Banská Bystrica. In each theatre a group of six to ten children met regularly once a week under the guidance of experienced lecturers, dramaturgs or lecturers of dramaturgy of the theatres, namely Iveta Škripková (BDNR), Lucie Mihálová (DJP), Daniela Brezániová (MDŽ) and Mario Drgoňa (SND). At the end of the 2022/23 season, a public presentation of the workshops' work was prepared. It took place on 18 June 2022 in the Blue Salon of the Drama Theatre of the Slovak National Theatre as part of the award ceremony programme of the Dramatically Young 2022 competition. The presentations of the year-long creative work were prepared by the participants together with their lecturers and the lecturer. The workshops were attended by 31 children and young people this school year. Some of them also entered their original works in the competition, from which the expert jury selected three works (Annual Report, 2022, p. 31).

A Classic in the Form of a Graphic Novel

Three European theatre institutions: the Slovenian Theatre Institute from Ljubljana (Slovenia), the Zbigniew Raszewski Theatre Institute from Warsaw (Poland), and the Theatre Institute from Bratislava (Slovakia) are collaborating to create a pilot model of cultural education in secondary schools through the graphic novel - comic book. The aim of the project is to stimulate the relationship of secondary school students to theatre with the help of graphic novels, to reach potential young audiences, and to introduce them to classical dramatic texts in an engaging and comprehensible way. The project was implemented with the support of the European Union under Creative Europe - Support for European Cooperation Projects 2019 program.

The aim of the project is:

- To produce and publish a joint international original series of graphic novels focusing on European theatre classics, thus diversifying the artistic and contextual means of theatrical expression.
- To involve graphic novelists, illustrators, designers, and theatre professionals and enable them to collaborate internationally.
- Introduce European theatre classics and similar performances to new young audiences and increase their interest in theatre and reading.
- To contribute to cultural education by developing a pedagogical drama programme for schools using the graphic novel as an educational tool.

The project partners have developed into comic form three major world dramas, namely the tragedy *Antigone*. The author of the graphic design is the Polish author of comics and children's books Daniel Chmielewski. Alfred Jarry's play *King Ubu* was worked on by the visual artist Ciril Horjak alias Dr. Horowitz, and finally, the world-famous William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* was worked on by the artist and illustrator Juraj Martiška, with the help of Daniel Majling's adaptation of the text.

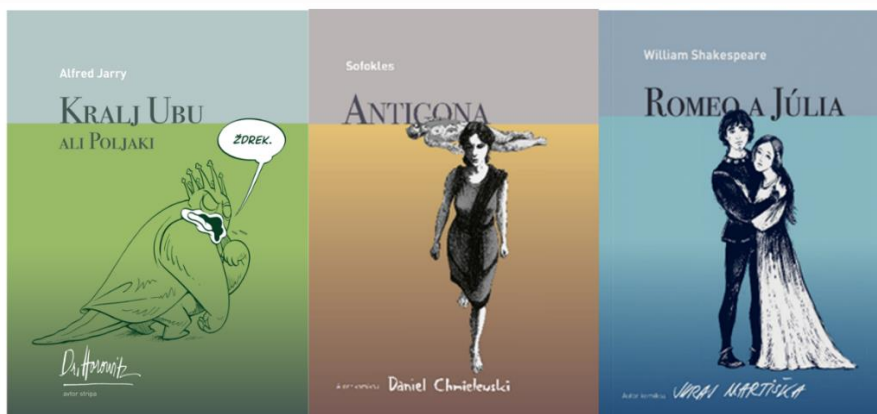


Figure 1: Covers classic drama comics

Source: Theatre Institute Bratislava

In 2022, a collaboration with the bilingual C. S. Lewis in Bratislava, where a pilot educational programme of the project was launched. The programme in the pilot class (1st G class of the grammar school under the guidance of teacher Martina Sondej) included a 2-part theatre-educational workshop *Romeo and Juliet* in a Graphic Novel. The workshop tested the possibilities and range of using this comic in the classroom. The workshop was prepared in collaboration with the EDUdrama association, which is working with the institution on new workshops, research, professional outputs and presentation of this part of the project. The collaboration also includes the

creation of method sheets for educators for each graphic novel (Annual Report, 2022, pp. 31-32). The educational workshop *Romeo and Juliet* in the Graphic Novel was presented by the end of 2022:

- for the students of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Presov (8.9.2022 in Studio 12 in Bratislava),
- for secondary school teachers as part of the professional accompanying programme of the international festival Pupperty Bystrica 2022 (26 September 2022 at the A. Sládkovič Gymnasium in Banská Bystrica),
- for grammar school students and teachers within the framework of the conference Theatre for Children - starting points, forms, perspectives in Prešov (25 and 26 November 2022, Viola Theatre in Prešov).

Based on the developed graphic novels and together with artists, students and teachers at partners' creative residencies, all partners developed a pilot model of innovative cross-sectoral and interdisciplinary culture and art education in high schools. The theatre heritage and history of the staging of selected dramas in partner countries were presented to the international stage with an e-exhibition.

In a similar manner, it is planned to prepare educational activities according to the proven model that we have implemented for the comic *Romeo and Juliet*. In the graphic novel was published by the end of 2022:

- for the students of the Faculty of Arts of the University of Presov (8 September 2022 in Studio 12 in Bratislava),
- for secondary school teachers as part of the professional accompanying programme of the international festival Pupperty Bystrica 2022 (26 September 2022 at the A. Sládkovič Gymnasium in Banská Bystrica),
- for grammar school students and teachers within the framework of the conference Theatre for Children - starting points, forms, perspectives in Prešov (25 and 26 November 2022, Viola Theatre in Prešov).

In a similar style, it is planned to prepare educational activities according to the proven model that we have implemented for the comic *Romeo and Juliet*. In cooperation with the EDUdrama association, theatre-educational workshops and methodological sheets for the plays *Antigone* and *King Ubu* are being developed. Two other secondary schools have been approached for cooperation - the Secondary Vocational School of Pedagogy in Turčianske Teplice and the Secondary Vocational School of Pedagogy in Bratislava. The programs will be implemented in the first months of 2023.

Conclusion

Based on the experience and outputs of the educational projects of the Theatre Institute, we can confirm that the strategy of non-formal education meets with extremely positive feedback from students and teachers of the

participating schools and cooperating Slovak and foreign theatres, as well as the general public. The Theatre Institute's non-formal education projects and other similarly conceived projects offer an alternative to active leisure time that develops the abilities, skills and knowledge of the young people involved, develops their interest in the performing arts, and promotes aesthetic and ethical perception. Non-formal education thus complements the teaching process in schools, expands the space for young people's self-realisation, leads to creativity, inspires self-creation and can also stimulate a young person's future professional direction. Drama education is a powerful tool for empowering and giving voice to marginalized individuals and communities. It provides a platform for self-expression, fosters empathy, and promotes social and emotional development. The Theatre Institute's activities contribute to the inclusion of all individuals regardless of their background, ability or identity. Projects and programs create a safe and supportive environment that celebrates diversity and encourages participation by all.

These activities offer relevant content: stories, themes and theatrical techniques that resonate with lived experiences and provide meaningful activities for children, students, cultural marketers, and marginalized individuals (or groups).

Telling classic stories and personal narratives Encourage participants to share their own stories and personal narratives through a variety of dramatic forms such as monologues, skits, or improvisation. This process allows everyone to express their experiences, challenges, and aspirations, thus fostering a sense of fellowship and mutuality.

Drama is also a tool for exploring social justice issues and promoting self-advocacy. Encourage participants to critically examine social inequalities and engage in discussions and creative projects that raise awareness and inspire positive change.

Skills development: In addition to the personal and emotional benefits, drama education can also help develop practical skills such as communication, teamwork, creativity, and problem-solving. These skills can boost participants' confidence and increase their opportunities for personal growth and future success.

The Theatre Institute's activities are inclusive, and culturally relevant, and create transformative experiences that strengthen individual lives and voices, foster personal growth, and promote social change.

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