

“I Thought Drama was not for Me” Teachers’ Experiences and Acquired Skills in Using Drama Activities in Teaching

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ABSTRACT

The objective of this study is to examine teachers’ experiences and competencies in using drama as a pedagogical tool. The data set comprises 36 teachers who have integrated drama into their pedagogical practices. The theoretical framework was based on Gardner’s multiple intelligences theory. The integration of drama facilitated teachers’ professional development as educators. Teachers identified improvements in perseverance, moral awareness, self-reflection, and courage to express oneself. Furthermore, the teachers exhibited advancement in creativity, joy of teaching, group management abilities, acceptance of diversity, and the ability to embrace incompleteness.

KEYWORDS

Drama/theater education; multiple intelligence; pedagogical skills; teachers’ drama experiences

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Introduction

In recent decades, research in drama education has primarily concentrated on the impact of drama on students and teacher trainees. However, there has been limited attention to the professional development and self-identified competencies of in-service teachers, even though their insights and experiences could contribute valuable knowledge to the field of drama education. Thus, the objective of this study is to examine the experiences of teachers engaged in drama education and to identify areas that could benefit from further attention, particularly in the context of occupational wellbeing.

Drama activities are functional theater methods that can be introduced in lessons to enrich and deepen the learning content. In 2014, the Finnish basic education curriculum was expanded to include drama, which is mentioned seventy-nine times as a method to promote interaction and expression, and to foster human growth and creativity (Opetushallitus/ Finnish National Agency for Education [OPH], 2016). At the upper secondary school level, drama and theater are integrated into the Finnish language and literature curriculum, with an emphasis on developing interaction and performance skills (OPH, 2019). Drama and theater studies are elective courses offered in some Finnish schools (Österlind et al., 2016). According to the current curriculum, teachers are advised to use drama as one of the teaching methods, among others (OPH, 2016). The question thus arises how teachers may benefit by integrating drama activities into their teaching.

Does incorporating drama enhance the appeal of theoretical content and introduce valuable new methods and skills for the teacher? The question of the value of drama can be approached from two different perspectives. It can be argued that drama's value lies in its functionality, in the possibilities it offers (e.g. Pyykkö, 2023; Toivanen et al., 2012). The specific type of drama activity conducted in the classroom is dependent upon the teacher's proficiency in both pedagogical and group management skills (Pyykkö, 2023). Alternatively, it could be argued that drama has the potential to facilitate a more profound comprehension of the world in which we live (Guss, 2005; Hadjipanteli, 2023). Previous research in drama education, such as the studies by Papavassiliou-Alexiou and Zourna (2016) and Viirret (2020), has highlighted the importance of developing teachers' personal qualities and professional competencies within the context of drama education. Further research is needed to gain a deeper understanding of the impact of drama on teachers' roles and practices.

Data for this study was collected in 2023 using an electronic survey platform. The purpose of this study was to examine the experiences of teachers in Finland who utilize drama in various subjects at the comprehensive and upper-secondary school levels.

This study focused on two key questions:

1. What experiences have teachers had using drama in their classrooms?
2. What skills have teachers acquired by using drama activities?

Teaching Drama in Consideration of Multiple Intelligences

Dramatic elements have been a part of human experience since childhood. Through play, rituals, and ceremonies, people acquire skills, knowledge, and stories that shape their understanding of the world. In the 1960s, the introduction of drama into the daily work of schools was aimed at developing an alternative pedagogy based on the principles of play and collaborative learning, rather than teaching children about theater as a cultural practice (Nicholson, 2009).

Psychologist Howard Gardner identified the concept of multiple intelligences (MI) in the early 1980s. Gardner’s theory of multiple intelligences (MI) is founded upon his identification of seven distinct types of intelligence: linguistic, logical-mathematical, musical, bodily-kinesthetic, spatial, interpersonal, and intrapersonal. Subsequently, Gardner (2000) broadened the scope of his theory to consider additional forms of intelligence, including naturalist, existential, and spiritual intelligence. In this regard, Gardner included moral and emotional intelligence among the types of intelligence. However, defining the moral domain has proven to be challenging for Gardner, as it encompasses a multitude of contentious connections that are still being investigated. The relationship between drama education and Gardner’s theory of MI and experiential learning has also been the subject of criticism, particularly in the context of learning through play (Guss, 2005).

In their 2007 study, O’Toole and O’Mara identified four distinct ‘paradigms of purpose’ in drama education. These include the acquisition of knowledge and skills in drama, personal growth through drama, learning through drama, and the understanding of the actions of people in drama. These paradigms can be linked to Gardner’s idea of everyone having a unique set of intelligences that are shaped by culture and environment (van de Water et al., 2015). The development of an individual’s ideological background and identity contributes to the development of these intelligences. By engaging in drama activities, educators can gain new insights into their own personalities and develop a broader spectrum of their intellectual abilities (Gardner, 2000; O’Toole & O’Mara, 2007).

The impact of drama pedagogy on the growth of student and in-service teachers’ beliefs about good teaching can play a critical role in helping them develop their pedagogical philosophy (Hadjipanteli, 2023). Thus, the use of drama as an educational tool can deepen understanding of oneself, others, or the subject matter. It fosters creativity, develops critical thinking skills and communication, and provides an opportunity to learn to express oneself, emotional skills, and the nuances of human interaction (van de Water et al., 2015). The implementation of various forms of drama games and exercises in the classroom has been demonstrated to be an effective pedagogical approach for the teaching of drama. These activities can motivate students and adults, stimulate discussion on a range of topics, and facilitate the concretization of the concepts and phenomena being taught (Toivanen, 2015).

Methodology

Data Collection

Data for the study was collected in 2023 using an electronic survey platform.

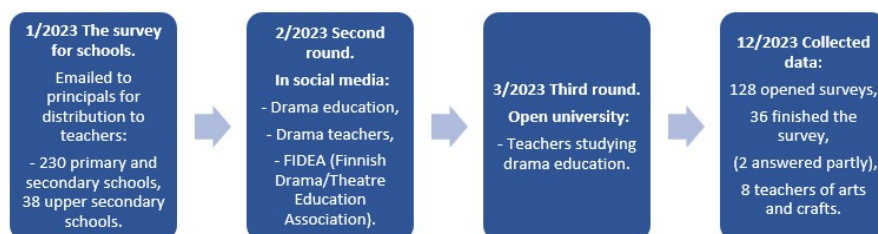


Figure 1. Timeline for

The number of respondents was exceedingly limited (Figure 1). This may be attributed to the concurrence of several survey questionnaires and the considerable workload of teachers. This survey focused on cities where a national tutor project, including drama education, was announced for implementation between 2017 and 2021. It became evident that only two of the respondents had undergone training in the tutor project. It is notable that many teachers in compulsory educational schools were omitted from this survey due to unclear reasons. The survey was distributed to all educators, not solely those who teach drama. The questionnaire included questions about years of experience, professional titles, and the use of drama in subjects and working methods. 36 teachers from primary school to university responded to the survey. Survey responses were coded and analyzed using MAXQDA software. The teachers’ experiences of drama and theater were organized into a system of categories. Such findings included perceptions of the value of drama in the classroom, the development of pedagogical skills, and the

acquisition of new competencies. Subsequently, the meaningful teaching and acquisition of new skills were categorized into three main categories.

The data was analyzed by using a theory-driven analysis. This entailed coding the teachers’ experiences from the data and constructing sets of meanings from them. The learned skills were analyzed through the lens of Gardner’s (2000) theory of multiple intelligences (MI).

Respondents

A total of 36 educators from all school levels participated in this survey. Most respondents were subject teachers. Seven of them taught at the primary level, twenty-six at the secondary level, and two special education teachers did not specify their school level. Additionally, one respondent taught at the university level. (Figure 2).

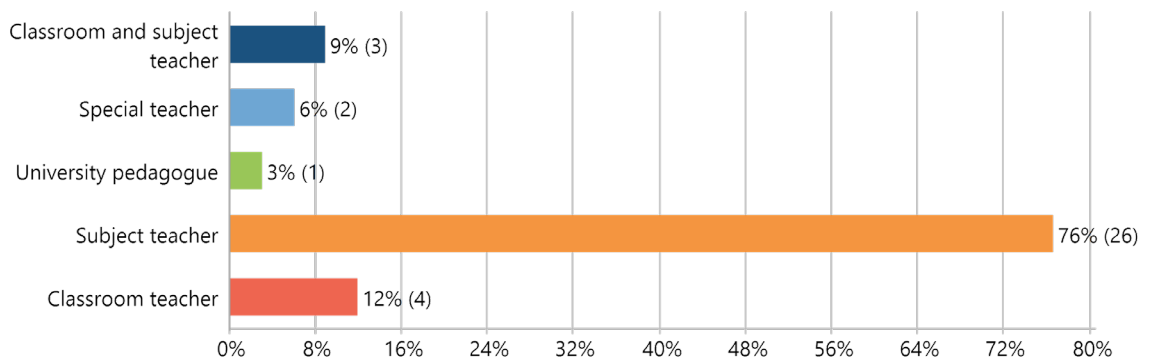


Figure 2. Professional titles of the respondents.

Respondents were divided into five age groups for analysis. Most respondents had been employed for over twenty years. The next two largest groups were those who had taught for 11–15 years and recent graduates. (Figure 3.)

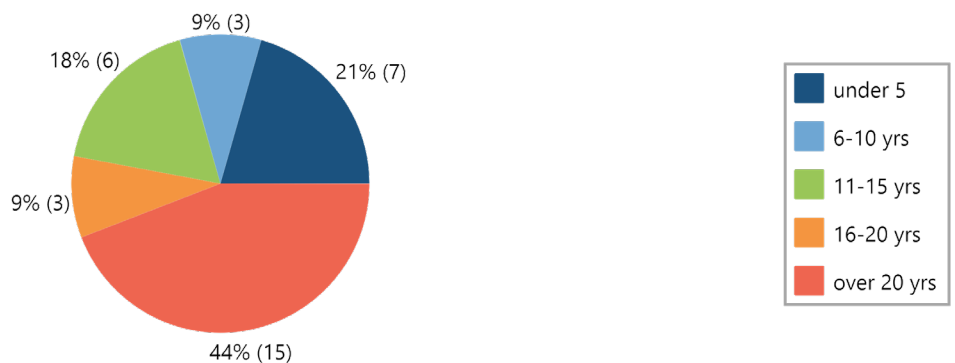


Figure 3. Professional age of the respondents.

The respondents integrated drama activities in a variety of school subjects, including languages, humanities, natural sciences, arts, and optional courses (Figure 4).

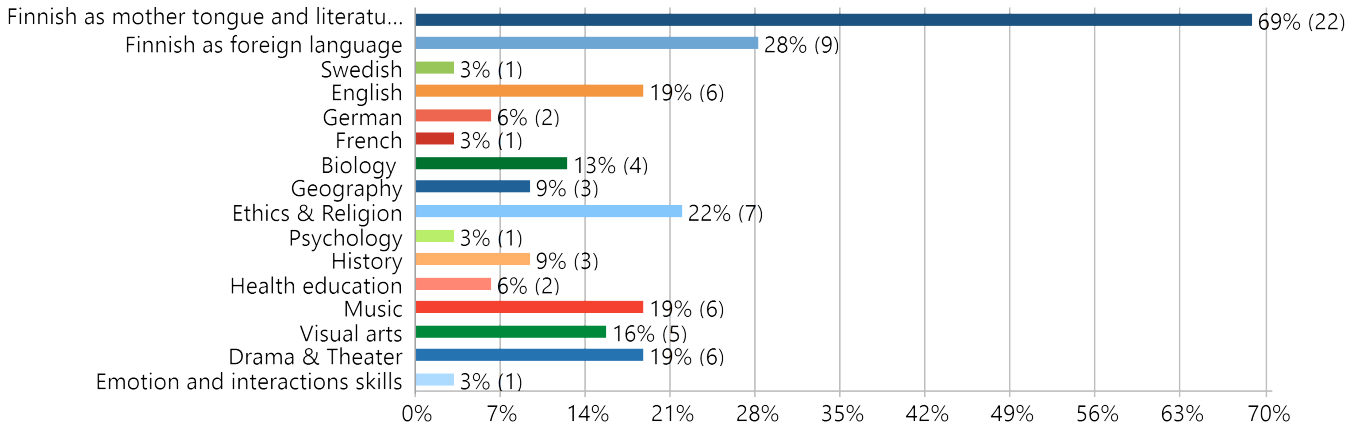


Figure 4. Subjects taught using drama activities.

As shown in Figure 5, most respondents held a degree in drama education, had taken courses in creative expression, or had a background in theater-related hobbies.

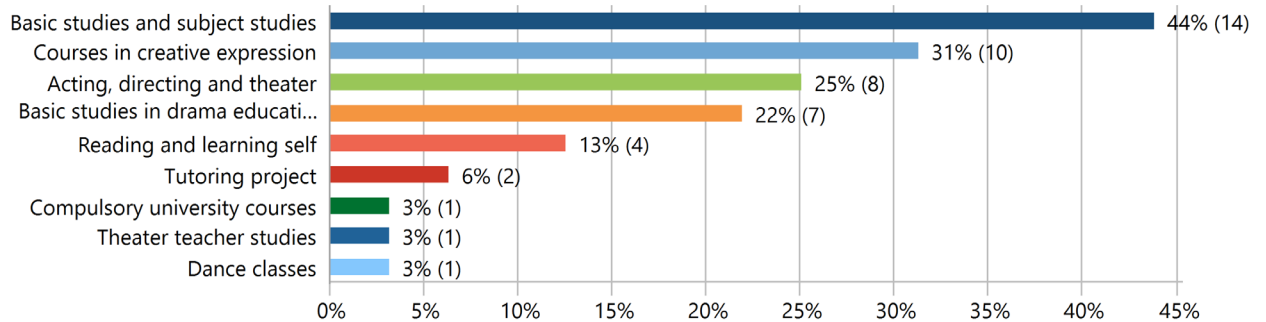


Figure 5. Respondents' drama and theater studies.

Analysis of the Data

Experiences in Using Drama in the Classrooms

The questionnaire was designed to elicit the participants' individual experiences with drama activities. Teachers had the opportunity to provide their opinions regarding the utilization of drama activities in their pedagogical practice. The final two items on the questionnaire pertained to the skills that teachers acquired through drama.

At the outset of the analysis, my preliminary assumption was that teachers utilize drama activities in most of the subjects outlined in the curriculum. It is notable that teachers employed drama more than anticipated, utilizing it in many educational contexts. One potential explanation for this phenomenon is that the respondents were motivated to participate

in the survey because they had previously studied or were currently studying drama or had an interest in theater.

The second assumption was that teachers who had completed training in drama or theater education would employ drama more frequently in their classrooms. Only two of the 36 teachers surveyed did not frequently use drama activities. One of them responded that drama activities were inconvenient and a waste of time, while the other was uncertain how to teach drama.

The first research question sought to explore the individual experiences of teachers who have used drama in their classrooms. Most of the respondents reported using literature-based working methods, such as readers drama or dramatizations. In addition, most respondents reported using playlets and still pictures. Those who did not use drama were coded as "have not used any" (Figure 6). The reasons for teachers' use or non-use of drama activities were analyzed, as well as other strategies that teachers reported using.

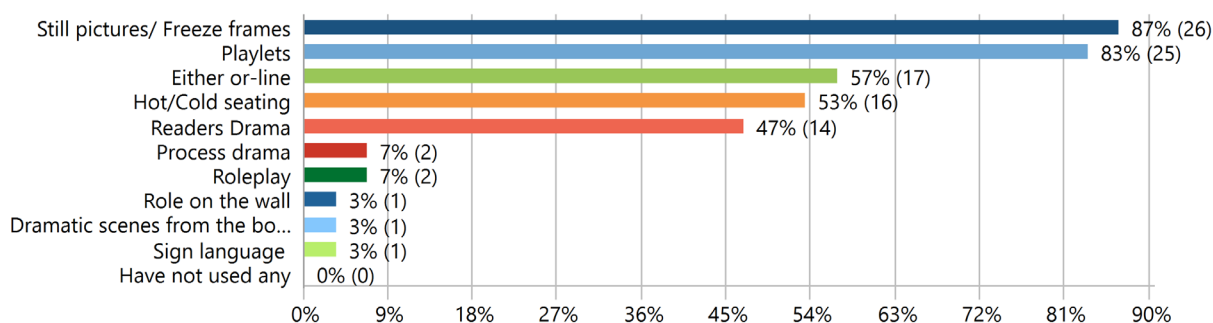


Figure 6. Drama activities used by respondents.

In the questionnaire, I provided a list of the most utilized drama activities, which respondents could readily select from. Additionally, I included an 'other' category to accommodate instances where a respondent was unable to locate a suitable option. The 'other' activities were categorized into seven groups: improvisation, movement and dance, theater games and warm-ups, theater/stage techniques, role play, and various other forms. In 'various other forms,' respondents used a variety of theater techniques, including costumes, mime, table and shadow theater, puppetry, storytelling and story theater, Augusto Boal techniques, vocal exercises, performance, and somatic dance.

Exercises detached from process drama were character work, role-on-the-wall, and conscience/empowerment alley (Figure 7).

The data revealed disparate motivations for educators' incorporation of drama into their pedagogical practices. The primary motivations were the diversification of the learning experience and the alignment of subject matter with appropriate drama-related activities. Almost half of the respondents felt that teaching through drama helped them develop their

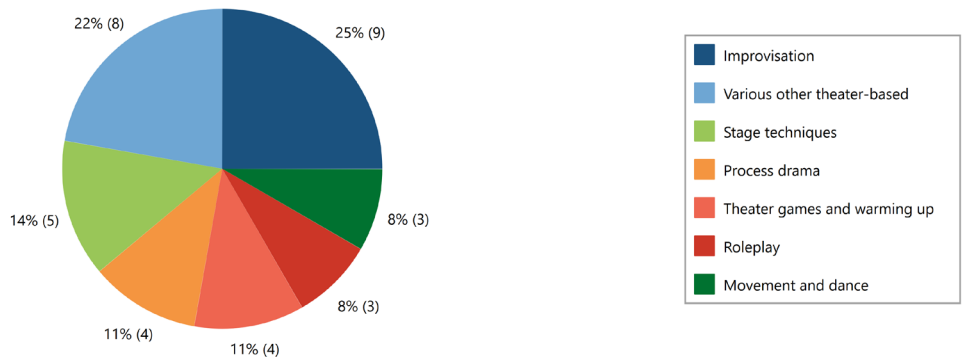


Figure 7. Respondents' other used forms of drama.

pedagogical skills and increased their job satisfaction. However, two respondents reported discomfort with using drama (Figure 8).

The respondents were requested to articulate their perception of the *meaningfulness* of drama activities (Figure 8). Most respondents identified motivation, particularly increasing *student engagement*, as a pivotal factor. One of the respondents postulated that drama activities can be used to check homework and foster a sense of community within the classroom.

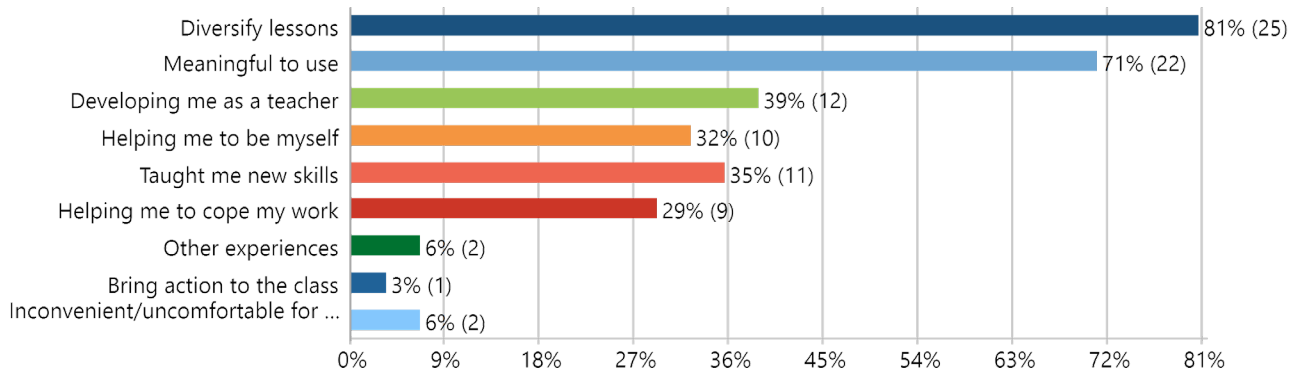


Figure 8. Respondents' individual experiences of using drama and theater in the classroom.

When asked to elaborate on how drama activities affected their personal experience of teaching with them, half of the respondents reported that the drama work helped students collaborate more effectively and develop students' collaborative skills (Figure 9).

“It [Drama] gives students the opportunity to express themselves in diverse ways and discover new sides of themselves.” (T14)

Half of the respondents expressed the view that they had the opportunity to gain a deeper understanding of their students when using drama in the classroom. In the section on motivation, the teachers highlighted the significance of learner-centeredness, enthusiasm, and the elevation of learners' self-esteem. Furthermore, the value of creating an enjoyable and enriching learning environment, incorporating *playfulness*, and fostering a sense of positive nonchalance was emphasized (Figure 10).

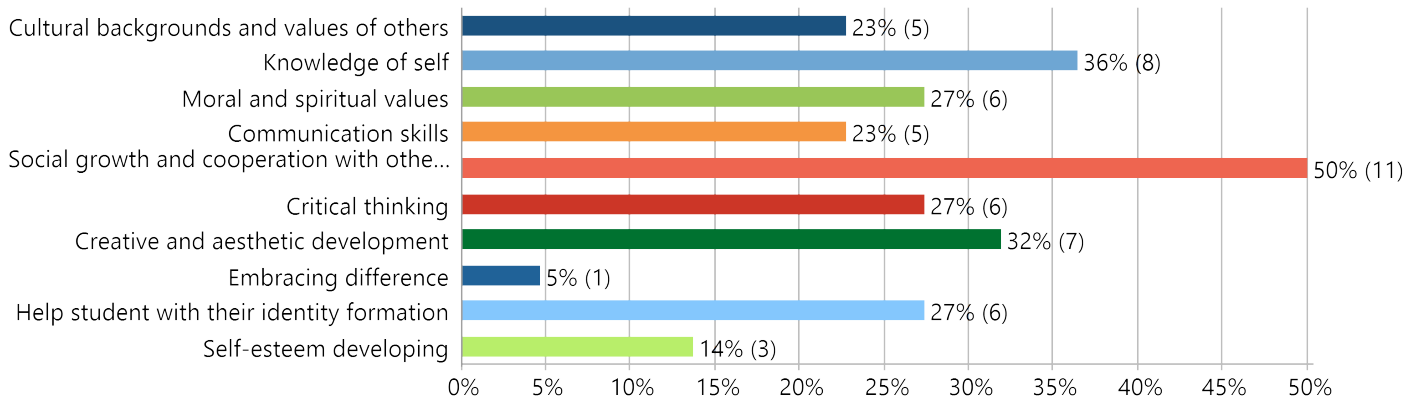


Figure 9. Clarifications from respondents regarding their experiences with drama activities.

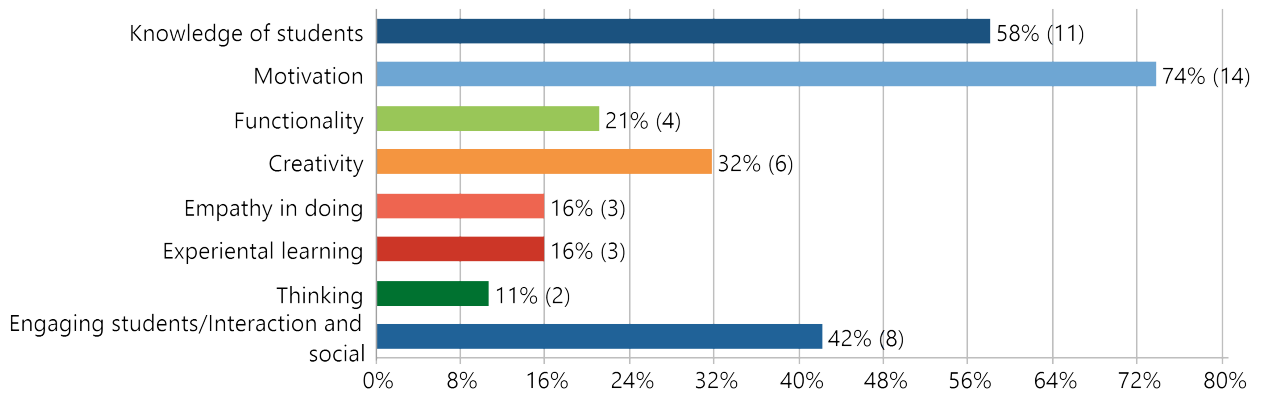


Figure 10. Clarifications from respondents regarding their experiences with drama activities.

“For the teacher, this is also an adventure and brings a real presence and contact in unpredictable situations. It is a creative flow of life and not a performance.” (T30)

“They [Activities] are creative and usually bring smiles to the students’ faces too. They make you forget about time and the worries of the norm for a while.” (T7)

The most common approach was to use drama to diversify teaching, motivate students and themselves, and emphasize the importance of linking drama exercises to the theme and content of the lesson (Figure 11).

“In a regular lesson, for example, they [drama activities] can help to illustrate and summarize meanings, themes, and content to be studied. They can introduce a symbolic/metaphorical level and teach symbolic/metaphorical thinking.” (T30)

Those who did not utilize drama activities perceived the activities to be excessively noisy and disruptive. Others asserted that there was an

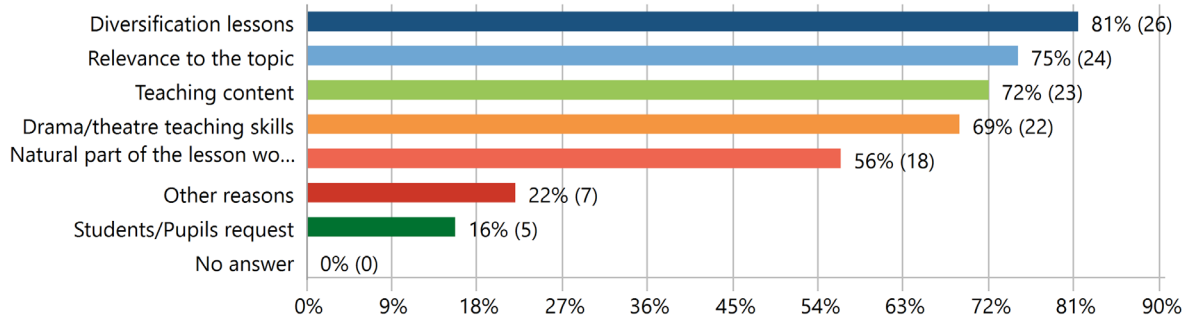


Figure 11. Reasons to use drama activities in the classroom.

inadequate allotment of time to integrate the activities into lesson planning, given the necessity of covering the required subject matter. Some respondents expressed concern that drama may evoke anxiety among students. The time constraints on lesson planning and the disruptions to the instructional flow are common concerns that are similarly prevalent among teachers (e.g. Lee et al., 2013; Papavassiliou-Alexiou & Zourna, 2016; Thorkelsdottir, 2020).

In addition to applying drama exercises, I sought to identify learning situations, and reasons, in which teachers avoid using drama. The survey consisted of scenarios that were expected to arise based on researcher's experience. Notably, a small proportion of respondents reported avoiding the use of drama in the classroom due to concerns about maintaining a peaceful work environment. This finding is controversial with previous research (e.g. Stinson, 2009; Thorkelsdottir, 2020).

Some respondents used alternative working methods instead of drama because they did not consider drama as important in their subject or were uncertain about students' receptivity to drama-based methods. These responses included concerns about the students' ability to understand the instructions and their feelings towards the teaching methods used and a need for "more detailed guidance on how to integrate drama into their teaching" (Figure 12).

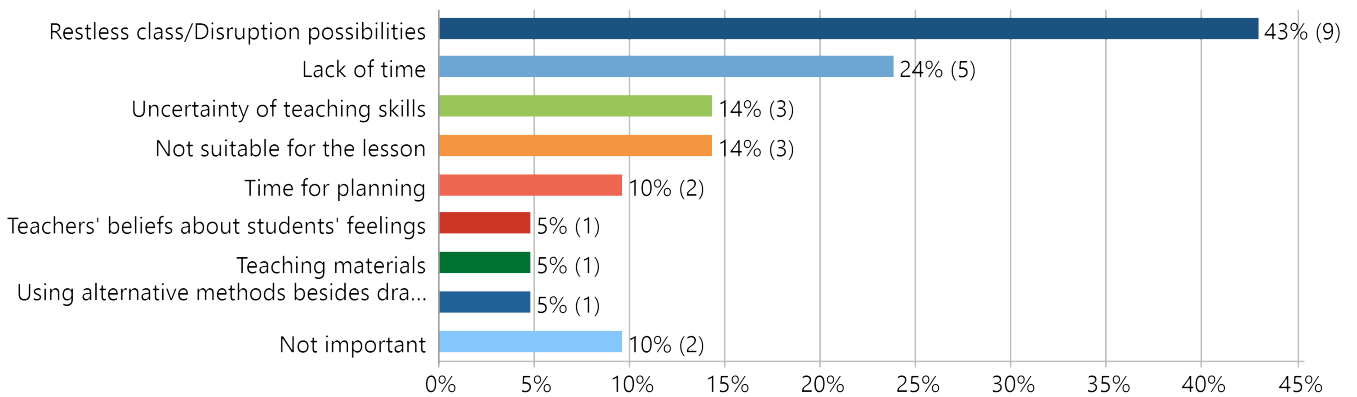


Figure 12. Reasons not to use drama activities in the classroom.

The respondents who chose not to utilize drama activities cited time constraints as their primary concern, followed by concerns related to the perceived hastiness, uncertainty, and inappropriateness of these activities for the subject matter.

“It can be difficult to apply drama to anything other than teaching literature. Digital learning materials and methods, i.e., literacy teaching, are emphasized in teaching. I do not consider them important in my subject.” (T30)

Acquired pedagogical skills

The use of drama in teaching was perceived as a valuable method for teachers to diversify their approaches and was to be an effective tool for motivating their students. The respondents focused more on the development of their students than on their own professional growth as educators, even though the questions pertained to teaching, which was unexpected. However, incorporating drama into their pedagogical practices proved to be beneficial for some teachers, resulting in personal growth and the acquisition of new skills and improved self-expression.

The acquired skills were classified into three groups: 1) *spatial-logical skills*¹, including kinesthetic and musical skills, 2) *intrapersonal skills*, and 3) *interpersonal skills*. This categorization is based on Gardner’s (2000) MI categories, as proposed by van de Water, McAvoy, and Hunt (2015), O’Toole and O’Mara’s (2007) “paradigms of purpose,” and the understanding of these concepts through music and drama, which encompasses all the intelligences and more, as Roper & Davis (2000) also suggest.

In the category of *spatial-logical skills*, planning, creativity, improvisation, proactivity, musicality, and embodiment were grouped together. Each of these skills requires strategic thinking about how the activity will proceed in a planned or improvised form (Figure 13).

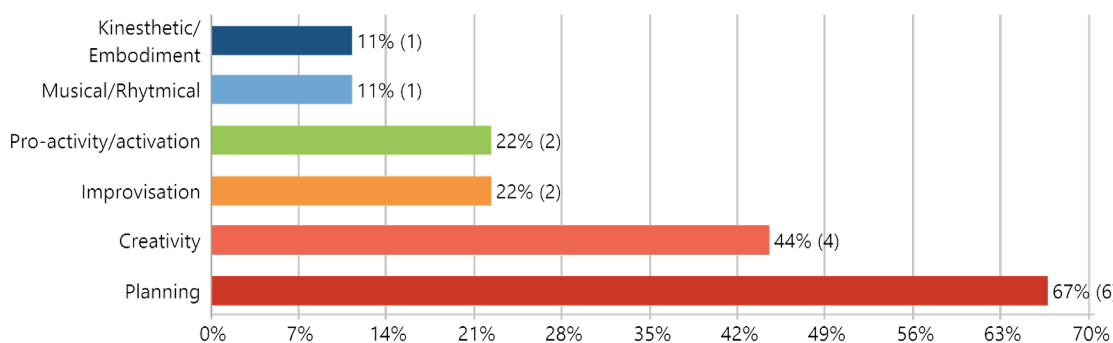


Figure 13. Learned spatial-logical skills.

Planning was a recurring theme in the responses. Planning a drama lesson requires more time than planning a regular lesson. The responses also highlighted the teachers' ability to be creative in their teaching and to adapt their lesson plans. The ability to include drama exercises spontaneously, or to create a completely new one, develops over years of teaching. As one of the teachers explained, “I have learned to design sequences of exercises that are logical and liberating, taking small steps forward with the group members in mind.” She had learned to lead long creative processes, as she described them, “from dreaming to public presentations to the final seminar.”

One of the respondents was the visual arts teacher, who posited that to facilitate effective drama activities in an art class, the teacher must assume a more proactive role. As part of her pedagogy, she has integrated drama exercises to engage students and encourage interaction beyond what is typically expected in visual arts classes. The teacher had thus developed the ability to reconcile her pedagogical improvement efforts with her engagement with drama, thereby employing her creativity and skills by incorporating embodiment into her visual arts teaching.

Among the drama conventions, improvisation was the most prevalent. Teachers reported utilizing various improvisation techniques, including movement and sound, which are associated with musical, rhythmic, and kinesthetic intelligence. Some of the teachers expressed a desire to use these learning spaces in addition to their teaching (van de Water et al., 2015). These intelligences, including spatial, are particularly notable in the arts (Gardner, 2000).

Most of the respondents utilized drama activities that are familiar from process drama, such as still pictures, hot seating, and either-or lines. One explanation for this is that teachers tend to use process drama more frequently in drama education because its exercises are well-suited for classroom use. Teachers reported using functional methods to encourage students to move away from their desks and to use their bodies, i.e., developing their bodily-kinesthetic intelligence.

In terms of pedagogical skills, teachers had developed the ability to think in new ways, to understand their students better, to manage groups, to plan lessons and drama processes, and to deal with their work environment. These skills are related to spatial intelligence, allowing them to create patterns in the process, like architects or sculptors (Gardner, 2000). They have also learned to enrich their teaching in a variety of ways and to engage their students in the content of their lessons.

“Managing and inspiring the group, ‘hooking’ the students into the subject, giving them something concrete to do and something to remember.” (T7)

The category of *interpersonal skills* includes those typical for teachers and actors, such as motivation, empathy, and effective communication (Figure 14). Interpersonal intelligence refers to an individual’s ability to comprehend the intentions, motivations, and desires of others to collaborate effectively (Gardner, 2000).

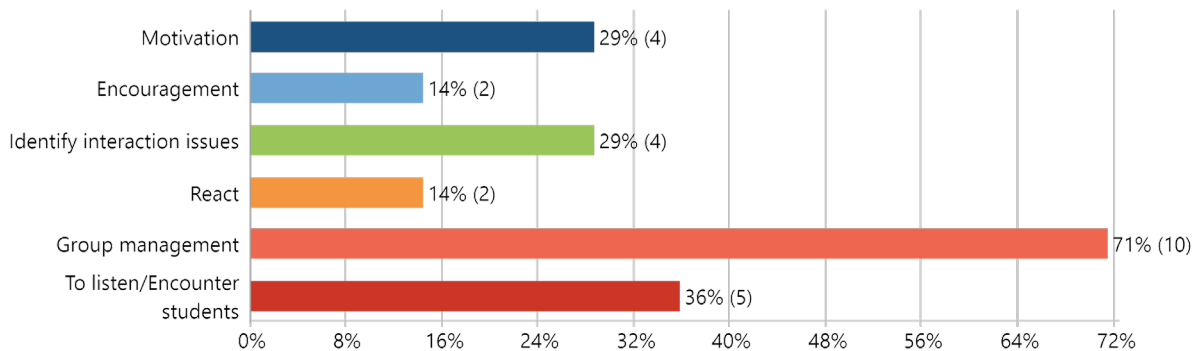


Figure 14. The interpersonal skills learned.

According to some respondents, drama education has helped them to grow as teachers. Teachers act as learners among others and motivate other learners with their own commitment. They reported learning to encourage and listen more carefully to their students, i.e. developing their interpersonal skills according to Gardner’s (2000) theory of MI, such as communication and artistic or aesthetic decision-making.

One music educator observed that “drama activities can assist individuals in immersing themselves in the realm of imagination and embrace differences”. And continues, “Drama can facilitate students’ exploration of other musical cultures that may be unfamiliar to them, both physically and emotionally.” The respondent recognized that the ability to understand oneself can lead to understanding others through experience and empathy, which can be subtly conveyed through arts-based education.

Teachers’ objective was to motivate students to engage in active learning through physical movement, critical thinking, and a deeper understanding of the matter. Respondents used activities to adapt drama work to the content and theme of the lesson. They observed that teaching drama enhanced their group management skills and made their lessons more fulfilling for themselves. Those who had studied drama education also wanted to use their teaching skills in this area.

“Pupils or students gain emotional experience of the issues at stake, for example events in history will leave strong memories if they are dramatized...” (T33)

An illustrative example of the teacher’s growth in interpersonal skills was, when she mentioned that “it is important to learn to pay attention to the moods of the group through drama activities.” This may lead to a

teacher’s choice to use certain activities, as several respondents reported using drama in their lessons because their students were familiar with it.

The incorporation of drama activities has proven to be an effective means of equipping individuals with the skills necessary to cope with their work. Twenty-two respondents identified several beneficial reasons for implementing drama activities. These included the following: engagement of students, functional methods, creativity, increased knowledge of their students, teaching empathy, joy, and enthusiasm for learning by doing.

“Students are enthusiastic, laughing, social and enjoying themselves.” (T21)

“Experiential learning tends to evoke emotions, which are important for learning.” (T22)

The category of *intrapersonal skills* was much more personal, including self-awareness, self-understanding, one’s own fears and desires, self-development, and emotional skills. One of the participants had learned to be more tolerant of incompleteness and unpredictability.

In this category of skills, teachers mentioned accepting themselves as they are and experiencing feelings of joy and happiness (Figure 13). Several teachers expressed a desire to modify their teaching and work methods, which aligns with Gardner’s (2000) theory of intrapersonal intelligence. As previously mentioned, the teacher had developed his ability to understand others, which he successfully incorporated into his teaching. He had developed both interpersonal and intrapersonal intelligence skills.

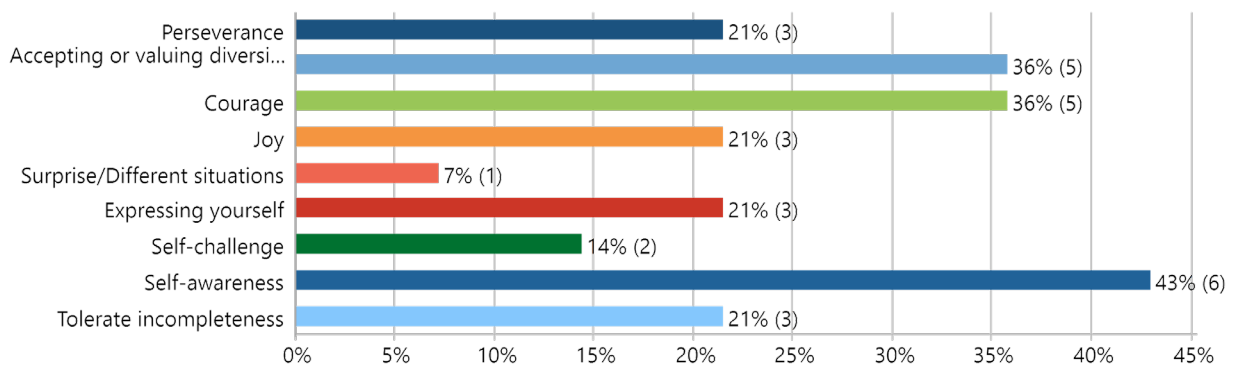


Figure 15.
The intrapersonal

“Drama has provided me with valuable insights into the principles that underpin my teaching. Through improvisation, I have developed my work-life skills. During the F2² studies, I recognized that language-aware pedagogy shares the same values as arts-based methods.” (T33)

Many respondents observed that integrating drama into the classroom had facilitated their professional growth as educators. The utilization of drama activities had enabled educators to enhance their pedagogical practices, cultivate critical thinking abilities, and enhance communication skills. As a direct result, respondents have exhibited growth in creativity, aesthetic learning, and self-awareness.

“I have learned to use my imagination, to play and count jokes and to use humor.” (T30)

Furthermore, the participants advanced in their moral and spiritual development, as evidenced by their perseverance and acquisition of the capacity to tolerate incompleteness. Moreover, the acceptance of differences and diverse cultural backgrounds had expanded

“I have learned to take better account of different people and learning preferences.” (T24)

“The use of drama also allows learners’ strengths to emerge. In addition, using drama provides more opportunities to address otherwise challenging content in a way that allows special needs students to engage in general education lessons.” (T33)

In alignment with Gardner’s idea about multiple intelligences, it can be proposed that the incorporation of drama into pedagogical practice allows teachers to leverage their diverse types of intelligence. In his study, Gardner (2000) posits the concept of moral intelligence, which he defines as the capacity to consider and accept diverse cultures and individuals. This category merits further examination and discussion because it concerns the ability to think in novel ways, with greater creativity. This capacity could potentially serve as a pathway to a more positive school community. Accordingly, an analysis of different genres of intelligence must be conducted with consideration of other art forms and a comparison of the findings to identify similarities and connections. In addition, the disparate challenges inherent to adult learning must be considered.

Implications and Conclusion

Gardner’s (2000) theory of multiple intelligences (MI) provided a valuable framework for observing and reinforcing teachers’ learning of pedagogical and social skills. When examining the effectiveness of drama-based learning techniques, it becomes evident that teaching drama can impact teachers in various ways. However, Gardner’s MI theory has not yet been fully explored in relation to the skills gained through

drama. These skills are not widely regarded as a significant art form beyond their cultural and educational value (Guss, 2005).

Teachers' intrapersonal skills, such as perseverance, moral awareness, self-reflection, and courage to express themselves, were naturally developed as they integrated drama exercises into their teaching (Gardner, 2000). These intrapersonal competencies are linked to teachers' wellbeing and resilience (e.g. McConville & Ludecke, 2019; McLauchlan, 2016). Additionally, spatial-logical skills were enhanced through the planning of drama processes and lessons, as well as by the utilization of creativity and improvisational abilities.

The teachers acquired a range of skills through various drama activities, thereby diversifying their pedagogical toolkit and enhancing their teaching practice. The respondents described their experiences of teaching through drama activities as predominantly positive. However, the respondents reported requiring a greater investment of time for planning than for regular lessons, which may contribute to feelings of stress. It is therefore recommended that educators who are teaching drama and incorporating drama activities into their pedagogical practice should be provided with additional time for planning and preparation, given that the teaching of drama is a distinct endeavor from the teaching of so-called academic subjects. The nature of the art subject entails tranquil, reflective work.

The potential of drama to provide additional value for teachers and students in future schools is a topic worthy of further investigation. It is important to view the teacher as a member of the learning community, as the teaching of drama has been shown to have positive effects on the teacher's work in this research and previous ones.

Based on my own teaching experiences and those of the educators whom I consulted, drama fosters the ability to interact with and respect others, comprehend their emotions and those of others, express and debate one's ideas and opinions, and value the experiences of oneself and others. By reflecting on their own conflicting experiences in social situations, both on and off stage, teachers can also develop culturally.

One of the key motivations for this research was to gain insight into the factors influencing teachers' wellbeing at work. The respondents exhibited a greater concern for their students than themselves. Also, experienced teachers reflected on their ability to manage their profession's demands. Some educators have also conducted research on the advantages of incorporating drama into their teaching practices to benefit students. This has led teachers to utilize various methods to keep young people engaged and interested in learning.

It was apparent that teachers required updates and additions to their pedagogical toolkit, as well as the implementation of practical exercises,

interactive or methodological training, and improvisation techniques. Furthermore, they sought to identify concrete tasks and exercises related to their subjects that could be easily integrated into their curricula. It is evident that there is a requirement for an enhanced market for drama education textbooks in Finnish.

Although some teachers taught drama as an art form, this did not emerge as a prominent theme in the responses, particularly regarding the conceptualization of aesthetics. This omission is surprising. One potential explanation is that drama is integrated into the curriculum as a pedagogical approach, rather than as an artistic discipline. In the Finnish national curricula, drama or theater is, as previously mentioned, an optional subject.

In Finland, there is a cadre of trained teachers with expertise in drama education. However, the potential for utilizing their professional abilities is not fully realized. For instance, they could serve as drama mentors or co-teachers, which would facilitate the integration of drama into the curriculum for educators who may be uncertain about their approach to teaching drama.

As previously stated, the survey was limited to teachers who perceived drama to be a valuable subject. It would be advantageous to conduct a national survey on the use of drama and its impact on pupils and teachers in the future. Although many respondents had already received extensive training and believed in their ability to teach drama, they indicated that further training was important because it provided new perspectives on learning drama. The findings of this study align with those of previous research on professional development. The studies conducted by McDonagh and Finneran (2017) and Papavassiliou-Alexiou and Zourna (2016) demonstrated that in-service teachers are significantly driven to enhance their professional competencies, receive training, and engage in lifelong learning to work with drama by pursuing additional training programs.

Moreover, educators need positive emotional experiences to flourish as educators and to facilitate the development of their own and their students' emotional and interpersonal skills (Ding, 2023; Viirret, 2020; McDonagh & Finneran, 2017). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers receive more training in the future in dealing with their own emotions, self-awareness, and sensitivity. This will enable teachers (and their students) to develop their aesthetic understanding and sense of community, which will contribute to their holistic growth and for a better future (Hadjipanteli, 2021).

Incorporating drama into the classroom can have a positive impact on teachers' emotional wellbeing, allowing them to connect with their students on a more personal level and express themselves in a way that is not always possible in a traditional educational setting (McConville &

Ludecke, 2020; McDonough & Finneran, 2017). The experience of community in the arts can facilitate the generation of novel interpretations of the world. Furthermore, the arts can serve as a powerful force for envisioning and fostering a positive future for the teacher as well, while simultaneously enhancing the quality of learning through the cultivation of profound experiences and emotions (Anttila, 2022; Salonen & Bardy, 2015).

A respondent stated that drama enables everyone to participate, regardless of their level of confidence or skills.

“As a student, I thought drama was not for me because I was unsure, shy, and anything else but a ‘theater person’. With the encouragement of a colleague, I started my basic studies. I realized that drama was for me because I was unsure, shy, and anything else but a ‘theater person’. Drama is for everyone!”

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Endnotes

1. In Gardner’s (2000) theory of MI, these intelligences are separated, as well as kinesthetic and musical intelligences. By using “skills” instead of intelligence, I want to highlight the skills that teachers have learned through their critical thinking while working and problem-solving.

2. F2 meaning Finnish as a second language.

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