

**EUROPEAN EXPERIENCE IN ORGANIZING THEATRICAL  
ACTIVITIES IN PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHERS TRAINING  
(BASED ON THE RESULTS OF THE JEAN MONNET MODULE  
PROJECT 620252-EPP-1-2020-1-UA-EPPJMO-MODULE)**

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**Summary**

The European integration processes that permeate the Ukrainian education system need to be strengthened through the implementation of the European experience. The use of European experience in the organization of theatrical activities in preparing students for raising children is meaningful and multifaceted in this context. Theatrical activity promotes the development of cognitive interests of future teachers, allows you to delve into the historical and social processes of writing a play, which expands the worldview, promotes self-realization, forms aesthetic tastes and preferences, stimulates thought processes, promotes self-affirmation in public life. Theatrical activity contributes to the rapid transformation of the student into appropriate images, which develops his creativity, imagination, fantasy, creates an environment of professional creative development. The use of European experience contributes to the formation of a set of European values, appropriate lifestyle, progressive thinking. In the article we drew attention to the use of theatrical activities in working with future teachers in Europe (France, Germany, Poland), the influence of the International Association of Theater and Education on student training and outlined the impact of European culture on the Ukrainian education system.

The publication reveals the way to implement the Erasmus + Jean Monnet project "EU experience of soft skills development of preschool and primary school age children by theater activities in teacher training". The aim of the project is to provide theoretical and practical training of future educators and primary school teachers to use theatrical activities to develop soft skills of different categories of children and the meaningful organization of their leisure activities based on the experience of Western European pedagogical concepts. We revealed the content of preparing students to use the European experience of organizing theatrical activities in the upbringing of children, presented their creative work, theatrical reincarnations. We have singled out a set of recommendations for teachers of higher education institutions regarding the use of dramatization games and dramatizations in the educational process, which allow to practice behavioral skills in different social situations and gain relevant experience. We paid attention to the promotion of European classical literature, acquaintance with foreign sites and work with them, the creation of various types of theaters (finger theater, soft toy theater, table theater, shadow theater, nature theater, open-air theater) based on European playwrights, the use of Scrum technology in the training of future teachers.

**Keywords:** European experience, theatrical activity, future teachers, Erasmus + project.

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## 1. Introduction

Ukraine's rapid European integration progress raises a number of new social demands on the population. In modern European and Ukrainian psychological and pedagogical research and educational practice, the emphasis shifts from cognitive to social factors that provide conditions for successful self-realization and achieving high status in society. An effective means of organizing the educational process of future teachers is theatrical art, which provides a multicultural environment for teacher development, as it combines fine, musical and decorative arts, literature, and the skills of the student. The use of theatrical activities in the educational process of students allows them to develop a set of soft skills necessary for personal affirmation and successful adaptation in society. In view of this, the issue of training future primary school teachers and preschools to use the European experience of organizing theatrical activities in raising children becomes relevant, as their professional activities are aimed at laying the foundation for dynamically and vector-growing social success. The achievements of European scholars in the field of theatrical activities are harmoniously combined with the concept and ideas of the Standard of Higher Education of Ukraine, so modern teachers are open to a wide range of ideas for implementing the European experience of theatrical activities. Qualitative training influences the expansion of pedagogical horizons of future teachers, their style of thinking, views on social relations, enriching the pedagogical arsenal with new forms, methods and techniques, the formation of European values and promotion in pedagogical practice.

Pedagogical institutions of higher education (PIHE) are actively working on a state order to prepare future teachers for the use of European experience in organizing theatrical activities in the upbringing of children. Professional training of future primary school teachers and preschool institutions includes lectures, practical, laboratory classes, pedagogical practice that stimulates the development of rational and, at the same time, creative thinking, enrich cognitive and emotional intelligence, be at the epicenter of pedagogical innovations and implement them in their activities, strive for acmeological growth in the professional sphere. The standards and recommendations for quality assurance in the European Higher Education Area, the Rome Ministerial Communiqué, and the Bologna Declaration emphasize the positive aspects of promoting the European experience in various educational institutions.

## 2. European experience in the use of theatrical activities in the educational process of teachers

The experience of European educators who have worked on the use of theatrical art in working with children is valuable for our study. Progressive ideas regarding the use of the syncretic nature of theatrical activity are covered in the pedagogical concepts of R. Steiner (Waldorf pedagogy), S. Frenet ("School of Joy"), K. Orff, D. Serafin, Z. Rashevsky, G. Rovid. The experience of educational institutions in the EU (Germany, Poland, etc.) uses different types of theatrical activities in leisure time. In the context of training future teachers in the context of training future teachers, courses in theater and pedagogy and stage skills are taught, in particular at the Pedagogical University of Ludwigsburg (Germany). Significant scientific achievements in the creative style of pedagogical activity are presented in the works of

foreign researchers such as P. Abbs, M. Braun-Galkovska, R. Scrutton, R. Gibson and others. The idea of practical use of theatrical art in pedagogical work with children was proposed by domestic scientists: I. Baranovska, N. Vodolaga, O. Derkach, T. Karamanenko, O. Kononko, L. Makarenko, O. Timofeeva, L. Khomenko, S. Martinyuk. Well-known directors such as O. Bryantsev, K. Stanislavsky, N. Sats and others made a great contribution to the study of the essence, means and mechanisms of children's theater development.

D. Briggs believes (1975) that each person should be perceived through the prism of creativity and do everything possible to ensure that he is not afraid to share their ideas and feelings. The teacher and the student should be connected by a sincere interest in joint creative activity, only then it will be able to give a productive result, such as: competence, development of creative abilities, development of personality in general. One of the leading tasks of the organization of theatrical activities is to establish mutual cooperation between teachers and students, which will be a successful start for all educational activities (*Briggs, 1975, p. 18*).

L. Ziaziun (2003) made a great contribution to the study of general problems of education by means of art in France. Among the compulsory subjects such as French, mathematics, physical education and sports, and speech and general culture, the Ministry offers subjects of the artistic cycle. To this end, French educators had a well-thought-out system for using art disciplines during the school day (in the second half) and a system for encouraging artists to teach art cycle subjects at school" (*Ziaziun, 2003, p. 24*). Didacticism is a universal feature of theater as a specific kind of creative human activity. In this regard, P. Pavi (2003) notes that "didactic is any theater that pursues an educational goal, causing the audience to think about certain problems, understanding of a particular social situation and education of moral or political positions" (*Pavi, 2003, pp. 485-486*). Varieties of didactic theaters are: moralizing theater, political theater, pedagogical theater (didactic or pedagogical plays, thesis theater, parables, philosophical fables).

Considering the implementation of theater activities in primary school and preschool education, Australian educator John O'Toole (2011) argued that teachers should confidently use the achievements of theater pedagogy in their own teaching activities, as well as understand its role in the context of school activities in general. (*Toole, 2011, p. 26*).

The International Drama / Theater and Education Association (IDEA) promotes European theatrical experience by organizing seminars, international projects, creating information resources, holding the World Congress and thus contributing strongly to world art and education forums. IDEA unites national theater associations, theaters, teachers, educators, artists, theatergoers, artists from about 90 countries. IDEA represents the interests of children and students at the international level in order to promote the role of drama in public life, contributes to the enrichment of the inner world of the individual, expanding his consciousness and worldview (International Drama).

Valuable material for our research is the experience of the Academic Theater of the University of Warsaw. According to the Statute of the University of Warsaw (1998). The Academic Theater is an organizational unit of the university structure. The main task of the theater is to promote Polish culture and art in the scientific community. Functions of theatrical activity – implementation of educational programs in the field of theater, art and culture; organization of meetings with well-known representatives of culture, science, politics and business; presentation of students' creative achievements; assisting creatively gifted youth in gaining knowledge of practical rhetoric and the art of self-presentation. Future teachers of the University of Warsaw, for example, the Faculty of Journalism, Pedagogy, Applied Linguistics, Political Science, Law, etc., take part in theatrical productions of the Academic

Theater. Everyone is invited to watch the performances, including students, schoolchildren, fans of progressive theatrical art. The Academic Theater of the University of Warsaw is an active participant in city cultural and artistic events and international theater festivals (Teatr Akademicki Uniwersytetu Warszawskiego).

### **3. The results of the use of theatrical activities in working with future teachers (Jean Monnet module project 620252-EPP-1-2020-1-UA-EPPJMO-MODULE)**

In order to promote the European experience, the team of Vinnytsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University took part in the Erasmus + Jean Monnet module project and received positive approval of the project “EU experience of soft skills development of preschool and primary school age children by theater activities in teacher training”. On November 19, 2020, a bilateral grant agreement was signed between the Rector of Vinnytsia State Pedagogical University named after Mykhailo Kotsyubynsky, Doctor of Pedagogical Sciences, Professor Natalia Lazarenko and the Head of the Executive Agency for Education, Audiovisual Technology and Culture Jose-Lorenzo 2020 years. The aim of the project is to provide theoretical and practical training for future preschool teachers and primary school teachers to use theatrical activities to develop soft skills for different categories of children and the meaningful organization of their leisure activities based on the experience of Western European pedagogical concepts.

The project is implemented through teaching students the optional discipline “Preparation of future teachers for the development of soft skills of preschool children and primary school students by means of theatrical activities in the context of European educational traditions”, which is presented in the following modules: “Theatrical activities in social and educational work based on an inclusive approach: the experience of the European Union”, “Organization of various types of theatrical performances of children in educational institutions: European context”, “Fundamentals of directing and artistic design of theatrical action: European context”, “Implementation of European experience in involving representatives of social services and public organizations in the implementation of theatrical activities”.

The main objectives of the study of the optional discipline “Preparation of future teachers for the implementation of European experience in the formation of soft skills of preschool children and primary school students by means of theatrical activities” are:

- acquaintance of students with different types of theater in Western Europe, methods of theater pedagogy; disclosure of educational, developmental, educational opportunities and organization of children's theatrical activities;
- gaining the ability to critically master foreign theories and experience in organizing theatrical activities for children, creatively use Western European experience in organizing various types of theatrical activities to develop soft skills of different categories of children with special needs;
- introduction and popularization of progressive pedagogical concepts and experience of educational institutions of the EU countries on the use of theatrical activities for the development of children's soft skills in leisure time;
- formation of future teachers' skills of planning, development, implementation of educational activities with the inclusion of theatrical techniques; skills of staging children's performances and organizing mini-theaters;
- developing the ability to use different types of theatrical performances of children in educational institutions;

- study of psychological and pedagogical features and methodological methods of inclusion in theatrical activities of different categories of children with special educational needs, including features of psychophysical development and gifted;
- mastering the basics of directing and artistic and musical design of theatrical action in the context of European traditions;
- development of the ability to involve social service specialists, members of public organizations, parents and the elderly in theatrical activities of children.

Preparing students to use theatrical and play activities in working with children of preschool and primary school age, we offer them to transform themselves into well-known images of classics of literature. They embody the image of Cinderella Charles Perrault, Juliet William Shakespeare, Dulcinea Miguel Cervantes, Esmeralda Victor Hugo, Matilda de La Mole Stendhal, Laura Petrarca Francesco and others. Creative images of students are presented in Fig. 1 and Fig.2.



**Fig. 1. Creative image of Anna Sh.**



**Fig. 2. Creative image of Anastasia Ch.**

Immersed in theatrical art, we repeatedly mention the work of Flacus Kvit Horace “To Melpomene”, Greek and Roman mythology, in which Melpomene was the patron saint of theatrical art. Therefore, we offer students to embody her image in their own work. In the process of project implementation we pay special attention to the acquaintance of students with foreign sites that promote theatrical art. We devoted ourselves to studying the literary works of W. Shakespeare, reviewed the language of the original of his theatrical production of “The Twelfth Night”. The students were especially interested in the history of the Globe Theater, where Shakespeare worked, and future teachers enthusiastically studied the stages of the theater's development, its features and structure. Some first learned that at the beginning of their existence in the theater, all female roles were performed by men. Under the mass of impressions and emotions, students created their own senkan and poems, wrote essays.

While working on the project, we did not limit ourselves to the resources and literature we know, but tried to expand the search opportunities for future teachers. They were happy to monitor various foreign sites, studying the experience of European countries in the use of theatrical art in working with children. All the collected information, interesting facts, notes were included by future teachers in booklets and on the project tray. Research and literary activities of students stimulated the development of their creative potential, allowed a non-standard approach to the tasks. Future teachers were able to experience the synthetic nature of

theater, which is based on a combination of drama, literature, architecture, music and fine arts, sculpture, the skill of the actor himself.

In the process of preparing students for the use of theatrical and play activities, we consider different types of theaters: finger, shadow theater, nature theater, puppet theater, one-actor theater, flannel theater, puppet theater, etc. and offer future teachers to make appropriate equipment for each of them. Together with future teachers, we studied the work of D. Rodari and offered a variety of stagings based on his fairy tales: "The Adventures of Cibulino", "Gelsomino in the Land of Liars", "Grammar of Fantasy", "Journey of the Blue Arrow", "Jeep on TV" (Fig. 4, Fig. 5).



**Fig. 3. Inventory for staging the fairy tale "The Adventures of the Bulb"**



**Fig. 4. Inventory for staging the fairy tale "Grammar of Fantasy"**

Classes are aimed at making future teachers clearly aware that theatrical activities are one of the most effective means of pedagogical influence on personal development. At the same time, it is a polyartistic activity is one of the most popular types of children's art. During the project, we involve students in writing their own plays for elementary school students. Future teachers use the plots of famous children's fairy tales, cartoons, personify life in the kingdom of flora and fauna, compose their own stories, create illustrations. Students develop theatrical plays, write scripts for performances in artistic and cognitive styles.

First of all, through theatrical activities the child has the opportunity to satisfy their existential need for creative self-realization and self-presentation in communication, self-knowledge through the reproduction of various images, demonstrates the level of artistic and aesthetic perception, complex knowledge, skills acquired in a specially organized teaching. During the internship, future teachers have the opportunity to involve children in theatrical games and performances created by them.

Thus, during the implementation of the project "EU experience of soft skills development of preschool and primary school age children by theater activities in teacher training" we used Scrum technology. It allows you to solve complex adaptive problems, and at the same time productively and creatively, making original decisions, to develop products of the highest quality. The scrum approach is easy to understand and easy to solve.

Scrum consists of Scrum Teams, in which the respective roles are assigned, as well as ceremonies (events), artifacts and rules. Each component of Scrum has a purpose and is key to success. The Scrum team consists of the Product Owner, the Development Team and

the Scrum Master. The Scrum team is self-organized and cross-functional. In working with students, we use the Scrum approach. We unite future teachers into three scrum teams and set a task – to make a mini screen for a puppet theater. In their scrum teams, students assign roles independently, they determine the owner of the product and the scrum master, and the rest of the positions come up independently, according to the task.

Working on Scrum technology means that students must adhere to their core roles. The scrum team works on developing ideas for the screen, selects the design, creates a layout, selects the necessary materials under the clear guidance of the scrum master. All ideas are agreed with the owner of the product, he voices his wishes regarding the quality and appearance of the mini-screen, and at the end of the work creates a presentation. During the week, each scrum team gathers together for a daily 15-minute scrum, discussing their ideas and trying to make them a reality. The main difficulties for teams are that students can't get used to their own roles, take over other people's powers, it is difficult for them to clearly explain their opinion, verbally describe the image of a mini-screen for table theater, which arose in the imagination, especially during remote teaching.

Our task is to monitor the activities of future teachers, to be so-called arbitrators, to remind each time of the personal task of each student, thereby establishing effective team work. Creative works of students on Scrum technology are presented in Fig. 5.



**Fig. 5. Creative work of future teachers in the process of implementing Scrum technology**

Working on the project, we try to prepare students to use the European experience of organizing theatrical activities in the upbringing of children. Future teachers must be ready to organize the perception of theatrical spectacle by students, which, according to K. Vain, promotes the mastery of the best forms of literary speech; organization of theatrical play aimed at activating vocabulary and coherent speech, storytelling of schoolchildren; preparation of theatrical performance (rehearsals, practice of expressiveness of speech). According to the types, the organization of theatrical activities, according to the scientist, provides three main areas of work of teachers:

- cognitive – the formation of children's certain knowledge, skills, ideas about theater, theatrical terminology; provides acquaintance with the theater, artistic and aesthetic perception;
- game – creating favorable conditions for play activities, encouraging children to improvise, use of acquired knowledge in the game; contains dramatization games and improvised games;
- stage – children form theatrical performances, elements of stage expression, skill; contains rehearsals, exercises, work in a theater group, preparation of a play.

In the process of project implementation, we use the experience of T. Jackson and offer future teachers to participate in dramatization games: dramatizations with fingers (with bi-ba-bo dolls); improvisations on a given or chosen topic, where teachers create an image through expressions, facial expressions, pantomime. As well as participation in simulation games that should be used in working with younger students in primary school, on the topic: "I'm in the theater", "In Search of Treasure", "Fairy Tale World", "Island of Desires", "Chocolate Country", etc. . Such games are aimed at the development of creative motives, awaken creative ideas and direct them to implementation.

#### 4. Conclusions

Preparing students to use the European experience of organizing theatrical activities in the upbringing of children, we recommend participating in conferences, webinars, discussions organized by the Erasmus + Office in Ukraine. Interesting findings, research, a set of activities on the topic can be found on the website of the project "EU experience of soft skills development of preschool and primary school age children by theater activities in teacher training" and on the official Facebook page. In our opinion, the use of European experience in the organization of theatrical activities in the upbringing of children contributes to:

- to study fairy tales in children's literature classes: English folk tales ("Joan and the Crooked Goose", "Dick Whittington and His Cat"), Italian folk tales ("Gifts of the Fairy of Crene Lake", "Three Oranges"), German folk tales "Bremen Musicians", "The Wolf and the Seven Goats", "Golden Goose", "Cat in Boots") Polish folk tales ("Punished Trick", "Fern Blossom", "Janosik"), make dramatization games or imitation games for their content;
- to show fragments of the best European films of the Children's Film Festival (Life of a Squash), "Boy in Golden Pants", "I Love You, Mom", "Molly Moon and the Magic Textbook of Hypnosis", "Forward, to school!", "Little Monster"), discuss current situations that are considered in them and create their own scenarios for the sequel to theatrical performances;
- working with future teachers, you should conduct virtual tours of European theaters, including the Italian Theater in the Arena di Verona, the Austrian Water Theater in Bregenz, the French Theater of Aerial Gymnasts, the DALHALLA Theater in Sweden, etc .;
- in pedagogical activities it is appropriate to use the achievements of the classics of pedagogy in relation to the use of theatrical activities in working with children (R. Steiner (Waldorf pedagogy), S. Frene ("School of Joy"), K. Orff, D. Serafin, Z. Rashevsky, G. Rovida);
- it would be informative for future teachers to take part in the organization and staging of theatrical performances, participation in theatrical circles;
- it is appropriate to offer students to independently search and analyze foreign sites of European schools, which demonstrate innovative methods and techniques of using theatrical activities;
- an interesting form of work can be online meetings with representatives of European theaters, teachers, etc.

The issue of using theatrical activities in working with preschool children and young students is relevant in every corner of Europe, which is why the exchange of experience in using innovative techniques, methods, forms of work will expand the pedagogical palette, saturate it with new, creative ideas. Preparing students to use the European experience of organizing theatrical activities in the upbringing of children will educate a new generation of teachers who can promote and promote European values.



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