

Reflections on initial findings during the research project: How does the Ludic Space of Applied Theatre influence the possibility of re-experiencing/connecting with childhood and its space in adult participants of the activities?

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Abstract

This study investigates how the Ludic Space of Applied Theatre (AT) influences the possibility of re-experiencing/connecting with childhood and its space in adult participants of activities. Although numerous descriptions of such re-connections exist in the literature, this topic has not been directly studied. Understanding this influence enhances the AT awareness and potential as a practice and research method, supporting positive individual and group transformations.

Conducted within an art-based Paradigm, this research utilises Applied Theatre as a Research Method (ATAR) to generate, collect, analyse, and disseminate data. The project integrates artistic and performance techniques with qualitative methodologies, providing participants with a holistic experience deepening their insight through various self-expression forms. The research is structured into three cycles, each involving different groups comprising at least six sessions, including individual and group play, artistic, reflective workshops, and celebratory moments. The researcher's perspective is enriched by active participation, autoethnography, and recall techniques.

After completing the first research cycle, preliminary findings emerged regarding playfulness, its significance for personal and group experiences, the facilitation and inhibition of its occurrence, and positive dynamics. The potential link was revealed between participants' access to playfulness and their internal factors related to childhood (such as regression, shame, self-criticism, trust, self-confidence). The playfulness concept is described within a network of terms: freedom, authenticity, spontaneity, creativity, curiosity, presence, courage, choice, and pleasure. Understanding playfulness and supporting participants in accessing it can benefit their personal and social growth.

In AT, playfulness is a recommended approach for conducting sessions and research. An interdisciplinary literature review separates playfulness (attitude of mind) from play (activity). However, in AT literature, this division is not consistently applied. Playfulness is often used to describe other terms, while its nature seems to be insufficiently present and explored. The study addresses this problem.

Keywords

Applied theatre