

# Εκπαίδευση, Δια Βίου Μάθηση, Έρευνα και Τεχνολογική Ανάπτυξη, Καινοτομία και Οικονομία

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ΕΛΛΗΝΙΚΟ ΑΝΟΙΚΤΟ ΠΑΝΕΠΙΣΤΗΜΙΟ

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## COVID-19 challenges: how ICT successfully allowed adaptation of Drama in Education experiential method during PhD research

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# COVID-19 challenges: how ICT successfully allowed adaptation of Drama in Education experiential method during PhD research

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## Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic outburst in March 2020 caused unexpected changes in the means, ways, methods that teaching, training, and learning usually take place. Teachers and educators around the globe gradually turned towards remote teaching methods taking advantage of the latest innovations in ICT and widely recognized internet platforms to meet those emerging needs; however, this shift provoked unforeseen and previously unmet challenges, especially in the cases of theater and drama, known until then as totally experiential and face-to-face facilitated. The current article focuses on the changes that were intentionally adopted concerning adaptation of methods and applications during a PhD research based on Drama in Education, that allowed effective remote intervention and successful continuation of the research. Appropriate career theories and the adaptability of DiE method helped the researchers to remain open-minded, flexible, and proactive, follow emerging unknown paths, and develop their coping, digital, research management, and professional skills.

**Keywords:** Drama in Education, COVID-19 pandemic, professional development, career coping skills, adaptation of methodology

## Περίληψη

Η εξάπλωση της πανδημίας του COVID-19 τον Μάρτιο του 2020 προκάλεσε απροσδόκητες αλλαγές στον τρόπο και τις μεθόδους διδασκαλίας και μάθησης στα εκπαιδευτικά ιδρύματα σε όλον τον κόσμο, οδηγώντας με πρωτοφανείς ταχείς ρυθμούς στην υιοθέτηση εξ αποστάσεως εργαλείων και μεθόδων. Η πρόκληση ήταν μεγαλύτερη στην περίπτωση προγραμμάτων και μαθημάτων που βασίζονταν στις κατ' εξοχήν ανθρωποκεντρικές και εκ του σύνεγγυς διδασκόμενες τέχνες, όπως του Εκπαιδευτικού Δράματος και του Θεάτρου. Το παρόν άρθρο επικεντρώνεται στην προσαρμογή εργαλείων, δραστηριοτήτων, χρονοδιαγραμμάτων και μεθόδων που έγιναν στο πλαίσιο έρευνας διδακτορικής διατριβής στο Πανεπιστήμιο Μακεδονίας, ώστε να αποφευχθεί η αποτυχία του όλου εγχειρήματος. Σύγχρονες θεωρίες σταδιοδρομίας, όπως η Θεωρία του Χάους στη Σταδιοδρομία και η Θεωρία της Προσχεδιασμένης Τυχαιότητας, καθώς και η ευελιξία της ίδιας της μεθόδου του Εκπαιδευτικού Δράματος βοήθησαν, ώστε να γίνουν αυτές οι αλλαγές στον κατάλληλο χρόνο, οδηγώντας τους ερευνητές σε πρωτόγνωρα μονοπάτια επαγγελματικής ανάπτυξης.

**Λέξεις κλειδιά:** Εκπαιδευτικό Δράμα, πανδημία COVID-19, επαγγελματική ανάπτυξη, δεξιότητες σταδιοδρομίας, προσαρμοστικότητα της μεθοδολογίας

## 1. Introduction

The first author is pursuing a PhD research at the University of Macedonia. Its aim is to investigate whether the experiential method of Drama in Education can enhance career decision-making self-efficacy and reduce career decision-making difficulties for teenagers aged 15-17 years. The research started in 2017-2018 with an extended literature review on the following topics: lifelong career guidance and counselling, modern career theories, and

career guidance interventions for teenagers. In 2018-2019 the pilot study was facilitated in a secondary education school and results were announced. Early 2020, as the first phase of the mixed methods research approach had started and the second phase had already been planned, COVID-19 pandemic outburst. Unexpected challenges that jeopardized the whole research approach and intervention needed to immediately be dealt with.

Isolation measures to fight COVID-19 expansion forced educational institutions to turn to remote teaching and learning and professional networks around the globe to work remotely online. Universities and schools had to incorporate major changes as soon as possible so that the educational sector might continue its normal function under the new circumstances. Teachers and professors had to learn how to use new platforms in a very short time; they had to incorporate changes in teaching strategies, methods, means, and tools; they had to act quickly, in most of the cases faster than the educational institutions where they were employed, so they bought and installed new technological devices and software such as personal computers, cameras, microphones etc., established more stable internet connections and got trained in using all these within a relatively short time (Papavassiliou-Alexiou et al., 2023).

On the other hand, in response to the unexpected circumstances many theaters 'went out of business due to financial issues', others turned to 'virtual productions or in-person shows while others shut down completely' (Fischer, 2021:2). As 'creativity develops through participatory approach and communication before live audiences' (Tudu & Hansda, 2022:888) and theatre is known to be a 'collaborative performing art that involves artists in front of a live audience' (Fischer, 2021:3) there was extensive disbelief that it could be transferred to virtual settings offering experiences as efficiently as in face-to-face productions. As Drama in Education is an experiential method based on theatrical techniques, its implementation in virtual environments did not either seem promising at the time.

## **2. Background and Research Framework**

Three major topics are intertwined in this article: Lifelong Career Guidance and Counseling; Drama in Education and its applications; challenges that emerged amid the pandemic and action taken to continue, expand, and complete the PhD research without further delays.

### **2.1 Lifelong Career Guidance and Counseling**

Career counsellors around the globe seek to find effective methods to develop their own professional skills as well as their clients' most needed career competences. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century nonlinear career trajectories incorporate and demand not only the acquirement, development, and expansion of necessary skills to secure both employability and successful transitions during lifespan but also consideration of personal values, interests, living status preferences etc. that could lead to a fulfilling life (Mann et al., 2020). Constructivist methods of career counselling are dominating the latest trends in the lifelong career guidance and counselling sector. Moreover, the notions of life construction, life narration, meaning making, career design, chaos, and happenstance have been included in the modern career theories; the latter take into consideration unexpected, unprecedented, sudden changes occurring in a globalized world and the personal meaning that clients as

adaptive and creative agents give to these changes. One of these constructivist methods could be Drama in Education, an experiential teaching and learning method, being already used in organizational trainings and other professional settings in addition to the educational sector where it originated in the 1960s. Before explaining more about the method, we will present two of the most recent career theories that helped the researchers and authors of this article cope with the unpredictable chaos in March 2020 and managed to continue their research to its completion.

### **2.1.1 Chaos Theory of Careers (CTC)**

Pryor and Bright have introduced this career theory approach wishing to explain modern life career development as well as to develop methods and tools to support individual career development. According to CTC, four are the major concepts of modern career management, known as the four Cs: complexity, change, chance, and creativity; the latter also meaning individual contribution/construction (Bright & Pryor, 2005; Bright et al., 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2003; 2008). The basic principle is that each one constructs, builds, creates one's own career path within a complex world, taking advantage of the unexpected events to one's favor, incorporating changes regardless of how sudden or unpredictable they may be. As the two theorists describe, reality is full of events which may be perceived as opportunities to creatively take advantage of, or obstacles to override, or possible paths to investigate, or changes to incorporate or adapt to, or conditions to interpret or make meaning, or unavoidable situations to accept. As the theory develops over the years, more concepts are introduced such as individuality, meaning making/interpretation, readiness to the unknown, spirituality, life uncertainty, pattern recognition, creativity, open-mindedness, and responsibility (Pryor & Bright, 2011; 2014).

### **2.1.2 Planned Happenstance Learning Theory**

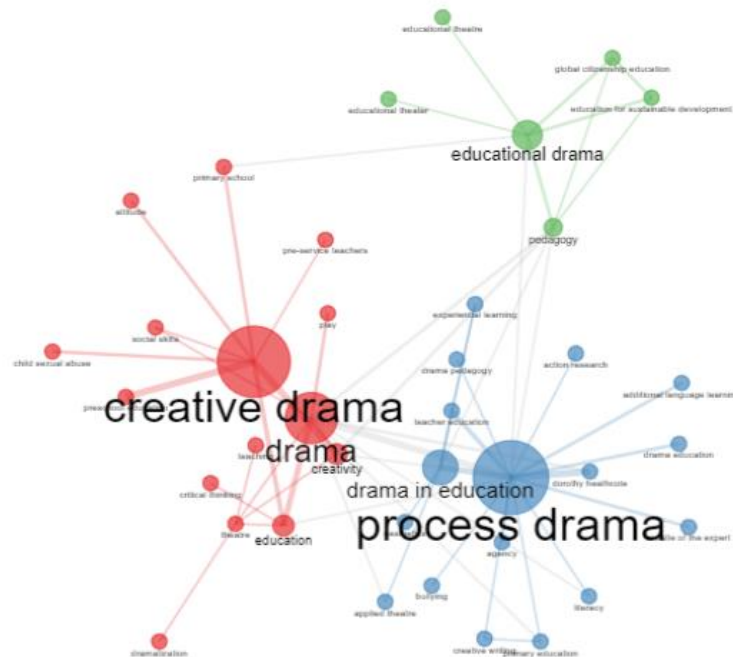
Having derived from Planned Happenstance Theory by Mitchell, Levin & Krumboltz (1999) and later developed as the Happenstance Learning Theory by Krumboltz (2009), when applied in career guidance and counselling, this approach asks for keeping one's career options open, continue efforts even if their outcomes are uncertain, move forward even if this means making mistakes, not expect favorable changes brought by luck but create one's own lucky path in life. This theory supports the so-called 'pre-planned randomness' (Mouratoglou, 2020); according to this oxymoron concept, there are five important skills that people must develop in order to be able to recognize, take advantage of and incorporate the unpredictable events in their lives: curiosity, persistence, flexibility, optimism, and risk-taking. These not only exploit the "luck in career" factor, in the sense of the unplanned, the unexpected, the unprecedented, but also indicate ways for the individual to be able to act on her own and 'create opportunities' that contribute to the achievement of personal and professional goals (Rhee et al., 2016:2). Such ways are, for example, exploring new learning possibilities and opportunities, making every possible effort despite difficulties, challenges and obstacles, adapting to the new circumstances and adjusting one's attitude towards them, considering the new opportunities feasible and attainable and, finally, undertaking action despite the unpredictable and uncertain outcomes (Mouratoglou, 2020).

These two theories governed the decisions of the first author and PhD researcher to acknowledge complexity, seek change, incorporate chance events, learn new strategies,

develop new skills, take risks, accept unavoidable situations, keep her options open, remain open-minded, flexible, and proactive, follow emerging unknown paths, and develop coping, digital, research management, and professional skills although the world around her seemed to fall apart at the time.

## 2.2 Drama in Education: face-to-face or remotely online?

Also known as Educational Drama or Process Drama or Creative Drama (see Figures 1), Drama in Education (DiE) is an experiential method of teaching and learning, invented by pioneer practitioner Dorothy Heathcote (1926-2011) and firstly introduced in primary education schools in the UK in the 1960s (Heathcote, 1984). Since then, the flexible nature of the method has led to multiple variations and diverse applications in many professional sectors apart from formal education. On the one hand, it expanded to all educational levels, from preschool to adult education, from formal to non-formal and atypical educational settings (Zourna, & Papavassiliou-Alexiou, 2022); on the other hand, researchers and practitioners in many countries use it in organizations and businesses, in the health and security sectors, in the aviation industry for professional skills development in employees' and managers' trainings both in- and outdoors (DICE Consortium, 2010; Parush & Koivunen, 2014; Romanowska et al., 2013; Villadsen et al., 2012).



**Figure 1: Drama in Education known under various names. Image created in Bibliometrix (Aria & Cuccurullo, 2017), similar approach by Bitzenis et al. (2023)**

Due to COVID-19 restriction measures in March 2020 and because of the ICT involvement in remote teaching, learning, communicating, and working, DiE practitioners and professional theater groups around the globe faced an unprecedented challenge to continue Drama and Theater applications online – or else this could mean a total destruction of the Applied and Performing Arts Sector with no sign of recovery in the near future. In a research about the impact of COVID-19 on theatre arts and the constraints faced in

performing them in the metropolitan city of Kolkata, West Bengal, India, researchers Tudu and Hansda found that ‘the crisis caused the ultimate breakdown of the industry’, people feared ‘starvation and failure more than the virus’ and that lockdown restrictions led to ‘psycho-social problems of theatre personnel’ (2022:891). In their case study approach about teaching artists who changed their practice during the pandemic, Dahn et al. (2021) found that they ‘supported students academically, socially, and emotionally during that challenging period’ counting on ‘resourcefulness, enhancing relationships, providing emotional support, cultivating introspection and empathy, expanding what counted as arts practice’, reframing classroom expectations and centering student voice and input (p.6). However, the question still persists: how can theatre and drama that are exclusively based on human interaction, intimacy, and physical contact or at least presence, be communicated, co-created, developed, and transmitted through online settings?

### **2.3 PhD research on DiE: COVID-19 challenges and schedule adaptations**

As previously mentioned, the aim of our PhD research was to investigate whether DiE experiential method can enhance career decision-making self-efficacy and reduce career decision-making difficulties for teenagers. As sudden unexpected conditions emerged during the main research component, unforeseen variables and new research questions were added to the initial ones such as the following: Could DiE method be remotely applied as effectively as in its face-to-face form? In what ways should techniques and activities adapt in the case of remote DiE applications? Is either of the two forms better than the other – or is a combination of the two required to meet future needs? Which ICT platforms and/or which tools can improve the overall experience and enhance the interaction among facilitators and participants? How can these successfully be incorporated into a DiE workshop design and implementation? In the following paragraphs we will try to answer these questions to the best of our knowledge, our personal experience during the research and the analysis of the participants’ evaluation and feedback discussions in focus groups in the 3<sup>rd</sup> research phase.

On the left column of Table 1 the initial research design and original timetable can be seen; the adaptations that took place because of the COVID-19 pandemic and other challenges are written on the right column in italics. More specifically, the first one-and-a-half years passed as initially designed. However, in the second year of the research, the first author and researcher had to change schools, so she implemented the scheduled pilot study at her newly assigned school. Despite the challenges, the pilot study was concluded on time and the results were announced in international conferences (Zourna & Papavassiliou-Alexiou, 2019); these results also informed a more detailed design of the main multiphase Action Research, including a needs assessment survey, an educational intervention, and a quasi-experiment. However, eight months of the third research year passed without obvious progress because the permission for facilitating educational interventions within public schools in Greece had to be granted by both the Ministry of Education and the Institution of Educational Policy, procedures that are time consuming and demand tight deadlines; moreover, the application form for the permission had to be sent in six months before the first contact of the researchers with any school of the target sample. In addition, the first author returned to her previous school so all procedures had to start from the beginning, among which communicating once again with all stakeholders: the schools’ headmasters, the teachers’ boards, interested students, and their parents. These procedures caused

another year of delay leading to the main research starting with 1<sup>st</sup> phase Needs Assessment, not earlier than January 2020. As the completed questionnaires of the quantitative phase were being gathered and the 2<sup>nd</sup> phase had just started, COVID-19 pandemic outburst and then mid-March schools were forced to close down. At this point the research came to a sudden halt. As soon as the schools started their online function, the research team decided to continue the intervention remotely on the WebEx educational platform and study the adaptation procedures. The first part was successfully completed by the end of June; since the school year was already coming to an end, a new permission for a research extension for the next year was necessary. Indeed, the second part of the intervention took place face-to-face at school premises until March 2022 and the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase of the research followed without any other inconveniences. In the following paragraphs coping strategy skills development and incorporation of change, chance, and risk taking are further explained.

**Table 1: Initial research design and timetable (left) and adaptations due to challenges (right)**

<b>Initial timetable</b>	<b>Adaptations</b>
Start: July 2017	Start: July 2017
Literature review (2017-2018)	Literature review (2017-2018)
<b>Table 1 (continued):</b>	
Pilot study (2018-2019)	Pilot study (2018-2019)
19 <sup>th</sup> General High School of Thessaloniki	<i>Experimental School of Thessaloniki</i> <i>Career guidance and counseling project (2019-2020)</i> <i>19<sup>th</sup> General High School of Thessaloniki</i>
1 <sup>st</sup> phase: quantitative (2018-2019)	1 <sup>st</sup> phase: quantitative (2019-2020, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Needs assessment survey in schools	Needs assessment survey in schools ( <i>started but...</i> ) <i>March 2020: COVID-19 Awaiting research permission...</i>
Main research (2019-2020)	Main research (2020-2021, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
2 <sup>nd</sup> phase: Action Research	2 <sup>nd</sup> phase: Action Research
Educational intervention and a quasi-experiment	Educational intervention and a quasi-experiment ( <i>1<sup>st</sup> part completed</i> ) <i>Awaiting permission for extension of research...</i> <i>Intervention (2021-2022) (2<sup>nd</sup> part completed)</i>
3 <sup>rd</sup> phase: qualitative (2020-2021)	3 <sup>rd</sup> phase: qualitative (2021-2022, 2 <sup>nd</sup> term)
Feedback – evaluation	Feedback – evaluation

## **2.4 Coping skills and strategies development**

As COVID-19 restriction measures were suddenly enforced jeopardizing the research, we needed to develop the necessary coping skills and strategies to face the unprecedented situation. We believe that two supportive factors were most important to cope with its urgency and severity: on the one hand, career theories were put into practice; on the other hand, peer teaching and learning support networks were put into action. Both factors were exploited to the fullest as explained in the next paragraphs.

### **2.4.1 Career theories implemented**

As educators who teach career theories to our students it seemed only natural that we had to apply them in our own careers as well. Below we explain how the major principles of the two aforementioned theories were practically applied.

#### **2.4.1.1 Chaos Theory of Careers implementation**

According to the first CTC principle ‘incorporate changes regardless of how sudden or unpredictable they may be’, new variables and new topics were included for investigation: remote versus face-to-face implementation of Drama in Education and comparing the two forms; broader knowledge was acquired such as the use of educational platforms, new software, and a variety of digital tools; our professional network expanded by collaborating with experts in their respective sectors such as big data analysts, drama practitioners, and professional directors of theatre groups; getting out of our comfort zone we participated in and facilitated DiE workshops online in collaboration with experts in our country and remote countries around the globe.

As for the second CTC principle ‘taking advantage of the unexpected events to your favor’, this came true on two occasions: firstly, it seemed as pure luck that the educational intervention of the 2<sup>nd</sup> research phase did not take place in school year 2019-2020 as it would be in vain: those students would have graduated before the completion of the 3<sup>rd</sup> phase due to the pandemic; in that case they would have to be excluded from the sample and the whole procedure should start all over again. Secondly, in March 2020 our university announced a competition for PhD students to start new research on the topic of the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on students’ lives. We decided to take part into the competition and with the collaboration of a psychologist we pursued a multivariate mixed-methods approach to undergraduate students’ experiences of COVID-19 impact on their psychology, career management and career coping skills development. Our research proposal was awarded with the fourth position at the competition and was disseminated in books, journals, and webinars in the years that followed (Papavassiliou-Alexiou et al., 2023; Zourna, 2021; Zourna et al., 2022).

The third CTC principle ‘one constructs, builds, creates one’s own career path within a complex world’ was implemented through our personal, social, and professional competences development. The first author was elected as School Life Counselor for the school year 2021-2022 and as such she was responsible for keeping a safe environment for

the 143 students in her school; by performing her duties her personal and social skills ameliorated such as empathy, flexibility, adaptability, self-efficacy, open-mindedness, active listening, communication, negotiation, crisis and conflict management, problem solving, organizational management, and team building skills. By participating in webinars she also developed drama and theater facilitating skills in cooperation with respective theater and drama groups worldwide such as Drama Victoria in Australia, Scenario Forum in Ireland, Drustva Taka Tuka in Slovenia, DIVERSE Erasmus program consortium; European professional networks such as IDEA (International drama/theater and Education Association), Hellenic Drama/Theater Education Network (TEN-et GR) and Burlington Books Eds.; Universities such as Aristotle University of Thessaloniki in Greece, Kempten University of Performing Arts in Germany, University College Cork in Ireland and University College London in the UK (see Appendix).

Regarding career counseling and coaching methods up skilling, this was made possible by participating in European Erasmus Plus strategic partnerships, webinars and conferences, as well as remote training in synchronous online career counselling tools, platforms, and methods created by innovative counseling and guidance private and public organizations around Europe such as Euroguidance Network, the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training (CEDEFOP), the National Organization for Certification of Qualifications and Vocational Guidance in Greece (EOPPEP), DMH associates, Erasmus Programs trainings such as those organized by Olde Vechte Foundation, Business Development Institution (IANEP), and Institute for Youth Lifelong Learning (INEDIVIM) (see Appendix).

#### **2.4.1.2 Planned Happenstance Learning Theory implementation**

In Table 2 the five major concepts are shown on the left column and how they were implemented is explained on the right column.

**Table 2: Planned Happenstance Learning Theory applied**

Major concept	Implementation
Curiosity: exploring new learning opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ online courses on scientific research tools and methods such as big data analysis, multivariate data analysis methods and software, R language and statistical packages, mixed methods research approach rationale and implementation</li> <li>✓ digital skills developed through training in the use of educational and assessment platforms such as e-class, Zoom and Webex, Web 2.0 tools for teamworking and online collaboration for both teaching and learning purposes</li> <li>✓ digital storytelling and narration through Scratch programming language and online community participating and sharing</li> <li>✓ using collaborative web platforms and interactive digital whiteboards such as Padlet, Miro, Jamboard, Mentimeter etc.</li> </ul>
Perseverance: making every effort despite any obstacles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ building firm and fruitful networks and collaborations with colleagues at school and in the university</li> <li>✓ mutual teaching and peer learning, psychological support, professional resilience and coping skills development</li> <li>✓ resourcefulness in the cases of technical issues with unstable internet connections or troubling devices</li> <li>✓ asked for extra permission from the parents to keep cameras on during group meetings and performances</li> </ul>
Flexibility: changing attitude in various situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ managed to think out of the box</li> <li>✓ the initial research timetable was drastically changed to adapt to the new circumstances</li> <li>✓ hours of meetings with the two groups of the quasi-experiment rescheduled to meet participants', their parents', and siblings' needs as devices at home were being shared</li> <li>✓ drama implementation followed the synchronous online principles</li> <li>✓ our general stance changed towards New Technologies and differentiated working conditions</li> </ul>
Optimism: seeing new opportunities as feasible and achievable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ resilience led to optimism and that gave us courage to continue with no more delays</li> <li>✓ deadlines for deliverables were approaching and we were running out of time and excuses</li> </ul>
Risk taking: acting in the face of uncertain outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ we made the decision to take risks and managed to make it work</li> <li>✓ teaching and learning became possible through web tools and platforms</li> <li>✓ drama was facilitated differently but effectively</li> <li>✓ career guidance and counselling benefited from the changes in methods and tools used</li> </ul>

## **2.4.2 Professional Network Expansion**

Another supportive factor that helped us cope with the transition was the utilization and expansion of our peer teaching and learning support networks.

Within our university, professors of all levels, PhD researchers, pre- and post-graduate students developed a network of supporting each other in solving urgent issues emerging in their everyday practice through direct or indirect communication channels (Papavassiliou-Alexiou et al., 2023). Webinars were soon established and voluntarily offered on a regular basis by professors or ICT labs' members on the use of educational platforms, e-class or ZOOM tools, as well as scientific methods of research, e.g., use of new software packages for multivariate data analysis methods etc. The exchange of know-how and the development of digital skills became possible thanks to this collaboration that started by necessity and continued for many months more.

In both primary and secondary schools, groups of teachers were formed, either formally or unofficially, usually on a voluntary basis, either inside schools or online. Most of them started by the initiative of colleagues who wanted to share their knowledge and support others in this unpredictable chaotic situation. Many peer learning webinars were offered within schools by ICT experts or educational counselors or by more experienced peers to the less experienced. International networks organized online open-access multiplier events, disseminating results of their Erasmus Plus programs, facilitating synchronous webinars for anyone interested in platforms, useful webpages, collaborative Web 2.0 tools etc. Also, on Facebook and social media many groups emerged where teachers and students could find immediate answers to emerging technological, digital, etc. problems.

In these unprecedented times even theatre and drama could not remain unaffected. In Greece, the Hellenic Theatre Drama and Education Network responded fairly quickly to the COVID-19 challenges and organized webinars to support its members – teachers, actors, dramaturgists, and theatre directors – to face the transition. European universities in collaboration with private theatre groups and organizations launched series of webinars and online festivals so that the theatre industry and drama applications could continue remotely. Drama and Theatre Education associations in Australia managed to offer online DiE workshops for teachers around the world to participate and develop their digital skills and also change their attitude towards using Drama online. Moreover, IDEA, the International Drama Theatre and Education Association, supported and disseminated such efforts around the world in conferences and conventions (see Appendix).

## **2.5 Adaptations in methodology, rationale, and stance**

Having already three years of experience on the matter as expressed in the 2023 conferences organized by IDEA (see Appendix) nowadays DiE practitioners around the globe accept the idea that successfully overcoming COVID-19 restriction measures through remote teaching and learning settings eventually managed to prove one significant thought: both forms of applying, delivering, and facilitating a DiE workshop are indeed possible. But when the pandemic burst, this conviction only seemed unreal. In addition, the DiE practitioners ascertain that these two forms cannot be compared; a serious change in rationale for using DiE in either form is necessary. One idea is that DiE cannot just be transferred into remote teaching and learning conditions without transformation; as it was initially designed and had been hitherto applied to serve human interaction based on

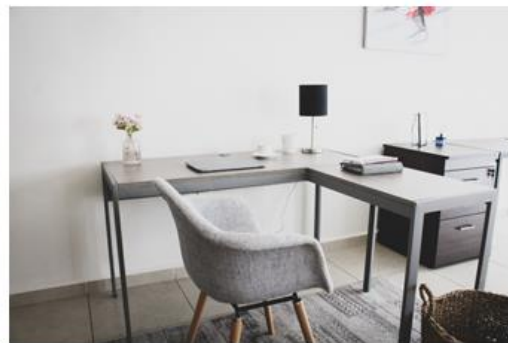
intimacy and physical presence by being close to one another, even touching each other or walking around other human bodies and objects in the same room, it can be agreed that being facilitated remotely cannot possibly offer the same kind of experience. The method cannot just be transferred to a different means; it needs to be transformed. According to experienced DiE practitioners, two are the basic requirements for its effectiveness: firstly, that the preplanned goals of each designed workshop are met; secondly, that the synchronous human interaction remains intact, focused, and jointly creative, its success deriving from shared responsibility between the facilitator(s) and the group of participants.

Adaptability and flexibility, two major skills practiced by human beings, have allowed their survival, progress, and sustainability throughout the course of Human History. As modern career theories suggest, a change in stance towards unpredicted conditions in our lives, a change in our way of thinking, reacting and acting, and a flexible open mind towards incorporating chance events to our favor either in life or in our careers, are needed for the future (Krumboltz, 2009; Pryor & Bright, 2014). The forced change into online teaching and learning settings due to COVID-19 initially provoked teachers' and practitioners' strong denial of changes in habits, know-how, methods and means, because it meant working out of their comfort zone; until then they were experts in their respective professional fields in face-to-face settings (Zulkarnain et al., 2021). But as time passed by, things did not seem to ameliorate in the field of returning to normality, so resilience and coping skills prevailed and certain changes were gradually accepted and further applied. Besides, theatre has always been 'a vehicle for personal and social change' (Litwak, 2016:18).

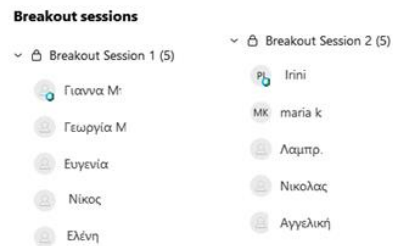
### **2.5.1 Adaptations in practice**

To be more explicit, concrete examples of the changes applied in our research practice will be presented. Instead of being in the same place face-to-face at school premises we were in our home offices or bedrooms (Figures 2 and 3). Instead of collaborating in small groups scattered across the classroom or theatre hall, we were divided in virtual breakout rooms (Figures 4 and 5). Techniques and activities were also appropriately adapted: the activity "Role on the Wall" was facilitated with the tool Annotate on a Webex platform whiteboard instead of writing on post-it stickers and place them on a cardboard hung against the classroom wall (Figures 6 and 7). A mind map was feasible in both cases by using either colorful markers on a piece of cardboard on the classroom floor or virtual markers over an empty whiteboard space on Zoom platform (Figures 8 and 9). Brainstorming on aspirations or expectations was also possible either by handwriting or by texting on Miro platform (Figures 10 and 11). Useful explanatory or exploratory word-clouds of necessary notions were formed, designed, shared either on paper or instantly presented on a Menti polling virtual space (Figures 12 and 13). Comic strips about career issues, thoughts, aspirations etc. were designed either by hand or with the use of versatile virtual tools on Scratch (Figures 14 and 15). Evaluation was facilitated face-to-face through discussion or written comments on post-it stickers or in secretly written messages put inside an envelope and virtually on a Jamboard virtual space or by filling in an online Google Form (Figures 16 and 17). Writing the hero's diary was possible on plain paper or virtually in the chat box or written as a message on a mobile phone and shared with a snapshot and e-mail or on Messenger (Figures 18 and 19). Improvisational scenes were prepared in either small groups or in breakout rooms and were presented to the plenary as theatre scenes in real

space conditions with selected props brought in by the facilitator in the case of school meetings or played in front of the computer screens with cameras on only for the presenting group and props found in the participants' respective homes (Figures 20 and 21). Emotional awareness activities were more difficult to transform; in the case of face-to-face meetings walking around the room, expressing feelings and thoughts out loud or with body language, with appropriate music in the background, enhances concentration and personal involvement. In the case of virtual meetings similar conditions cannot be dictated or orchestrated by the facilitator – responsibility must be shared among the participants so that they have to focus on what atmosphere could possibly be created when physical presence is not possible. The goal could be met by using more visual tools such as emoticons or charts with feelings and appropriate images for participants to choose from (Figures 22 and 23).



**Figures. 2& 3: Meeting face-to-face (left) and from home (right)**



**Figures. 4 & 5: Collaborating in small groups (left) and in virtual breakout rooms (right)**



Figures. 6 & 7: “Role on the wall” activity (left) and WebEx annotate whiteboard (right)

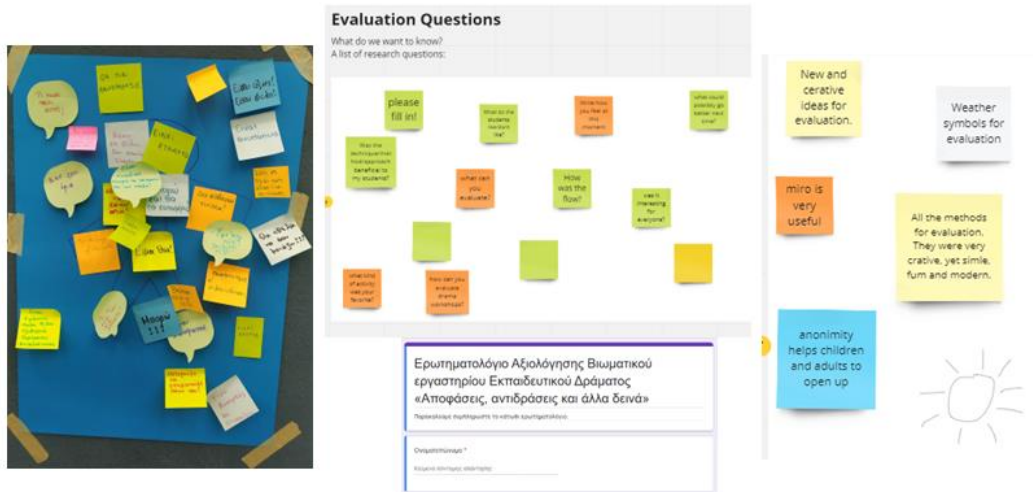


Figures. 8 & 9: Mind map construction on cardboard or stickers (left) and using virtual tools (right)

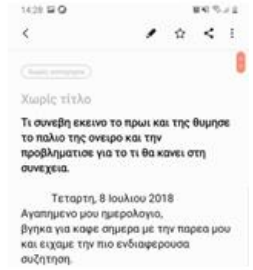




Figures. 14& 15: Comic strips creation on paper (left) and using Scratch virtual tools (right)



Figures. 16 & 17: Evaluation through post-it on paper (left) and on Jamboard or Google forms (right)



**Figures 18 & 19: Writing the hero's diary on paper (left) and in chat box or on mobile phone (right)**



**Figures 20 & 21: Improvisation scenes face-to-face (left) and on camera (right)**



**Figures 22 and 23: Expressing emotions through body language (left) and emoticons (right)**

## 2.6 Comparison of face-to-face and remote online implementations

Certain activities and techniques were more efficient in a face-to-face environment; others were better in a virtual environment. Here are the results of our research study:

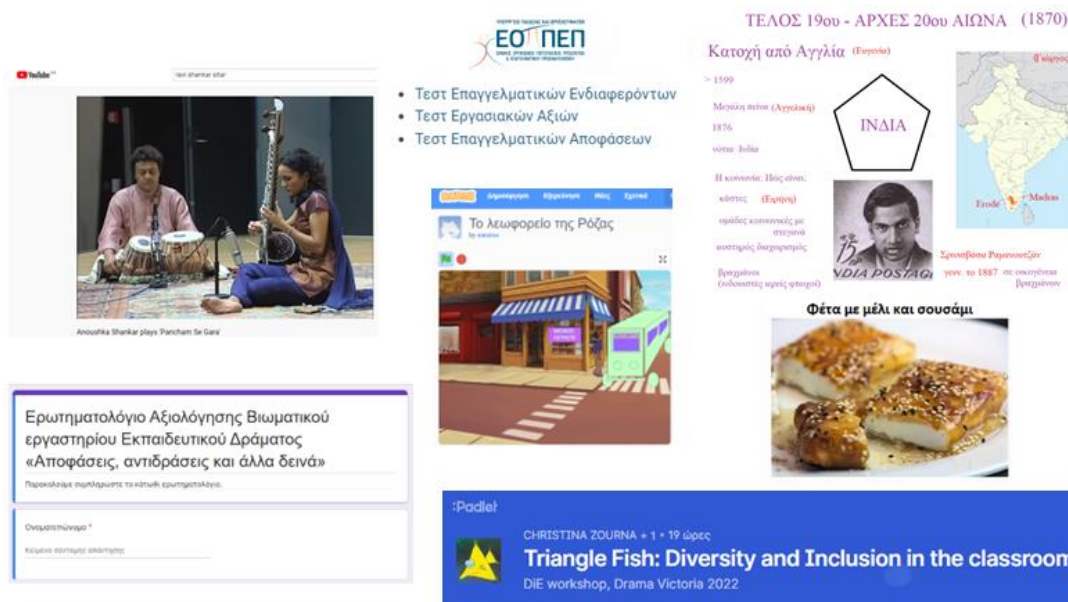
On the one hand, in face-to-face implementations, physical presence, intimacy and human based interactions serve better for group bonding, common goals sharing, personal involvement and buying-in the whole project; celebrating birth- or first-name days of the participants, cutting and sharing the traditional New Year's cake, holding hands and forming a bonding circle with our bodies, facing one another directly in the eye, using our peripheral vision to feel the space and the people around, walking around the room, in the school yard or in plain nature among the other members of the group, changing rhythms or speed when walking or transmitting messages or movements, expressing ourselves by altering voice height and tones, role playing using body language or movement in accord with the rest of the actors in the same scene, hands-on activities to jointly create something new and concrete (Figures24), all these cannot be transferred to a virtual setting. Or at least, they cannot have the same deep human bonding exchanging co-creating teamworking experience as in face-to-face settings. As some of our students put it, 'even with the improvisation scenes with our cameras on, it was not spontaneous, it was procedural; we didn't feel like actually acting, it felt like badly rehearsed' and 'when we prepared or presented our scenes in school, we lived the experience so intensely being in the same room with the others'. As M. Maksimovic also describes, 'we missed the experience of touch without use of language and the richness of *minor gestures*', referring to the notion introduced by Erin Manning (2017:42).



**Figure 24: Activities better performed in face-to-face settings**

On the other hand, in DiE virtual implementations, the important element of simultaneity, of synchronous co-creation of the whole experience, still exists – although responsibility of the success lies no longer mostly in the facilitator's skills. A DiE workshop cannot be videotaped and presented to a different audience just like a speech or a presentation can;

unless it serves the goal of evaluation or as an example for those interested in getting to know how some techniques or activities have been applied – but these need to be experienced in DiE as well. As the method is totally experiential by nature, living through Drama is totally personal and cannot be transmitted, explained or lived by representative whatsoever (Avdi & Chadjigeorgiou, 2007; 2018). Nevertheless, as we observed during our research, some activities were enhanced, their implementation was facilitated, and their results became more immediate and more visible when virtual online tools and platforms were used. For example, finding appropriate music or video excerpts or images to enhance the overall experience, to create a suitable atmosphere or to meet selected goals; using web search engines for information necessary for the story to be explored; filling in online questionnaires about career interests, goals, aspirations, etc.; sending in immediate assessment through Google Forms. All of these were easily performed by the students, too, adding to the shared responsibility requirement to manage an effective online workshop (Figures 25). The participants in the experimental group of our research commented that ‘the information we found about the historical era when the real heroes lived, was fascinating’ and ‘we enjoyed creating digital stories and comics so much; it was so creative and collaborative’. In other similar studies, online implementations ‘created experiences that utilized the resources students had at home and focused on building and maintaining teacher-student relationships as well as providing emotional support during their interactions’ (Dahn et al., 2021:7) in hard times of isolation due to COVID-19.



**Figure 25: Activities better performed in synchronous online settings**

As for the researchers’ personal and professional development during the same time, facilitating or participating in DiE online synchronous experiential workshops or webinar trainings in other countries around the globe, time differences considered, could not have happened if ICT platforms and tools had not existed.

### 3. Conclusions

All the above taken into consideration, we conclude that both forms of DiE implementations are feasible, thanks to the versatile nature of the method itself. In the last half-century Drama in Education has proven how flexible, adaptable, and applicable it can be. Up to recently, it has been used in teaching and learning, training and coaching, in career skills development in various settings not only in all educational levels – from preschool to adult education – but also in the workplace such as in organizations for managers’ training and workforce upskilling, the health sector for doctors’ and nurses’ professional training, in the aviation industry for pilots’ and hostesses’ intra- and interpersonal skills training, etc. (Papavassiliou-Alexiou & Zourna, 2016). Additionally, from now on, it can be claimed that DiE can also be used in online remote settings after being carefully designed, and then implemented not in the same but in a different way, adapted to the new means of communication, demanding shared responsibility; hopefully, it will be as effective as in the face-to-face settings. In their study in Indonesia, Zulkarnain et al. (2021) found that five web-based learning environment factors – access to learning, interaction, lecturer support, equity, and investigation – ‘enabled students to evolve, explore, engage, and evaluate knowledge’ being ‘positively associated with learners’ achievement’ (p.411). As Imiti (2022) claims, ‘it is impossible for theatre to disseminate information without communication’ and that ‘it performs virtually all media functions, which include instruction, persuasion, education, entertainment, development’ (p. 96). It is the authors’ belief that a combination of the two forms might provide the required answer; especially, in the case of long term projects using DiE in intervention workshops. However, more scientific research is needed to gather concrete evidence to back up this claim.

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## 5. Appendix

Links to the conferences, associations, and webinars in the same order mentioned in the text:

About Drama in Education skills development:

<https://www.dramavictoria.vic.edu.au/eventdetails/15284/drama-victoria-conference-face-to-face>

<https://www.ucc.ie/en/scenario/scenarioforum/scenarioforumonlineresearchcolloquia/>

<https://www.takatuka.net/>

<https://www.takatuka.net/conference>

<https://action.gr/home/projects/social-inclusion/diverse/>

<https://www.ideadrama.org/>

<https://theatroedu.gr/en/>

<https://www.burlingtonbooks.com/Greece/Page.aspx?PageID=1545&zzoneIndex=2>

<https://www.frl.auth.gr/index.php/el/tmima/ergastiria/dhlab-gr>

<https://dramapaedagogik.de/en/drama-in-education-days-2022/>

<https://www.mantleoftheexpert.com/event/conference-dorothy-heathcote-now-2022/>

<https://erasmus-plus.ec.europa.eu/projects/search/details/612178-EPP-1-2019-1-EL-EPPKA3-IPI-SOC-IN>

About career guidance and counseling skills development:

<https://euroguidance.eu/euroguidance-conference-celebrated-30-years-of-the-network>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events/sectoral-skills-intelligence-and-strategies-drivers-just-transition>

<https://www.cedefop.europa.eu/en/events/microcredentials-labour-market-megatrend>

<https://www.eoppep.gr/index.php/en/home-en>

<https://dmhassociates.org/latest-webinars>

<https://oldevechte.com/>

<https://entre.gr/online-ekdilosi-platforma-career-skills-to-mellon-tou-epangelmatikou-prosanatolismou/>

[https://www.eduguide.gr/nea2021/dwrean-online-dihmero-ekpaideytiko-seminario-21st-century-skills/?results\\_undergrad=130](https://www.eduguide.gr/nea2021/dwrean-online-dihmero-ekpaideytiko-seminario-21st-century-skills/?results_undergrad=130)