

SENTIMENTAL EDUCATION AND STORYTELLING: THE MEETING BETWEEN THE MASTER IN THEATRE, PEDAGOGY AND DIDACTICS AND THE CAMPANIA THEATRE FESTIVAL

EDUCAZIONE SENTIMENTALE E NARRAZIONE: L'INCONTRO TRA IL MASTER IN TEATRO, PEDAGOGIA E DIDATTICA E IL CAMPANIA TEATRO FESTIVAL



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ABSTRACT

The growing challenge for the current generation is to experience emotions that are not mediated by social media; therefore, new educational approaches should aim to enhance emotional and sentimental education within learning processes. The workshop held as part of the Campania Teatro Festival, aimed at students of the Master's program in Theatre, Pedagogy, and Didactics, explored, through a narrative and practice-based research approach, the effectiveness of theatrical practices in strengthening emotional, relational, and creative skills.

La difficoltà crescente della generazione attuale è quella di vivere emozioni che non passino attraverso canali social, pertanto le nuove sfide educative dovrebbero mirare a valorizzare l'educazione emozionale e sentimentale nei processi formativi. Il laboratorio del Campania Teatro Festival, rivolto agli studenti del Master in Teatro, Pedagogia e Didattica, ha esplorato, attraverso un approccio narrativo e di ricerca basato sulla pratica, l'efficacia delle pratiche teatrali nel potenziare competenze emotive, relazionali e creative.

KEYWORDS

Emotional education, Storytelling, Theatrical pedagogy, Performativity
Educazione Sentimentale, Narrazione, Pedagogia Teatrale, Performatività

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Introduction

In the current socio-cultural landscape, which is deeply influenced by the pervasiveness of digital technologies and the homogenizing mechanisms of communication typical of social media, there is a growing difficulty—especially among younger generations—in processing authentic emotional and relational experiences. In this context, it becomes increasingly urgent to promote emotional and sentimental education within educational settings, aimed at helping individuals decode, acknowledge, regulate, and manage their own feelings. Self-awareness is, in fact, a fundamental competence for personal and relational development, representing a key resource in building meaningful relationships. Carl Rogers, a leading figure in humanistic psychology, affirms that “only a person who is fully in touch with their own feelings and thoughts is capable of entering into a deep relationship with another” (Rogers, C.R., 1995).

From this perspective, the ability to recognize and regulate one’s inner states plays a crucial role in the quality of interpersonal dialogue.

In the educational sphere, this awareness assumes an even more central role: it fosters holistic and relational learning, placing at its core the integration of mind, body, and emotions (Maturana, H.R. & Varela, F.J., 1991).

Understanding one’s emotions, thoughts, and the motivations behind individual behavior not only strengthens personal learning, but also promotes cooperative and inclusive dynamics.

Within this framework, with the goal of enhancing the experiential and multisensory dimensions of learning, fits the workshop project *Chronicle of Crawling Feelings or Everything Is Always Already There*, realized as part of the *Quartieri di Vita* project of the Campania Festival Foundation in collaboration with the Master’s program in Theatre, Pedagogy, and Didactics: Methods, Techniques, and Practices of the Performing Arts.

This workshop proved to be a meaningful experience in analyzing how theatrical practices can become powerful educational and transformative tools. The aim of this pilot study was to design the workshop as a pedagogical and expressive pathway intended to foster in participants a deep exploration of themselves and their relational, emotional, and creative abilities, in order to build community in facing the challenges of contemporary society. Through theatrical techniques such as training, improvisation, and narrative and autobiographical storytelling, participants were guided along a path of self-reflection leading to the

collective construction of a final performance, presented to a public audience. The training provided the physical and relational foundations of the work, developing body awareness and stage presence.

Improvisation stimulated creativity, flexibility, and the ability to relate in the here and now, supporting the exploration of personal experiences and group dynamics. Finally, narrative storytelling allowed participants to give shape and meaning to personal experiences, creating connections with the social issues addressed. The entire process took place within a space of adaptive resonance (Rosa, H., 2019), a flexible environment of listening and sharing, where individual vulnerabilities were welcomed, valued, and transformed into resources for the group. The personal stories of the students, intertwined with collective reflections, gave rise to a mosaic of authentic experiences that formed the emotional and narrative core of the final performance.

This approach not only enhanced the unique contribution of each participant, but also fostered a sense of belonging and connection within the group, offering students the opportunity to develop a strong sense of community and to acquire emotional, relational, and creative skills (Carlomagno, N., 2020) to face the complexity of the contemporary world.

1. Theoretical Framework

In the contemporary educational context, emotional education represents a fundamental dimension of the formative process, aimed at developing relational, empathic, and emotional skills. It is conceived as a path of affective awareness that enables individuals to recognize, understand, and regulate their own emotions, as well as to relate to others in an authentic and respectful manner. This aligns with the concept of emotional intelligence developed by Daniel Goleman (Goleman, D., 1995), according to which recognizing and managing one's emotions are prerequisites for developing empathy and building meaningful relationships.

Emotional education thus constitutes a holistic form of learning, which goes beyond the cognitive dimension to fully embrace the ethical, affective, and social ones. Self-awareness emerges from the integration of bodily and emotional processes (Goleman, D., 1995), reinforcing the notion that "feeling is a way through which the body and the mind communicate" (Damasio, A.R., 1999). Therefore, the foundation

of meaningful (Ausubel, D.P., 2004) and long-lasting learning lies in the integration of mind, body, and emotions (Maturana, H.R. & Varela, F.J., 1991).

This dialogue between emotional and bodily dimensions, as supported by recent neuroscientific findings (Maturana, H.R. & Varela, F.J., 1991; Caruana, F. & Borghi, A. M., 2016; Carlomagno, N., 2020), strengthens the idea that the educational process should promote experiential and multisensory learning capable of engaging the individual fully.

Self-knowledge, therefore, is not only a prerequisite for personal development but is also a key element in fostering inclusive and meaningful educational environments (Ausubel, D.P., 2004). The enhancement of intrapersonal and interpersonal skills within educational pathways helps to shape conscious and empathetic individuals, supporting a holistic view of education that integrates the physical, intellectual, and emotional dimensions of the learner.

Within pedagogical practices that combine art and education, theatre emerges as a privileged tool for the development of emotional education. Through the body, voice, improvisation, and autobiographical storytelling, theatrical experience activates processes of self-reflection and emotional awareness. In particular, self-narration in performative contexts not only facilitates the reworking of personal experiences but transforms them into communicative and collective acts, capable of generating emotional resonance and mutual recognition (Bruner, J., 1990; Demetrio, D., 1996).

This perspective is also consistent with Dewey's vision (Dewey, J., 1938), according to which every educational experience is inherently emotional and relational, and with Nussbaum's philosophical approach (Nussbaum, M. C., 2003), which attributes a central role to emotions in the formation of ethical judgment and democratic participation.

In educational settings, theatre allows individuals to explore their identity, fostering a process of self-reflection. Theatrical interaction - based on techniques of improvisation, dramatization, and bodywork - creates a safe space in which individuals can recognize and transform their vulnerabilities into personal resources. It represents an educational tool capable of developing the intrapersonal and interpersonal dimensions of the individual, with the goal of creating more inclusive and welcoming learning environments. By encouraging dialogue among all participants, theatre contributes to reducing cultural and social barriers.

The use of the body plays a central role not only as an expressive tool but also as a means of integrating emotional and narrative experiences. This fosters empathetic connection and mutual understanding within a didactic approach inspired by enactive theory (Rossi, P. G., 2011; Gallagher, S. & Lindgren, R., 2015), which supports the co-construction of the educational experience.

The educator and teacher are not merely content transmitters but facilitators of experiences that stimulate reflection and practical interaction (Sibilio, M., 2020) with the surrounding world, creating an environment in which students can build meaning through concrete experience. In this context, the use of narrative practice not only promotes cooperative and multisensory learning but also develops socio-emotional and communicative skills, essential in the training of educators and teachers.

Through self-narration, individuals can explore and share their emotions with others, creating points of connection and discovering differences that enrich the group experience. Telling one's story becomes a process of autopoiesis, that is, an act of self-creation that enables the individual to build a sense of self through narration (Demetrio, D., 1996). In this sense, narration is a fundamental tool for the construction of meaning (Bruner, J., 1990), which is not limited to an act of expression but represents a process of critical reflection on experiences.

This sense-making process through narration is a mechanism for integrating emotional and cognitive experiences, helping the individual to bring coherence to their identity. Narrative practices, therefore, become tools for the development of *narrative identity*, the construction of the self through stories that give coherence and meaning to experience (Singer, J.A., 2004). Such stories become essential vehicles for reflecting on profound life and societal themes, fostering the development of an empathetic dialogue rooted in care (Mortari, L., 2006), and stimulating skills such as active listening, mutual understanding, and the ability to build meaningful relationships with others.

2. Methodology

The methodology used in this research, in line with the work developed of the *International Research Group "Bio-Educational Embodied Research on Performing Activities. On Theatre, Pedagogy and Didactics"* (BErPA – TPD), is based on a qualitative and bio-educational approach that emphasizes the integration of

cognitive, emotional, and bodily aspects in learning (Frauenfelder, E. & Santoianni, F., 2002). The primary objective was to explore the impact of theatrical practices on the acquisition of socio-emotional and creative skills in educational contexts (Damasio, A.R., 1999; Nicholson, H., 2014; Carlomagno, N., 2022).

An innovative teaching approach within the contemporary educational landscape is represented by performative teaching (Carlomagno, N., 2022). This approach proposes an embodied vision of education by integrating the arts, particularly theatrical practices, into pedagogical and didactic contexts, promoting multisensory, experiential, and active forms of learning.

Within this framework lies the experimental approach CReAP + T – Corporeality, Creativity, Relationship, Emotion, Action, Performativity + Training – (Carlomagno, N., Minghelli, V., 2022), an experiential and experimental approach, holistic, dialogical, and adaptive, characterized by transdisciplinarity and multimodality, based on theatrical practices that respond to the need for an inclusive and transformative pedagogy. This pedagogy values peer collaboration and the construction of meaningful knowledge through bodily experience.

This approach allows for the integration of cognitive, emotional, relational, and creative dimensions, placing bodily engagement and the interaction between mind and emotions at the center, elements now recognized as fundamental to the construction of shared meanings and the development of transversal competences (Gallese, V., 2005; Immordino-Yang, M. H., & Damasio, A., 2007).

On this integrative background, the research embraced a narrative research approach grounded in practice-based research (PBR) (Candy, L., 2006), enabling the collection and analysis of participants' personal experiences within the context of the theatrical workshop. Practice-based research is a method that integrates professional practice with research, emphasizing the generation of knowledge through practical action (Candy, L., 2006). Specifically, in the field of performing arts, PBR enables the exploration of artistic practice as a tool to generate knowledge and critically reflect on complex phenomena related to education and creativity (Aaltonen, H. & Bruun, E. F., 2014). Combined with narrative research, PBR provides a powerful tool for understanding subjective experiences and relational dynamics through the collection and analysis of personal stories.

The research was structured in several phases, combining participant observation techniques, narrative data collection, and thematic analysis (Bruner, J., 1990; Kolb, D.A., 2014).

Thematic coding was conducted through an iterative, multi-level analysis, initially focusing on identifying recurring themes such as self-reflection, empathy, and body-emotion integration.

These themes were subsequently refined and reorganized into main categories through methodological triangulation, cross-referencing results from observations, field journals, and questionnaires completed by participants.

This approach ensured greater validity of the results, allowing for verification of the coherence and convergence of data collected from different sources, and facilitating a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study.

2.1 The structure of the research laboratory

The structure of the workshop was conceived as an experiential learning environment in which participants, through narrative practice, were engaged in a process of emotional self-exploration and collective creation. The workshop was divided into three phases: initial, intermediate, and final.

In the initial phase, participants were prompted with open-ended questions posed by the director, which sparked spontaneous reflections that later served as foundational elements for structuring the collective narrative.

The intermediate phase was characterized by improvisational narrative and performative activities that allowed participants to explore their inner worlds, recognize and embrace emotions, and express personal experiences—both positive and negative—through body, speech, and relational engagement. These elements became the raw material for the development of performative dramaturgy.

The third and final phase culminated in a public performance, where participants shared their authenticity on stage, offering themselves and opening up to others.

The main activities proposed included:

1. **Group formation:** Through physical warm-ups, actor training exercises, theatrical techniques, and brainstorming sessions, individual barriers were progressively broken down, fostering emotional openness and strengthening group cohesion.
2. **Narrative development:** Participants engaged in improvisation, autobiographical storytelling, and bodywork, which enabled the collection of raw and authentic materials as a foundation for artistic creation.

3. **Dramaturgical elaboration:** The emerging suggestions were reworked into a shared narrative, enriched by symbolic and personal objects brought by the participants. Each scene was constructed through a process of exploration, rehearsal, and revision.
4. **Public sharing – final performance:** The workshop concluded with a public performance, the final outcome and expressive synthesis of the collective work.

The holistic design of the research made the workshop's output not only a subject of observation but also a direct and immersive experience for both participants and audience members. The final performance took place—by directorial choice—among the audience, who were arranged in a circular formation, rather than on the theatre stage, despite the venue having one. This choice aligned with an inclusive and participatory vision of education, where the performative dimension of the CReAP + T approach becomes a relational and co-constructive space for meaning-making, moving beyond the traditional dichotomy between actor and observer.

2.2 Context and participants

The study was conducted within the framework of the "Quartieri di Vita" Project, a festival of training and social theatre organized by the Campania dei Festival Foundation with the support of the Campania Region. It involved nine students from the Master's program in *"Theatre, Pedagogy and Teaching. Methods, Techniques and Practices of the Performing Arts"* at Suor Orsola Benincasa University in Naples, who expressed interest in participating in the experience.

The opportunity to take part in the workshop, titled *Chronicle of Crawling Feelings or Everything Is Always Already There*, led by Austrian artist Ed Hauswirth - a member of the artistic direction of Theater im Bahnhof in Graz - in collaboration with Nadia Carlomagno, pedagogue, actress, and artistic director of the Master's program, was offered to current and former students from the present and two previous editions of the Master's course.

The participant sample was heterogeneous, composed of 6 women and 3 men, including: a psychology student; a graduate in Performing Arts and Media Studies; an actress and educator; a singer and videomaker; an actress and high school teacher; a dancer, educator, and social worker; a performing arts professional; a

trainee actor and theatre workshop facilitator; and an actor with autism spectrum disorder.

The average age of the students involved was approximately 30, with most participants coming from the Campania region.

The workshop spanned 11 days of rehearsals and culminated in a public performance held at a theatre in the Campania region.

2.3 Data collection

The data for this research were collected through multiple tools and methodologies:

1. **Participant observation:** Group dynamics and interactions among participants during the activities were systematically documented.
2. **Reflective journals:** Students were asked to keep a reflective journal, in which they recorded their experiences, emotions, and learning throughout the workshop.
3. **Questionnaires:** Open-ended questionnaires were administered at two key points—at the beginning and at the end of the workshop—to explore initial expectations and perceptions of the outcomes achieved.
4. **Creative productions:** The participants' narrative and performative outputs, including texts and scenes created during the workshop, were collected and analyzed as sources of qualitative data.

2.4 Data analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a thematic approach. The process followed these steps:

1. **Initial coding:** The data were examined to identify recurring themes related to socio-emotional skills, creativity, and personal transformation.
2. **Thematic grouping:** The codes were organized into main categories such as "self-reflection," "empathy," and "body-emotion."
3. **Critical interpretation:** The identified themes were interpreted in light of the pedagogical and neuroscientific theories referenced in the literature (Damasio, A.R., 1999; Bruner, J., 1990; Shapiro, L., 2019).

3. Results

The results highlight the value of theatre as a powerful pedagogical tool capable of stimulating active and transformative participation, offering new perspectives for educational and professional training. The workshop experience revealed how the connection between emotional and bodily dimensions can significantly enrich the learning process, promoting a holistic educational approach that integrates mind, body, and emotions within a performative context.

Below, the materials produced by the participants are analyzed to explore the key phases of this journey. The workshop began with a brainstorming activity designed to stimulate participants' imagination and initiate collective reflection.

Self-reflection

The director posed four key questions, each related to a core emotion or concept: hope, insecurity, thrill, and anger. These questions invited participants to freely explore their inner experiences, generating a rich lexicon of words, images, and associations. The responses were shared in the group, creating a mosaic of associations that provided a concrete foundation for the creative work. Each word that emerged was not only a personal expression but also a contribution to the construction of a collective imaginary that deeply influenced the final performance.

In response to the question ***What words do you associate with hope?***, participants evoked vivid and life-filled imagery, reflecting a deep desire for positivity and renewal. Words that emerged included:

"Light, future, action, faith, eyes, tree, inspiration, secret, desire, love, heartbeat, struggle, reach, grip, soul, union, relationship, children, heart, breathing, glue, joy, Nadia, nature, animals, life, path."

Hope was represented as an interweaving of vital energy, meaningful relationships, and a sense of direction toward the future.

In response to ***What words do you associate with insecurity?***, the group explored a more intimate and vulnerable space, bringing forth images of instability and fragility:

"Cold, duvet, box, darkness, slap, void, drowning, project, crossroads, procrastination, purple, climate change, life circumstances, back and forth, to be or

not to be, loss of certainty, bullying, knot, naked, mirror, judgment, doubt, people, erase."

These words reflect a perception of insecurity as a lack of control and a constant tension between action and passivity.

To the question ***What words do you associate with thrill?***, participants explored a territory full of contrasting emotions, from fear to excitement:

"Emotion, cold, contact, jolt, kiss, height, dare, fright, heartbeat, vertigo, fear, adrenaline, seduction, unknown, scream, fingernail, sense of the new, goosebumps, beyond, ghosts, spirits, Halloween, death, rails, madness, electricity, getting lost, revulsion, connection."

Thrill was described as a moment of tension, a thin boundary between attraction and repulsion.

Finally, in response to ***What words do you associate with anger?***, powerful images emerged, charged with destructive energy and conflict:

"Inside out, fist in the wall, red, fire, alcohol, screams, devil, aggression, cycle, unresolved, injustice, judgment, pride, lack of communication, failure, choice, blindness, rage, explosion, eruption, Hitler, misunderstanding, impatience, diversity, loneliness, problems, selfishness, irritating, dissatisfaction, frustration, traffic light, horn, parents."

Anger was described as an overwhelming force, often tied to perceived injustices or the inability to communicate effectively.

The word exploration during the brainstorming contributed to the construction of a shared emotional lexicon, fundamental to the creative process. The use of narrative and free association, combined with collective reflection, reflects Jerome Bruner's theories on narrative thinking as a tool for making sense of experiences. Furthermore, the integration of bodily and cognitive emotions in theatrical work draws on the principles of *embodied cognition*, which posit that thought is inseparably linked to physical experience and sensory perception (Shapiro, L., 2019).

Empathy

In the next phase of the workshop, students shaped scenic proposals through a series of improvisations that led to the development of authentic and personal texts. To encourage them to produce meaningful material, the director asked each participant to bring an object of particular personal value. These objects not only contributed to the narrative construction but were also integrated into the final performance, amplifying the symbolic and emotional value of their stories. The texts that emerged reflect deep emotional exploration and a rich variety of perspectives. Below are some of the objects used and selected writings developed by the participants, representative of the creative process:



Some of the objects particularly dear to the participants

Topic	<i>Motherhood and social conditioning</i>
Written report	<i>D.: The time has come, the time to decide whether or not to become a mother. My age demands it, but there's something even greater: I want a child, I truly do. But you decide for me. Work, society, the system, my partner - they all decide for me. It's a heavy burden. To be the bearer, the vessel of birth, something that belongs to me, my body, my mind, my heart... yet I don't decide. I don't decide.</i>

D.'s text explores the inner conflict between personal desires and external pressures. The narrator feels trapped in a system that denies autonomy over their most intimate choices, reflecting on the weight of gender expectations and the relationship between body, mind, and society.

Topic	<i>Resilience and reconciliation</i>
Written report	<i>G.: I will be someone who knows how to take care of what has been, someone who won't tremble in the face of danger, but will embrace the opportunities it offers. I will not hold grudges, because holding grudges has hurt me more than those I thought I hated. And I won't hate, because, in the end, hate is just the other side of the same coin called Love.</i>

G. offers a perspective on the ability to transform difficulties into opportunities. The text focuses on overcoming resentment and embracing love as a positive driving force, highlighting the strength of care and reconciliation as antidotes to negativity.

Topic	<i>Self-harm and awareness</i>
Written report	<i>L.: I will be someone who has learned to hurt myself, and once you've learned, you know how to do it well, with full awareness. Because it's hard to imagine having a moment in life when I'll truly know how to do good for myself, I mean real good, not illusions, deceptions, traps, or disappointments. And yet, for some reason, it's not hard to learn how to hurt yourself and do it skillfully, with that sense of having accomplished something complete. Then you take a step back and say: yes, this is the harm I've managed to inflict on myself this time. And every time you improve—the practice makes perfect.</i>

L. addresses the delicate issue of self-harm with surprising clarity. The analysis of "hurting oneself" as a conscious and formally coherent act highlights the conflict between self-destruction and the search for meaning. A deeply introspective work that invites reflection on the complexity of the human experience.

Topic	<i>Collective identity and inner chaos</i>
Written report	<i>F.: Good evening, welcome. We are a collective and... as you may have noticed... there are random people in a random situation. Maybe it's a work group, a family unit, or simply a scenic situation. They seem very busy. Perhaps it's about</i>

	<i>decisions and instincts, or what's happening in their bodies—what they've brought with them: experiences, intuitions, maybe even doubts and pains. And this, of course, is what moves them. What moves me? Right now, I don't know. It's a bit chaotic.</i>
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F.'s text stages an apparent randomness, depicting a group engaged in an undefined action. The chaos becomes a metaphor for personal and collective uncertainty, and the concept of "movement" suggests that the search for meaning develops through shared experience and dialogue.

Topic	Freedom and human connection
Written report	<i>A.: I will be someone who knows how to be free without feeling judged, without feeling inadequate. Someone who will not stop at a thought, but will sing freely in the fog and come toward you with open arms to embrace and play, to rest and nourish themselves with beauty, sunlight, and wonder. I will be able to feel you and listen to you. So close, even if we are far apart, even if I don't know your story, I will understand that your story is also mine.</i>

A. describes a vision of freedom that includes the ability to accept oneself and to deeply connect with others. The desire for beauty, wonder, and acceptance becomes a manifesto for an authentic existence, open and rich in meaningful relationships.

Topic	Creativity and transformation
Written report	<i>C.: I will be someone who learns when they don't win, drawing a new world to figure out what to do without flying or falling, choosing instead to dream, to glide, and to hold a glass full of themes I didn't know I could create. Reacting, speaking, feeling pain, with the evenings of yesterday and the enchanted nights. Trying thoughts, nature, longing for dust, staying still without getting up, yet still managing to create, play, speak, regret, without measure.</i>

C. celebrates resilience and the ability to create despite difficulties. The metaphor of the "glass full of themes" suggests a positive perspective on the complexity of life, where failure and suffering become raw material for personal growth.

Body-emotion

Alongside the laboratory process and the creation of the performance, the nine participants were asked to respond in writing to the question "What do you expect from this workshop?" An analysis of the students' responses revealed expectations that were intricate and deeply personal, intertwined around common themes but experienced uniquely by each individual. Most participants emphasized the desire to approach the workshop with an open mind, free from preconceptions and rigid expectations. This attitude leaves room for surprise and unpredictability, as evidenced by those who expressed a desire to be amazed and led by the flow of the work. The choice of an approach devoid of expectations seems linked to a need for authenticity and creative freedom.

Another common thread is the desire to explore and expand one's expressive possibilities. Some students focused on exploring their own biography as a communicative resource, while others aspired to discover new ways of interacting with the stage, playing with what it offers and developing confidence in their performative actions. There is a strong desire for growth, both personal and artistic. The human aspect is often mentioned as a point of contact between individual sensitivity and the transformative power of art (Mezirow, J., 2003). For some, this growth takes the form of exploring the human being as a tool for change and for building social dialogue. The workshop is also seen as a place of meeting and confrontation. Several responses highlight the importance of collective work, dialogue between different backgrounds, and the possibility of creating together through clash and encounter with the other.

This path is experienced as an opportunity to discover new ways of facing life and the fundamental questions of human existence. Others focus on technical and methodological enrichment, expressing the desire to step out of their comfort zones and contaminate already solid techniques with new cultural and artistic stimuli. The workshop was therefore perceived as a space rich with potential, as fertile ground for exploring, growing, and transforming, both as individuals and as artists, in continuous dialogue between oneself, the other, and the stage.

The workshop represented an important opportunity for human and professional growth for the nine participants, who, in a journal response to the question "After participating in the workshop, what can you bring into your profession?" highlighted the formative importance of the experience. Below are some reflections drawn from the journals.

"I am an educator and a social worker, and participating in the project 'Quartieri di vita' represented an opportunity for both personal and professional growth. This path places the person at the center in their entirety and uniqueness, valuing those segments of the population that have too often, and for too long, occupied a marginal place in society. With 'Quartieri di vita,' people regain value and dignity, finding a protected space in which to tell their stories, listen to each other, and offer themselves to others. For my profession, this experience has been invaluable, allowing me to closely observe how individual vulnerabilities can be transformed into strengths."

"Participating in this project has been a valuable learning experience, where theatre proved to be a pedagogical tool capable of transforming individual emotions into a collective language. This experience allowed me to better understand the educational potential of theatre, strengthening my desire to use it in the future as a means to promote inclusion, personal growth, and the development of shared sensitivity."

"The experience of 'Quartieri di vita,' and specifically the journey with Ed, allowed me to ignite even more that fire that drives me to be an actor: to reveal and challenge my vulnerabilities, transforming them into strength, to show and prove that through theatre, one can welcome, transmit, and leave an impression on an audience—our people—with a message that speaks the language of emotions. I will carry with me the awareness that theatre with a social purpose is a responsibility that travels with art, and with that sensitivity unique to art, hearts and minds are touched, guiding them toward redirection, integration, and the feeling of being part of one great community—the human race. Before being actors, we are human beings, and that factor is the fundamental ingredient that will always overcome walls and build solid bridges of connection for people and among us people."

"Deepening my professional journey with director Ed. Hauswirth was essential for acquiring and sharing an additional method and poetic-directorial vision focused on the creative process to reach the shared production of a performance that oscillates between reality and fiction. A process that led to a union, to a connection with the other that is completely inclusive, guided with care, gentleness, respect, and with the inner joy of discovery."

"This workshop has been a journey for me, the opportunity to fully immerse myself in a space of transition, where I could feel free to be and to experiment. The result of this journey is the process itself."

"This journey has been an intense, lived, and entirely experiential process. A climate of welcome and sharing was created, reminding me how this can foster the emergence of internal dynamics that each of us brings to a group, an organization, society, and therefore to life. These dynamics interact with each other, generating reactions that lead to the transformation of a body in action. Theatre can be a tool for growth and discovery for children, adolescents, and adults, as well as a way to empower and uplift people who find themselves in more complex situations."

"During this extraordinary workshop, I was able to confirm something I have always believed: theatre as therapy. A therapy that goes beyond the self, understood as a cure for inhibitions and shyness, a therapy that involves the other. Theatre as social therapy, which, if timely, prevents; if it cannot prevent, it tries to save. Save from difficult social contexts or, in extreme cases, save the other" and save them from themselves."

"Playwright, composer, and performer. 'Participating in this work was an opportunity for me to delve into those 'cracks' that lived experience leaves in the fabric of reality, spaces where the stage can bloom, and where thoughts and gestures merge into a unique language.'"

"Theater is a great force of unity that can bring different people together and transcend boundaries, spreading a universal language that can help overcome the most difficult problems, making life wonderful."



Some shots of the stage precipitate created following the workshop

4. Discussion

The workshop was based on an integration of pedagogical methodologies that reflect a multidimensional view of learning. A key element was the approach of inclusive pedagogy, which emphasizes the importance of recognizing and valuing diversity in educational contexts. This approach not only focuses on removing barriers but also strives to build deeply inclusive environments capable of stimulating the authentic participation of every individual. In the workshop, this principle translated into the creation of a climate of mutual trust, an essential foundation for any form of transformative learning (Mezirow, J., 2003). Alongside this framework, experiential learning, rooted in Kolb's theoretical model (Kolb, D.A., 2014), emphasized the continuous and dynamic cycle between direct experience, critical reflection, and action. This methodological perspective guided the design of the proposed activities, which were conceived to stimulate deep and conscious engagement and to foster learning that emerged directly from the participants' lived experiences and interactions.

The theory of embodied cognition (Maturana H.R & Varela F.J., 1991; Shapiro, L., 2019) provided an additional level of methodological insight, recognizing the central role of the body in cognitive processes. In the workshop, this theory found

a clear application: the body was used not only as an expressive tool but as a true mediator of knowledge. Through performative exercises and body improvisation activities, participants explored the connection between emotions and movement, translating inner experiences into tangible narratives. This process highlighted how body work can facilitate the integration of emotional and cognitive dimensions, leading to the creation of a collective narrative that reflects both individual and shared experiences.

Similarly, the CReAP + T approach, applied through Practice-Based Research (Candy, L., 2006), constituted a methodology that views art not only as an expressive means but as an epistemological system capable of revealing complex meanings and promoting critical reflection. In the context of the workshop, PBR techniques were used to transform personal stories into performative material. Through autobiographical narration and the use of symbolic objects, participants created a performance that synthesized emotions, relationships, and social issues. This process not only highlighted the transformative potential of art in an educational context but also emphasized PBR's capacity to foster empathy and human connection, central elements for the success of inclusive pedagogical practices.

Specifically, a bottom-up approach was adopted, prioritizing a process of methodological construction based on the emerging experiences and needs of the participants. For instance, during the workshop, themes and activities were defined based on responses from initial brainstorming sessions. Open-ended questions, such as "What emotions are associated with hope or anger?", allowed for authentic input from participants, which was later used to structure improvisations and collective narratives. This methodology enabled the enhancement of each individual's unique experiences, transforming them into creative and pedagogical resources for the group and fostering a participatory and dynamic learning process. The participants, involved in performative activities based on improvisation, autobiographical narration, and body work, experienced a multisensory learning process that stimulated deep reflection on the self and collective dynamics (Carlomagno, N., 2020), enabling them to translate emotions and experiences into artistic expressions, fostering profound transformation both personally and collectively. This approach, in line with the principles of narrative theory (Bruner, J., 1990), which suggests that storytelling is an essential tool for creating coherence and meaning in experience, promotes the construction of individual and collective identities. The results emphasized that theater, through the use of the body as an

educational medium (Varela, F. J., Thompson, E., & Rosch, E., 1991), offers a safe and protected space to explore personal vulnerabilities, transforming them into resources and opportunities for growth. In particular, the collaborative dynamics activated during the workshop facilitated the creation of a learning community, where empathy and interpersonal communication were valued as core skills for educational and social work. This aspect is especially relevant when considering that emotional intelligence (Goleman, D., 1995) is one of the key factors in the development of authentic and inclusive relationships.

5. Conclusions

The theater workshop *Chronicle of Creeping Feelings or Everything Is Always Already There*, conducted as part of the *Quartieri di Vita* project organized by the Fondazione Campania dei Festival, aims to demonstrate how artistic practices can be utilized in the educational field to promote emotional and sentimental education. The research conducted highlighted the crucial role of theater in facilitating the development of socio-emotional, creative, and relational skills through the integration of bodily, cognitive, and emotional dimensions, in line with experiential learning theories (Kolb, D. A., 2014) and embodied cognition (Maturana, H.R & Varela, F.J., 1991; Shapiro, L, 2019).

The workshop sought to show how situated learning (Rivoltella, P.C., 2013; Lave, J., & Wenger, E., 1991), understood as a process that takes place in authentic contexts and through active participation, represents an effective educational approach. From an educational perspective, the workshop generated significant implications, demonstrating that the adoption of performative practices can enrich the training of educators and teachers by offering practical tools to design interventions that integrate the body, emotions, and storytelling into teaching.

The work highlighted how theater can help overcome social and cultural barriers, promoting inclusion and a sense of belonging through shared participation in creative processes. Additionally, the workshop emphasized the need for an education that embraces a holistic perspective, capable of addressing the complexity of the contemporary world, where we are increasingly connected on digital platforms but less connected with ourselves and with others.

Although the research presented has the limitation of a small sample size, it aims to demonstrate how theatrical practices are not only artistic tools but also

represent an innovative pedagogical resource, allowing for the integration of multiple dimensions of the self, fostering the personal development of participants, and enhancing their ability to design and implement educational paths that place greater emphasis on emotional and sentimental education.

Therefore, the valorization of theatrical practices in the educational landscape can contribute to the formation of aware, creative, and empathetic professionals, capable of tackling contemporary educational challenges through inclusive and participatory approaches.

Author contributions

Nadia Carlomagno is the author of the paper. She is the main researcher of the project; she wrote the Sect. "Introduction"; the Sect. 2 "Methodology", and the Sect. 2.1 "The structure of the research laboratory".

Arianna Ricciardi is the co-author of the paper, she wrote the Sect. 2.3 "Data Collection" and the Sect. 3 "Results".

Valeria Vadalà is the co-author of the paper, she wrote the Sect. 1. "Theoretical Framework"; the Sect. 2.2 "Context and participants"; the Sect. 2.4 "Data analysis", the Sect. 4 "Discussion" and the Sect. 5 "Conclusions".

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