Entrepreneurial Challenges in theatre Higher Education Curricula – ECTHEC

Intellectual outcomes –Recommendations and reflection upon a research project

Background

In the application for the ERASMUS+ project we extracted four domains in terms of knowledge production. In the following you can read different advices and reflections from project members of the teacher and research group, distributed on the four domains. The advices and reflections should be read as multiple and diverse voices of the project more than anything else. We have chosen to sample the written voices in this document to celebrate the ongoing collectiveness and co-creative work mood we have worked in. Read and be inspired.

1. Testing new environments

In our search for exploring the field of artistic entrepreneurship we have been eager to test new learning spaces and creating environments. A very important choice have been to work at all our schools during the project period and by that exploring our different scholastic physical and cultural surroundings. At every event around Europe we took our starting points in the strengths, conditions and resources at the particular school and by that we managed to test entrepreneurial workshops, methodology and practices from a new innovative and curious place every time. The biggest event took place outside a traditional school system but in collaboration with our partner Teatro di Pisa and their locations in the village of San Miniato. Here we were all newcomers and had to create a community of practice to be able to work.

Be diverse in the choice of actual workspaces and see those as a part of the possibility to be innovative in terms of the topic that you work with. Mind the space.

Let the creation of the workspaces be a concrete and important part of the actual research project.

Let the diversity of spaces feed into the research project and its processes and outcome so that terms like mobility, fluidity, trans-nationality and exchange becomes concrete and tactile and not only words in an application.

We need to create reflection rooms (space and time) with students. Since I started my classes in Hamburg in October I can't go back. I can't go back to the "normal teaching", I can't go back to my comfort zone, and I can't go back to the simple knowledge transmission from A to B. Although I always tried to offer a playful and dynamic way of teaching, after our process in Erasmus+ I recognize the importance to be a good listener. I have to take care of the questions and the requests of the students (and mine as well) and create space and time with them to let thoughts and ideas take a concrete form.
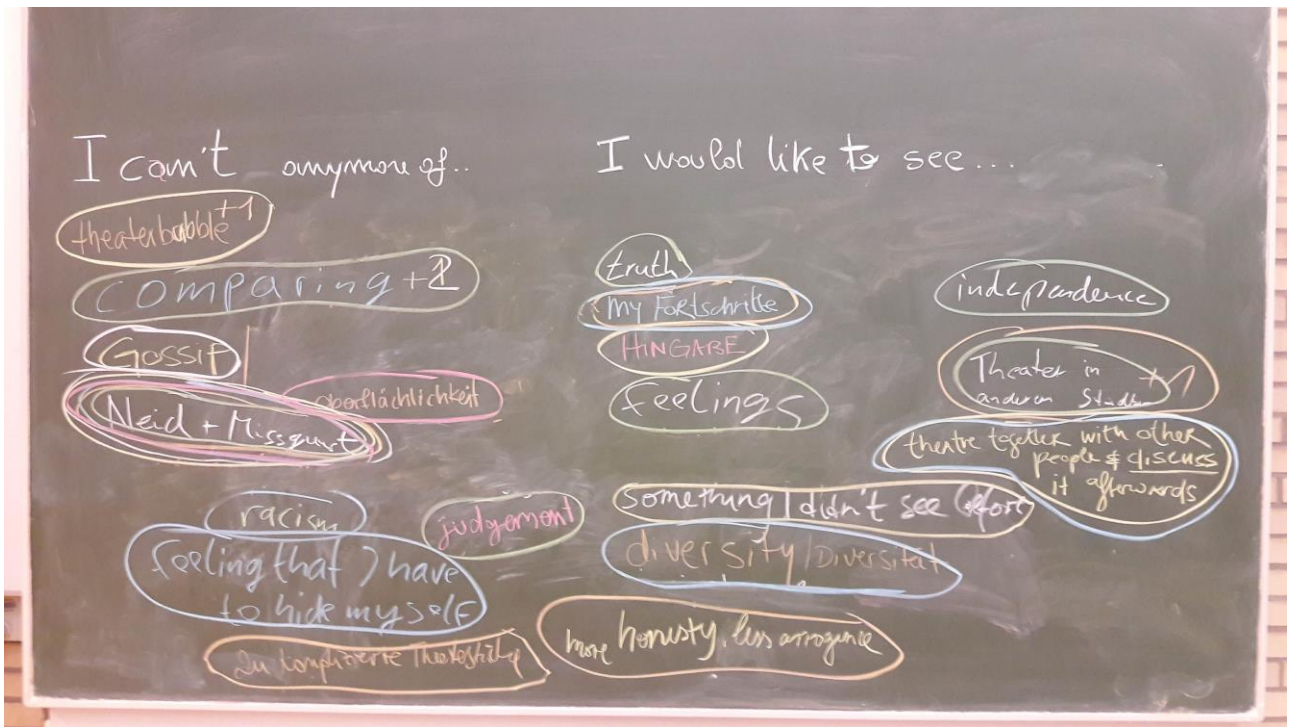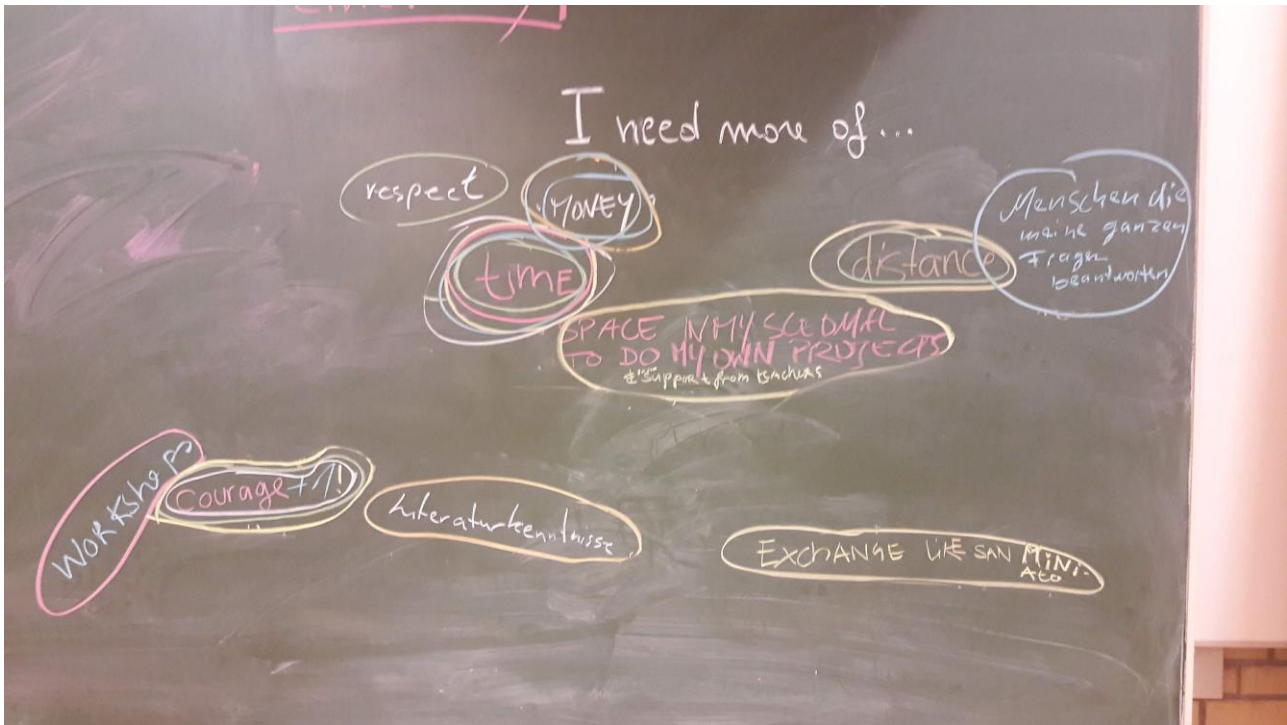
2. Developing good practice

An important aspect of the ECTHEC project is the *expansion* of the meaning and understanding of what artistic entrepreneurship is and can be. The expansion of terms had a significant impact on everyone participating in the project - it made us open up our perspectives to research artistic entrepreneurship multiple ways. The expansion was a collaborative process that developed our pedagogical approach in new multiple exiting ways. The project extended and expanded prior assumptions of what it means to teach and/or be a teacher in the field of artistic entrepreneurship but also in a broader sense.

Creating an entrepreneurial mindset in the school is perhaps more important than having a specific program in artistic entrepreneurship. I think that it is important to create a space with a basic set of values/principles such as: fairness, justice, respect for the differences, inclusiveness, responsibility/accountability; a set of competences – autonomy, creativity, independence, political

and ethical awareness, project building competence, collective planning and creating, etc.; A set of skills, designed not only upon the demands of a particular professional discipline or practice but also upon an understanding of the needs of students, teachers and the community and the discussion of 'Why am I doing this?'; a set of actions (we can call it courses or program) but they are mainly hypothesis for a pedagogical process that is mainly project-based and it is centred in the learning and researching, instead of the teaching-learning.

I believe that this entrepreneurial mindset implies trust in the other, namely, the student, and demands that you create at the same time a space of uncertainty and disturbance – allowing surprises, undefined moments of things to happen, openness for negotiating changing in the planning and contents, questioning, etc. – and a safe space that is the social and emotional support of this disruptive dynamic. This, that we can name a community of practice, is not easy to achieve, since it demands that we include in the pedagogical relations other factors – political, social, ethical, that normally are not easy to develop in the daily life of a school and also imply an internal, fair and continuous discussion of its convictions, arguments and principles.

Talking about entrepreneurship in the context of theatre higher education it is important not to focus on the word itself, but on the content - which skills and knowledge the students should acquire during their studies, necessary dealing with career development uncertainties, risks and aiming to help them making a living from their art.

An entrepreneurship course for theatre students shall provide knowledge on how to analyze the market, how to make target audience profile (how to know better the audience - not just who they are but who they could be) or how to develop the audience. Children theatre directors and actors have very clear picture about their audience - children. But do they also think about the decision makers - parents and how to make the performance attractive also for them? Not always.

In the beginning of this project the core group of teachers, researchers and administrators had very different experiences with entrepreneurship as a curricular subject matter in their schools. Standing in very different "corners" in terms of practice based knowledge, content, formats and even ideological starting points about entrepreneurship, the group had to start

developing good practice together from a place of gentleness. In this process we worked and experimented together on the basic of values as openness, autonomy, empathy, patience, and diversity. We saw ourselves as common creators in different laboratories where we simultaneity tried to un-learn to co-learn. Developing good practice within the large field of artistic entrepreneurship happened because teachers, researchers, administrators, students and alumni became co-researchers and shared, sampled and shaped the variety of concrete workshops and knowledge during the whole period.

Let students and teachers/researchers develop content, material, knowledge and experiences in a non-hierarchical environment and atmosphere.

Let the development of good practice lean into chosen core values of the participants/the work group.

Let the intellectual outcome and knowledge production reflect the practice that has been developed in as various ways as possible.

3. Developing skills and competences

Ask and listen to the students: Where do they feel uncertain and see their gaps in terms of planning their artistic future. And then try to find a response, i.e. try to insert in the curriculum topics, tasks, training elements, which can fulfil these gaps.

The main goal of an entrepreneurship courses for performing arts students should be to see the bigger picture of what is the audience and analyze it. The audience and its behaviour changed a lot in the last 10 years.

Entrepreneurship in the Arts program requires not only creativity, but also managerial innovativeness, which can be integrated through at least three structural blocks: (1) a set of vocational qualifications (essentially limitless and requiring continuous training, adaptation, renewal); (2) a block of social skills (from psychology to intercultural competences etc.); and (3) a block of managerial competences. The content of all these different parts, the applied

methodologies par excellence has an open format, changing, requiring constant monitoring and updating, so that the study process corresponds the dynamically changing environment, and resonates with it.

In a community of practice trying to maintain re-humanised time that makes it possible to learn, listen, experiment and reflect, the participants of this project have developed a various repertoire of skills and competences. All the skills and competences are connected to artistic entrepreneurship because the term is expanded between concrete administrative and creative tools, mindset work and lifelong reflection upon self-efficacy and courage to face your own artistic practice. The participants have shared their skills and competences but most of all invented new ones together, maybe not knowing in the first place that it had to do with being entrepreneurial. But acknowledging that it had everything to do with being entrepreneurial when we started to work together.

Create a broad frame and a broad definition of the term entrepreneurship.

Think about whether the adjective "entrepreneurial" can be more useful that the noun "entrepreneurship" – useful in terms of finding common content and formats within the topic.

Use reflection and feedback to discover skills and competences after concrete workshops or work processes. Asking: What were we doing and how were we doing it?

4. *Curricula development*

Maybe it is not necessary to create a separate subject or module on entrepreneurship/creative project organising. A set of skills and practice elements may be included into different subjects – it is up to curriculum creators of the school.

In context of developing educational institutions curriculum the project has shown strong points: We need to dare to go into *the unknown* as a research method to develop a curriculum by asking questions:

To our traditions and hierarchical structure in the institution (position) and the hierarchical structure between the fields (subject areas) represented in the institutions

About our (individual and institutional) presumptions
What is basic knowledge?
Why and how a specific subject is relevant for the coming generation?
Why we do as we do?

We need to dare to invite each other to participate (regardless of position, age or cultural background) in our teaching sessions and our reflections. To listen what occurs between us. Invite students into development processes.

My advice is to open doors for people and come to the heart of what the people are. I would advise to build a program around this core of the topic. I believe that in the daily practice of an artist - especially when it comes to the acting department - the training is a lot about skill, which is important, to become a skilled actor, as people have signed up for this.

If we want to create a basic course to train an artistically entrepreneurial or daring mindset I would advice to offer a platform, a time and space where we let students play with their artistic skills as well as let them combine the new learned skills with things they like to do and practice which they don't train in university.
A platform that connects them with others - other cultures, social circles, places, different practices and trainings and ideas of art and views on life.
A platform to play, to reflect, to dream, and to connect, where participants can think and ask questions, and are asked for example:
To create a *map of [their] life*, about what is important to them and find out what they really like to do.
To write an *artist statement* in which they give examples of influences and try to decipher what it is their artistic search and interest.

A platform where we encourage people to go into dialogue with themselves and others and come up with a vision for their own life that covers their dreams and encourage them to go for it, like we practiced by creating the *great masterplan of life.*

To give overviews of work or project possibilities that we can already think of and hand them a kind of white mirror- like we exercised by creating *the magic carpet.*

A place where participants are asked: *Show off what you love most* and therefore are given a time and space slot to show to the whole group.

This platform therefore might be a place and time where the group can reflect and build projects that might continue or simply really see a person they would work together with in the future and where people with an idea are taught strategies how to bring this idea into existence, how keep the various factors in mind and where they find a mentor. Where we learn about resilience how to deal with failures and keep going for the things that are most important to us because I guess this is why we chose to become an artist in the first place.

Developing artistic entrepreneurship within a curriculum is not something I believe can be instantly achieved, but with certain elements in place, will grow and thrive over time. By giving time to the process it will become something that is autonomous and self-strengthening in its development. Below are some key ideas that have sprung from and are rooted in the work of this two-year project. I strongly believe they would lead to the development of true and brilliant artistic entrepreneurship within a curriculum and therefore beyond.

A list of contacts that can be called upon to help develop current students' ideas. This was something that was brought up by Rachel Roberts, from the Conservatoire in Boston, during the 'Artists as Citizens' week in London, February 2018. Rachel spoke about how she helps her students obtain grants for their ideas during the training, and then, crucially, continues the support after graduation.

Identifying and furthering what it is in the training that enables a student to feel empowered. Time must be given to develop this vital sense of autonomy. This was something that quickly became

apparent in San Miniato during our Artistic Laboratory with European creative students from multi-disciplines: letting go of the abundance of preparation and plans, and giving space to what the students were being drawn towards.

The importance of having a "direct creative debate… there is not enough" (Christian Burgess (Vice Principal and Director of Drama – 2018, Guildhall School of Music & Drama). This idea reflects the most exciting work that has been done during this project – when there is a clear channel of communication between teachers and students, enabling creativity to thrive and students to directly influence and shape the course of their learning.

A further exploration and development of cross-collaborative projects. Any school with a variety of disciplines is a hub of potential. I feel that any time put into further interdisciplinary work would be invaluable, and the benefits would grow beyond the structure of the training.

A final year/graduate company – an idea that I feel is more important than ever now, in our ever changing and uncertain political and social climate. This is something that can be introduced during the training- perhaps during the last year - creating an ensemble whose life may well continue and flourish beyond the training.

Optional alumni support for one year (minimum) to keep in touch and stay feeling supported. It is an overwhelming and often lonely experience when you graduate and are left to fend for yourself. With a support system in place, I believe new graduates would feel more able to continue the brave and exciting work that the training encourages.

I believe that most importantly we must *integrate* the values of creative entrepreneurship, as opposed to treating them as an add on limb – as much as possible. Of course a traditional education model can be used, but I'm not sure the effect would be as great as a real embedding of it into the training. It would be a longer process – but that is what it is. A process. It may not always have an end product, but the process itself will provide far more riches than the end 'result'. For both teachers, and students.

Arts entrepreneurship modules can be easily constructed around creative projects - going one more step further and integrating additional exercises on how to run the project, identifying the risks, thinking about marketing, legal issues related to the project etc. The topics of the analyzed modules cover subjects from career planning to project management and new venture development: mapping oneself; personal career options; dealing with changes, risks and motivation; artistic mission and vision; choice of legal forms; artist as a brand; developing ideas for cultural service/product; target audience; marketing; partnerships and cooperation; negotiating and contracting; authors' and related rights; business model; business/project plan formulation and presentation.

As a part of this ERASMUS+ project stays a vision of developing a transnational joined master within the field of artistic entrepreneurship. During the project period the participants connected to the partner schools have created concrete content in terms of workshops, courses, learning goals and divers pedagogical and artistic material. This content could be the starting point of creating an entrepreneurial curriculum. The joined master should be developed between interested EDE schools and should be possible for all students at EDE schools to join. The partner schools of this project should all offer modules as a part of the joined master and the amount of mobility and diversity in terms of subjects, people, formats and production should be ambitious and large.

Use EDE as creative partner network in developing a future joined master.

Let the development of a future joined master be an entrepreneurial process in itself (eat your own medicine).

Create time and space for developing and try out a joined master in artistic entrepreneurship. Let it become a real laboratory, a real experiment of skills, competences, mindset, heart and brain for the entrepreneurial young artist and the sustainable artistic life.

(Rikke L. Heinsen, from different testimonies of the research group and teachers)