Innovation in Forum Theater: Using IT in FT method

The Project’s IT platform

***Concept***

*by*

*Mads Bo-Kristensen, PhD. in multi-media didactics in Adult learning*

*& Elizabeth Gregersen*

1. **Guidance Counseling Pedagogy (*Vejledningsmetodik*)**

The pedagogical approach for this project is the *Existential Theory of Learning*. People learn alone; they also learn together with others, and they learn the knowledge that is meaningful for them. (fx Bo-Kristensen 2004a). This applies to all possible subjects. Learning is collaborative and situational when students learn together with others (e.g. Lave et al 1998); Learning uses the existential perspective when the focus is on *meaning* in learning (e.g. Colaizzi 1998). It is an art to both separate and blend these three perspectives – so they demonstrate how students learn.

For many teachers, the cognitive perspective is the flagship of didactical reflections in learning. What are the cognitive processes that provide the foundation for this? An answer is that it will give the teacher entrance to the cognitive view of learning and consequently, the knowledge on how learning activities in an e- or m-based material be designed, such that it will have the necessary didactical quality.

Research from a cognitive view of language learning has different models to understand cognitive learning processes. Several models are offered: information- and system theory-based, hermeneutically- and phenomenologically-based models. These models have 3 common central processes:

* understanding
* attention
* use

The concept of *pre-understanding* concerns the experiences, the knowledge and accomplishments on which adults base their learning. The concept of *attention* is drawn from the research on perceptions and consciousness and is a prerequisite for learning. (Schmidt 1990). Finally, *use* is a concept that also comes from memory research and shows that we know how to precisely use acquired knowledge such that it would be possible to adapt and store it for later use – in long term memory.

Concretely within the context of Forum Theatre (FT) for motivating and providing counselling to pupils, this theory of learning can be applied in ...... (MADS help!)

***Three Types of Activities***

E-base and m-based technology can be used to enhance the forum theatre method for counselling. The mobile phone, supplemented by a closed online platform, can be used in the activities that should be designed to reflect student’s cognitive learning processes. There must be 3 types of activities:

* Pre-activity
* Activity
* Post activity

A developer of e-learning materials for second language learning should ask the following questions regarding his/her materials:

The **pre-activity** exercise can be seen as preparation for the FT production. This could take the form of an assignment where teachers/counsellors can ask pupils to think about specific dilemmas (meta approach). The themes could be about their social conditions (social arv), dream job, parents’ job, bullying, etc. The outputs can take the form of an interview of parents, taking photos of their dream job, blog on their parents’ dream for them, etc. These electronic outputs can be submitted to the teacher/counsellor via a closed learning platform where only the class members and the teacher will have access. This stage in the process will help the teacher identify the dilemma/s that will be tackled in the production itself.

The second phase, the actual **activity** itself is the Forum Theatre production. During this phase, the pupils actively participate in the productions. They can take photos or videos of each other, write sms, or blog (after the production), send their comments etc.

The **post activity** can be tackled in class after the production where discussions on the dilemma tackled and their experiences can be discussed with the teacher/counsellor as a group, 2-2 or 3-3. The discussions can lead to identification of new dilemmas or an expression of deeper angst,leading tgo stage 1 (representing a cycle.)

Some issues to be considered by the teacher/counsellor:

* Are there pre-activities that mobilise understanding and contextualises or provides the framework for the subsequent activities?
* Do the themes allow the student to direct his/her attention his/her own situation?
* Have post activities been considered, to ensure the use or accept of reakisations made during the FT production? What role does a possible teacher guidance play in pre- and post activities?
* Is the dilemma part of a larger context, where, for example, there is already an established understanding?

1. **The IT Tools**
2. Closed E-platform/blog site

Each class will have a closed e-platform site that will be created by the teacher/counsellor, and only the class members will have access to this. This site will function as a communication nerve where the class receives assignments and sends their homework to the teacher. It can also be a discussion forum that will serve as an extension of the classroom.

The platform can send and accept photos, video and audio files, enavle chat and bogs.

Given the limitation of the project financing, we are recommending the use of free sites such as [www.moblog.net](http://www.moblog.net), or other similar safe sites. Partners, especially in the UK and Finland, could also identify free sites that are “child-safe.” At present, VIFIN is using the moblog.net site this for its many m-learning projects, and has had good experience with tihs. This is not a social networking site, so the privacy and safety of the pupils are ensured.

Part of the training course for counsellors and teachers is understanding the pedagogy and using sites and softwares to support the technological aspect of the FT method.

1. Website

The project will create a website (www.actvice.eu), similar to the “Act and Change” website where information on the project and its activities could be found, plus serve as repository of resource materials on Forum Theater and its use in motivating pupils and in counselling in schools.

The materials to be developed under the project will also be accessible via this website.

This will also be linked to the project’s FB page.

1. Supplementary e-networking tool: FB & Blogs

Facebook will be used primarily to aid the project’s information dissemination plan. Partners can invite the the teachers and counsellors actually participating or are interested to participate in the project, colleagues’ who may benefit from using the techniques (teachers college, drama school, language centres, municipalities, etc). Likewise, pupils who wish to be updated on the activities of the project may join/ be invited to join the group.

To facilitate the discussion and networking among teachers and counsellors, the project will actively encourage participants to use the discussion function of the page. Aside from accepting photo and video uploads, this type of open group site also accepts .doc file uploads. A good example of a functioning professional group page is EU\_Educators page in FB. See: <http://www.facebook.com/home.php#!/home.php?sk=group_117880428273669&ap=1>

1. Blogs

After all is said and done, blogging today is a good way of disseminating current information and to create and sustain interest in a subject matter. While not everyone is keen on blogging, there are some members of the project group that can start and maintain the blogs. This is a good way to get teachers and counsellors share their experiences on the FT method, learn from each other’s experiences and “spread the word”.

This will be independent of the website. We will just link this to the project’s website, and vice-versa.