

GAME TRAINING IN THE PROFESSIONAL PREPARATION OF FUTURE ACTORS: A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF THE PHENOMENON

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INTRODUCTION

The modern concept of educational development in Ukraine emphasizes the formation and strengthening of intellectual and spiritual potential of individuals, as well as the implementation of socially significant priorities in higher education, as declared in the Law of Ukraine “On Higher Education”¹. In this context, the development of theoretical and practical foundations for the professional training of future specialists becomes particularly relevant. The most crucial task of higher professional education, including theatrical education, is the transition from a paradigm of knowledge transmission to a paradigm of self-discovery and processing of information, continuous self-development, and self-improvement². Accordingly, in contemporary conditions, the outcome of education should not merely involve the student’s acquisition of new ideas but also the cultivation of internal motivation, prerequisites for their personal and professional growth, aimed at readiness for creative performance in future professional activities.

Today, the modern actor is required to possess a wide range of skills and abilities: they must be capable of perceiving and conveying various emotions, understanding the depth of a character and their inner world; have a profound understanding of the contradictions of human existence; adeptly combine comedy with tragedy, irony with seriousness, enabling them to create unique characters on stage; master the use of their voice and speech for effective communication with the audience (changing tone, intonation, and rhythm to convey different moods and characters); possess physical mastery, using their body as a means of

expression (controlling their movements, gestures, and poses to convey the character’s emotions and behavior); have physical flexibility and coordination to embody various characters on stage.

The future actor must learn to combine intellect, emotions, and physical expressiveness, like the «intelligent harlequin» envisioned by L. Kurbas³.

¹ Про вищу освіту : Закон України від 01.07.2014 р. № 1556-VII. Дата оновлення: 16.09.2022. URL: <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/1556-18> (дата звернення: 16.09.2022).

² Нова парадигма освіти у глобальному світі. URL: <http://dlse.multycourse.com.ua/ua/page/15/53> (дата звернення: 24.06.2021).

³ Життя і творчість Леся Курбаса / упоряд., наук. ред. Богдан Козак. Львів ; Київ ; Харків : Літопис, 2012. 656 с. + 104 с. ілюст.

The actor's training through gameplay is directly aimed at developing the future actor's special (professional) competencies and contributes to the harmonious interaction between the body and the mind – the psycho-physical apparatus of the actor.

Today, training as a separate educational component holds a significant place in the professional preparation of actors. Hence, numerous questions arise that educators must answer for themselves in order to effectively develop the content and utilize the didactic tools of gameplay training to cultivate the acting skills of future professionals.

To determine the specificity of gameplay training, one must answer a series of questions: how does children's play differ from that of adults; what possibilities does gameplay training open up for the future actor; which elements of actor's psycho-physiology does gameplay training develop, and how does it impact the student's professional development, among others. These questions emerge from the exploration of the genesis of theatrical training and, to this day, remain open and relevant for the contemporary acting pedagogue.

1. The essence and functionality of actor training as a pedagogical phenomenon

In the theoretical discourse of theater pedagogy, the use of such categories as “actor training”, “actor's play-based training”, and “training in acting skills” can be observed. In the pedagogical theater practice, especially in the professional preparation of future actors, these concepts are used interchangeably. No significant differences that could affect the process of professional preparation of future actors have been identified by us. In our opinion, their substantive and functional significance is identical. Therefore, these specified categories will be considered as working concepts and used by the authors as synonyms.

The phenomenon of “play” has attracted the attention of scholars from various fields of knowledge since ancient times and continues to be of interest today (Plato, F. Schiller, F. Nietzsche, I. Kant, H.-G. Gadamer, K. Gross, Yu. Lotman, J. Derrida, M. Epstein, J. Heijenga, and others). In theatrical pedagogy, classical scientific views on this problem have been developed by theater experts and practitioners such as E. Grotowski, O. Kurbas, T. Ribot, M. Chekhov, and others, as well as contemporary theater figures and scholars like L. Limarenko, A. Lobanov, O. Oleksin, N. Stadnichenko, and others.

The individual's need for play and the ability to engage in play are not age-related, although they have their peculiarities in each age period. Thus, play is revealed as a personal characteristic rather than an age-specific one⁴.

⁴ Кутас Е. А. Ігрова діяльність дорослих. Актуальні психологічні дослідження. URL: <https://elib.bsu.by/bitstream/123456789/14470/1/94-98pdf.pdf> С. 95.

According to the theory of K. Gross (German philosopher, Ph.D., professor), the process of play in children develops the entire spectrum of vital skills that help the child navigate complex life's social and natural conditions. Therefore, the author identifies the functional system of play as a phenomenon of human activity, including physical play (like all mammals, humans are physical beings who need to develop a strong body and learn to move coordinately); linguistic play (which teaches children to speak); exploratory play (which combines curiosity and playfulness in exploring the surrounding world); constructive play (which aids communication through creating necessary devices and tools); social play (which is essential for survival in cooperation with others); and imaginative play (which trains the ability of imagination). Any play situation can serve more than one of the functions proposed by K. Gross. Group play can encompass physical play, linguistic play, exploratory play, constructive play, social play, and imaginative play simultaneously.

According to Karl Gross, play is essentially an instinct for training other instincts. In his work "Animal Play", he wrote: "We cannot say that animals play because they are young and playful, but they have a period of youth for playing; only in this way can they complement their insufficient inherited endowment with individual experience"⁵. Thus, at the level of fauna, humans have an instinctive urge to gain personal experience in mastering certain mechanisms of communication and interaction with the surrounding reality through direct engagement with the object-informational space through play.

In our view, the opinion of Peter Gray, a doctor of philosophy from Boston College, that play is a form of unproductive activity, with the motive not in its results but in the process itself, remains a subject of debate. According to Gray's definition, play is an activity pursued for its own sake, not directly aimed at a specific serious goal outside of play⁶. As play is an activity carried out for itself and not for any conscious result beyond it, people often perceive play as frivolous or trivial. This position on the educational function of play is paradoxical: the educational significance of play lies in its triviality, where the player engages in play solely for the desire to play, not pursuing any specific goal; education becomes a by-product. As a result, much of the educational significance of play may not be fully appreciated.

For the "person who plays", the process is more important than the outcome, as the process of play allows the individual to become a subject of life activity and feel empowered over oneself, emphasizes the scholar. However, there are different types of "adult" games (sports, political, and

⁵ К. Гросс. [https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/freedom-learn/200901/the-value-play-iv-nature-s-way-teaching-us-new-skills].

⁶ Gray P. The value of play IV: play is nature's way of teaching us new skills. 2009. Mode of access. URL: <http://www.psychologytoday.com/node/2824>

specifically acting as a form of professional activity) where the result for the player dominates the process, and the process serves as a means to achieve the goal. And the result is inherent in the content of the purpose of any activity.

The incorporation of play exercises into actor training is motivated by the challenge of maintaining the direct perception of childhood into adulthood. Life in society imposes certain limitations, and what may be natural and enjoyable in childhood can become at least peculiar in adulthood. Play allows the awakening of qualities essential for the acting profession, such as naivety and spontaneity, which, in turn, stimulate creative intuition, freedom, and involuntary reactions. When we offer rewards to students for their play, we transform their play into something that is no longer play but purposeful work aimed at achieving a professional task and obtaining a desired outcome.

Therefore, for an education seeker, play constitutes both the subject of their future professional activity and a means of acquiring professional skills and abilities. As a tool used in the educational process, play serves an instructional function, providing specific opportunities for students to develop their acting expertise.

The didactic potential of play is realized through the replacement of traditional educational goals and tasks with game-oriented objectives and tasks. The logic of the lesson is aligned with the plot logic of the game, while still fulfilling the primary functions of learning (educational, developmental, and upbringing).

Depending on the particular aspect of the actor's psychophysiology that needs to be developed, the instructor places didactic emphasis during the play and directs the student's attention towards working on specific elements. Educational games foster the formation of robust decision-making algorithms and the selection of appropriate actions. They lay the groundwork for the student to transfer these algorithms into their professional practice.

The psycho-corrective potential of play lies in its being the most natural, dynamic, and therapeutic form of human activity. Within the game, adaptive conditions are created for the «subject-subject» relationship between the teacher and the student. Play provides means to resolve conflicts and express emotions, which are essential elements of the acting profession. It can alleviate tension, nervousness about giving the wrong answer, or fear of performing on stage.

Moreover, play fosters spontaneity, as it allows individuals to be themselves, free from excessive prudence, and awaken their subconscious. This kind of activity enables students to reveal their true nature, present their «self-concept» to others, and therefore not suppress their emotions by conforming to rationality or conforming to the behavior of others. It allows students to present themselves to their peers and instructors as they truly are.

During the process of play, a strong internal desire to achieve a result emerges – to be better, to surpass oneself and others, which creates excitement or enthusiasm, becoming one of the driving forces for inspiration. This enables the student to break free from their usual personality constraints, enter a state of flow, and approach the subconscious.

Actor training stimulates the creative thinking of students. They learn to explore character interpretations, generate new ideas, and express them through movement, voice, and emotions. This fosters the development of creativity, imagination, and innovative thinking.

Additionally, actor training enhances the physical abilities of students and encourages them to gain confidence in themselves and their abilities. They learn to control their body, voice, and energy, allowing them to express themselves and showcase their individuality on stage. This nurtures self-assurance and helps students unlock their potential in all aspects of life.

Actor training involves interacting with other actors, directors, and technical personnel. Students learn to work as a team and accomplish collective tasks. This aspect is crucial in actor training as theater is a collaborative art that requires cooperation and interaction among all participants.

Actor training helps students improve their body awareness, develop flexibility and coordination of movements, and learn ways to convey emotions through physical expression.

The potential possibilities of using play as an educational form in the professional preparation of future actors include a real didactic functionality in shaping the professional readiness of students for creative work in theater arts. This is achieved through a chain of effective play-based practices, such as predicting, assisting, supporting, developing, allowing, stimulating, etc., leading to the formation of functions like predictive (prognostic), pragmatic, supportive (facilitative), developmental, regulatory, and stimulative functions, among others.

All this potential is aimed at shaping and developing the psychophysical apparatus of the future actor, often referred to as the actor's working instrument. This includes their physicality, motor skills, vocal abilities (diction, articulation, and breathing), musical sense, rhythm, attention, thinking, memory, intellect, imagination, and creativity. Therefore, the psychophysical apparatus is an intellectually-emotional, musically-plastic instrument of perception and reactions to the creative environment in which the actor exists.

The game exercises in actor training are designed to shape the psychophysical apparatus of the future actor and can be characterized by the degree of consciousness, purposefulness, and structure. The training helps students learn to analyze the processes happening within them and be present «here and now». In the acting profession, significant attention is devoted to

the process of working on a role because achieving a successful outcome requires meticulous work on each element of the stage performance. Thus, there is an inevitable interdependence between the process and the result. Sometimes, a student may initially achieve a great result in their work on a role, but to repeat it consistently, they need to deconstruct and understand the mechanisms that contributed to it and then immerse themselves again in the rehearsal process.

The specificity of game-based training lies in the dominant role of imagination in shaping the psycho-physical apparatus of the future actor, which has a binary status: on the one hand, imagination serves as the foundation and means for performing any didactic task in the training; on the other hand, in the process of working on game exercises, it develops the creative imagination directly.

Through the stimulation of imagination in game-based training, instructors foster the development of creative potential and associative thinking in students. During these game exercises, students learn to achieve a state of «dual consciousness», where they can both control themselves and immerse in the persona they envision. This acquired skill will later prove invaluable for aspiring actors in their work on roles. As actors delve into the process of splitting their own personalities, they can tap into genuine emotions and fully grasp the reality of their artistic creations. This allows them to completely immerse themselves in intense emotions such as anger, indignation, or sorrow, all while maintaining an appreciation for the imaginative depth they contribute to their performances.

This process of the actor's personality division helps actors more vividly experience emotions and express them through the feelings created by their imagination, which brings genuine joy and great satisfaction from their acting work.

A distinctive feature of actor training lies in the execution of game exercises by students, which do not teach new skills but rather qualitatively transform and refine existing ones, adapting them to the theatrical context. During the admission process to a theater university, prospective students already possess a certain level of developed attention, imagination, communication, and other relevant qualities. Game-based training helps in enhancing the «elements» of the actor's psycho-physical apparatus.

Similar to an infant, an actor must learn everything from the very beginning: how to look, walk, speak, and more. In our everyday lives, we already possess these abilities. However, the challenge lies in the fact that, in the vast majority of cases, we perform them poorly, not as nature intended. On the stage, one must appear, move, and speak differently – better, more naturally, than in real life. Firstly, because the imperfections highlighted under

the spotlight become particularly prominent. Secondly, because these imperfections impact the actor's overall stage performance.

The game-based training process helps actors refine their skills and achieve a more authentic and effective performance on stage. Through carefully crafted game exercises, actors can overcome their weaknesses and develop a deeper understanding of their craft, aligning their performances more closely with the natural behavior and emotions demanded by their roles.

Creative process is inherently whole. Fragmenting it artificially into discrete components at the outset of the journey hampers spontaneity, restricts creative liberty, and obstructs the intuitive and direct expression of life on the stage, ultimately stifling the creative process itself. The creative process engenders a state of creativity, not to be regarded as an end achieved upon completion of the journey; it is an inherent quality to be unearthed from within. This creative state should be embraced from the moment the stage is set. Such self-awareness comes to fruition when an actor cultivates a culture of creative autonomy, necessitating conducive conditions for the actor's imagination to flourish.

By engaging in games, students cultivate the capacity to “react spontaneously” without suppressing or forcing their initial response. This serves as a foundational requisite for nurturing the actor's imagination. Accurately seizing upon the initial reaction precipitates the natural emergence of emotions and unfettered self-awareness, priming the actor for an involuntary artistic metamorphosis that facilitates authentic “being and living” on the stage.

It is important to embrace the holistic nature of the creative process, cultivate a state of creativity, and foster an environment of spontaneity and freedom during the actor's performance on stage.

The actor exists on the stage in a state of duality, or “doubleness”, which is the fundamental natural characteristic of play, as noted by the Dutch cultural historian J. Huizinga⁷. Through the use of game-based training, individuals of the “play type” (according to Huizinga) are developed, capable of transforming real reality into imaginary and acting within the given circumstances. In game-based training, there is a unique transition from the real to the unreal, resulting in the formation of a new «imaginary» world in which the student exists during the proposed exercises by the educator.

In essence, during game-based training, the actor's consciousness is divided, enabling them to engage in two types of behavior simultaneously – one that pertains to practical reality and the other that is conditioned and imaginary. This duality allows for the creation of an imaginative world within

⁷ Хейзінга Й. Номо Ludens Досвід визначення ігрового елемента культури / Пер. з англ. О. Мокровольського. Київ: «Основи», 1994. 250 с.

the training exercises, contributing to the development of the “play type” individual capable of transforming reality through imagination and action.

The method developed by M. Chekhov is a vivid example of using playful exercises. In his elaborated exercises, the actor gradually masters the “dual behavior”, learning to exist in two worlds simultaneously – the imaginary and the real. While creatively working on the role, the actor imitates images of imagination. However, the character cannot be a simple extension of the actor’s personality, as it would hinder the creative process. At the same time, there exists a distance between the character and the actor, allowing the actor to freely embody the character. The character is always “outside”. The actor must possess such control over their attention and imagination to summon the image of the character freely: to sustain it, draw it closer, and penetrate its inner life beyond the external appearance of the character. Achieving this ability in the aspiring actor is made possible through playful training and systematic work.

Through systematic exercises, the student of Mikhail Chekhov’s method learns the laws of theatrical existence, distinct from everyday life, right from the initial stages of mastering acting skills. They acquire the ability to swiftly transition from their ordinary state of being to a creative one. This capacity demands the tremendous mobilization of their entire psychophysical apparatus, ready to instantaneously respond to images born from the imagination and willingly submit to them, surrendering to the realm of playful improvisation within the framework of the playwright’s and director’s tasks.

Let’s provide an example of one of Chekhov’s playful exercises: Walk in space as if you are quietly approaching a sleeping dog. Move with exaggeratedly large steps, as if your entire attention is devoted to walking silently. Vary the pace and length of your steps. Play and enjoy what you are doing, like a child. Keep sneaking. After a few minutes, start walking at a regular pace, imagining that you are still moving with stealth. You may stop, visualizing your energy body continuing to sneak. While doing this, genuinely imagine the creeping movement. It is crucial to focus your imagination on the muscular sensation, feeling like you are genuinely doing it. Stop. Observe yourself: notice any new sensations, impulses, or images that arose within your body⁸.

This exercise is based on the actor’s dual perception: on one hand, there is their physical body with its concrete sensations, and on the other hand, there is the body of the imaginary character, which can exist in a different mode, sometimes contrasting with the physical reality.

In everyday life, for most people, it has become a habit to reflexively suppress involuntary reactions, which is entirely justified since displaying childlike spontaneity in adults is unreasonable and dangerous. However, on

⁸ Chekhov M. *To the Actor: On the Technique of Acting*. London : Routledge, 2002. 256 p.

stage, the ability to spontaneously respond to words and thoughts is the foundation of an actor's creativity. This belief was shared by both theater theorists and practitioners of past centuries as well as contemporary theater figures.

The specificity of playful training also lies in the fact that these exercises not only train the ability to fantasize (creating new images and connections in one's imagination) but also develop the skill of influencing the surrounding stage life and changing it in the proposed direction through one's own imagination. In the performing arts, both abstract and active fantasy are required, stemming from a real sense of what is happening on stage.

There exists a «specific actor's imagination», distinct from the imagination of writers, artists, or musicians. Without the development of this specific actor's imagination, an actor cannot exist. The specificity of this actor's imagination lies in the fact that for an actor, fantasizing means internally acting out the roles. The material of a performer's art is their actions. Therefore, for an actor, fantasizing means to act, not in reality, but rather in their imagination, in their creative dreams.

The actor's imagination resembles a type of fantasy that is particularly characteristic of individuals during childhood and early adolescence when they are inclined to dream and imagine themselves as great commanders, polar explorers, pilots, and more. The creative belief of an actor in the given circumstances, which they "construct" with the help of their imagination, also gives every reason to compare them to a child. Playful training taps into the experiences of childhood. On stage, those who can behave naturally and effortlessly in real life are the ones who play truthfully.

The appellation of an actor's craft as "play" is not haphazard, encapsulating a professional skill rooted in the embrace of authentic imagination, often synonymous with an actor's spontaneity. Recognizing the authenticity of actors' emotions, the centrality of imagination cannot be overstated, serving as the bedrock for these genuine sentiments. The psychological mechanism of play is entirely based on the work of the imagination.

Within the acting realm, an actor's imagination evolves into a potent tool, facilitating their embodiment of fictional realms, adoption of diverse personas, and genuine immersion in the play's circumstances. The actor's adeptness at tapping into their imaginative faculties and forging a connection with the emotions and encounters of their characters underpins their ability to infuse veracity and authenticity into their performances. This creative potency, alongside skills refined through playful training, empowers actors to craft compelling and unforgettable portrayals on stage.

The dynamic cultivation of imagination contributes to the actor's inherent ability to organically experience emotions, bypassing the imposition of artificiality. In deciphering the enigma of an actor's existence, insights

emphasize the need to study the sequence and interplay of affective states. The solution to an actor's enigma lies not in isolated emotions, but in the intricate interconnections binding emotions with more complex psychological systems. This understanding constitutes the cornerstone of the entire psychology of the actor. In the context of playful training, a connection arises between the actor's imagination and their ability to feel and emotionally respond to sensations. Playful training allows the actor to surrender to the reaction that arises from imaginary impulses. By correctly catching the initial response and allowing it to develop freely, the actor achieves spontaneous (subconscious) artistic transformation, enabling them to naturally "be and live" on stage, using the scenic circumstances of the play (or etude), rather than relying on preconceived imperative instructions.

Therefore, the investigation into the specificity of playful training has allowed us to propose a definition for the concept of "actor's playful training".

Actor's playful training is an active pedagogical method (tool) aimed at refining the actor's psychophysical apparatus (instrument). It has an improvisational nature of activity and is directed towards developing a direct "childlike perception", creative intuition, freedom, and spontaneous reactions. This training enables the acquisition of the ability to simultaneously engage in two types of behavior – practical (real) and conditional (imaginary), all within the framework of clearly defined rules set by the teacher (director) as organizational and pedagogical conditions.

2. The practice of using playful training in the professional preparation of future actors

Ukraine is renowned for its diverse national culture and sophisticated artistic heritage, which undoubtedly includes theatrical arts. Today, cultural and artistic practitioners face the demand for dynamic changes (development) in ideological and thematic directions, with an emphasis on national values and the humanization of society through the means of art, especially in the realm of theater. Consequently, the artistic community encounters various creative challenges that require actors to be flexible, creative, and adaptable to modern trends in theatrical arts.

The realization of these pressing trends falls on the shoulders of the new generation of creative youth. Therefore, the training of young, talented professionals is a matter of national importance. The preparation of future actors is a multi-level, complex, and multifaceted process. Ukrainian educational institutions offer opportunities for gifted and ambitious individuals to unleash their potential, acquire acting skills, and grow into highly qualified professionals.

The analyzed content of the educational programs "Theatrical Arts" at the bachelor's level with the specialty of 026 "Stage Art 2 from the following

higher education institutions: Zaporizhzhia National University (ZNU), Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I. P. Kotliarevsky (KhNUA named after I. P. Kotliarevsky), Kyiv National University of Theatre, Film, and Television named after I. K. Karpenko-Karyi (KNUKTiT named after I. K. Karpenko-Karyi), and Ternopil National Pedagogical University named after V. Hnatiuk (TNPNU named after V. Hnatiuk). This analysis was conducted to understand the quantitative and qualitative content of the educational programs of these higher education institutions, including the general and professional competencies that future actors should acquire during their professional training. Additionally, it aimed to determine the place of game training within the educational components of the professional preparation in each university. The obtained information has facilitated the identification of modern requirements for students considering the specific features of each educational institution.

Comparative analysis of the quantitative content of educational programs in the mentioned higher education institutions aimed at the professional training of future actors is presented in Table 1. In most universities, the indicators of specialized competencies exceed general competencies.

Table 1

**Indicators of the quantitative content of competencies
in Ukrainian HEIs' study programs**

№	Higher education institution	Quantity of competencies		
		Integrated	General	Specialized
1	ZNU	1	15	15
2	KhNUA named after I. P. Kotliarevsky	1	12	22
3	KNUKTiT named after I. K. Karpenko-Karyi	1	8	17
4	TNPNU named after V. Hnatiuk	1	8	18

The integral competency (IC) is formulated in accordance with the state standard of higher education at the first (bachelor's) level in the specialty 026 "Theatrical Art" in all educational programs and is aimed at developing the ability to "solve complex specialized tasks in the field of theatrical art using the theory and methods of art studies, theatrical pedagogy, creativity psychology, and cultural studies"⁹.

The general competencies in the study programs of the Kyiv National University of Theatre, Cinema, and Television named after I. K. Karpenko-Karyi and Ternopil National Pedagogical University named after V. Hnatiuk

⁹ Стандарт вищої освіти першого (бакалаврського) рівня зі спеціальності 026 «Сценічне мистецтво» / розробники стандарту: О. Є. Бучма, С. І. Гордєєв, С. М. Деркач та ін. Київ : Міністерство освіти і науки України, 2017. 11 с.

are presented as follows: the ability to exercise rights and responsibilities as a member of society, to recognize the values of a civil (free democratic) society and the need for its sustainable development, the primacy of the law, the rights and freedoms of individuals and citizens in Ukraine; the ability to preserve and enhance moral, cultural, and scientific values and achievements of society based on understanding the history and patterns of development in the subject area, its place in the general system of knowledge about nature and society, as well as in the development of society, technology, and technology; the ability to apply knowledge in practical situations; the ability to communicate in the state language both orally and in writing; the ability to communicate in a foreign language; the ability to use information and communication technologies; the ability to work in a team; appreciation and respect for diversity and multiculturalism [OP].

The general competencies (GC) in the educational program of Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I. P. Kotlyarevsky include the ability to possess critical thinking and self-criticism, which means adequately assessing one's abilities. The transition to the contractual form of theater existence alongside the repertoire theater requires the educational recipient to acquire the ability to adapt in new situations, motivate people, set and solve problems, moving towards a common goal.

In the educational program of Zaporizhzhia National University, there are certain general competencies that differ from programs of other institutions, namely the development of the ability for self-analysis and self-reflection using tools and methods for developing creative thinking, imagination, fantasy, intuition, memory, empathy in professional activities, and the ability to analyze the results of creative activities from the perspective of psychophysiological peculiarities of personality. In our opinion, these are some of the most important qualities that should be developed in a future actor. These are the elements of the actor's psychophysics that constitute the "instrument" of the actor, his body, and soul.

The particularly interesting general competency in the educational program of Zaporizhzhia National University (ZNU) is the ability to differentiate the beautiful (ugly), sublime (lowly) both in works of art and in the surrounding reality. Aesthetic education and the development of taste are essential not only in the artistic sphere but also in everyday life to create a sense of creativity on stage and in life. This competency helps to develop the ability to see beauty in everyday things, focus, and create an atmosphere of creativity and beauty around oneself.

The special competencies ensure the level of acting mastery and professionalism and play a crucial role in shaping a successful acting career. They are essential for professional performance.

One of the most important special competencies in acting mastery is the ability for emotional and physical transformation. An actor must be able to feel, understand, and convey various emotions and states of their character.

They should deeply empathize, experience joy, anger, sadness, and other emotions, and then skillfully embody them in their performance.

Another essential professional competency is the ability to use their voice and language effectively. An actor must have control over their voice, understand its capabilities, and apply it to portray different characters and moods. Additionally, they should have mastery over speech, pronouncing words correctly, controlling intonation and rhythm to effectively communicate with the audience.

A distinctive feature of the educational program at Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I. P. Kotlyarevsky is the requirement for students to be able to engage in conversations and dialogues in foreign languages related to their profession and to translate professional texts with the use of a dictionary. This language proficiency is crucial for future actors as it opens up new opportunities, such as participation in international projects, collaboration with foreign theater companies and directors, and the ability to perform roles in international productions, films, and series. It enables actors to effectively portray characters from different cultures and nationalities, expanding their artistic range and utilizing their creativity in various contexts.

Physical mastery is also a professionally essential special competency. An actor should have control over their body, move flexibly, and coordinate their actions with those of other actors on stage. They should use their body as a means of expression, conveying various gestures, postures, and movements that help create an authentic character portrayal.

The educational programs offered by the proposed universities require future actors not only to master external and internal techniques, skills, and abilities related to embodying a character on stage but also to possess critical thinking and analytical skills. They should also have a culture of thinking, the ability to generalize, analyze, and synthesize in their professional activities. An actor should be like Les Kurbas' "intelligent harlequin", meaning they must have a deep understanding of character interpretation, the ability to combine comedy and tragedy, irony and seriousness, and possess intellectual flexibility and a high level of intellectual intelligence to be able to evaluate the achievements of artistic culture in historical context, conduct reasoned critical analysis of theatrical works, be aware of the directions and concepts of contemporary artistic life, comprehend the trends of modern cultural and artistic processes, and engage in dialogues with a wide range of professional and scientific communities and the public regarding theatrical art (curriculum of Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I. P. Kotlyarevsky). Moreover, it is important to have a high level of emotional intelligence to adequately perceive criticism, find appropriate ways to respond to it, and critically evaluate one's own performance and its results (curricula of Kharkiv National University of Arts named after I.P. Kotlyarevsky and Kyiv National University of Theatre, Film, and TV named after I. K. Karpenko-Karyi).

The special competencies of the educational program at Zaporizhzhia National University (ZNU) include the «ability to play the piano or another musical instrument». This skill expands the future actor's sensitivity to expressiveness and versatility, allowing them to incorporate musical elements into their performances and create multi-layered characters. Moreover, in contemporary theater, which is syncretic and combines various art forms and disciplines such as dance, music, visual arts, poetry, and actor's craftsmanship, the main idea is to create a cohesive and expressive character where all artistic components interact and coexist in the performance.

The educational programs of the considered higher education institutions prepare actors for professional activities, making them suitable for employment as speech technique tutors, readers, leaders of studios for various art forms and artistic creativity, amateur associations, interest clubs, and directors of theatrical and amateur collectives. This emphasizes the necessity for future actors to possess a wide range of skills and abilities, enabling them to acquire the relevant competencies and be prepared for teaching professional activities in educational institutions, teaching theatrical disciplines of acting mastery and actor's training (curriculum of Kharkiv National University of Theatre, Film, and TV named after I. K. Karpenko-Kary, Zaporizhzhia National University).

The conducted content analysis of the quantitative and qualitative content of educational programs presented by higher education institutions (HEIs) allowed us to conclude that despite the variations in quantitative indicators, the interpretations of competency formulations differ, but they comprehensively encompass all necessary competencies for the effective preparation of future actors. At the same time, each educational program has its own distinctiveness and specificity, making it unique.

In the formation of all the identified professional competencies, we believe that a significant role should be given to a form of educational work known as “training”, and the “actor's training through play” should be an educational component in the professional training program for future actors.

It has been revealed that such an educational component as actor's mastery training is included in the professional training cycle at the Karpenko-Karyi National University of Theatre, Film, and Television and Volodymyr Hnatiuk Ternopil National Pedagogical University, this component is presented as an elective discipline.

In our opinion, the inclusion of actor's mastery training in the professional training cycle (or the professional training cycle of an educational program) as an educational component has solid professional grounds: the professional necessity of developing communication skills (professional communication skills). Actor's mastery training fosters understanding of deep emotions, studying and mastering the means of verbal and nonverbal communication, and the development of “emotional intelligence”. This equips actors with the ability to effectively communicate with different audiences and influence them as spectators.

Educational programs in acting mastery in Ukraine encompass an incredibly multifaceted world of creativity and self-expression.

Of interest is the experience of foreign actors and theater educators in utilizing play and acting games in their professional activities. Let's present a preview of practical achievements by some experts that could be beneficial for the training of future actors in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

American actor and instructor Kevin Levy created a book of theatrical games for developing acting mastery titled "275 Acting Games: Connected". He offers a comprehensive set of exercises, each aimed at training specific elements of actor's psychotechnics¹⁰.

Professor of acting mastery at California University, Bella Merlin, in her work "Acting: Theory and Practice", proposes the development of imagination through various games and improvisation¹¹. Games are inherently linked to the use of improvisational exercises, as they help cultivate spontaneity, freedom, and establish a connection between the body and mind, word and imagination. Since there is a direct connection between improvisation and play, it is manifested in the identical skills and abilities refined through improvisational exercises.

The playful foundation embedded in improvisation explains the popularity of using improvisational exercises to develop the skills of future actors, as advocated by foreign educators such as Viola Spolin, Clive Barker, Keith Johnstone, and Augusto Boal¹².

According to the views of Bella Merlin, a professor of acting mastery at California University and an actress and instructor, Viola Spolin stood at the origins of theatrical games as a method of actor training. While she was a student at Northwestern University in the USA, researching games, folk dances, and oral creativity, she realized the importance of theatrical games and began working on her own book.

Clive Barker did not consider himself a good actor, which became a stimulus for him to create exercises-games that would help him unleash his natural emotional energy and make movements more uninhibited. Through improv games, in Keith Johnstone's teachings, the focus was on developing the ability to act on stage. Augusto Boal, a performance director from Brazil and a nominee for the Nobel Prize in 2008, actively utilized games in actor training because play teaches us to act spontaneously, making our actions a "living" response to our mental processes; it develops skills such as ensemble interaction, communication, confidence, and physical contact.

The summarization of the foreign experts' practices in using acting games in actor training is presented in Table 2 in their theoretical works.

¹⁰ Lavy G. *Acting Games: Connected*. A comprehensive workbook of theatre games for developing acting skills. Denver, Colorado: A division of Pioneer Drama Service, 2010. Inc. 375.

¹¹ Мерлин Б. *Актерское мастерство. Теория и практика*. Харьков : Гуманитарный центр, 2017. 256 с.

¹² Мерлин Б. *Актерское мастерство. Теория и практика*. Харьков : Гуманитарный центр, 2017. С. 75–78.

Table 2

Practice of Using Games in Actor Training (20th–21st century)

Name	Years of life	Country	Books	Philosophy	Elements of Game Exercises
Viola Spolin	1906–1994	USA	“Improvisation for the Theatre”	Games are socially based, with a group of people agreeing to specific rules and engaging in interaction within those boundaries.	1) Spatial orientation; 2) Whole-body play; 3) Development of awareness; 4) Emotions; 5) Character.
Clive Barker	1931–2005	UK	“Theatre Games”	He discovered that he struggled with certain aspects of physical movement and found that using theatre games was a way to distract from the movement challenge.	Children’s games: leapfrog, ball games, exercises on contact and trust, etc.
Keith Johnstone	1933–	UK	“Impro”		1) Status – exploring how every movement changes the space you occupy; 2) Spontaneity – accepting what your partner offers in the improvisation, not blocking their proposals and keeping the scene going; 3) Narrative skills – exercises to develop imagination and storytelling; 4) Mask and trance – developing the concept of working with St. Devi masks through game exercises.
Augusto Boal	1931–2009	Brazil	“Games for Actors and Non-Actors”	Boal sees games as a “way to open the eyes” to social interaction between people. He perceives theatre as a form of knowledge and a means to change society. Boal created a series of games and exercises aimed at awakening people’s feelings. He believed that by awakening our feelings, we could rediscover our connection to the world and stimulate the ability to transform social situations.	1) Feel what we touch; 2) Hear what we hear; 3) See what we look at; 4) Memory of sensations; 5) Heightening certain sensory perceptions.

The study of global practices in using game-based training in the preparation of future actors and the implementation of the developed foreign

experience into the professional training of higher education institutions in Ukraine deserves scientific and scientific-methodological attention and is a promising direction for further research on this issue.

CONCLUSIONS

Game-based training is a crucial form of education in the professional preparation of future actors. In Ukrainian higher education institutions that train future actors, training in acting mastery, in various modifications such as game-based training, acting training, and actor's training, holds a prominent place in the educational programs.

Game-based training has a powerful didactic and psychological potential. It harmoniously combines feelings and volitional impulses, influences thoughts, imagination (images), and fosters creative self-awareness in students. As a result of game-based training, a harmonious personality is developed, with a professional attitude towards oneself as an "instrument" of theatrical activity. The ability to develop a dual existence on stage, facilitated by the specific "duality of consciousness", leads to "dual behavior". The more a student becomes aware of how their psychophysical apparatus works in the interaction of all its "elements" during professional training, the more confident they will feel in their work on roles and performances on stage.

The outcome of game-based training for future actors can be observed in the unity of three components: intellectual-volitional, activity-practical, and emotional-value. Game-based training allows the actor to surrender to a response that arises from an imaginary impulse. Properly captured initial reactions, freely evolving, lead to spontaneous artistic transformation, enabling the actor to naturally "be and live" on stage, using the scenic circumstances of the play (etude).

Exercises in actor's training focus on honing one or several psychophysical qualities of the actor, such as imagination, attention, memory, muscular and psychological freedom, and more.

In conclusion, the international experience in researching the theory and practice of game-based training in shaping acting mastery confirms its consistent relevance and timeliness.

ABSTRACT

The problem of ensuring the quality training of future professionals has always been a priority in the field of pedagogical knowledge. The scientific and methodological issue of using game-based training in the professional preparation of future actors is relevant and timely. The specificity of game-based training and a range of questions have been identified, such as the differences between children's and adult's play, the opportunities that game-based training offers to future actors, and the "elements" of actor's

psychophysics developed through game-based training and its impact on the professional development of students, among others.

The chapter presents the elaboration of the problem in the discourse of theater pedagogy, revealing the essence, functionality, and specificity of game-based actor's training. The phenomenon of "play" has attracted the attention of scholars from various scientific and cultural domains since ancient times and remains of interest in the present. In the theoretical discourse of theater pedagogy, terms such as "actores training", "game-based actor's training", and "training in actores mastery" are observed. In pedagogical theater practice, especially in the professional preparation of future actors, these concepts are used interchangeably.

The study of the specifics of game-based training has allowed us to propose a definition for the concept of "game-based actores training".

Game-based actor's training is an active pedagogical method (tool) aimed at enhancing the actor's psychophysical apparatus (instrument). It is characterized by improvisational activities and is directed towards developing immediate "childlike perception", creative intuition, freedom, and spontaneous reactions. The training enables the acquisition of the ability to simultaneously engage in two types of behavior – practical (real) and conditional (imaginary) – within the framework of clearly defined rules set by the teacher (director).

The potential possibilities of training (using play) as an educational form in the professional preparation of future actors encompass a practical didactic functionality in shaping students' professional readiness for creative activities, as presented in the chapter. The practice of using game-based training in the professional preparation of future actors is examined, and the substantive content of educational programs in "Theatrical Art" at the bachelor's level with the specialty of 026 "Stage Art" in four higher education institutions is analyzed. This analysis aims to understand the quantitative and qualitative content of educational programs in higher education, regarding general and professional competencies that future actors should acquire during their professional training, and the role of actor's training within the educational components of each university. The obtained information allows for a contemporary understanding of the requirements for students, considering the specificities of each educational institution.

Additionally, an overview of practical experiences from various international experts is presented, offering valuable insights for the training of future actors in Ukrainian higher education institutions.

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