

The Pedagogy of Clowning: Learning through Play, Failure, and Presence

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In contemporary performing arts education, the training often prioritizes technical excellence, accuracy, and success-oriented performance. This approach appears to create challenges for students, such as performance anxiety, fear of failure, loss of natural responses, and hesitation toward creative inquiry. In this context, clowning is not just a form of comedy; it is an alternative pedagogical framework and method of art training based on the concepts of play, failure, and presence. Clown training redefines failure as a key opportunity for learning and creation, rather than seeing it as a state to be avoided. At the same time, play is embraced as an active means of teaching and of training the students to be fully present in the moment. This creates opportunities for students to develop self-confidence, independent performance, teamwork, body-mind coordination, and creative thinking. Clowning is therefore considered a pedagogical model that can help foster a healthy and inclusive art-learning environment. This study aims to critically analyze the pedagogical potential of clowning in the context of art education. In particular, it examines how the concepts of play, failure, and presence operate in acting practice and how they influence students' learning experiences and performance. The research is based on a qualitative approach and Practice-as-Research methodology. The main research methods are clown training activities, participant observation, reflective journals, and interviews. By connecting the concept of Healthy Practices in Performing Arts Education with the experiential learning approach of clowning, this study proposes an alternative pedagogical framework for healthy, creative, and student-centered theatre learning. Furthermore, this research proposes a new perspective on art education that emphasizes the learning process over performance success, human experience over technical excellence, and acceptance over perfection.

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