

# Educational drama: A tool for promoting marketing learning?

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## Abstract

Educational drama, which is an experiential form of learning, can be distinguished from more conventional role play approaches to learning because the participants play themselves in an improvised dramatic setting. Prior qualitative studies have suggested that educational drama creates real enthusiasm among participants and that participants believe that it is a very effective learning tool. This study adopted a quantitative approach, to complement prior qualitative studies, by seeking to measure the benefits of learning through educational drama as perceived by participants on a marketing course. Additionally, the quantitative approach provided the opportunity to see whether any demographic differences in attitudes towards educational drama could be measured. In a study conducted with final year marketing students at an Australian university, it was found that educational drama is regarded as a highly effective form of learning by all demographic groups and students who have prior full-time work experience have particularly favourable attitudes towards this learning method.

*Keywords:* marketing education; educational drama; experiential learning; drama conventions

## Introduction

The literature on educational drama as a learning method is relatively slim, and studies of student perceptions of educational drama even more so. The prior research that exists in this field has adopted a qualitative approach to establish the nature of the benefits and the weaknesses of educational drama from the student perspective (Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Jackson, 2004, 2006). The study described in this article was designed to measure student attitudes to educational drama quantitatively in the context of a final year university marketing course, and so provide a complementary perspective to those prior studies.

There is substantial literature on the use of drama as a learning medium. Central beliefs of the international drama-in-education community are that drama is a vitally important art that can be used to teach virtually anything and teach across curricula (Heathcote, 1977; Bolton, 1984; O'Neill, 1995; Neelands, 1998). However, comparatively little research has been undertaken into the application of drama for teaching business students in higher education contexts. Therefore the real potential of drama as a pedagogical focus for business courses has not been fully determined.

The term educational drama is often regarded as being synonymous with creative drama. Creative drama has been defined as (a) "the play that is developed by a group, as opposed to the one that abides by a written script" (McCaslin, 1996, p. 8), and (b) "an improvisational, non-exhibitional, process-centred form of drama in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect upon human experiences" (David & Behm, 1978, p.10). According to British drama authority Dorothy Heathcote (1977, p. 43), educational drama is: "anything which involves persons in active role-taking situations in which attitudes, not characters, are the chief concerns".

In the next section we review the prior literature in this field, focusing in particular on the definition of educational drama, the rationale for educational drama, and the benefits claimed for this approach to learning. After briefly describing the quantitative methods of data collection that were used to explore the attitudes of students on an Australian university marketing course towards educational drama, we then analyse the results obtained, before drawing conclusions for educational practice and making suggestions for further research opportunities.

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## Educational drama

### Drama conventions

Drama conventions are techniques to facilitate the process-centred nature of educational drama. Drama conventions are defined as “indicators of the way in which time, space and presence can interact and be imaginatively shaped to create different kinds of meanings in theatre” (Neelands, 1998, p. 4). Various drama conventions have been classified into four main groups (Neelands, 1998):

1. Context building action - where the focus is either to set the scene or add information to the context of the drama as it unfolds. Examples of drama conventions in this group include sound tracking, defining space and still-image.
2. Narrative action - where the focus is on the story, what-happens-next and the attitudinal change and analytical critique dimensions of the drama. Examples of such drama conventions include meetings, a day in the life, and hot-seating.
3. Poetic action - where the focus is on creating the symbolic potential of the drama through highly selective use of language and gesture. Examples of these drama conventions include forum theatre, mimed activity, and prepared roles.
4. Reflective action - where the focus is on soliloquy or inner thinking in the drama to allow people to review the drama from within the dramatic context. Examples here include reflective narration, thought-tracking, and voices in the head.

According to Van Ments (1989), the educational drama conventions approach is quite different from conventional role-play for a number of reasons. The drama is process-centred rather than being exhibitional, meaning that students engage in educational drama as a means of learning rather than a way of demonstrating the mastery of certain skills. Students are actively engaged in activities such as researching, designing and reporting. The teacher is not a source of answers and does not tell the students what they will learn. All students are involved in improvisational work without scripts, and subsequent repeated enactments of the same drama may result in completely different dialogue and dramatic outcomes. Role context is given considerable emphasis, which is not always the case in traditional role-play. Finally, students are encouraged to find their own voice, immerse themselves in the roles and create their own meaning.

Contrasting role-play with drama conventions, J. Neelands (personal communication, December 20, 2004) stated that:

The real difference between 'role-play' and the conventions approach is the focus on context. In the conventions approach context is everything! The assumption being that what we say and do is shaped by the situations that we find ourselves in - so in order to understand human behaviour in any situation we must understand how the situation and therefore the utterances and behaviour have been historically, socially and culturally shaped.

Conventional role-play as advocated by Van Ments (1989) usually takes the form of student dyads, practising and rehearsing skills that may have been taught in class (such as closing the sale, negotiating a deal or handling dissatisfied customers). In role-playing, students try to imagine what someone else would say or do and in the process often focus on mannerisms such as appearance, voice and so on, whereas in role-taking they *live* the experience as themselves, in that role, within the drama.

According to Collier (1998), a major benefit of using drama conventions over conventional role play techniques is that drama conventions allow students to engage and disengage from dramatic roles. K. Collier (personal communication, November 24, 1999) cited examples where, without the engagement of drama conventions, role play had got out of hand. For example, participants had taken things personally or held grudges after the event, resulting in conflict and in some cases the demise of friendships. In the study reported in this paper, educational drama conventions were used to create a safe but challenging learning environment as a means of engaging and disengaging students from role, thus avoiding some of the reported problems associated with conventional role play (Collier, 1999).

### Rationale for educational drama

The field of educational drama is eclectic in that it has a number of theoretical underpinnings from the field of education, including constructivism (Bruner, 1966), transformative learning (Mezirow, 1991), humanism (Rogers, 1983), social learning (Cornford, 1999; Saunders, 1999), and experiential learning (Dewey, 1963; Kolb, 1984; Boud, 1996).

Regarding constructivism, educational drama conventions seek the encouragement of meaningful learning and construction of knowledge. Discovery approaches to learning through methods such as drama, as opposed to “reception learning” (Ausubel, 1978) through exposition, are advocated so that students discover what they need to know (Bruner, 1966, 1972). Such discovery by students themselves reinforces the meaning and relevance of ideas that are identified as fundamental for their learning about marketing. Transformative

learning, which involves individuals shifting from their existing frames of reference, developing more autonomy and engaging in critical reflection, promotes discovery learning through methods such as group projects, learning contracts, role plays, cases studies and simulations (Mezirow, 1991).

Compared to other more conventional educational approaches, experience-based learning, such as educational drama, is characterised by (a) involvement of the whole person - feelings, senses and the intellect, (b) recognition and use of a learner's life experiences in order to create personal meaning and relevance of new learning, and (c) continued reflection on prior experiences so as to build and transform deeper understanding (Dewey, 1963; Kolb, 1984; Andresen *et al.*, 2000).

### **Benefits expected from educational drama**

According to Neelands and Goode (2000), four types of goal are appropriate for educational drama conventions. These are aligned, metaphorically, to the points of the compass

- instrumental objectives (North): specific goals relating to skills conceptual development and knowledge
- expressive objectives (South): unspecific goals relating to the development of attitudes and values through involvement with dramatic action
- aesthetic learning (East): skills and knowledge related to performing
- personal and social learning (West): knowledge and skills relating to self and others

Some espoused advantages of educational drama include physical activity, which is associated with the embodiment of learning, otherwise known as learning through bodily movement (Boal, 1979; Wright, 1998; Beaver, 1999), the engagement of emotion (Brookfield, 1990; Boud, 1996), and the removal of barriers to learning by introducing an element of play into a classroom or learning situation (Leigh & Kinder, 1999; O'Toole & Dunn, 2002).

In one of the earliest studies conducted into marketing students' perceptions of learning through educational drama in a higher education context, Pearce (2004) reported on qualitative research used to evaluate the effectiveness of a drama-based approach to teaching a marketing subject at an Australian university. Interpretive research was conducted using multiple sources of evidence with 32 undergraduate students experiencing learning through various types of drama conventions. The perceived advantages of educational drama were identified as: retention, imagination, confidence, freedom, application and activity, independent thinking, role/performance, learning, enjoyment, and social relations. Perceived disadvantages of educational drama were that it requires commitment, may not be suitable for all subjects and all situations, and may engender doubt, fear and suspicion in students. On balance, students considered that the perceived advantages associated with educational drama outweighed any disadvantages. In the next section we continue the discussion of the benefits of educational drama, in the context of a description of a particular implementation of the technique in a marketing class.

### **A concrete example of educational drama in marketing**

Pearce and Jackson (2006) provided an extended example of the use of educational drama in a final year undergraduate marketing class in an Australian university, which we paraphrase here in order to furnish the reader with a concrete illustration of the technique. The drama scenario concerns an Australian rock band, "The Poor", which is aiming to break into the American market. As Pearce and Jackson (2006) point out, although this is a hypothetical example, it clearly represents a realistic business case, and one which is likely to engage the interest of the student group. Students were allocated to a wide range of roles: band members (three or four), radio station executives from Sydney, record producers, Sony music executives, rock journalists, a rock historian, an industry writer/commentator, American radio disc jockeys, American television executives (one from MTV), marketing consultants, and tour promoters active in the American market. The band members were provided with props such as wigs and costumes so that they would look in character. The lecturer, playing the role of meeting chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting and played some rock music, purportedly by The Poor, to enhance the element of realism and provide a multi-sensory atmosphere. The primary purpose of the meeting was to promote the band in America, but additionally there was an underlying choice for the Australian marketing organisation, Austrade, to make between two broad marketing strategies: either to use the band to launch a "Heavy Metal Down-Under" promotion in the USA, or to opt for a more generic genre-neutral Australian cultural promotion. This scenario resulted in a lively improvised drama lasting for about an hour, after which a 40 minute debriefing session focused on the marketing issues that had arisen. Subsequently, the students were given time to write individual reflective commentaries in their learning diaries.

The extended example described by Pearce and Jackson (2006) is an example of the "Meetings" convention in educational drama, meaning that a meeting is the central element of the drama. Other drama conventions that have successfully been applied in marketing and management classes include "Still Imaging" (in which participants use their bodies to create a still image representing a key issue or learning point in a business

situation and other class members have to guess their meaning), and “Come on Down” (a dramatic recreation of a television talk-show, focusing on a business issue, with some participants playing studio guests and others taking on specific roles in the studio audience). Neelands and Goode provide an extended list of drama conventions that may be useful in education (2000).

In their study, Pearce and Jackson (2006) found that the participating students reported high levels of motivation and a strong sense of realism. In addition, the students remarked upon the value of hearing different, and sometimes unexpected, perspectives from people playing the different roles. The students felt that the exercise had opened their minds to alternative perspectives and provided insights into the views of foreign (American) consumers. The use of props and costumes during dramatic activity was regarded by students to be important in building belief in the scenario being played out and in embracing the roles allocated to individual students. Props, music and costumes were also contributing factors in students enjoying the experience and transforming the classroom into a real-life setting with an atmosphere that was conducive to creative thinking. Learning through a drama mindset was regarded as being more organic or natural than learning via formal lecture-type situations. However, Pearce and Jackson suggested that it would be valuable to conduct a quantitative study to complement their purely qualitative approach, and speculated that such a study might find differences between demographic categories in their response to the educational drama experience. The study reported here was designed to pursue these research opportunities.

## Methodology

### Research design and context

Research reported in this paper into student perceptions of learning through a drama-based marketing course at a large Australian university uses a research instrument developed from a UK-based quantitative study by Brennan and Ahmad (2005) that explored higher education business students’ perceptions of the value of using case studies in marketing and strategic management courses. The UK study found marked attitudinal differences between age groups and ethnic groups concerning the perceived value of the case method.

The research instrument was suitably adapted for the different pedagogic method being investigated (educational drama rather than case studies) and for the different cultural context (e.g. in terms of university entrance qualifications). The reasons for adapting the particular research instrument for purposes of this study were as follows:

1. To the best of our knowledge, no prior quantitative studies of educational drama had been conducted, so no previously validated instrument was available.
2. The research instrument adapted for use in this study had been used for a closely parallel purpose - measuring marketing student attitudes towards an experiential learning method, namely case studies.
3. The research instrument had been used in an English-language speaking but multi-cultural context on a final year marketing course (similar to the context of this study) and found to be reliable.

The educational context on which this paper is based is a one-semester, final-year undergraduate, elective marketing module entitled “New Frontiers in Marketing”. Educational drama was the major pedagogical tool on this elective. The drama-based nature of the subject meant that students participated in experiential 3-hour drama workshops on a weekly basis. The main purpose of the subject, accommodating up to 35 students, was to familiarise them with contemporary issues in marketing in ways that might not be normally accommodated through conventional lecturing formats. In terms of educational design, the main motivation for using drama-based teaching in the subject was to provide final-year students with an alternative and memorable student-centred learning experience that would better equip them for vocational life after university.

	Specified learning outcomes
1	Be more aware of major contemporary marketing issues and the impact they are having in business
2	Have a greater appreciation of the role research and intelligence gathering play in marketing
3	Be better informed about a contemporary marketing issues topic
4	Have acquired skills as autonomous learners and reflective practitioners
5	Possess advanced communication competencies
6	Have researched and written an article aimed at a popular marketing journal
7	Be better equipped to think on their feet and debate issues
8	Be aware of the role, use and relevance of educational drama in learning about marketing

**Table 1:** Learning outcomes for “New Frontiers in Marketing”

The learning outcomes for this subject, itemised in Table 1, were designed to prepare students for employment. Learning outcomes 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 and 8 relate directly to the incorporation of educational drama

strategies into the subject.

### Methods of data gathering and analysis

A questionnaire was administered in class to students taking the ‘New Frontiers in Marketing’ unit. Educational drama is used throughout the unit. In all, 81 completed questionnaires were collected, which formed the basis for the analysis presented in this paper. The demographic characteristics of the student sample are shown in Table 2.

Category	Number	Percentage
Male	43	53.1
Female	38	46.9
Ethnicity self-described “Australian”	37	45.7
Ethnicity self-described “Asian”	18	22.2
Ethnicity self-described other/missing	26	32.1
Entry qualification HSC	60	74.1
Entry qualification TAFE	18	22.2
Entry qualification other/missing	3	3.7
Worked full-time: Yes	40	49.4
Worked full-time: No	40	49.4
Worked full-time other missing	1	1.2

Table 2: Demographic characteristics of the student sample

The dependent variables in the study were based on those investigated by Brennan and Ahmad (2005), suitably adapted to refer to the educational drama teaching method. The students were asked to rate 11 methods of teaching and learning (e.g. lectures, educational drama, case studies, assignment-based research) on a 5-point scale anchored by “I never learn anything when this learning method is used” (1) and “I always learn a lot when this learning method is used” (5). Student perceptions of educational drama were then investigated in greater depth using a series of nine questions focusing on different aspects of learning and the learning process. These nine questions were designed to address the four key aspects of the educational drama teaching method identified in the literature review, namely the effect on communications skills (two questions), the effect on learning (three questions), the effect on social skills (two questions), and the perception that educational drama gives deeper insights into the “real world” of work (two questions).

In addition to the quantitative questions on the questionnaire, respondents were offered the opportunity to provide further free-form qualitative remarks: 34 out of the 81 respondents chose to do so. The qualitative remarks were coded using the four key aspects mentioned above.

### Discussion of results

Table 3 provides an illustration of the qualitative responses given by the respondents in the space provided for free-form remarks on the questionnaire. The qualitative coding framework illustrated was not intended to be a straitjacket for the analysis. Rather, it was intended to act as a simple organising structure so that the qualitative remarks could easily be compared with our findings from the literature and from the quantitative data. Consequently there is overlap between the categories, which is entirely to be expected since the students usually provided a brief, holistic, and often exuberant reflection on their experiences in their written comments. The Learning category was the one to which the highest number of qualitative remarks was coded. Several of the comments in this category could easily be used, without editing, as a sales-pitch for this learning method - see comments L1 to L4 in Table 3. It is not surprising that the students made comments that were coded to the Communication and Social categories. This conforms to the common sense notion that getting students to engage in entertaining free-form dramatic improvisations will help them to communicate and to get on better together. However, the student remarks coded under the Real category are perhaps less expected - how can dramatic improvisation bring reality into the class-room? Nevertheless, this is the perception of the students (see comments R1 to R3). This supports earlier qualitative work (Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Jackson, 2004, 2006), and is consistent with our quantitative findings.

Table 4 shows the mean and standard deviation of student responses concerning 11 different teaching and learning methods (the table has been arranged in order from the highest scoring method to the lowest scoring method). These results corroborate the earlier qualitative findings reported by Pearce (2004), demonstrating that students who are exposed to educational drama generally perceive it to be an effective learning method. The positive attitude of the students towards this learning method can also be illustrated using some of the qualitative remarks made on the questionnaire and coded under Learning in Table 3. This finding is illustrated graphically in Figure 1, where we compare the responses given about educational drama with

those for lectures. The responses for educational drama are heavily skewed towards the anchor “I always learn a lot when this learning method is used”. In contrast, for lectures the responses are approximately normally distributed around the scale mid-point.

Code	Illustrative remarks
Communication	C1 “One of the main attributes which I have gained from this unit is confidence not only in my presentation skill but communication skill.” C2 “It has increased my confidence in my drama ability and not be embarrassed to speak in front of people.” C3 “I really enjoyed class. I had 100% attendance which is a reflection of the way I feel towards this class. It has built my confidence and helped me to be a better presenter.”
Learning	L1 “Learning through drama brings knowledge to life.” L2 “It is much more engaging and interesting than ‘normal’ teaching methods. I think it’s a unit where you don’t realise how much you learn immediately.” L3 “I liked the class and I did not realise how much I had learned until I completed my diary.” L4 “Reflecting on drama also has given me a deeper and meaningful learning experience as the relationship with theoretical models has time to evolve in the mind and draw innovative analysis on marketing material.”
Social	S1 “I was fortunate to be part of a great class, the dynamics of this class further helped my learning and made the experience that much better.” S2 “Not only has educational drama allowed me to improve my people skills, my confidence and knowledge, it’s been fun, enjoyable and I would recommend everyone to do it.”
Real	R1 “It is very useful in demonstrating practical marketing concepts in the real world.” R2 “Simulation of real life situations; therefore good experience to be applied in the workplace and the real world of marketing.” R3 “Educational drama brought a practical element to theories and models previously taught as well as current marketing issues. This greatly aids in the understanding and application of this theory.”

Table 3: Illustration of the coding framework applied to the qualitative remarks

Teaching/learning method	Mean	Standard Deviation
Educational drama	4.0	1.06
Assignment-based research	3.8	0.98
Discussions with other students	3.7	1.03
Self-guided research	3.7	1.07
Group analysis of a case study	3.5	0.96
Question and answer sessions in seminars	3.3	0.87
Private reading (e.g. textbooks, articles)	3.3	1.03
Individual analysis of a case study	3.2	0.95
Watching a video	3.1	1.02
Lectures	2.9	1.02
Computer-based learning (e.g. e-learning@UWS)	2.7	1.02

Table 4: Student rating of 11 learning methods

Note: Variables were measured using a 5-point scale: 1 = never learn anything, 5 = always learn a lot

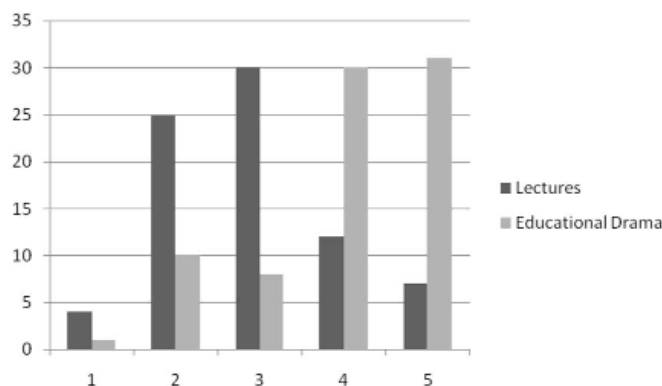


Figure 1: Respondents' views of how much they learn when educational drama or lectures is used as a learning method

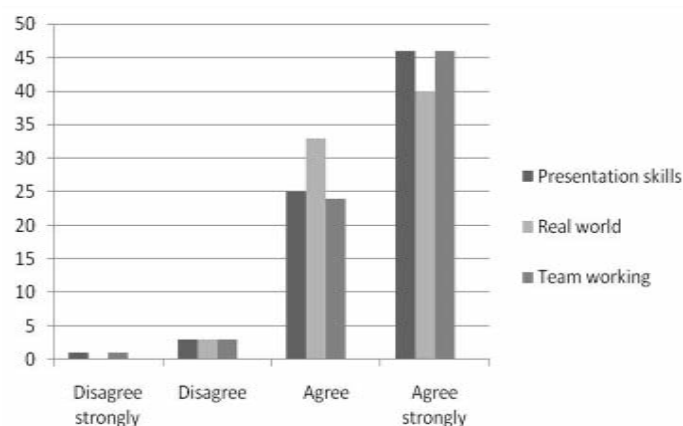
Note: Scaled response: 1 = never learn anything, 5 = always learn a lot

Table 5 presents the mean and standard deviation for each of the nine dependent variables in the study, that is, the attitude scores of the respondents towards different aspects of educational drama. These nine dependent variables are arranged into the four key aspects identified in the literature - communications skills, learning, social skills and 'real world'. It can readily be appreciated from Table 4 that, with the exception of writing skills, all of the mean values are above the scale midpoint (2.5) and significantly different from 2.5 at better than the 1% level. Respondents perceive that educational drama is of no particular benefit in developing writing skills, but that it is of considerable benefit in developing presentation skills, promoting learning, developing social skills, and bringing the real world into the classroom. It is noteworthy that three of the four highest mean scores are recorded for presentation skills, team work skills, and the confidence to express opinions, since these reflect highly desirable qualities sought in business graduates by employers (Walker *et al.*, 1998; Tanyel *et al.*, 1999). As in previous work reported by Pearce (2004), we found that students believe that educational drama illustrates how marketing works in the real world. This message was reinforced in qualitative remarks made by respondents on the questionnaire (see Table 3). The message conveyed in Table 5 is illustrated graphically in Figure 2 which represents the student scaled responses for three of the questions that we asked concerning the influence of the educational drama work on their presentation skills, their understanding of business decisions in the real world, and their team working skills. In all cases the modal response is to agree strongly that educational drama was of benefit in that learning dimension.

Variable	Mean	Standard deviation
<i>Communication skills</i>		
"Doing educational drama has helped me develop my presentational skills" (Presentation)	3.6	0.643
"Doing educational drama has helped me develop my skill in writing" (Writing)	2.6	0.819
<i>Learning</i>		
"Educational drama helps me understand theoretical concepts" (Theory)	3.3	0.569
"Educational drama is helpful in understanding complex problems" (Understanding)	3.1	0.640
"I learn a lot when educational drama is used" (Learning method)	3.2	0.844
<i>Social skills</i>		
"Doing educational drama gives me the confidence to express opinions" (Confidence)	3.3	0.740
"Doing educational drama has helped me develop my team-working skills" (Team work)	3.6	0.644
<i>Real world</i>		
"Educational drama illustrates how business/marketing works in the real world" (Real)	3.5	0.577
"Educational drama helps me understand how business decisions are made" (Decisions)	3.2	0.612

**Table 5:** Student perceptions of learning through educational drama

Note: Variables measured using a 4-point scale: 1 = strongly disagree, 4 = strongly agree, midpoint = 2.5



**Figure 2:** Respondents' perceptions of the nature of what they learn when educational drama is the learning method

Note: Statements used were "Doing educational drama has helped me develop my presentational skills", "Educational drama illustrates how business/marketing decisions are made in the real world", "Doing educational drama has helped me develop my team-working skills".

The preceding analyses demonstrated that the respondents believed educational drama to be a highly effective learning method and showed which aspects of learning are promoted by educational drama. However, in a prior study of the case study method using a similar research instrument, Brennan and Ahmad (2005) found that there was some variation between demographic groups in their attitudes towards case studies. Notably, attitudes towards case studies varied on the basis of the type of entry qualifications, age, and ethnic background of the respondents. In addition, Pearce and Jackson (2006) speculated that there

might be variation between demographic groups in their response to educational drama. The question arises, therefore, of whether there are demographic differences in attitudes towards educational drama. This question is addressed in Table 6.

	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	UAI score	Entry qualification	Worked full-time?
	t-value	Correlation coefficient	t-value	Correlation coefficient	t-value	t-value
<i>Communication skills</i>						
Presentation	0.64	0.22	0.56	0.12	1.20	2.03**
Writing	1.15	0.10	0.76	0.14	1.75*	2.40**
<i>Learning</i>						
Theory	0.70	0.04	1.93*	0.11	0.53	1.90*
Understanding	0.92	0.08	0.02	0.18	1.43	2.66***
Learning method	0.64	0.02	0.36	0.10	1.54	1.94*
<i>Social relations</i>						
Confidence	1.36	0.14	0.46	0.06	0.83	0.67
Team work	2.13**	0.09	1.58	0.08	0.06	0.82
<i>Real world</i>						
Real	0.79	0.12	0.53	0.12	0.57	1.51
Decisions	0.16	0.07	0.91	0.32**	1.58	2.20**

**Table 6:** Significance tests for inter-group variations in attitudes towards educational drama

Note 1: For each cell a significance test has been conducted on the null hypothesis that there is no difference between the mean score on that independent variable for different dependent-variable categories (male/female, Australian/Asian, and so on). For dichotomous dependent variables the relevant test is a t-test, while for metric dependent variables it is a test of significance of the correlation coefficient.

Note 2: The figure shown in a table cell is the relevant test statistic - the t-value or the correlation coefficient. Where the null hypothesis has been rejected the number of asterisks indicates the significance level (\* = 10%; \*\* = 5%; \*\*\* = 1%).

Note 3: UAI is the Universities Admission Index, which indicates the school achievement percentile of an individual.

The only independent variable that appears systematically to affect respondent attitudes towards educational drama is whether or not the respondent has prior full-time work experience. For six out of the nine dependent variables, there is a significant difference between the responses of those with full-time work experience compared to those without such experience. In all of these cases those with full-time work experience express more positive attitudes towards educational drama than those without.

There is no evidence that the other independent variables measured in this study - gender, age, ethnicity, UAI score or type of entry qualification - systematically affect student attitudes towards educational drama. However, there is scope for further research here, which we will touch upon in the conclusion.

## Conclusion and suggestions for further research

In this study we have corroborated and extended prior research into student perceptions of educational drama as a learning technique. Prior qualitative studies had indicated that students exposed to this learning method found it both engaging and an excellent method of acquiring knowledge and skills. Surprisingly, students had also remarked that they found educational drama to be a highly realistic learning method (Pearce, 2004; Pearce & Jackson, 2004, 2006). In this study, educational drama was clearly the highest scoring learning method out of 11 methods mentioned in terms of student perceptions of how much they learn when each method is used. Students believed that the educational drama method had been particularly helpful in terms of developing their presentational skills and their team-working skills. As in prior studies, the responses clearly show that students perceive this learning method to be particularly helpful in illustrating real world business issues.

There are few consistent differences in attitudes towards educational drama between the demographic groups that we have examined. However, there is certainly scope for further investigation here. Although we found no evidence for systematic variation between men and women, the attitudes towards educational drama expressed by women were more favourable than those of men on every dependent variable - even though this difference was only statistically significant for one variable (team-working). Further investigation of possible gender differences is desirable.

There is strong evidence that students with prior full-time work experience have more favourable attitudes towards educational drama than those with none. Further qualitative research would be valuable to try to

establish why this is the case. Intuitively, it seems possible that those who have been exposed to full-time work appreciate the opportunity to explore their understanding of business problems and business decisions in a realistic but non-threatening environment, while those who have not worked full-time may be more inclined to see educational drama as just play-acting. However, this is a tentative suggestion that requires further investigation.

Overall, this study has contributed to the small but growing literature that suggests that educational drama is a potentially valuable tool in marketing education, particularly where the educational goals pertain to presentation skills, team-working skills, and confidence-building. So far this educational method has been the province of a dedicated band of enthusiasts, and this in itself may tend to bias positively the results of studies such as this. In addition, students still encounter educational drama only rarely and there may, therefore, be a novelty effect. Nevertheless, given the encouraging evidence available so far, marketing educators should seriously consider the use of educational drama as a component of their practice. As an increasing number of educators adopt this method, so both the enthusiast effect and the novelty effect will wane, and further studies are desirable to test the value of educational drama as it becomes an established technique in business schools.

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