LEARNER-CENTERED LEARNING

CIRCUS EDUCATION THROUGH LCL METHODOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION



Looking at Learner-Centered-Learning (LCL) methods, we find an odd situation. In formal education (e.g. schools), learner-centered pedagogies are widely advocated and recognised in theory, and in academic debate, but are rarely implemented in practice. In non-formal education, and particularly in circus pedagogy, learner-centered approaches are almost universally used and applied, but with very little theoretical understanding or academic debate. Circus trainers apparently employ learner-centered strategies instinctively and almost un- consciously.

Our handbook begins with this paradox. We will be analysing the current use of learner-centered teaching methods and teaching culture in the circus field, while gathering, discovering and empowering the pedagogy of circus schools and teachers by encouraging greater awareness of Learner-Centered-Learning, in theory and practice, in non-formal activities and projects, with an eye on circus lessons.

WHAT IS THIS HANDBOOK?

This handbook is a comprehensive guide to teaching circus in a learner-centered way. It brings together some of the best ideas, approaches, activities, tips and tricks from circus tutors across 11 different European countries, underpinned by academic theory and research, to create a guide to teaching learner-centered circus effectively and intentionally. This handbook is the culmination of the LCL project: a three year initiative by the European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO).

WHO IS IT FOR?

This handbook is intended to be a guide to learner-centered-learning theory and practice, for circus tutors. However we hope it will also be an interesting and useful document for anyone working in formal or non-formal education, as well as youth and social workers, facilitators and artistic trainers.

We are aware that circus tutors teach in a wide variety of educational contexts, with different teaching practices, methodologies, tools and activities. Youth circus is taught in large circus training centres, social circus environments, after-school clubs, as part of the school curriculum, and many places in-between. This handbook has therefore been designed to be adaptable for a wide variety of contexts and needs.

WHO ARE WE (EYCO)?

Youth circus, in all of its various forms, has grown exponentially in the last twenty years, and there are now hundreds of youth circuses across Europe. In many European countries, youth circuses are represented by a national youth circus network, and these networks in turn form the European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO). EYCO currently represents 13 different youth circus networks, from countries across Europe.

This handbook was developed as part of an EYCO project on Learner-Centered-Learning in circus education, which was developed across three years and 11 countries, supported by Erasmus+ funding from the European Commission.

HOW WAS THIS HANDBOOK DEVELOPED?

To develop this handbook, EYCO appointed a core pedagogical team to organise exchanges, gather resources, research pedagogical theory, and put everything together into this document.

The exchanges brought together circus tutors from youth circuses across Europe, to share their experience, activities, resources and ideas. The pedagogical group then conducted their own research into the history and theory of learner-centered-learning, and how it could be applied to circus, as well as consulting with academic experts in the field. All of this information and experience was then brought together to create a comprehensive guide on learner-centered circus teaching in theory and practice.
The handbook was written by Tommaso Negri, pedagogical team coordinator, with the contribution of Andrea Martinez for the Toolkit part.

A full description of the LCL project is included in **Chapter 1.3**.

THE FORMAT OF THIS HANDBOOK

There are a number of different ways this document can be read and used, depending on your needs and learning style:

You can jump to a different chapter through the highlighted links.

You can follow the coloured boxes to find examples from different circus disciplines:

Aerial
Juggling
Balance
Acrobatics



If you learn best through movement, follow the yellow boxes to find 'brain-train games' and practical activities.

To make sure that this chapter makes sense to you, we have prepared an 'LCL Check-List'. This is a self-evaluation, summarising the whole chapter. A circus teacher can complete this before or after a circus lesson, in order to ensure that they have considered all the key elements needed to carry out a Learner-Centered circus lesson. Check it out!

At the end of the handbook, you can find a 'Toolkit', with details of all of the exercises and ac- tivities that were gathered as part of the exchanges.

We hope you find this handbook interesting and above all useful, as a tool to enhance your teaching practice.



PART 1
CONTEXT

Chapter 1.1
Learner-centered education theoretical background

If you want to skip the theoretical background
click here to go directly to Part 2.

What Are the Origins of Learner-Centered-Learning? The term 'Learner-Centered-Learning'[1] is used to describe a range of different learning theories, teaching methods, teaching cultures, didactic approaches, philosophies and methodologies, that have been developed by educators, philosophers, psychologists and educational reformers throughout the course of the 20th century.

[1] ...or learner-centered-pedagogy, learner-centered-education, learner-centered-teaching etc.

This chapter is a crash course in some of the key thinkers who have shaped learner-centered educational theory, and their contributions. While a range of different philosophies are summarised here, there are numerous similarities between them. A Learner-Centered educational approach will always focus on shifting the responsibility for learning onto the learner, rather than the teacher, and will also fulfil one or more of the following criteria:

> "make educational provision more responsive and accessible to learners;
> align it with the nature of learning processes;
> link it with the interests, capacities and needs of individual learners;
> and associate it with the learning outcomes defined in the curricula"
> (Cedefop 2015).

JOHN DEWEY (1859-1952)

John Dewey planted the first seeds of learner-centered educational theory, advocating an educational structure that delivered knowledge while taking into account the interests and experiences of the student. He wrote:

> "we must take our stand with the child and our departure from him. It is he and not the subject-matter which determines both quality and quantity of learning"
> (Dewey, 1902, pp. 13–14)

For more information, see Chapter 2.2.1.

MARIA MONTESSORI (1870-1952)

Montessori philosophy, which still influences education today, is underpinned by the idea that any education must be student-centered. Maria Montessori famously advised teachers and educators to "follow the child" - that is, to allow the child to determine the path of their education, with support, by allowing them to pursue their curiosity and passions. By doing this, we create opportunities for the child to develop an internal motivation to learn, as each new discovery is its own reward.

LEV VYGOTSKY (1896-1934)

Lev Vygotsky was a Soviet psychologist who, in the 1930s, developed the concept of the **Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)**. This model suggests that knowledge can be split into three zones:

1. What the learner can do unaided
2. What the learner can do with guidance (the ZPD)
3. What the learner cannot do

The second zone is known as the Zone of Proximal Development, and in this zone, Vygotsky proposed, children can learn and perform skills that go beyond their own developmental level, so long as they have guidance from a teacher or more advanced peer (also known as a 'scaffolder').

For more information on the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), see Chapter 2.4.1.

JEAN PIAGET (1896-1980)

Piaget's **Theory of Cognitive Development** proposes that:

- Children learn best through doing and actively exploring
- Problem-solving skills cannot be taught, they must be discovered
- The teacher's role is to facilitate learning, rather than to direct instruction
- Children should not be taught certain concepts until they have reached the appropriate stage of cognitive development
- **Assimilation** and **Accommodation** require the learner to be active, rather than passive

Assimilation occurs when we modify or change new information to fit into our schemas (what we already know). It keeps the new information or experience and adds to what already exists in our minds.

Accommodation is when we restructure of modify what we already know so that new information can fit in better.

Teachers should therefore encourage the following in the classroom:

- Focus on the learning process, rather than an end product
- Use participative methods that focus on students discovering or reconstructing the teaching content
- Use collaborative activities (so that children can learn from each other)
- Evaluate the level of the child's development, so that suitable tasks can be set

Piaget's ideas have been profoundly influential and are still relevant today.

CARL ROGERS (1902-1987)

Perhaps the most influential advocate for learner-centered education, Carl Rogers was a humanistic psychologist who advocated 'student-centered learning'. Student-centered learning focuses on the goals, interests, abilities and learning styles of the learner, while also considering their backgrounds, needs and capabilities. Students are actively engaged in and responsible for their learning, while educators became Facilitators of learning.

The following is a list of Roger's principles:

1. The facilitative teacher shares with the participants (students, and possibly parents or community members) the responsibility for the learning process
2. The facilitator provides learning resources: from their own experience, as well as from books, other resources, or from the experiences of the community
3. The student develops their own program of learning, alone or in cooperation with others
4. A facilitative learning climate is provided: a caring and authentic environment, where participants are listened to and respected
5. The facilitator focuses on encouraging a continuous process of learning
6. Self-discipline is necessary to reach the student's goals

In this growth-promoting climate, the learning tends to be deeper, proceeds more rapidly, and permeates more deeply into the life and behaviour of the student, than learning acquired in more traditional classroom environments.

PAULO FREIRE (1921-1997)

Paulo Freire did not speak directly about learner-centered education, however his ideas had a profound influence on the pedagogical development of LCL.

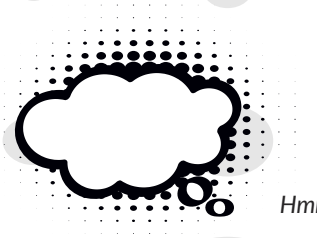
Freire described traditional teaching as the 'banking' concept of education; students are the depositaries, and the teacher is the depositor of knowledge. In contrast, Freire advocated an alternative, humanising pedagogy, in which teachers establish a permanent partnership with students, moving away from the division between teacher and student. In this new educational approach, teachers and students are jointly responsible for co-creating the learning journey.

DAVID KOLB (1939-PRESENT DAY)

Last but not least, David Kolb's model of the '**Experiential Learning Cycle**' transformed the concept of the learning process, by putting the student's individual experience at the centre of the process, and suggesting that each student will favour a different starting point when learning, depending on their own learning channel.

For further information on the 'Experiential Learning Cycle', see Chapter 2.4.3.

The work of these theorists forms the academic foundation of learner-centered-learning. For a practical exploration of how to use these ideas when teaching circus, read on!



Hmm... I find it interesting that…

(Here you can write down the thoughts, notes, reflections and ideas that this chapter has brought to mind.)

Chapter 1.2
From constructivism to active learning

Learner-centered-learning evolved during a radical shift in sociological and psychological thought, due to the rising popularity of constructivism.

Constructivism is a theory, based on observation and scientific study, about how people learn. It suggests that people construct their own understanding and knowledge of the world, through experiencing things and reflecting on those experiences. This vision of knowledge does not necessarily reject the existence of a 'real world', but proposes that all we can know about reality is our own interpretation of our experiences of the world.

According to this theory, the learning process is more effective when the content is relevant and meaningful for the learner, and when the learner is **actively** engaged in the creation of their own knowledge and understanding. To ensure this happens, it is important that learning proceeds in an environment that promotes interpersonal relationships and interactions, and that the learner feels appreciated, recognised, respected and valued.
Furthermore, there must be careful consideration of the fact that students have different perspectives or reference patterns due to their history: these differences must be given weight and respected in order to engage students and let them take the **responsibility** for their own learning.

Hence, from a constructivist perspective, learning is approached as an active and organic process, and so the primary responsibility of the teacher is to create and maintain a **collaborative problem-solving environment**, in which students are allowed to construct their own knowledge, and the teacher acts as a facilitator and guide.

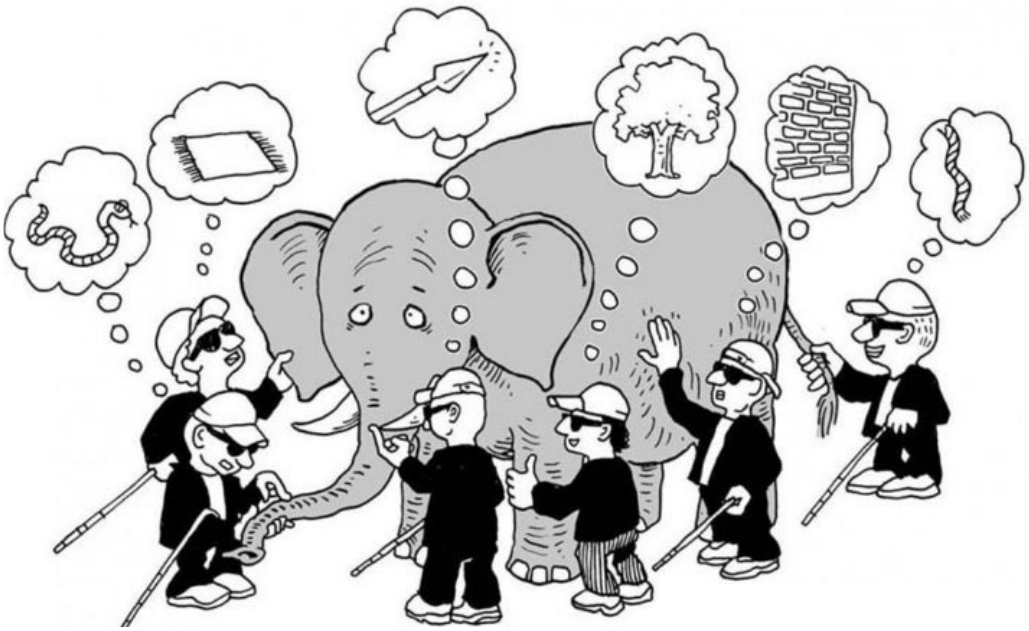


Illustration
HansMøller, Mollers.dk

An ancient Indian parable tells the story of a group of blind men who come across an elephant. They each touch a different part of the elephant, and each come to a different conclusion about what the elephant is.

How does this story fit with a constructivist worldview? What do you think is missing to get wiser knowledge?

Chapter 1.3
The "LCL project"

WHAT IS EYCO?

The European Youth Circus Organisation, which is based in Paris (France), is made up of representatives from national youth circus umbrella organisations from 13 different countries across Europe. EYCO supports the national youth circus organisations it represents, as well as developing resources, training and research for youth circus practitioners across the whole of Europe.

WHAT IS THE LCL PROJECT?

This handbook was developed as part of an EYCO project on Learner-Centered-Learning in circus education, which was developed across three years and 11 different countries, supported by Erasmus+ funding from the European Commission.

The LCL Project brought together circus trainers and pedagogical experts from across Europe to exchange experience, activities, resources and ideas. All of this information was then brought together to create a comprehensive handbook on learner-centered circus teaching in theory and practice.

WHAT WAS THE PROCESS?

This handbook was developed in three phases:

PHASE ONE

The project partners - representing youth circus organisations from 11 different countries - discussed and explored how, and to what extent, learner-centered education is already used in youth circus teaching, and how it can be developed further.

PHASE TWO

The second phase involved intensive fieldwork: two exchanges were held, and circus teachers and pedagogical experts from across Europe were brought together to exchange existing ideas, activities and good practice, as well as to develop new ideas about how to apply learner-centered methodology and culture in circus lessons.

PHASE THREE

Finally, all of the information, experiences, resources, research and ideas were consolidated into this document, in order to disseminate the outcomes of the project.

Timeline



TRANSNATIONAL MEETINGS

Three preparatory meetings in Köln, Potsdam and Bristol were used to plan the exchanges and set up the structure, methodology, aims and logistics of the LCL project.

These meetings involved:

- Exploring the potential of LCL in the circus field, including discussions on how learner-centered strategies are already used in circus training, and how they can be expanded and improved
- Creating a strategy for successfully developing the project
- Creating a pedagogical group to plan and facilitate the exchanges, and to share and develop expertise on the subject
- Consulting with invited pedagogical experts: Mieke Gielen (Belgium) and Peter Duncan (UK)

THE EXCHANGES

The exchanges developed the raw resources that were then used to create this handbook.

Circus teachers, pedagogical experts, artists and experts came from circus schools across Europe to share existing ideas, resources, tools, activities and good practices on learner-centered education in circus. Additionally, an open environment was created to encourage the organic creation of new practical and theoretical material. The exchanges were structured with a learner-centered, participative ethos.

The main goals of the exchanges were:

- To discover ways that a learner-centered approach can be applied practically in circus classes (e.g. by gathering learner-centered activities)
- To research how learner-centered educational tools can be used to specifically develop and hone circus techniques and to improve performance
- To research how learner-centered-learning can be incorporated into circus teaching pedagogy across Europe

September 2019
Gschwend
FIRST EXCHANGE

GSCHWEND, GERMANY

THE FIRST EXCHANGE

Host
CIRCARTIVE HAUS PIMPARELLO (circus school)

Dates
13th to 17th september 2019

Participants
13, from 10 different European countries

Facilitators
TOMMASO NEGRI and ANDREA MARTINEZ

Additional Support

- STEVEN DESANGHERE, as the 'Extractor'
- TOBIAS and JÜRGEN LIPPEK gave a workshop on psychotherapy approaches and movement arts

March 2020
Toulouse
SECOND EXCHANGE

TOULOUSE, FRANCE

THE SECOND EXCHANGE

Host
GRAINERIE (circus centre),
and LIDO (professional circus school)

Dates
9th to 13th March 2020

Participants
17, from 12 different European countries

Facilitators
TOMMASO NEGRI and ANDREA MARTINEZ



PART 2
THE FIVE LCL POINTS

There are many definitions of what Learner-Centered Learning is, and what its principal characteristics are in an educational context. It wasn't easy to choose which framework to begin with, but in the end we chose a simple one that proposes 5 areas, or main topics. This allowed us, not only to describe and understand what a Learner-Centered Education means, but also to analyse and research how to develop a Learner-Centered approach in a circus class, through the use of these 5 'lenses'.

We will return to what these 5 'lenses' are a little later. First, we have another frame to look at, that illustrates the differences between Teacher-Centered and Learner-Centered Learning. Let's see if this will be useful to you too:

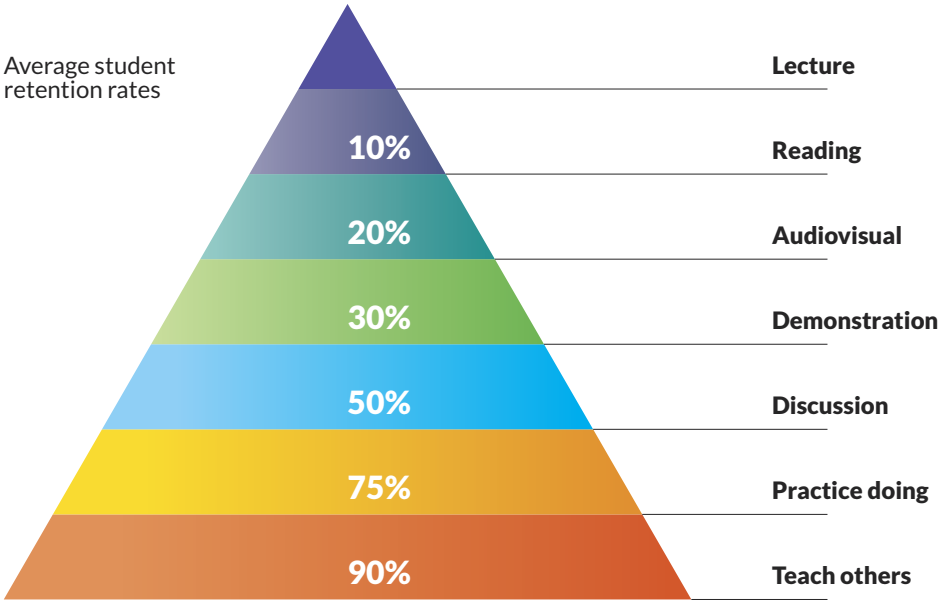
ELEMENTS	TEACHER-CENTERED	LEARNER-CENTERED
Knowledge	Transmitted from instructions	Constructed by students
Student Participation	Passive	Active
Role of the teacher	Leader / authority	Facilitator / Partner in Learning
Role of assessment	Grading	Ongoing feedback, snapshot tests
Emphasis	Learning correct answers	Developing deeper understanding
Assessment Method	One-dimensional testing	Multidimensional testing
Academic Culture	Competitive, individualistic	Collaborative, supportive

Through this frame, we can see that the focus of a Learner-Centered education is about learning to learn and to better our understanding, instead of focusing on transmitting set information and then assessing that students know the 'right' answer. Students are involved, actively or experientially, in the creation of knowledge: through discussions, choices, thinking tasks, and through evaluation, which becomes an ongoing part of the learning process.

From the '60s, beginning with research by the NTL Institute[2], many pedagogues and researchers began to believe that an active approach to learning could be more effective than a passive one. The 'Learning Pyramid'[3], is an example of this idea: it shows how much information we remember after a period of two weeks, depending on if we learned the information in an 'active' or 'passive' way.

You'll get the idea behind this much-debated concept by looking at the picture! The percentages are an estimation and are not scientific, but the main idea it conveys is how retention rates change depending on the way that information is communicated.

Learning pyramid



Source: National Training Laboratories, Bethel, Maine

Many centuries ago, Confucius expressed the same idea:

"I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do and I understand".

With this change of perspective, the role of the teacher also has to change, from a position of leadership and authority, to the role of facilitating the learning process.

This is not an easy thing to do, and here Carl Rogers comes to help us, when he writes about a necessary precondition for passing from conventional education to a person-centered approach. This precondition is:

"a leader or a person who is perceived as an authority figure in the situation is sufficiently secure within herself and in her relationship to others that she experiences an essential trust in the capacity of others to think for themselves, to learn for themselves" (Carl Rogers, 1969).

[2] National Training Laboratories Institute for Applied Behavioral Science, known as the NTL Institute: an American non-profit behavioural psychology centre, founded in 1947.

[3] The earliest "Learning Pyramid" representation is believed to originate in a 1954 book called Audio-Visual Methods in Teaching in the NTL Institute, in the early '60s, on its main campus in Bethel, Maine.

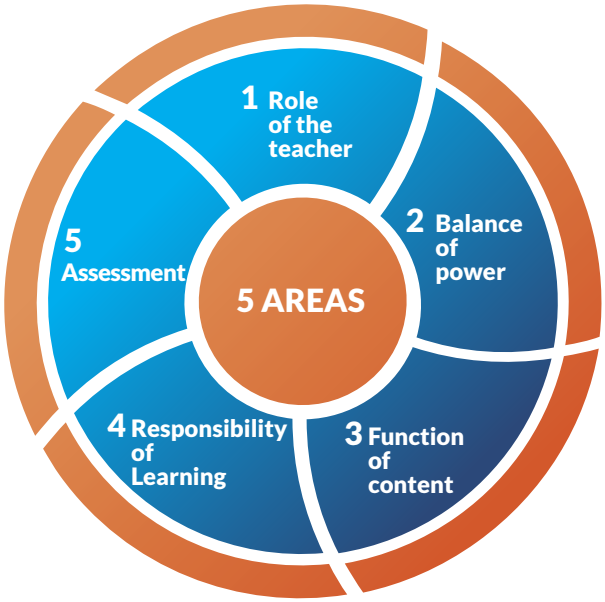
Non-Formal Education:
"Nonformal education is any educational action that takes place outside of the formal education system. Non-formal education is an integral part of a lifelong learning concept that ensures that young people and adults acquire and maintain the skills, abilities and dispositions needed to adapt to a continuously changing environment. It can be acquired on the personal initiative of each individual through different learning activities taking place outside the formal educational system. An important part of non-formal education is carried out by non-governmental organisations involved in community and youth work."
Glossary of Youth by Council of Europe

These ideas were initially applied to formal education (e.g. in schools), and in this context the cultural shift that is necessary to make the step towards active learning is huge. But what if we try to apply these ideas to a 'Non-Formal Education' point of view? Do they still make a big impact, or are they characteristics that Non-Formal Education and circus education already utilise?

While researching, we often asked ourselves this question, noting that a lot of the features of active learning are already a part of our way of teaching. However, we were also aware that most of the time, we are putting these methods into practice without a clear awareness of what we are doing, more instinctively than rationally, and we are therefore not optimising its impact. So, we realised that what we needed to create was a new frame, to show the elements that characterise a learner-centered circus education.

To do this, we return to the 5 topics or 'lenses' discussed at the beginning of this chapter. We propose these 'lenses' to analyse and discover how an LCL approach can be used and developed in the specific context of our circus lessons:

1. **The Role of the Teacher**
2. **The Balance of Power**
3. **The Function of Content**
4. **The Responsibility of Learning**
5. **Assessment**



These 5 points are always connected and interdependent, and you're invited to make connections between them.

In the following chapters we'll see through these 5 lenses how LCL can be used to push our students in their motivation, their satisfaction and their technical circus progression.

Chapter 2.1
The Role of the teacher

> "Making children look for what they can reach with their own strength."
> J. H. Pestalozzi

How can we imagine the role of the teacher in a learner-centered circus class?

As is the case in a school classroom, the teacher is invited to become a guide and a facilitator. This means that the main role of the teacher is to create an environment where the students feel comfortable expressing themselves and are able to grow and learn with passion and co-operation, in their own time.

The teacher, or the trainer, promotes action and interaction within the group, with the intention of activating participants, physically and mentally. They should use instructions that encourage students to find their own path, rather than forcing them to get an expected result.

Wherever possible, the teacher designs tasks that allow students to discover ideas for themselves.

For example, in aerial: instead of showing students how to climb onto a trapeze, propose that they find 3 different ways to climb onto it.

Teachers should also make sure that they stay flexible and open, as students may reach conclusions that the teacher had not considered, and these are more than welcome!

Increasing cooperation is one of the main goals that we can aspire to as educators, so teachers should encourage students to learn from each other: why not let them find 3 different ways to climb onto a trapeze, and let them teach each other?

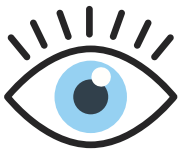
The role of the teacher is therefore no longer just to retain and transmit knowledge of technical skills, but to encourage the students to build their own path and determine their own trajectory, in learning and in life. The skills you need to live in society today are constantly changing and evolving, and this evolution requires a new form of teaching: students must be able to communicate, collaborate and solve problems, not just complete set tasks. Our role as teachers is to build relationships with and among our students, to help them to feel interconnected in a world that is based on interconnections.

2.1.1: Learning styles

With this perspective, it is of central importance to consider every individual and their needs as unique and important.

A good way to increase your awareness of how much individual diversity there is in any group is through Learning Styles theories and models. By this we are referring to a range of theories that suggest that humans can be classified according to their 'style' of learning.

One of the best known of these theories is the "VAK" model, which proposes three basic Learning Styles:



Visual
people who learn more through what is seen, i.e. printed materials, facial expression, body language, etc.



Auditory
people who learn more through what is heard and said, i.e. spoken words, lectures, sounds, etc.



Kinaesthetic
people who learn more through what is felt, i.e. emotions, actions, movement, taste, smell, etc.



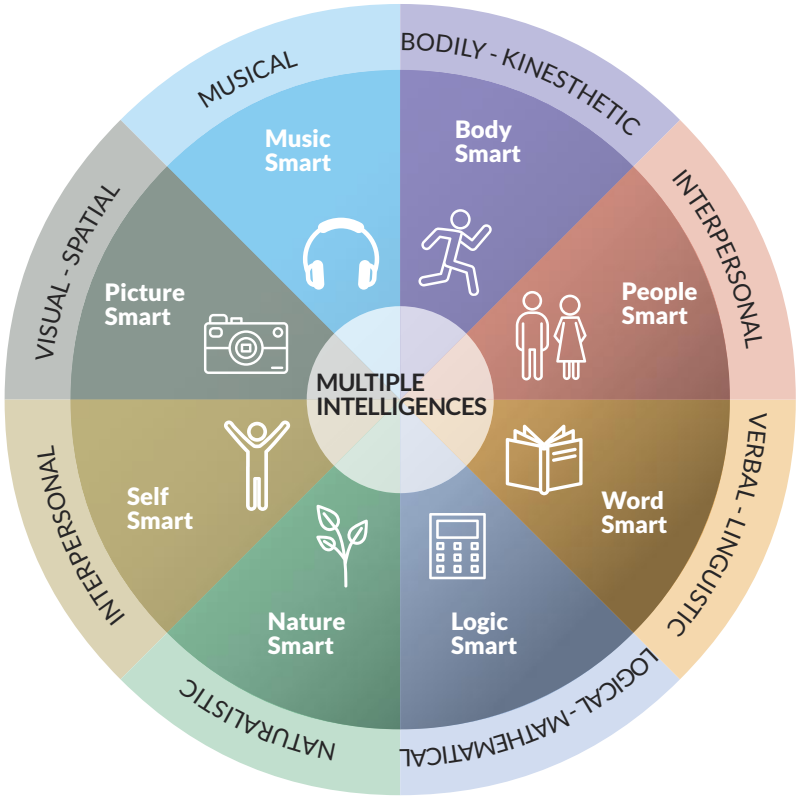
To discover a practical exercise connected to this model, go to the Toolkit.

Surveys report that in the general population, around 65% of people are Visual Learners, 30% are auditory, and just 5% are kinaesthetic. But what we can see from several test submitted to circus people, is that in our sector these percentages are very different: often people in the circus arts are mostly kinaesthetic and visual learners, and as teachers we have to remember this!

A fourth style was added later, creating the "VARK" model: the Reading style:

Reading: people who learn more through what is read and written, i.e. books, texts and note-taking





Many other, similar models have been proposed, exploring the idea that there are a lot of different learning styles and a variety of different kinds of intelligence. The 'Multiple Intelligences' (figure below) concept by Howard Gardner is an interesting example of this. The American psychologist and teacher wanted to get away from the idea of intelligence dominated by just one kind of general ability, instead suggesting 8 abilities, to account for a broader range of human potential.

Leveraging on your Visual Learning Style, we invite you to discover the 8 intelligences proposed by H. Gardner!

Although, in practice, we generally "mix and match" different styles of learning and types of intelligence, these theories help us to understand the needs of our groups and students, and empower them, rather than restricting them to one modality of learning (as too often happen in schools). This allows us to offer a wide variety of different ways of teaching.

A circus teacher should try, in each lesson, to use different tools to give instructions and propose activities, while also taking advantage of the 3 forms of communication: verbal, non-verbal, and para-verbal. Tools can include drawings, puppets, gestures and flipcharts, as well as utilising the group's own potential by encouraging peer learning and learning through imitation.

Verbal communication is the words we choose and use;
Nonverbal communication is our body language;
Paraverbal communication is how we say the words; the tone, pitch, and pacing of our voices.

It is important to remember that most of the time, in a communication, there is a gap between what is said and what is understood. So when a teacher communicates a message, we have to be aware that every student will understand and assimilate it in their own way, and the message received will be not always align with what we had in mind. It's very important to be aware of this, and always check the comprehension of our students, as well as training ourselves to communicate in different and new ways.

Here is an exercise for circus trainers, to put all this into practice: in your next circus lesson, try to pick one of the three styles below, and stick to this throughout an exercise.

VISUAL	KINAESTHETIC	AUDITORY
In silence. Without words or sounds	**Without showing or talking**	**Without having physical contact with the student**
Just showing (The teacher shows with the body or other materials). Without speaking or touching	Guiding the student's body (The teacher does not speak or demonstrate). Without speaking or showing, just do it with the class, letting them fail and try	Just talking (The teacher does not move). Without touching or showing instructions

2.1.2: Leading styles

Different ways to learn, different ways to teach. While a circus trainer can adapt their lesson to suit the different learning styles of students, they will also have their own Leading Style. There are a range of common features that show up in the act of leading and facilitating circus in a non-formal context: to demonstrate these features, we'll use two different models.

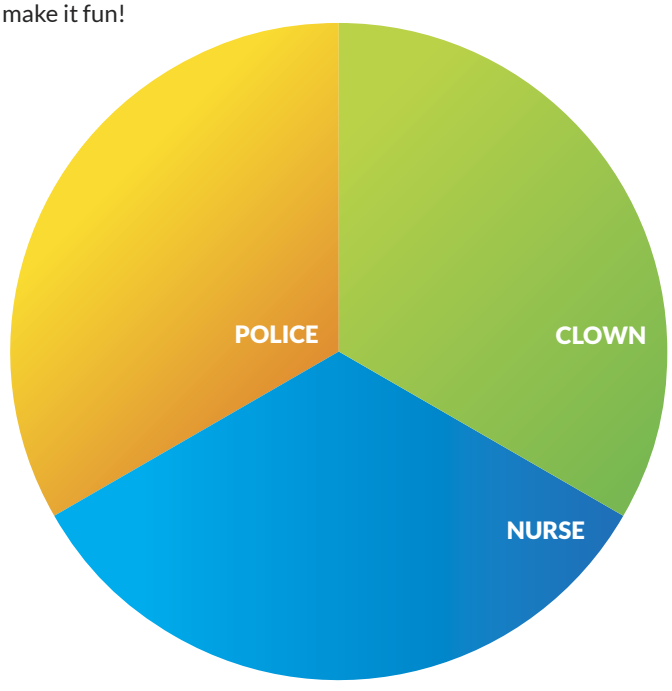
One well known model illustrates three major roles that a teacher can play in an educational environment, represented by three exaggerated caricatures:

Police
represents the management of discipline, and the ability to be heard and followed;

Nurse
represents the ability to take care of students and to listen to their needs;

Clown
represents the capacity to make it fun!

Of course, in the real world these three roles are not necessarily distinct: it is possible, for example, to play the role of a police-clown, who ironically plays with leadership, or an attentive nurse who is also able to be firm and strict.



[4] Kurt Lewin's framework defines three styles of leadership: autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire. Autocratic leaders make all the decisions themselves. They do not consult their team, or let them make decisions. Once the decision has been made, they impose it and expect obedience. Democratic leaders take an active role in the decision-making process but they involve others. They carry the responsibility for seeing that the decisions made achieve the desired outcomes. Laissez-faire leaders have very little involvement in decision-making, mostly leaving everything up to their team. As long as the team members are capable and motivated this can work, but can create problems if not. From Kurt Lewin's 1939 leadership framework research.

For more information go to the next chapter.

In a learner-centered setting, we shouldn't assume that the 'police' role is not needed. Indeed, learner-centered education does not coincide with a 'laissez faire'[4] leadership style, where a student is allowed to do whatever they want. There are rules and it is the teacher's job to make sure that they are respected, even if the rules have been negotiated and defined by the group itself.

If it is the responsibility of the 'police' role to keep in check the group as a whole, the 'nurse' pays more attention to individual needs and feelings, ensuring that everybody has found their place in the group, and feels comfortable with the group and with the learning process.

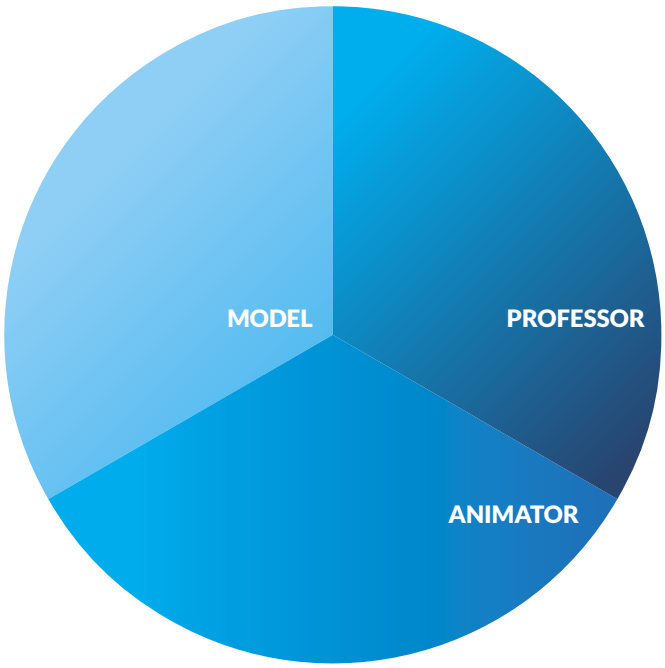
As for the 'clown', it is important to stress, that it is not necessarily their role to be fun or to put on a show: instead, their role is to encourage participants to play and have fun, and develop their own creativity and expression. To do this, the clown has to be honest and authentic!

Another, similar, model, which also examines the role of the teacher, proposes three different features for a circus trainer:

Professor
in charge of not just discipline, but also the ability to transmit both practical and theoretical content;

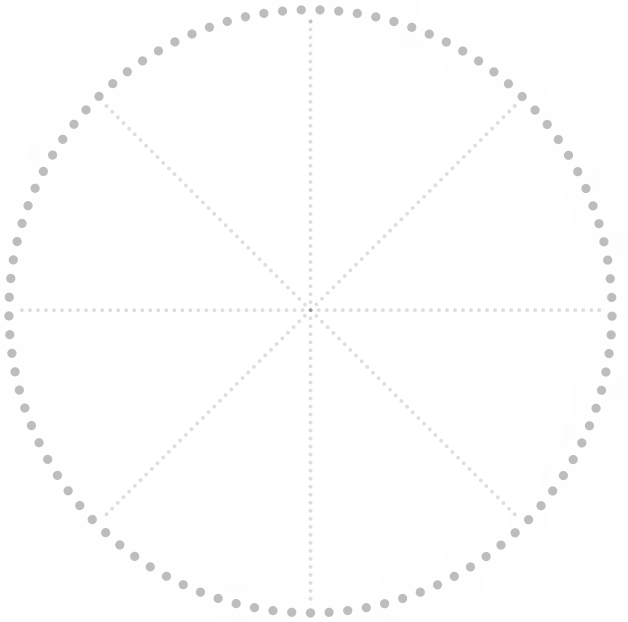
Animator
The animator (from Latin "anima", soul) has the ability to keep students participative, active and entertained; and make them the protagonists of the lesson.

Model
the role of the teacher doesn't finish at the end of the class: they are a model for students, and should demonstrate coherence between their teaching and what they represent in their own life, inside and outside the circus space.

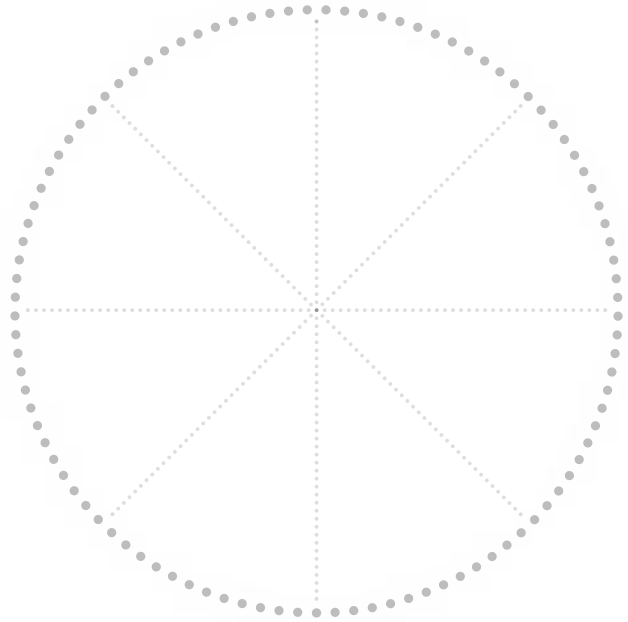


These features, characteristics and attitudes can be embodied by a single person, but they can also be useful for managing collaboration between co-teachers. If I'm working with someone really funny and empathetic, I can leave it to them to fill the role of 'clown' or 'animator', and pay more attention to being a good 'nurse' or 'professor', for example.

Now we invite you to reflect on your own teaching and leading style: which characters from the two previous models do you identify with most? Try to fill in the circles here by dividing them into 3 parts, to represent the percentage of each character you embody in your circus lesson:



POLICE - NURSE - CLOWN



PROFESSOR - ANIMATOR - MODEL

If you're having doubts while you're doing this, and you're thinking that your teaching style is more complicated and dependant on circumstance than these circles allow... we agree with you!
This is a simplistic exercise, and in reality your teaching/leading style is likely to change depending on who you are teaching, who you are working with, and other factors. However this exercise is a useful tool to help you examine your strengths and weaknesses as a teacher, and identify what you want to develop in future.

2.1.3: Here and Now

During the weeks of research for this handbook, it has become obvious that, beyond all the tools and methodologies a teacher can utilise, one of the most important skills a teacher can have is the ability to ensure that students are present in the HERE and NOW.
Circus is already very attractive to young people, and learners in general, but it cannot maintain engagement by itself. A teacher should ensure that students are well-disposed, motivated, and focused on the present moment - and not on the last text message they received, or on a difficult situation waiting for them at home.

We are used to saying that when you enter a circus class you enter a magic space: another dimension, a suspended bubble, where we can allow ourselves to be different. In this space we give participants the opportunity to take off any labels that other contexts, such as school or family, have imposed on them over time. For this reason it's so important to make them feel present and connected with the moment that they're living, the space where they're running and playing, and the group that they are sharing their experience with. Ground them in the HERE and NOW.

Rituals are great tool to use to do this. For instance, beginning and ending the session with a circle can represent a ritualistic way to mark the entry and exit from this protected space. Games, music, and exercises can also serve a similar purpose, to make the participants feel welcome and comfortable with the activities, people and space. It takes enthusiasm and motivation to keep students aware and 'in the moment', but you also need to set a structure and discipline in which the students can feel protected and safe.

If rituals are the skeleton of a lesson, the teacher must also be aware of the need for a long-term plan. The **long-term plan** deals with progression: giving students tools little by little, so that they can steadily build their skills, competence and capacity. This gives lessons an overall sense of coherence.

Finally, safety: teachers must ensure not only the physical safety, but also the emotional safety of every participant in the class. Focus, concentration, caring for themselves and for others, and being present in the moment, are all preconditions for the physical and emotional safety of students. It is therefore imperative that a Learner-Centered teacher ensures that students are present in the HERE and NOW.

2.1.4: Let's Check

- Have I tried to be aware of the 3 Leading Styles: clown, nurse, police?
- Have I tried to be aware of the 3 Facilitating Styles: professor, animator, model?
- Have I used the 3 different learning styles to lead and transmit content: Visual, Auditory, Kinaesthetic?
- Have I used the 3 different modes of communication: verbal, non-verbal, para-verbal?
- Am I aware of the diversity of experiences, learning styles and needs in the group?
- Have I tried to reduce the gap between what I'm saying and what learners understand (e.g. by finding out about the students' individual understanding of the world)?
- Have I encouraged students to be present in the here and now, aware and concentrating?
- Have I checked that the class works towards the long-term plan?



Stop reading! Stand up and try this 'brain-train game': Point your right forefinger at your left hand and keep the left thumb raised,then swap them!

Chapter 2.2
The Balance of Power

> "We cannot teach people anything, we can only help them discover it within themselves."
> Galileo Galilei

Some of you may be thinking that it's not very 'Learner Centered' to begin with the Role of the Teacher; and you may be right! In reality it's difficult find a good balance.

Learner-Centered doesn't mean that the children or students can do whatever they want, or that the teacher have no power or no say.

It means that the power should be shared responsibly between students and teachers. The goal of this pedagogical process is to equip students with the ability to make responsible choices; to teach themselves, and to play an active part in their own learning. To do this it is essential that decision making and leadership in a group is shared between everyone involved. Let's examine how we can create an environment which makes this possible.

2.2.1: Active and Directive Pedagogy

At the beginning of the 20th century, inspired by the work of **John Dewey** in the educational sphere, teachers and academics started talking about 'Active Pedagogy' as opposed to traditional and directive teaching. The idea was to move the focus away from the teacher instructing. It was found that children learn best when they interact within their learning environments, and are actively involved with their school curriculum. This means moving away from the child being a passive recipient of knowledge, as was assumed to be the best way to teach by many educators at the time, to the child playing an active part in the learning process.
Building on this, we can say that the aim in a Learner-Centered educative process is to find the right balance where the teacher, students and content are given equal importance in the learning equation. The result we want is to give students the opportunity to discover for themselves and to develop as active, independent learners.

What happens in circus lessons when the balance of power changes?
For an introductory lesson on balancing skills; tightrope, walking globe and rola bola, does the learning need to be more active or directive?
In our exchanges we started with this question, and proposed two different 'balance lessons', at either end of this line:

Directive Pedagogy ◄·····► **Active Pedagogy**

In the first (directive) lesson, following a good warm-up, we proposed a scenario where different balancing techniques were demonstrated and explained, with all the safety measures, the 'correct' way to climb on and to get off the equipment. The participants were then invited to try, one by one each piece of equipment, following the technical progressions proposed.
This is a classic way in circus school to teach a balance lesson, rotating from one station to another in small groups.

In the second (active) lesson, we put the participants in pairs, and allowed them to explore the equipment. Some suggestions were made: e.g. structuring the learning around a game; using music; narrating a story. We gave them some simple, open instructions such as: 'choose an object', 'explore different ways to climb on the equipment', 'find different ways to dismount', or to 'traverse the equipment', or to 'stay on the equipment', etc. In the end, almost without knowing it, they had a sequence to present to the others.

Which way is better? Which method is the 'right' one? Is it against the ethos of Learner-Centered-Learning to give instructions and to explain how to use equipment safely? We discussed this at length, and it's a useful question to keep reflecting on.

Our investigation showed how difficult it is to understand and to find this balance, particularly in the field of circus where participants always seem to be 'actively' involved.

It's really important to note that by 'active' we don't just mean physically active; the idea is that there is active engagement, and conscious participation both within the lesson and as part of the whole learning process. We ivolve the learners as decision makers and problem solvers, and include them in the process of defining their learning goals.

There is the need for a long-term plan, incorporating directive activities, (technical principles, safety rules and support and spotting information), but also maintaining a Learner-Centered structure in which students can, for example, choose their discipline and decide which techniques to develop.

If our goal is to create a Learner-Centered culture, we cannot take for granted that this will happen naturally. More traditional ways of teaching, where participants are told what to do can also engender feelings of anxiety and insecurity about doing something in the 'wrong' way.

If a group of participants is not familiar with LCL methodology and are more accustomed to a traditional way of teaching the process may require more time. People who have learned in a traditional way, whether children or adults, can feel much safer and more relaxed in a Teacher-Centered setting with someone telling them exactly what to do:

"To get on the globe, you have to do this…"

In this case we need to gradually introduce active learning, progressing slowly towards a more learner-centered approach, while taking into account the physical and emotional safety of the participants.

It is our responsibility to keep the goal in mind, and to plan the process step by step according to the group and the circumstances.
And we need to take into account that we, as facilitators, are influenced by our previous experience as well. Our experience, our capabilities and our self-confidence will influence how far we can go and how much we can push to get what we are aiming for.

This becomes really clear in **Carl Rogers**' words:

"The person-centered approach is at the opposite end of conventional education. It is sharply different in its philosophy, its methods, and it's politics. It cannot exist unless there is one precondition. If this precondition exists, then the other features listed may be experienced or observed at any educational level, from kindergarten through graduate school."

This precondition is:

"A leader or a person who is perceived as an authority figure in the situation is sufficiently secure within herself and in her relationship to others that she experiences an essential trust in the capacity of others to think for themselves, to learn for themselves"

(Carl Rogers 1969).

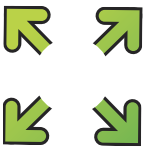
2.2.2: Leadership Models

To make all this clearer it can be useful to take a look at leadership models. By leadership we mean the ability to lead or guide a group. These models are often found in the business world, but can also be useful in educational settings.

In 1939, a group of researchers led by psychologist Kurt Lewin began to speak about different styles of leadership. They established three major leadership styles that later provided a springboard for more defined leadership theories. Following Lewin's study, the group leader could be an authoritarian, democratic, or a "laissez-faire" leader.



The Authoritarian
or 'Autocratic'; gives clear instructions on what needs to be done and how it should be done. This style of leadership is strongly focused on both command by the leader and control of the followers.



The Democratic
or 'Participative'; offers guidance to group members, but they also participate in the group and allow and encourage input and engagement from other group members.
They retain the final say in the decision-making process.



The Laisser-faire
or 'Delegator'; offers little or no guidance to group members and leaves the decision-making up to group members. While this style can be useful in situations involving highly qualified experts, it often leads to poorly defined roles and a lack of motivation.

These three major styles are simplifications, but are useful in defining how a person behaves while leading a group. To go further we have to assume that these behaviours are not fixed, and that the leadership style used depends on the needs of the group and the circumstances in which you are teaching them. So today a lot of researchers agree with the idea that there is no 'right' leadership style; it has to be flexible and adaptable to the situation.

A more adaptive model was outlined by K. Blanchard. The Situational Leadership II (or SLII model), developed by Kenneth Blanchard, builds on Blanchard and Hersey's original theory[5], and may be a more suitable theory for us to use. It identifies four basic leadership styles:

[5] The first model was introduced in 1969 as "life cycle theory of leadership", by Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard, developed while working on Management of Organizational Behavior.

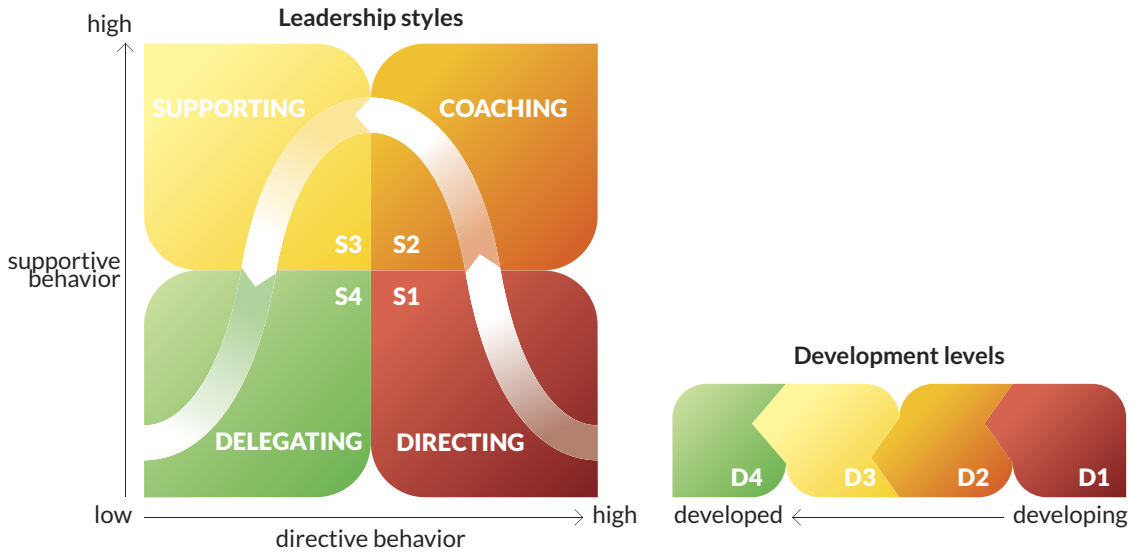
Directing
The teacher provides specific instructions, has control of the situation and has clear expectations regarding the task to be accomplished.

Coaching
The teacher continues to direct and supervise activity, but also explains the process, invites suggestions, and supports progress.

Supporting
The teacher facilitates and supports students' efforts to complete the tasks and shares responsibility for the choice of activity.

Delegating: The teacher hands over responsibility for developing the learning experiences to the student (examples might include asking the student to develop an activity to lead towards a technical goal).

THE SLII® MODEL



The main idea of this model is that no one of these four leadership styles is best. Instead, a good teacher will adapt his or her behaviour to the level and developmental stage of each group. The developmental level of the learner is determined by each individual's level of competence and commitment[6]. So, in relation to the participants' level the teacher will use more or less one of the two key behaviours: supporting or directing.

- Directing behaviours include giving specific instructions and controlling the behaviour of the group.
- Supporting behaviours include actions such as encouraging, listening, and asking for or offering feedback.

These are not the only elements we need to consider. We also need to be aware of the relationship we have with the participants, and how much mutual trust exists. It's also crucial to take into account the activities we're doing: if it's something new that could pose a risk to participants, the leadership style will need to be more directive.

As discussed previously, the teacher must also consider their own level of authority in the group, beyond their job title. This authority can be gained through experience, and by building a positive relationship with the group.

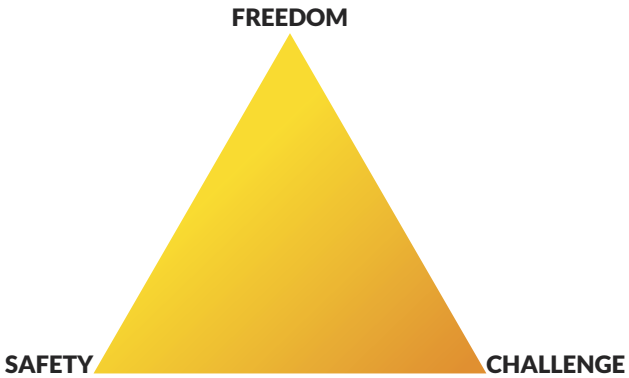
Taking all of this into account, leadership styles needs to be adaptable to allow us to take on different roles and behaviours, and for the learners to grow and evolve. A more directive pedagogy so as not to lose control of the group, and an active and supportive pedagogy to reach our final goal: to slowly transfer more and more power, authority, autonomy and freedom to the members of our groups.

[6] In the Blanchard model these levels are: enthusiastic beginner, disillusioned learner, capable but cautious performer and self-reliant achiever. To learn more about it look up Blanchard's work.

2.2.3: Balancing Circus

Within a circus lesson we juggle with all of these elements, and from a Learner-Centered perspective we are obliged to offer a safe and inclusive space for freedom and discovery, without losing control of the group and learning objectives. Children are often excited by the opportunities that circus arts offer them, and it's not always easy to find a good balance between explosive motivation and the learning process. The latter is based in turn on the balance between the acquisition of life-skills[7] and the technical progression of the circus discipline. We can say that the three balls that we are juggling are: the participants' freedom, their physical and emotional safety and challenging them to learn the next trick.

[7] **Life skills** are abilities for adaptive and positive behaviour that enable humans to deal effectively with the demands and challenges of life ('Life Skills Education for Children and Adolescents in Schools' World Health Organisation).



The more we try to push the challenge, the more we risk affecting the participant's emotional and physical safety, and their sense of freedom, unless of course the participants are already very motivated, mature and aware of risks. On the other hand, if we focus excessively on the need for safety, we put a lot of limits on the students and we run the risk of potential demotivation. If we give too much freedom, we can lose control of the group, putting their safety at risk. So, what we can do?

Continually adjusting the balance between these three concepts safety-freedom-challenge is the key to long term learning progression. Designing lessons where there is space for the participants to develop and increase their skills, stimulate collaboration and encourage peer-to-peer learning is a major step towards developing the Learner-Centered culture we discussed earlier.

2.2.4: Let's Check

- Have I used a more active or directive pedagogy; in the exercises, in the lesson as a whole and in the long-term plan?
- How much freedom have I given the participants within the lesson structure?
- To what extent can they choose, adapt or make suggestions?
- How useful for technical skills development is the level of freedom I have given the students?
- Have I designed tasks so that students can discover ideas for themselves?
- Have I been flexible enough to allow students to reach conclusions I had not considered?
- Have I encouraged students to learn from each other (peer learning)?
- Have I provided enough extra resources to deepen the learning process?
- Have I given enough freedom to the students without sacrificing control of the class and the learning objectives?
- Have I taken into consideration the balance of the power between the students?



Energise!
Find a partner and count between you to 3: You say 1, Partner says 2, you say 3 and Partner says...1, and so on. Once you get it, substitute each '1' for a sound; and then substitute each '2' for a movement; and for a bigger challenge, substitute '3' for a short sentence. Enjoy!

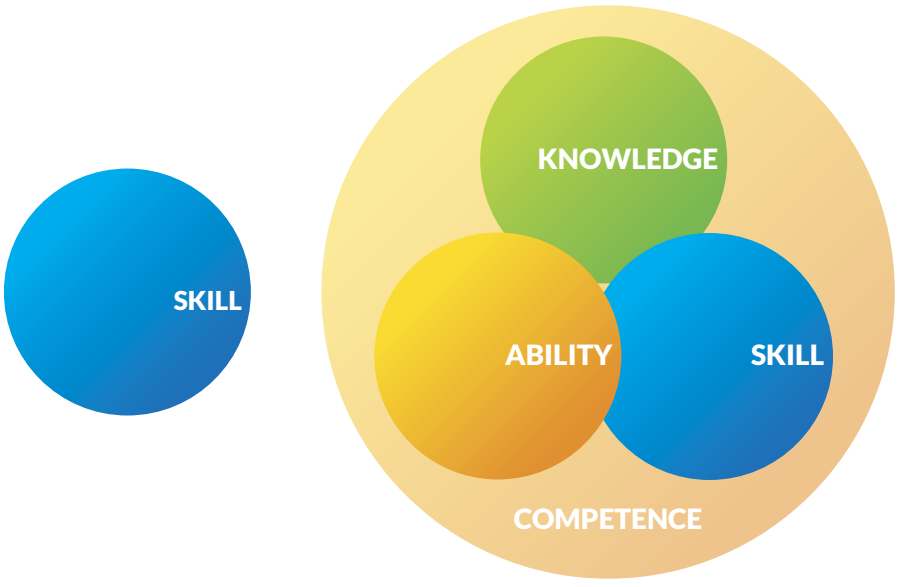
Chapter 2.3
The Function of Content

The circus arts include countless disciplines and techniques which are continuously evolving. Learning an acrobatic movement or a juggling trick often leads to a realisation of how many other movements and tricks there are to learn, in what would seem to be an endless learning process. For this reason it could be said that Circus is an ideal medium for Learner-Centered Learning. From this perspective, 'content' should be viewed as a vehicle for **learning how to learn**.

As we saw with **constructivism theory**, students actively construct their own knowledge rather than passively receiving it. This is most effective when there exists the desire and will to learn more. Circus disciplines offer excellent opportunities to inspire and motivate students, but we cannot rely on the skills alone to keep the learners engaged. We need to ensure that as well as learning the skills, they are also learning how to learn; in this way they can be inspired and find pride in their personal achievement and creativity.

2.3.1: Competencies and Skills

Focusing on developing competencies instead of skills doesn't mean not teaching skills. Competencies are a much broader concept, incorporating abilities and knowledge as well as skills. 'Knowledge' is defined as the body of information that you possess, that can be applied to help you to do the job and can be quantified: abilities are more difficult to quantify. Basically, they are not much more than the capacity to express the skill. Typically, abilities are the tasks completed on the job. Skills and abilities are often used interchangeably, but there are subtle differences. Ability is the capacity to perform, whereas skill is the actual performing. Skills are just one facet that make up a competency: in fact learning a new skill is typically quicker than learning a competency.



In a circus lesson we can easily teach someone to juggle with 2 balls, passing the balls from one hand to the other. It would take more effort to make him or her understand what's happening to the trajectory of the balls and develop the body awareness of eye-hand coordination, thus developing real competence that can be used in further learning.

It means that developing skills remains fundamental, but we shouldn't focus entirely on the result. We should instead try to look at the bigger picture to better understand and to be really aware of the whole process.

A good technique we discussed a lot in the exchanges was the idea of allowing a sort of empty space in the instruction and let the learner fill it: a problem-based learning[8] where the participants have to find solutions by themselves, developing problem solving abilities, discovering new ways to use an object or to do a movement.

[8] Problem-based learning (PBL) is a student-centered approach in which students learn about a subject by working alone, in pairs or in groups to solve an open-ended problem. This problem is what drives the motivation and the learning. PBL can promote the development of critical thinking skills, problem-solving abilities, and communication skills.

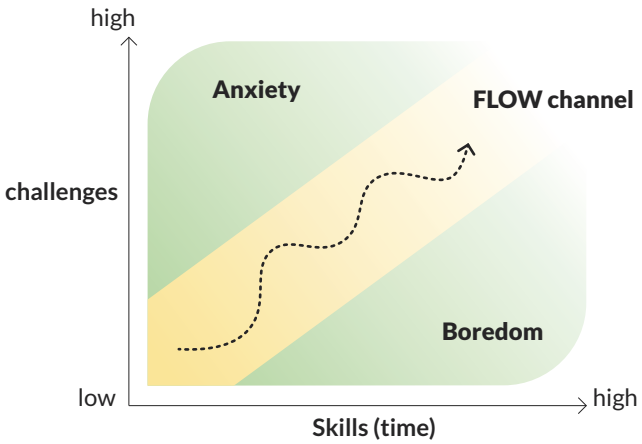
2.3.2: Flow Model

Content plays a fundamental role in engaging the participants, but how can we maintain the interest and involvement of students, ensuring continuous growth and technical progression?

An interesting model already used extensively in circus education[9], which may help to answer this question, was devised by Hungarian-American psychologist, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi: The Flow Model.

[9] See also "Look at me!", S. Desanghere, 2016

This model compares situations where on one axis there are challenges proposed by the teacher, and on the other axis there are skills already possessed by the students. Proposing a challenge that is too high for a student, who does not have sufficient skills, can produce anxiety and panic. In contrast, if the task is too easy for someone who has a high skill level, we risk boredom and demotivation. The real challenge is to discover how to remain in the middle of these two axes where we can experience Flow. Flow is a mental state in which people are completely focused on the activity, and in this state there is no stress: instead there is fun and satisfaction.



There are some main factors that Csikszentmihalyi outlines as conditions to stay in this Flow:

- Teachers and students need to find a good balance between the challenges of the activities and the understanding of one's own skills.
- Clear goals have to be formulated and negotiated, between the two parts, in relation to the activities proposed.
- Give clear and immediate feedback, during and after the activities.

With these guidelines we should be able to keep our students in a state of Flow, allowing them to learn in optimal conditions and with a smile!

2.3.3: Obliquity

Applying this concept to group work, the problem with this model arises when we have to manage a group with varying technical abilities, which is almost always the case…
To address this, we have to find a way to put every participant in the Flow zone whilst still keeping the group together. For this to happen we can explore the idea of **'Obliquity'**.

The Obliquity is the condition that allows everyone to work at their own level, experiencing success in their own way. This allows different learning situations and is therefore suitable for different levels of individual ability within the group. For example, we can imagine putting a rope in an oblique position, and then asking the participants to cross over the rope however they want.



It is likely that some students will jump over the highest point, possibly even using acrobatics, while others will jump over at a lower point, or even pass underneath it. Being able to provide exercises like that in different disciplines is one of the most challenging and powerful things a circus teacher can offer to their students.

2.3.4: Creativity and Games

In the past creativity was seen as pertaining to a gifted few, rather than to the many. Today in every educational context this idea has been transformed, and it is now widely accepted that all people are capable of creativity. With this in mind, circus education is founded on the belief that creative potential can be found in every child. Or better, in every child and every teacher: we cannot teach creativity if we don't teach creatively!

On the one hand we strive to develop and foster students' own creative thinking and behaviours. We have endless opportunities to do this with circus arts, because in every discipline and technique, we can discover infinite ways to do a trick as well as, potentially, infinite new tricks. In addition to the multitude of skills within circus, there is also the trans-disciplinary character of circus: music, dance, theatre, improvisation, physical theatre and other arts have long been an integral part of the artistic baggage of circus. And we need to take full advantage of these to push and foster the curiosity, creativity and artistic potential of students.

On the other hand, since students' creative abilities are most likely to be developed when the teacher's creative abilities are engaged, it is up to the teacher to constantly re-invent imaginative approaches to make learning more interesting, exciting and effective. In the words of the American psychologist R.K. Sawyer: "Creative teaching occurs when a teacher combines existing knowledge in some novel form to get useful results in terms of facilitating student learning", Sawyer (2011)[10]. For a Learner-Centered circus teacher this means creating new exercises, warm-ups, improvisations, circuits, innovative methods, tricks, material, and most of all, new games.

[10] Sawyer, R. K. (2011). A call to action: The challenges of creative teaching and learning. To be published in Teachers College Record.

The educational power of games is no longer a secret. Today, thanks to the efforts of great pedagogues, philosophers and psychologists, such as Spencer, Huizinga, Caillois, Freud, Winnicott, Piaget, Montessori, Vygotsky and many others, we can say that games are fundamental for the emotional, cognitive, motor and relational development of the child. It is finally recognised that games are one of the most authentic, creative sources of learning.

Following Caillois' thinking, one of the most interesting aspects of games is the implicit duality of two parts: 'Paidia' and 'Ludus'[11]. All games move between two opposites: on the one hand, paidia (improvisation, absence of rules and restraints, fun) and ludus (rules and effort). In this contraposition, as we can see between play and game in the English language, we can also find the essence of Learner-Centered education, that seeks to promote freedom and creativity within a clear and broad framework of rules.

[11] Caillois, R. (1961). Man, play and games.

In this setting, through play and challenges, a child can learn from those who possess more skills. Learning skills socially and through play can reduce the frustration which can result from more structured learning.

In an acrobatic circus lesson, to develop acro-balance technique and to discover new figures in pairs or groups, a teacher suggested using domino cards with body positions to form shapes and pyramids[12]. In this way, playing with cards, pictures and easy instructions, the groups built incredible pyramids. And nobody taught them!

[12] The game and the cards was developed by Marjolein Wagter, Dutch performer and circus teacher.



> "Man only plays when he is
> in the fullest sense of the word a human being,
> and he is only fully a human being
> when he plays."
>
> Friedrich Schiller

2.3.5: Competition

Games are a great ally to defeat frustration, replacing this big demon in learning with fun, enthusiasm and motivation. However, with games comes competition, and with competition comes a question:

Is it good to have competition in circus or should circus, as a 'non competitive' activity, reject competition?

Before answering this question, it is a good idea to analyse the form that competition takes and how we can manage it. There are 4 kinds of competition:

Competition with others
when the game or the challenge is *with* or *against* other participants;

Competition with groups
when the game or the challenge is between different groups or your group against another group;

Competition with yourself
when the game or the challenge is *with* or *against* yourself;

Competition as a group
when the game or the challenge is *with* or *against* your own group.

As you can see, there are big differences in the types of competition we can make use of, and in general the last two listed build more positive energy within the group, and encourage longer lasting individual motivation. This does not mean that the other two types are 'outlawed' in circus education. On the contrary they can be used, carefully, to increase inner motivation and also to reach the 3rd level with more enthusiasm and the 4th level with more passion and cohesion.

By developing competition as a group, by creating challenges and trials, we are encouraging the group to collaborate together. To get the best results, the group will need to support each other, communicate, develop strategies and recognise the qualities of each individual.

Tips to manage competition positively are:

- Put focus on the game, the challenge and the process, and minimise the importance of the result.
- Propose competition across different areas which require different competencies. If we always suggest challenges based on strength and agility, we will encourage a small group, but discourage many others. Instead, if we want make use of competition, we must make sure that we vary the attributes needed: for example creativity, elegance, cunning, etc.

We'll finish this chapter with Donald Winnicott's wisdom: "Playing is itself a therapy"[13].

[13] "to arrange for children to be able to play is itself a psychotherapy that has immediate and universal application, and it includes the establishment of a positive social attitude towards playing"; from Winnicott, D. W. 1971a. Playing and Reality. London: Routledge (p. 50).

2.3.6: Let's Check

- Have I given the students tools to allow them to learn by themselves?
- Have I left enough space in the lesson, to allow the learners to fill it and find solutions themselves?
- Have I tried to develop competencies, as well as skills?
- Is the lesson plan stimulating enough to motivate the group?
- Does the plan challenge the learner's creativity?
- Have I used games to motivate the group, encourage physical preparation and develop trust and self-expression?
- Have I created stimulating challenges for the students?
- Have I used techniques or exercises to get the students into a flow state (Flow Model)?
- Have I followed the "Obliquity" method in any of the proposed exercises?
- If I have used competition, was it multidimensional enough (requiring different talents, such as strength or elegance or creativity) and 'multi-directed' (with others, teams, groups or alone)?
- Have I planned emotionally safe, competitive elements that avoid frustration and to increase cooperation?

Chapter 2.4
Responsibility For Learning

> "A person cannot teach another person directly;
> a person can only facilitate another's learning"
> Carl Rogers

Are teachers responsible for a students' learning? Are we responsible if a young person is not able to or doesn't want to learn to juggle? Or is it the child's 'fault'? Whose responsibility is it to learn or not to learn? This is a difficult question, without an easy answer. But we can agree that this responsibility is not one sided.

Paulo Freire, in 'Pedagogy of Oppressed', adds another dimension, describing the pedagogical act as the power dynamics between the student, the teacher, and the content. In previous chapters we saw that content can support the teacher in giving meaning to the lesson, and providing a gateway to creativity and problem solving. We also discussed how the first role of the educator is to create a space, a community, and a process that supports the learner's particular needs. All of these factors contribute towards developing a sense of responsibility for learning on the part of the students, who are, needless to say, at the centre of the whole process. Learning should not be imposed upon or handed to students. It is something they have to do for themselves in the end.

For this reason, from a Learner-Centered perspective we can say that teachers are responsible for their students learning to the extent that they provide the support and opportunity to learn. It is our responsibility to provide the student with the environment, the knowledge, the belief and the support to overcome the enormous obstacles hidden within every learning path.

In a circus class this means intentionally shaping a culture conducive to collaborative learning, in which there exists teacher-to-student and student-to-student support. It means creating a community where each learner is respected and treated holistically, and able to function as independent, autonomous learners. It means students playing an active part not only in the learning process but the lesson planning process too: choosing which assignments or techniques to practice, establishing participation policies and rules, agreeing deadlines and setting personal and group goals in the short and medium term.

Learning is fundamentally a social process. We all need the emotional and intellectual support of others to help us overcome barriers that prevent or limit learning. This is where educators come in. Whether school or circus teachers, educators are responsible for supporting others in their learning.

Let's look at some tools and techniques to support this sharing of responsibility.

2.4.1: The Zone of Proximal Development

In the early twentieth century, psychologist Lev Vygotsky put forward the idea of the "Zone of Proximal Development" (ZPD)[14], referring to the learner's ability to successfully complete tasks with the assistance of other, more capable, people.

[14] This theory is presented in one of Vygotsky's most important works: 'Mind in Society: the development of higher psychological processes.' Vygotsky, L. S. (1978).

Unlike Piaget's notion that children's development must necessarily precede their learning (see chapter 1.1, Piaget), Vygotsky argued that social learning tends to precede development. In accordance with this idea, he saw the ZPD as the area where the most sensitive instruction or guidance should be given, allowing the child to develop skills they will then use on their own, developing higher competencies (see chapter 2.3.1). He imagined three areas, or three levels of development:



1. **Level of actual development**
   what the student can do, right now, with any help. A *learning comfort zone*;
2. **The Zone of Proximal Development**
   what the student can do only with appropriate assistance;
3. **Level of potential development**
   what the student can't do, yet, even with external help.

[15] Steven Desanghere, international trainer and expert in the circus community, introduced the ZPD theory in his book 'Look at me', 2016.

This is a powerful theory gaining increasing recognition and popularity in the field of circus education[15]. It introduces the idea of the importance of spotting and helping, so important in learning circus techniques, which present a physical risk in addition to a level of difficulty.

In an acrobatic lesson, it is difficult to imagine learning a flic alone without the help of someone watching your back (at least here in Europe...).
A good teacher must be able to judge when a student is entering the 'Zone of Proximal Development', when learning a flic or another trick is possible, or if they are still in the zone of Potential Development and risk getting hurt.
Question: as teachers, are we able to enable students to push their boundaries, if required, or do we let them stay where they are, and make them feel comfortable with their level?

[16] Wood, D. J., Bruner, J. S. and Ross, G. (1976). The role of tutoring in problem solving. Journal of Child Psychiatry and Psychology, 17(2), 89-100.

An interesting term used to define the action of assistance in the learning process is 'scaffolding': a structure of 'support points' to help a student complete a task. The term scaffolding was not actually used by Vygotsky and was later coined by Bruner[16].
It's important to underline that this help or support doesn't have to come from the teacher, but may come from others as well. Vygotsky speaks about the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO). This refers to someone who has a better understanding or a higher ability level than the learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept. The MKO can be another student, who has higher skills in some disciplines. Fellow teachers can be each other's MKO

sometimes, but in different techniques. An MKO can also be an external resource, such as a book or video. It's easy today to imagine how many technical tutorials have helped a lot of learners, and teachers!



"3 before Me" - Notice for teachers
With children who often seek attention we can use this rule: before asking the teacher, try at least 3 strategies to solve the problem independently[17].

[17] This method was proposed by Pete Duncan in a transnational meeting during the LCL project.

2.4.2: Peer Education

This theory has huge implications on the management of the relationship of a group. The act of learning is no longer based exclusively on the relationship between student and teacher, but the relationships between the students themselves can also come into play and become a fundamental basis for the whole process.

In Vygotsky's definition of the Zone of Proximal Development, he highlighted the importance of learning through communication and interactions with others rather than just through independent work[18]. Therefore we can speak about 'Collaborative Learning' or 'Peer Education'[19], where two or more students learn or attempt to learn something together. This process, which is an essential basis for a Learner-Centered approach, facilitates learning and develops some very important life skills, such as social communication and problem-solving, by emphasising the importance of mutual aid and respect.



[18] Vygotsky, Lev. (1997). "Interaction between Learning and Development" Archived2016-01-25 at the Wayback Machine. W.H. Freeman and Company, New York.

[19] What is the formal difference between Collaborative Learning and Peer Learning? Collaborative Learning occurs when students work in groups to discuss ideas, solve problems, create or trying a trick together, while Peer Learning, or Peer-to-peer learning, is when one pupil leads another, or more, through a task or concept.

[20] Participant Handbook, part 2, Cirque du Monde Training; Cirque du Soleil, 2014.

Teamwork and debating ideas enable participants to quickly learn the benefits of being open to other perspectives and learning how to assert oneself while still respecting the opinions of others. Participants learn that there is no one easy fix for everything, and, as a result, they learn how to adapt to circumstances, groups, cultures or religions[20].

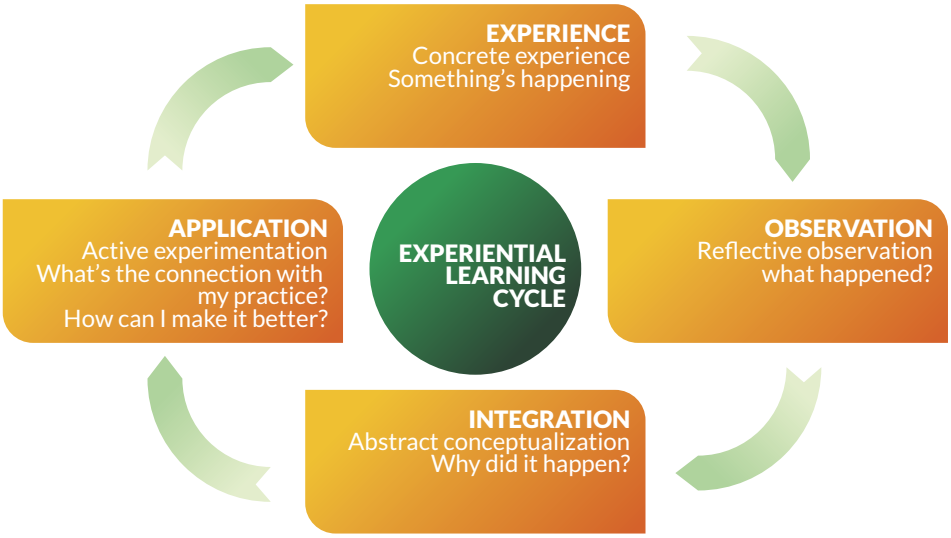
Hence the value of using this approach in our circus lessons. To facilitate it we have multiple tools to use:

- Vary how the group interacts, by working in smaller groups, pairs, trios etc;
- Always change roles in an exercise;
- Change partners often when working in pairs;
- Facilitate debates, group creations, design collective problem solving situations;
- Encourage deeper interaction, and constantly ensure respect for each other.

This form of organisation is very empowering as it uses the infinite potential of the group and participants, allowing us to arrive at new and unexpected solutions and outcomes. And often saving us a lot of energy!

2.4.3: Experiential Learning Cycle

The Experiential Learning Cycle could easily have been our starting point on this journey. It is undoubtedly one of the most important theories in this handbook. It was brought to us by David Kolb, in 1984, and it's linked to the different Learning Styles we saw in **chapter 2.1.1**, presenting another point of view. By 'experiential learning', we mean the process of learning through experience, also defined as 'learning through reflection on doing'. This is well explained by Kolb's graphic model:



The experiential learning cycle enables everyone to find their own way of learning, and can be used in accordance with different Learning Styles[21].

You can start from any point in the cycle: experiencing, observing, analysing or directly doing. This provides a framework for a learning journey, which helps to form a deeper and more personal understanding around an experience.

In this process, the teacher's role is not only to provide students with significant learning experiences, but also to help them assimilate knowledge, even when there is a variety of different learning styles present within the group.

[21] Kolb proposed 4 distinct Learning Styles based on the Cycle: diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating. Discover them in the next page.

THE FOUR STAGES OF THE CYCLE

Experience
The process is initiated through a concrete experience.

Observation
Reflection, review and perspective-taking about the experience.

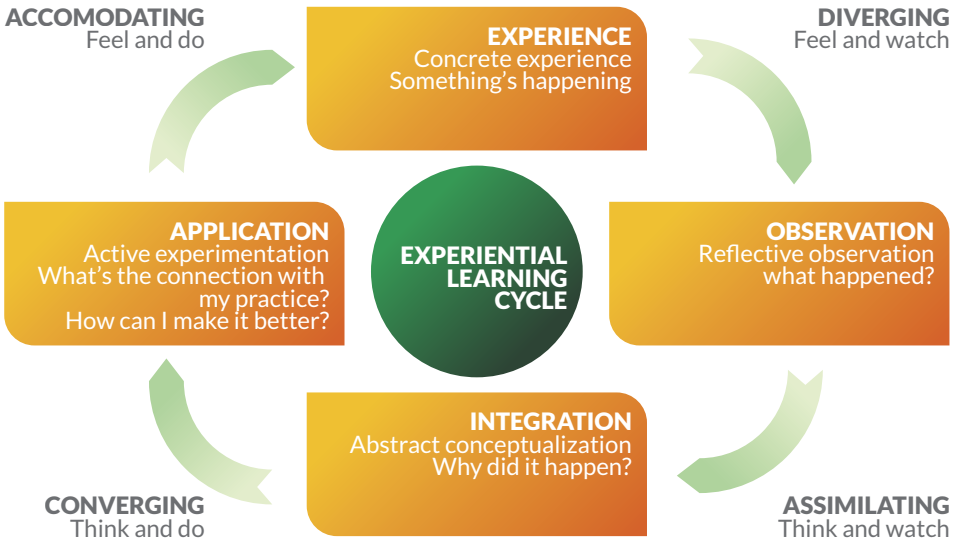
Integration
Abstract thinking to reach conclusions and conceptualise the meaning of the experience.

Application
Engaging in active experimentation or trying out what you've learned. Thinking and experimenting with how it can be used in your practice, work, or life.

This process leads to a new, evolved, experience, from which we can start the cycle again.

THE FOUR KOLB'S LEARNING STYLES

Kolb proposed 4 distinct Learning Styles based on the Cycle:
diverging, assimilating, converging and accommodating. Each of these styles arises between 2 steps of the cycle defining a preferred learning style



Diverging
sensitive people who prefer to watch rather than do, tending to gather information and use imagination to solve problems.

Assimilating
people with concise and logical approach. Ideas and concepts are more important than people. They excel at understanding wide-ranging information and organizing it in a clear, logical format.

Converging
practical people who can solve problems and will use their learning to find solutions to practical issues. They prefer technical tasks, and are less concerned with people and interpersonal aspects. They are best at finding practical uses for ideas and theories.

Accommodating
intuitive people who prefer to take a practical, experiential approach and use other people's analysis. They are attracted to new challenges and experiences, and to carrying out plans.

Both Kolb's learning styles and cycle could be used by teachers to critically evaluate and to develop more appropriate learning opportunities to ensure activities designed and carried out in ways that offer each learner the chance to engage in the manner that suits them best.

As with many of the other models presented here, there is deeper analysis available, so feel free to research these ideas further.

2.4.4: The Culture of Self Discipline and LCL

During our research and training weeks, we discussed the best way to encourage children or participants to accept responsibility for their learning, particularly when encountering difficulties, or when the learners are more accustomed to a traditional teacher-centered approach. We came to the conclusion that the most important thing is to progressively build a culture of Learner-Centered-Learning.

This means accepting that it may take some time to do, and that it is easier for some participants to take part in such a process than it is for others. It means striving to develop a culture of dialogue, where there is a problem-solving attitude, and feedback and active listening occurs between both teachers and learners. This should be commonplace and recognised as an integral part of the educational process.

The challenge is also to build a culture of self-discipline; in which every participant is able to organise and understand their progression and learning path, where every teacher is able to provide tools to enable this, and where the teacher is aware and attentive to each individuals learning goals.

It's not just creating an individualised learning path, as learning remains fundamentally a social process. The challenge for the teacher is to be able to ensure that the group develops democratically and in a supportive way, while providing everyone with the tools they need to push their limits.

We want participants to be passionate learners. We want them to be engaged with their peers and the circus skills in a productive and positive way. We want them to move on from their time with us better prepared for life, to contribute to their communities, and our world.

To conclude this chapter: a word from Angela Duckworth, author of **'GRIT'**[22]. Duckworth uses the word 'grit' to highlight that learning is neither immediate nor linear, and for this reason every learner needs 'grit'. Grit is the passion and perseverance needed for very long-term goals. She points to the critical importance of identifying purpose for one's learning, and to the essential role of teachers in nurturing students' innate capacity to learn.

Developing Grit, motivation, focus, concentration and self-responsibility, is the first step towards building an LCL culture.

[22] Grit: The Power of Passion and Perseverance, Angela Duckworth, 2016

2.4.5: Let's Check

- Have I provided tools to support the students, to enable them to function as independent, autonomous learners?
- Have I encouraged peer-learning?
- Have I created a problem-solving environment?
- Have I created individual learning paths, while ensuring a social process?
- Have I left space for them to choose strategies, paths, goals and skills to develop?
- Have I used the Experiential Learning Cycle: observing, reflecting, and re-working the experience together?
- Have I worked to create a culture of self-discipline, dialogue, feedback and active listening between all students and between the students and teachers?
- Have I involved participants in establishing guidelines for participation and agreeing on the planning and timetable?
- Have I given them the choice of pushing their boundaries or staying where they are, in their comfort zone?
- Am I consciously giving step by step instructions (ZPD)?

Chapter 2.5
Assessment

> "Becoming is better than being"
> C. Dweck

If you were asked what the purpose of assessment in a circus lesson is, how would you answer? The conclusion of our research is that assessment empowers the learner to clarify what they know, and to provide a basis for future learning.

Assessment has less to do with generating grades and more to do with promoting learning. It is part of the educative process, and is used to inform the teacher which framework, which exercise, and which 'proximal development' zone, is most useful going forward.
To paraphrase the book 'Working Inside the Black Box':

'An assessment for learning is any assessment that has, in its design and practice, as its first priority the aim of promoting student learning.
It differs from assessments designed primarily for the purpose of accountability, or student ranking, or certifying competence.
Evaluation activities can help learning if they provide information that teachers and their students can use as feedback to evaluate themselves and their peers and modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.'[23]

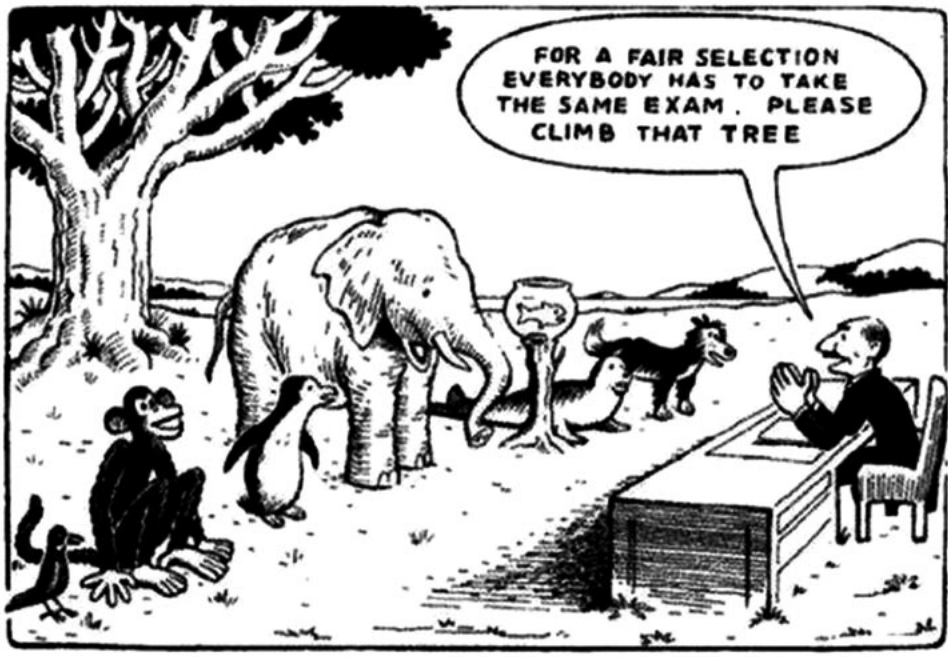
From this perspective, assessment is a constant cycle of improvement, for both teachers and students.

[23] Working Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam (2004)

2.5.1: The Different Purposes of Assessment

Assessment in all its forms involves collecting information: an interaction between the assessor and the assessed, that results in decisions being made.

In education, evaluation can satisfy various pedagogical and didactic functions. It can lead to better student-teacher relations, or it can also be used to maintain a calm atmosphere in the classroom or set the pupils into a hierarchy (e.g. level 1, level 2 etc.).
Instead, in circus lesson these collateral tasks are not assigned to evaluation, but to other different tools, such as the use of the games, the development of motivation, and the wonder that arises from learning the circus techniques. The assessment is already more used to regulate and empower teaching and learning.



One of the main limitations of a traditional school evaluation system is illustrated in the picture above. How can we use the same kind of tests for completely different individuals?

According to OxfordDictionaries.com, the definition of 'to educate' in English is 'to give intellectual, moral, and social instruction to someone'. Assessment of personal development cannot be standardised, but must change according to the needs of every individual student. An assessment plan should attempt to develop an individualised multi-dimensional model of assessment that is built around students rather than content.

Circus disciplines are characterised by a wide variety of skills and abilities. It is the facilitator's task to use a variety of methods which will take this into account. Some students will excel in creative skills, but less so in technical progression. Others will excel in strength and skill in acrobatics, or be elegant on aerial silks, or have coordination in juggling and so on. The training process must therefore be facilitated with empathy, observation and connection. In general, continuous discussion and a constant drive towards self-evaluation of one's own training programme is preferable.

Some trainers on the exchange preferred to use different words to describe this process. 'Development' instead of 'Assessment', and 'Evolution' instead of 'Evaluation'. This gives us a lot to think about.

2.5.2: Formative Assessment Cycle

Today educational evaluation is a complex and evolving disciplinary field and has a robust and complex tradition of research behind it. Since the end of the 1960s, debate around the concept of educational evaluation has centered on context, reference systems, programmes, resources and, in general, the situations in which teaching-learning processes take place.

There are countless types of evaluation and models: such as Summative, Formative or Diagnostic[24], Process or Impact, Qualitative or Quantitative, the Kirkpatrick Model[25], the Outcome-Base Evaluation Model[26], and many others[27].

Here we'll take a look at Summative and Formative Evaluation.

Summative Evaluation, recognises and describes the knowledge, skills and competences achieved by the pupil at the end of a pre-established teaching period. It's a final evaluation which consists of assessing all the changes that have occurred during the training. Summative assessment is still significant in teaching. It scores the student, issuing a grade which supposedly reflects the level acquired by the student.

Current thinking is that this type of evaluation does not guarantee equity or fairness in results[28].

This kind of evaluation is uncommon in the circus field, particularly in youth circus, where a non-competitive and supportive vision and philosophy puts more emphasis on the process than on the results.

A more Learner-Centered and relevant model for us is **Formative Evaluation**. This type of assessment is carried out *in itinere* (throughout the teaching period), to measure how students receive new knowledge. Its goal is to be flexible and to adapt teaching activity to the different needs and characteristics of the students. It provides a process, through which we can discover and understand what has been learned, what remains to be learnt, and how to improve. In this model, the student is considered an active protagonist.



[24] The diagnostic assessment takes place at the start of the learning sequence. Its objective is to take stock of the prior and spontaneous knowledge of the students who will serve as a point of support for new learning (De Ketele, 1988).

[25] The Kirkpatrick Model is probably the best-known model for analysing and evaluating the results of training and educational programs. It takes into account any style of training, both informal or formal, to determine aptitude based on four levels criteria: reaction, learning, behaviour, and results.

[26] OBE is a student-centered learning philosophy that focuses on empirically measuring student performance called 'outcomes' (Felder & Brent, 2003). Motivations for implementing OBE can be 'to improve learning' (Biggs, 2003) or 'to meet accreditation needs' (Felder & Brent, 2003). It is a combination of three types of competence: practical, knowing how to do things, ability to make decisions; fundamental, understanding what you are doing and why; reflective, learn and adapt through self-reflection; apply knowledge appropriately and responsibly.

[27] To know more we suggest this research for French readers: Lucie Mougenot, 2013.

[28] Brau-Antony and Cleuziou, 2005; Combaz and Hoibian, 2008

This is the Formative Assessment Cycle. As you can see, this form of evaluation is circular. Its regulatory function affects both learners and those who carry out their didactic action.

This evaluation strategy is utilised in the teaching-learning process and aligned with set objectives. The objectives are shared with the students who are able to identify the critical aspects to improve on the journey. Its purpose is to define the levels and abilities of participants, but also the effectiveness and quality of the procedures followed, thus allowing a possible revision and correction of the process itself. It means that the evaluation can and must affect the teaching methodologies, to the point of modifying them, with the aim of accompanying, describing and guiding the path itself.

Assessment and learning objectives should inform each other. Assessments are built around learning objectives, however, learning objectives should be revised based on insights from assessments.
This completes the assessment cycle[29].

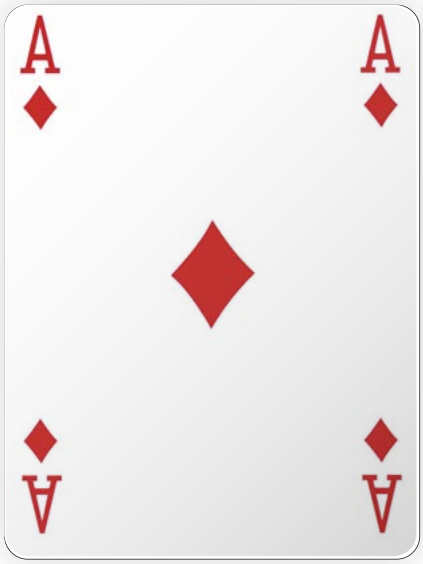
'An assessment for learning is any assessment that has, in its design and practice, as its first priority the aim of promoting student learning.
It differs from assessment designed primarily for the purpose of accountability, or student ranking or certification of competence. An evaluation activity can help learning if it provides information that teachers and their students can use as feedback to evaluate themselves and their peers and modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged.
This evaluation becomes 'formative evaluation' when the information is actually used to improve the teaching work and thereby satisfy the learning needs'[30].

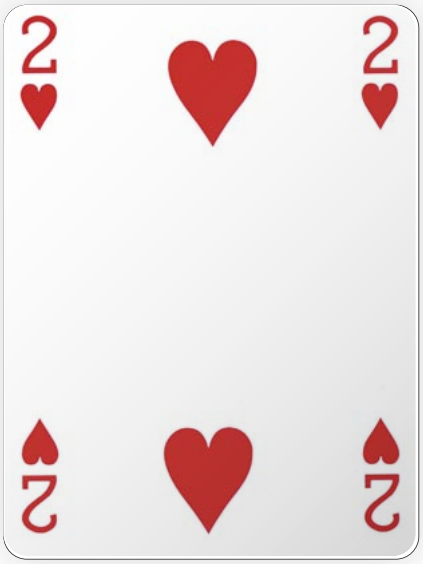
[29] To learn more about this topic, you can follow the works of Paul Black and Dylan Wiliam. They completed a meta-analysis of more than 250 research studies on the topic. Their findings, published as 'Inside the Black Box', make a compelling case for formative assessment.

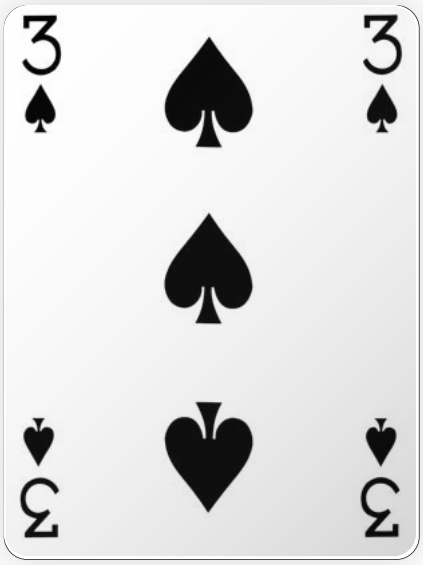
[30] Working Inside the Black Box: Assessment for Learning in the Classroom'; Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam (2004)

2.5.3: Active Reviewing, Peer Evaluation and Feedback

Playing Cards can have a great power, even in a circus class!









With a little bit of imagination, Playing Cards can be used as a great creative tool to evaluate a lesson with our students. The Diamonds signify the Facts, the Hearts are the Feelings, the Spades are the Findings and the Clubs are the Future.

Each suit represents an aspect of the experience we've been through and the impact it has had on us, and all four cards complete the 'active reviewing cycle'[31].

We can give a card to an individual, or a small group of participants. They can then discuss their point of view using the topic the card represents.

[31] This framework is designed by Dr Roger Greenaway, an expert on training teachers and facilitators, it's also called 'The four F's of active reviewing'. It was proposed in our circus training by Steven Desanghere.



Diamonds represent Facts
Some questions for participants with this card are: What happened? Who, where and when? Try to stick to concrete facts, and give an objective account of what happened.



Hearts represent Feelings
Describe some of the feelings you experienced. What other feelings were there? What were the highs and lows? Try to give an emotional picture of the situation.



Spades represent Findings
What did or didn't work and why? What was the most/least valuable? What have you discovered? Try to get some concrete findings that you can take away from the situation.



Clubs represent the Future
How will you use what you have learned? What plan can you make for the future using this experience as a starting point? Try to structure your learning so that you can use it in the future.

The red suits allow discussion around the experience; the black suits provide the means to learn from it and prepare for changes.

We can also use the Joker. The Joker is anything anyone wants it to be, and enables participants to add or share anything they want. It represents Freedom: the fifth 'F'.



This is just an example of the multitude of types of feedback we can use with our pupils. Feedback can be verbal, like in the last example shown, but also physical, graphic, symbolic, spatial, written, etc.
Providing different ways to give feedback, and ensuring it is multidimensional, is very important within a group to ensure that each participant is able express themselves in the most appropriate and comfortable manner. Too often the only ones who are heard are those who are confident speakers. We must not forget the opinions of those who have a different voice, and who are more able to express their opinions through movement, drawings, expressions or colours.

Active reviewing and feedback are great habits to practice regularly with a group. Using them at the end of the class or at the end of an important activity can be a way of reinforcing our relationships with our students, monitoring their level of participation and their understanding of the learning process. Make this a part of your lesson plan; it's a great way to close a session because it can motivate the group and highlight the students' active engagement with their practice; heightening their awareness of how much they have learned and how much they still have to learn.

This habit will also encourage the practice of peer and self-assessment, where students **assess** each other and themselves. It can encourage students to take greater responsibility for their learning, encouraging engagement by reflecting on their own progress and performance, and that of their peers.
All of this needs to be developed little by little, with care and attention. Offering others feedback can be important and constructive, but it can also be painful and frustrating for those who receive it, if not done sensitively.

To close this paragraph a proposal for an active review for you:
Think back on the last chapter and recall the topics that made you say: "Huh????" (Still not very clear...). And the ones that made you say: Aha!!!! (Great to know this...)



2.5.4: Praise

Research on PRAISE:

For over a decade Carol Dweck, an American developmental psychologist and pioneering researcher in the field of motivation, studied with her team the effects of praise on students. This study, published in 'The Perils and Promises of Praise'[32], by Carol Dweck in Educational Leadership, October 2007, involved a series of experiments on over 400 5th graders from all over the United States. It shows the remarkable differences that were found in the way children reacted to different kinds of praise in relation to provided tests and exercises. One group was praised for their intelligence: "Wow very good - You must be really smart at this". The other group was praised for their effort: "Wow great job - You must have worked really hard on this". The resulting differences, rather than showing large gaps with respect to the results obtained, revealed a great impact with respect to attitude, motivation and the ability to manage errors and failure.

Children who received praise about their ability showed more of a disempowered response to failure; they focused on the cause of their failure, concluding that they were not smart enough, for instance.

On the other hand, children who received process praise showed a more mastery-oriented response. They focused on solutions, such as looking for new strategies for solving the problems (Mueller & Dweck, 1998)[33].

Furthermore, children who were praised for effort showed greater task persistence, greater task enjoyment, fewer low ability attributions, and better post-failure task performance compared to the children who were praised for their intelligence after the initial task.

The group praised for intelligence preferred not to risk failure when the tests became more difficult and gave up earlier, as they didn't want to lose the results that had already been achieved.

This demonstrates the impact that can be made by a few subtle differences in the way that they were praised.

[32] The Perils and Promises of Praise, Carol Dweck, in Educational Leadership, October 2007.

[33] Praise for intelligence can undermine children's motivation and performance, C. M. Mueller, C. S. Dweck, 1998, in J. Pers. Soc. Psychol., 1998 Jul.

Praise itself is a good thing, but we have to be very careful praising someone's talent, results, intelligence or abilities, instead, we should focus on the process and effort that they put in. Results are not good or bad in themselves, they are individual to each person. In our praise and assessment, both positive and negative, we must always carefully separate the action and the process from the person themselves.

2.5.5: Fixed and Growth Mindset

After Mueller and Dweck discovered these remarkable differences in the way children react to different kinds of praise, these *Findings* (♠) formed the basis of Mindset Theory. Furthermore, a distinction was made between a **growth** and a **fixed** mindset (Dweck, 2006)[34].
When someone believes that intelligence is something that is possessed and cannot be changed, they have a **fixed** mindset, or an 'entity theory of intelligence'. Alternatively, if someone believes that intelligence is malleable and can be developed through learning, they have a **growth** mindset, defined as an 'incremental theory of intelligence'.
To bring these concepts back to our circus practice, and how we deal with success and failure, here's an example that illustrates this theory:

[34] Mindset: The New Psychology of Success, Carol Dweck, 2006

If one of our students was trying to jump over a big obstacle or do some particularly challenging acrobatics, what would happen if we gave them a brick for every mistake that they make?
If our student has a fixed mindset, they could take all the bricks and put them in a backpack, then attempt to do the same trick...
If the student has a growth mindset, learning from their mistakes, they may take the bricks, put them on the ground, and build a pile to use as a base from which to jump higher[35].
The bricks symbolise the mistakes the student makes. They can decide to see them as problems and allow them to weigh them down. Or they can use them as opportunities to learn, build on them and use them as a platform to aim higher.

[35] The example was presented by Pete Duncan, during a transnational project meeting

The difference between these two kinds of mindset is clear; and if our students can embody this mindset in a circus class, they will be able to take it outside of the circus class and into other areas of their lives.

As we can see in the chart below, these two mindsets develop very different approaches to a lot of topics:

Entity intelligence	Topic	Incremental intelligence
Fixed Mindset	Intelligence	Growth Mindset
Avoid	Challenge	Accept
Answers "I have to give answers..."	Teacher	Question "I will ask them questions..."
Final	Exams	Snapshot (a passing measurement, to build on)
Disabling "The Language disables me..." "I can't, I'll fail, it's impossible..."	Language	Constructive "I'll get it, I'm learning..." "Not yet..."
Failure	Mistakes	The Opportunity to Learn

People with **fixed** mindsets believe that skills, intelligence and talents are natural. Failure is shameful and should be avoided; some people are naturally good at things while others are not; and in the end you are not in control of your abilities.

People with **growth** mindsets believe that you have the capacity to learn and improve your skills. Failure is a valuable lesson; people who are good at something are good because they worked on their skills; and in the end you are in control of your abilities.

Researching this further, Carol Dweck took two sample groups and not only gave them different kinds of praise, but also presented different information about how intelligence develops.

To one group she explained the growth mindset theory and showed how the brain is like a muscle. "They learned", says Dweck[36]: "the more they exercise it, the stronger it becomes. They learned that every time they try hard and learn something new, their brain forms new connections that over time make them smarter. They learned that intellectual development is not the natural unfolding of intelligence, but rather the formation of new connections brought about through effort and learning."
Teachers and researchers noticed a marked improvement in their motivation and effort, compared to the other group to which believed the notion of intelligence as a fixed trait.

[36] C. Dweck, 2007

Discovering that intelligence and abilities can be improved is so important, particularly for those whose life experience has reinforced feelings of inadequacy. "When students believe they can develop their intelligence, they focus on doing just that," writes Dweck. "Not worrying about how smart they will appear, they take on challenges and stick to them".

Circus is a perfect example of this theory of learning. In each circus discipline it's self-evident how much you can develop your abilities, techniques and performance; learning a new trick gives you the motivation to learn another one, in a constant cycle of improvement.

In my personal experience as a circus teacher[37], I have met lots of young people who were not motivated by sports and other physical activity, and who didn't feel good at anything. And what circus taught them was that there is always a way to improve your skills, often surprising yourself and those around you. It is often reported that this increase in motivation and the resulting achievements can spill over into other areas of life. There is mounting evidence that children having greater success in schoolwork after practicing circus.

[37] The author speaking/writing is Tommaso Negri.



Circus, taught in a learner-centered way, can be useful in understanding the 'Power of Yet'[38]. Using this little word, YET, can be a simple way to start developing a growth mindset. "I can't do this" becomes "I can't do this…yet!", and this change of focus can help develop a superpower.

According to Carol Dweck, the power of 'not yet' gives students a pathway to their future and makes them feel that they are on a learning curve rather than at a dead end. Even if they have difficulties overcoming something now, the time will come when they succeed if they continue trying different methods to get results.
The Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam, an Indian president, better known as the 'People's President', gave us the following acronym:

F first
A attempt
I in
L learning

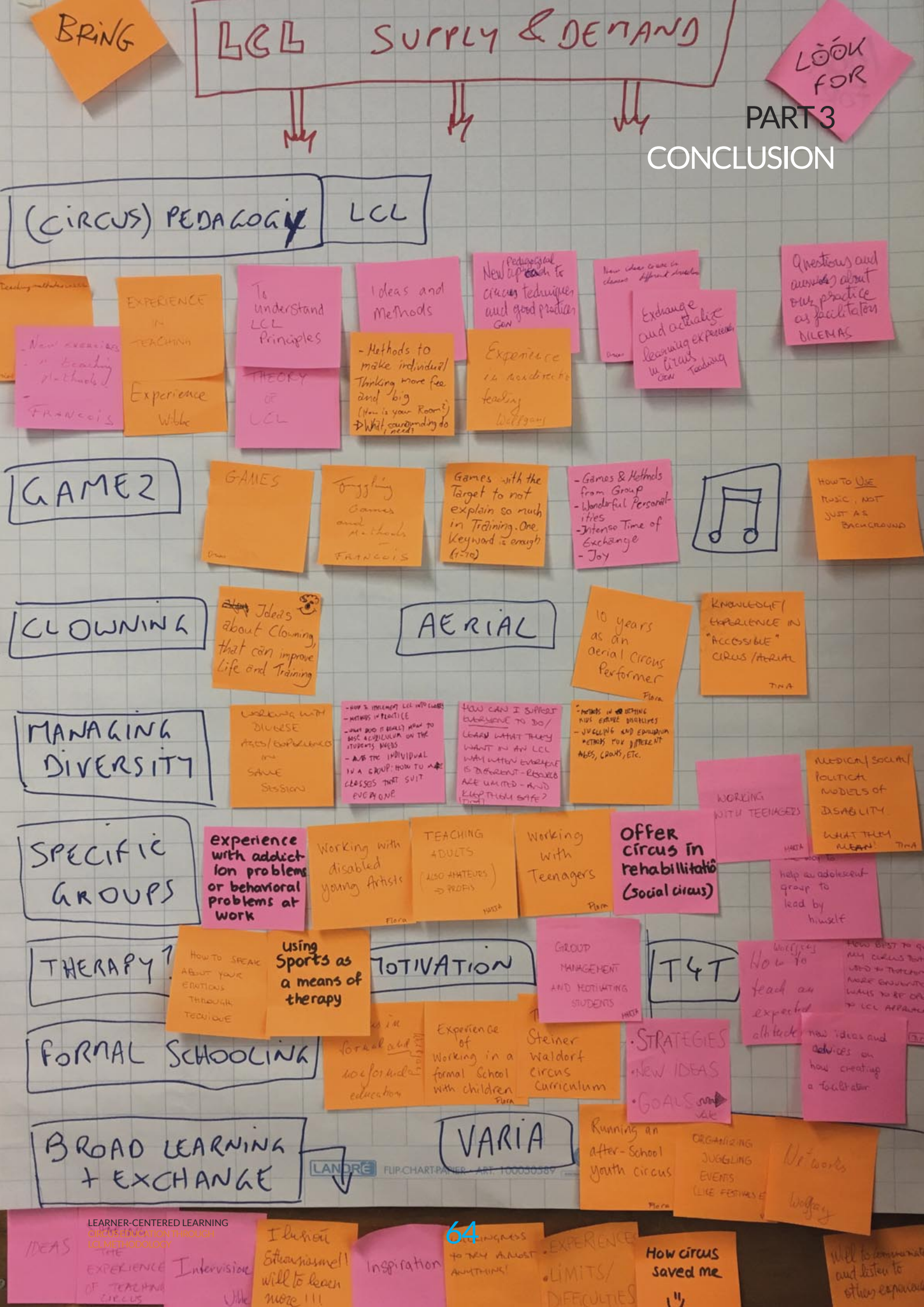
This is a great lesson in failure management, where difficulty just means 'not yet' (remember the bricks!). "I can't do it now, but I'll do it."

Circus arts always deal with the impossible. Circus disciplines are based on the *illusion of impossibility*, and our job as circus teachers and non-formal educators, is to transform this *impossible* in a gritty and powerful "NOT YET" journey.

[38] The "Power of Yet" is an expression coined by C. Dweck, expressed in her book "Mindset", 2006, and very well explained in the following Ted Talk link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J-swZaKN2Ic

2.5.4: Let's Check

- Have I put methodology into practice to check that the students understand?
- Have I planned a final, active review, or on-going feedback exercises?
- Do the students have the opportunity to make self or peer evaluation?
- Are the students able to choose goals for themselves?
- Is the assessment multi-dimensional?
- Have I planned an assessment for myself as a teacher or group of teachers (by the students or by my own team)?
- Am I able to separate the behaviour from the person in the evaluation (assess "what you are doing" instead "what you are"), while also observing each person's progression?
- Am I able to praise the process/effort, instead of the result or the talent?
- Have I encouraged a growth mindset, instead a fixed one?


BRING
LCL SUPPLY & DEMAND
LOOK FOR
PART 3
CONCLUSION
(CIRCUS) PEDAGOGY
LCL
EXPERIENCE IN TEACHING
Experience Wibbe
To understand LCL Principles
THEORY OF LCL
Ideas and Methods
- Methods to make individual Thinking more free and big
New Pedagogical approach to circus techniques and good practices
Experience in nondirective teaching
Exchange and actualize learning experiences in circus Teaching
Questions and answers about our practice as facilitators
DILEMAS
GAMES
Juggling Games and Methods
FRANCOIS
Games with the Target to not explain so much in Training. One Keyword is enough
- Games & Methods from Group
- Wonderful Personalities
- Intense Time of Exchange
- Joy
HOW TO USE MUSIC, NOT JUST AS BACKGROUND
CLOWNING
Ideas about Clowning, that can improve Life and Training
AERIAL
10 years as an aerial Circus Performer
Flora
KNOWLEDGE/ EXPERIENCE IN "ACCESSIBLE" CIRCUS/AERIAL
TINA
MANAGING DIVERSITY
WORKING WITH DIVERSE AGES/EXPERIENCES IN SAME SESSION
HOW CAN I SUPPORT EVERYONE TO DO/ LEARN WHAT THEY WANT IN AN LCL WAY WHEN EVERYONE IS DIFFERENT - RESOURCES ARE LIMITED - AND KEEP THEM SAFE?
WORKING WITH TEENAGERS
MEDICAL/SOCIAL/ POLITICAL MODELS OF DISABILITY
WHAT THEY MEAN!
TINA
SPECIFIC GROUPS
experience with addiction problems or behavioral problems at work
Working with disabled young Artists
Flora
TEACHING ADULTS (ALSO AMATEURS → PROFIS)
MARTA
Working with Teenagers
Flora
Offer circus in rehabillitatio (Social circus)
help an adolescent group to lead by himself
THERAPY?
HOW TO SPEAK ABOUT YOUR EMOTIONS THROUGH TECHNIQUE
using Sports as a means of therapy
MOTIVATION
GROUP MANAGEMENT AND MOTIVATING STUDENTS
MARTA
T4T
How to teach an expected attitude
FORMAL SCHOOLING
Experience of Working in a formal School with children
Flora
Steiner Waldorf circus Curriculum
STRATEGIES
NEW IDEAS
GOALS
new ideas and advices on how creating a facilitator
BROAD LEARNING + EXCHANGE
VARIA
Running an after-School youth circus
Flora
ORGANIZING JUGGLING EVENTS (LIKE FESTIVALS)
Networks
Wolfgang
IDEAS
THE EXPERIENCE OF TEACHING CIRCUS
Intervision
Illusion
Enthousiasme!! will to learn more!!!
Inspiration
EXPERIENCES
LIMITS/ DIFFICULTIES
How circus saved me
Will to communicate and listen to others experience

If you are reading these lines, it could mean one of two things; either you jumped straight to conclusion or you carefully read all of the previous chapters. Let's hope it's the second, otherwise these conclusions won't make sense, and also you won't know what you've missed!
All the models and methods described above, outline, at least in part, the universe of opportunities offered through the application of Learner-Centered-Learning methodology to circus education. This universe is already widely explored within the numerous circus schools scattered throughout Europe. Of course, for each school and for each teacher there is a different implementation and interpretation of the teaching. Everyone has their own way of delivering their lessons, and they also possess varying degrees of awareness about this subject matter. Many teachers involved in the exchange project had completely different pedagogical backgrounds, ranging from an extensive knowledge and ability to use a learner-centered approach, to an almost total lack of knowledge on the subject. And they were all expert circus teachers. This leads us to think that the numerous youth circus schools have a pedagogical setting that takes its cue from both teacher and learner centered approaches.
We also found that in circus education the border that separates traditional teacher-centered learning from learner-centered-learning is very thin and flexible, and we don't want to say which one is right, but instead to analyse and reflect on the advantages and limits of both.
We drew a line that goes from the most teacher-centered approach to the most learner-centered, to encourage readers to increase their awareness of the impact of their teaching, moving along this line to build or strengthen their teaching methods.

Circus education, as well as circus arts, is fertile ground for cross contamination between cultures, thoughts and ideas, in a continually evolving and transforming progression. This flexibility prevents circus education from being constrained by a strictly defined method, and it gives everyone the freedom to find their own place and take the best part of each educative approach.
In the beginning of these pages, we proposed a framework to compare teacher-centered and learner-centered education (jump to page 17 to see this). Following on from this, we have tried to describe our definition of Learner-Centered-Circus. That is, the use of LCL in the circus universe. Now, building on the idea that everyone can shape their own knowledge, we invite you to complete the form below, using your experience to define what for you is the meaning of 'LCC' (Learner-Centered-Circus).

This project and the research that went into it has been a collective path aimed at discovering the potential of this mysterious 'LCC'. If you too want to contribute to the evolution of this process, please share with us your completed form and reflections on this mail: coordinator@eyco.org

Elements	Teacher-Centered	Learner-Centered	"LCC" Learner-Centered-Circus
Knowledge	Transmitted from instructions	Constructed by students	...
Student Participation	Passive	Active	...
Role of the teacher	Leader	Facilitator	...
Role of assessment	Grading	Feedback	...
Emphasis	Correct answers	Deeper understanding	...
Assessment Method	One-dimensional	Multidimensional	...
Academic Culture	Competitive	Collaborative	...



Author's Note

This handbook was written during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. A time when all schools in Europe were closed. A time where we started to speak about e-learning and distance learning. A time when circus schools and non-formal activities were done remotely. A time when everything that seemed certain collapsed, and our way of working turned upside down.

In this time, I think discussing learner-centered methodology has become even more important. Because all these incredible tools that allow us to be connected virtually with our students, involve an enormous risk of forgetting who we're connecting with, moving further away from empathy and deep relationships, and becoming even more teacher-centered. We have a greater responsibility as non-formal educators than ever today, and it is increasingly urgent to ensure that the education we provide has the ability to respect and empower its students.

Good job everyone.

Tommaso Negri

"Pedagogy is a construction that takes place in real time,
in the meeting and in the cohesion of the objectives and needs
of the student and the teacher.
Education is a dialogue.
Education is a political act"

P. Freire





PART 4
TOOLKIT

Welcome to the Toolkit!
In these pages are a selection of, games, group activities and exercises we shared during the two exchanges, that may help to connect the LCL theory with some practical exercises.

1 Games
2 Skill Specific exercises
3 Experimenting with Teaching Styles
4 Key Competences
5 Working Groups

1 Games

We began both exchanges, as we do in any circus program, lesson, training or exchange, with group activities and introduction games to get to know each other.
When a group first meets, the aim is to create a comfortable, safe and fun atmosphere.
The choice of activities can vary depending on the target group. It's important to adapt the vocabulary, rules, who is leading, and the space and time given to each exercise to make sure everyone feels involved and welcomed.
Ideally, the facilitators and participants work together to create rules and adapt the programme according to their interests and skills. Adding everyone's experience makes the programme richer and makes everyone feel more involved.
We have made a selection of some basic introduction games, which work within LCL methodology, to use in your practice.
The descriptions of the games and activities will be kept simple to make them easy to understand; each game can be developed and adapted to suit your programme.

Name

"The Sun is Shining on……"

Target group:

6 + participants. Beginning of a circus lesson.

Description

Everyone takes a place at random around the room. Each participant has an object that belongs to them, and puts it on the floor in front of them. Everyone remains in their place, until the facilitator says:(e.g.) "The sun is shining on the ones who like dark chocolate ……", if the answer is YES, they have to move to a different place with a different object.

The facilitator gets the activity started by choosing a few sentences/questions to ask the group (3 for example) After this, one of the participants removes their object, and becomes the facilitator, choosing a question to ask (The facilitator remains part of the game). When the group answers and everyone moves, there will always be somebody without an object, and this person will be the one that will ask the next question.

Goals

Everyone learns about each other- likes, dislikes etc.. Facilitators can obtain relevant information from the group (eg who smokes, who's vegetarian..) Creates a space for introductions

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Material

Personal objects or juggling rings

LCL approach

The facilitator hands responsibility to the group. The group decides what they want to know about each other, and can add other variations.

Name

"HI"

Target group:

5 + Participants. Beginning of a circus lesson. Group meeting for the first time.

Description:

In a circle, one person looks at another, makes eye contact and crosses the circle walking towards them. They stop in front of the person, they then say their names to each other. Then they jump and high-five simultaneously. The second person continues the game, crossing to someone else. The first person takes their place in the circle The number of people crossing the circle is increased, with different speeds and variations (faster, slower…..)

Goals:

Learning the names of the participants, breaking the ice and developing body language and contact Raising awareness of each other

---

Material

LCL approach

Allow time for the groups, either together or in smaller groups, to create different ways to cross the space, present their names and change places.

Name

I'm falling/ I want to fly

Target group:

6 + participants

Description:

Walking around the space, when a person says "I'm falling", they cross their arms across their chest (keeping the body tense so as not to bend), and fall backwards. The rest of the group runs towards them to prevent them from hitting the ground. Combine it with "I want to fly", flying position (open arms at the sides and tight body position). Then the group makes the person fly around the space for 10 seconds. After the flight, they put the person on the floor in a safe way. More words and movements can be added- I want to hug etc. More than one person can say the words at the same time. It's the responsibility of the group to look after each other.

Goals:

Developing individual and group trust. Creation of collective guidelines. Body movement and expression.

Material

LCL approach and variation(...)

Divide the group into 2, ask them to create at least 3 different sentences relating to one of the given actions. Ask them to prepare to show it to the other group, using it to create a little performance.

Example: A person says the phrase "I feel alone". The group embraces the person. You can also choose a theme to base the phrases and actions around.

Name

Acro-actions

Target group:

All ages; adapt the content to the level of the group. Useful as an acrobatic warm-up to introduce the part of a lesson focused on creativity and individual movement.

Description:

The facilitator chooses 4 actions such as rolling, turning, walking on all fours, jumping. The group has to move through the space looking for different ways to perform the action. The facilitator then suggests that the participants create an individual acrobatic sequence that combines all of the actions. After giving some time to rehearse, they can show it in small groups or individually.

Goals:

To analyse different actions and use them to develop technical skills.

Material:

Floor mats LCL approach:

Allowing participants the freedom to explore movement and develop and choose their own shapes based on their interests and levels gives them the responsibility for their learning. They can become aware of the points of new learning and make decisions on where to go next

Variation: The group chooses which moves to do and decides how to create the routine.



Did some games inspire you?
We challenge you to make your own game.
Be creative!

Name

Target group

Description (name, how to play)

Goals

LCL approach

Material

Observations

2 Skill specific exercises

JUGGLING

Juggling Exercise 1

An LCL Approach to Site-swaps

This exercise is adaptable to use with children, young people and adults. Use it after a warm up at the beginning of a juggling lesson. You can progress from easy to more complex throws.

In groups of 5, one person is chosen as a leader. Each group has a big piece of paper, with a drawing in the shape of a person. The group draws over this whilst listening to the leader with their eyes closed, taking turns with the marker pen. The leader gives instructions, imagining a juggling throw that can be done with one ball as they do so- directing the lines that they are drawing- up, right, down, left, circle, line, diagonal…. There should be one line per person in the group (5) Each line then represents one throw or movement.

The group analyses the lines, and allocates a site-swap number to each one.
Everyone in the group chooses one number and practices the throw associated with it. Then the group brings the throws together and creates a choreography to perform to the others.

Example of a drawing and numbers

As an LCL element, this exercise develops the **function of content**, stimulating and motivating the student to develop skills for their personal learning. Using creative ways to introduce site-swap juggling, little by little creating their own learning path.



Juggling exercise 2

Sharing Responsibility for Learning

At the beginning of the lesson, ask the group some questions, such as:

1. What can you do that will make you happy at the end of a juggling session?
2. What do you want to learn or practice today?

Group people together around similar answers.
Give the groups time to juggle together for around 20 minutes with the aim of achieving their answers.

After 20 minutes, ask the group if they are happy or need anything or want to show something.

This structure of the lesson means that everybody is very active, playing and learning with different levels and abilities, and developing peer-to-peer learning. This exercise demonstrates how we can share responsibility for learning.



AERIAL

Aerial exercise 1

Creating more awareness

Start with a warm up, mobilising the joints, focussing on which parts of the body will be used for aerial. Each participant taking it in turns to suggest a movement. Leave 5 minutes free time at the end for individual warm ups.
Split into small groups.

On silks, suggest to the students:

Climb
as high as you can, put a scarf to mark your highest point. Move the scarf as you climb higher

Invert
Take a ball between the feet, turn upside down, pass the ball between the silks to another person.

Explore
From a pike, explore different movements/positions

Ask them to organise themselves around the space, making their own rules. Allow them time to practice, while motivating and supporting the group.
This framework provides the opportunity to explore, introducing other circus props and combining them with aerial, to develop their technique.
After the exercise, you can reflect with the group on what was most effective in their practice and what can be more effective next time- a good assessment tool.

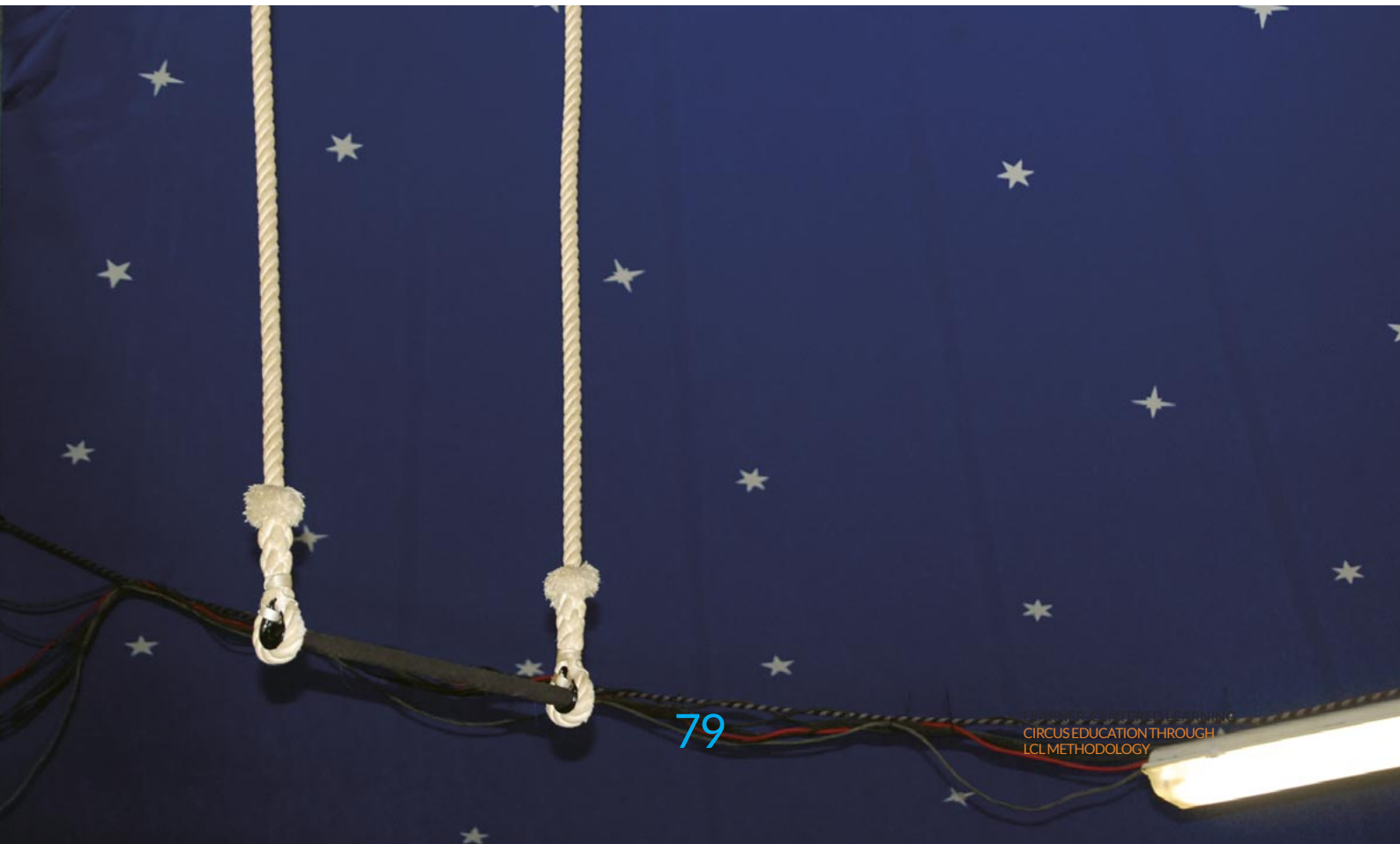


Aerial exercise 2

Teaching Styles and the Role of the teacher

To explore using different leading and teaching styles, you can create 3 spaces, and have a different teaching role in each space (clown, nurse, police). You can also try experimenting with VAK learning styles. For example:

- Teach a footlock on silks by demonstrating the trick, using visual learning, without giving an explanation.
- Practice hocks (hanging by knees) on a trapeze bar by repetition. Embedding the skill in the body through movement and repetition supports kinaesthetic learning



ACROBATICS

Exercise 1

Creative Warm up using the VAK model

As a fun and creative general warm up, you can play with a shoe, demonstrating different movements with the shoe to the group They then try to copy the movement with their body (jumping, rolling, turning...).
It can be really interesting to see how the group understands the instructions by seeing how the shoe moves and interpreting the movement with their bodies.

You can add another shoe, and then the group works in pairs, doing different actions and interacting together.

You can find more about VAK and VARK on Chapter 2.1.1



Exercise 2

Creating Space to be more Creative and Aware of your Body

As specific warm up, still in pairs, suggest crossing the space, carrying your partner: first with a tense body position, 2nd with a relaxed position, 3rd, in the most graceful way possible.

Just by giving prompts such as these, each pair will find their own creative way of moving.



BALANCE

Exercise 1

Sharing Experience and Peer Education

Using a globe and working in pairs, try doing some creative research, holding hands, exploring different ways of moving and experimenting in a safe way.

Bring the group together, put the globes in a line and ask them to cross all of the globes with the help of the rest of the group. You can block, or put the globes on mats to make this safer. You can add technical progressions depending on the groups level, for example jumping over the globe (with helpers).



Exercise 2

Using Creativity to be Aware of Safety doing Balance

Set up different balance objects around the space and rings on the floor. Students can choose one object, something they can carry with one hand which is not sharp (but not a balance object) They then choose a ring and step into it with the object. You ask the participants to do different actions:

- As soon as the music start try to balance your object with the right hand without leaving the ring
- Try to move with the object while balancing, walk to a free ring.
- Use the colour of the rings to divide the group. Everyone stands in a ring: White goes to rola bola, red to the globe, blue to the tightwire

The space is divided in 3 stations: rola bola, tight wire, and globe.

There are TASKS for each station:

- Balance however you want, but without using your feet.
- Discuss with your teacher how can you stay safe with your feet on the balancing prop
- Each group shows their ideas and talks about how to perform them safely

Many thanks to all of the people who took part in the LCL exchanges for providing these activities. We are very grateful for your efforts!! Thanks for sharing!! To find out who took part in the exchanges follow this link.



3 Experimenting with teaching styles

In chapter 2.1, The Role of the Teacher, we referred to different learning styles- the VAK model.
This model is useful as an indication of the % of types of learners that you have in a group, or the type of learner you are personally. It can also inform how to facilitate a lesson or an exercise.
It is interesting to analyse your teaching to see which learning styles you usually use, and to expand on them and use a variety of styles so you help all of your students to develop their multiple intelligences and support their different ways of learning.
Here is an exercise for circus trainers, to put this into practice:
in your next circus lesson, choose one of the three styles below and stick to it for a whole exercise.

VISUAL	KINAESTHETIC	AUDITORY
Without words or sounds	**Without showing anything**	**Without having physical contact**
Just showing The trainer demonstrates with the body or other props in silence Without speaking or touching	Just guiding the student's body The trainer does not speak or show with their own body Without speaking or showing	Just talking The trainer does not move Without touching or showing instructions



Try to select on exercise do you know, and try to explain the same exercise using the 3 ways, with one or more circus techniques.

VISUAL	KINAESTHETIC	AUDITORY

Some examples proposed by the participants:

Auditory

- Listen to instructions, with eyes closed, then carry out the instruction as you have understood it. Make a video of the exercise, and then watch as a group. When we did this on the exchange, we could see how everybody reacted differently, despite hearing the same words. An interesting example of how we perceive things to be compared to reality!

Visual

- The trainer demonstrates an aerial trick without explanation. This can be repeated as many times as is needed.

Kinaesthetic

- A student is on the trapeze, and the trainer asks them to move parts of their body as they touch them. As an additional challenge, ask them to close their eyes and find a way to get onto the trapeze and sit on the bar.

On chapter 2.1.2, we discussed teaching styles. Some people respond better to one style or another, and to help them with their learning process it is important to combine them.
For example, in the balance session we suggested that you organise two sessions, one using active and the other using directive models, then to and analyse them with the group. See if there are ways to transform the exercise from a directive approach to an active one.

DIRECTIVE	ACTIVE

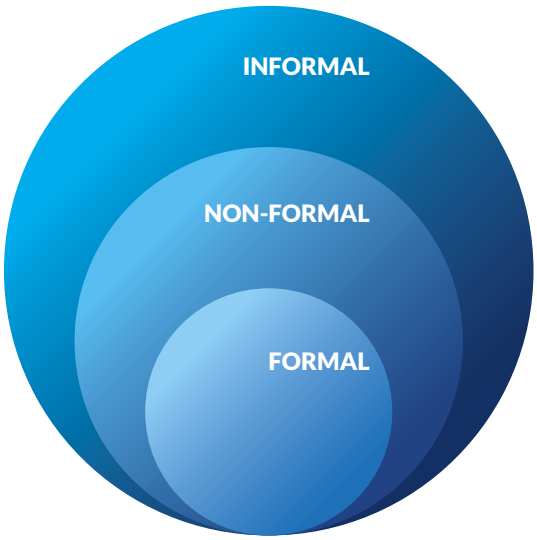
4 Key competences

The Council of the European Union adopted a recommendation on key competences for life-long learning in May 2018. The recommendation identifies eight key competences essential to citizens for personal fulfilment, a healthy and sustainable lifestyle, employability, active citizenship and social inclusion.
They are used in a formal education context, developed in the curriculum, and also in non-formal education, developed in through activities.

The 8 competences are:

1. Communication in the **mother tongue**, which is the ability to express and interpret concepts, thoughts, feelings, facts and opinions in both oral and written form (listening, speaking, reading and writing) and to interact linguistically in an appropriate and creative way in a full range of societal and cultural contexts
2. Communication in **foreign languages**, which involves, in addition to the main skill dimensions of communication in the mother tongue, mediation and intercultural understanding. The level of proficiency depends on several factors and the capacity for listening, speaking, reading and writing.
3. **Mathematical competence and basic competences in science and technology.** Mathematical competence is the ability to develop and apply mathematical thinking in order to solve a range of problems in everyday situations, with the emphasis being placed on process, activity and knowledge. Basic competences in science and technology refer to the mastery, use and application of knowledge and methodologies that explain the natural world. These involve an understanding of the changes caused by human activity and the responsibility of each individual as a citizen.
4. **Digital competence** involves the confident and critical use of information society technology (IST) and thus basic skills in information and communication technology (ICT).
5. **Learning to learn** is related to learning, the ability to pursue and organise one's own learning, either individually or in groups, in accordance with one's own needs, and awareness of methods and opportunities.
6. **Social and civic competences.** Social competence refers to personal, interpersonal and intercultural competence and all forms of behaviour that equip individuals to participate in an effective and constructive way in social and working life. It is linked to personal and social well-being. An understanding of codes of conduct and customs in the different environments in which individuals operate is essential. Civic competence, and particularly knowledge of social and political concepts and structures (democracy, justice, equality, citizenship and civil rights), equips individuals to engage in active and democratic participation; needed by those establishing or contributing to social or commercial activity. This should include awareness of ethical values and promote good governance.
7. **Sense of initiative and entrepreneurship** is the ability to turn ideas into action. It involves creativity, innovation and risk taking, as well as the ability to plan and manage projects in order to achieve objectives. The individual is aware of the context of his/her work and is able to seize opportunities that arise. It is the foundation for acquiring more specific skills and knowledge.
8. **Cultural awareness and expression**, which involves appreciation of the importance of the creative importance of ideas, experiences and emotions in a range of media such as music, literature and visual and performing arts.

These key competences are all interdependent, and the emphasis is with the **Principles that Guide the Teachers**: Critical thinking, Creativity, Initiative, Problem solving, Risk assessment, Decision taking and constructive management of feelings.
We practice all of these competences in Circus- Lifelong, learner-centered and at a European Level. We can view these competences as a way of connecting formal and non-formal education, and developing interdisciplinary learning. Circus pedagogy encompasses many values and goals found in education. Circus education could be regarded as a powerful tool to transform teaching styles.



Informal
Informal learning is learning that occurs in daily life, in the family, in the workplace, in communities and through interests and activities of individuals.

Non-formal
Non-formal learning is learning that has been acquired in addition or alternatively to formal learning. In some cases, it is also structured according to educational and training arrangements, but more flexible. It usually takes place in community-based settings, the workplace and through the activities of civil society organisations.

Formal
Formal learnIng takes place in education and training institutions, is recognised by relevant national authorities and leads to diplomas and qualifications. Formal learning is structured according to educational arrangements such as curricula, qualifications and teaching- learning requirements.

Circus pedagogy can be a lifelong learning process developing key competences both within its practice, and also impacting on other educational realms. Circus pedagogy merits recognition from educational and governmental institutions as a powerful tool for intervention in education. Artistic education deserves to be recognised alongside mainstream education for the support it can offer to children and young people in their educational and social development. And it should be able to request and receive adequate funding to flourish.



To explore the competencies, here is a suggestion for you.
Discuss the competences with your group, and in smaller groups or pairs. Ask them to create an activity (using juggling, or another circus technique) choosing 2 key competences. The activity can be an exercise game or technical progression that helps to develop the competence. Ask them to write it down, and then to do it with the group. The group has to guess which competences were chosen.

Competence

Description

Circus Technique

Here an example that came from the exchange participants:

Competence *Cultural awareness (8) and foreign language (2).*

Description

Using one ball, can you write the word "Thanks" in your language? Practice it, show it to some- one else, then copy their 'thanks'. Introduce something from your culture: a song, a dance or a poem. One person dances/sings/recites while the other juggles.

Circus Technique

Juggling

5 Working groups

As the exchanges were based on experiential learning, we wanted to work with the group and use their expertise, to explore all of the landscape of LCL and circus.
Passing through theory into practice, we wanted to connect the principles with pedagogical development to improve circus skills, and let the group feel, create and decide how LCL can be integrated into circus lessons.
Divided into working groups, each group created a "TRAILER", a short film, to present to the other groups. There were 4 groups in total.
The task to be filmed was to prepare a 30 min. lesson, being able to plan and lead together, with a link to one of the 5 points of the checklist.

Thanks to this working group, we produced lots of good content, some of which is contained in this toolkit.
You can see the trailers on the **LCL website**.

After the presentation of each trailer, we facilitated a discussion with questions for both leaders and participants. To make sure everyone had an opportunity to speak, each person was given 3 juggling balls, one of which was surrendered each time they spoke. They were also able to gift their ball/ speaking turn to another.



Here some excerpts from the discussions after the “Trailer”:

LEADERS

We asked how they planned their session:

> “We started with a question – what participants would like to find in the session. We have di- vided two groups – a movement and a juggling / following our own goals. Everything was really short – just to get a feeling – this was just a trailer.”

> “We wanted participants to discover themselves what is the danger of the props. The content did not serve to teach techniques but awareness of their own safety. They may use it in a different context.”

> “The idea is not to develop the skill, the movement (content) but competences that will help a student to arrive to these techniques.”

> “Content is everything that is in the class. The function – what do you use it for?”

> “We were trying to switch teacher roles depending on the moment and trust in our character, trying to be ourselves with the awareness of these roles.”

> “We tried to integrate many learning methods. We came to the conclusion that we will not focus specifically on them, they will organically flow out of the process.”

PARTICIPANTS

we asked what they felt and observed.

> "My frustration limits for juggling is quite low so usually I do not want to burden anyone with that. I have realised that taking responsibility for learning something you do not really like is very challenging."

> "I find this a key thing with a balance of power – how much framing do I need to give so the bodies and minds go exploring. If you do not say enough – people keep discussing what they are going to do. How much input, frame, freedom do I need to give?"

> "I appreciate how was used the group, skill and peer learning in risk management. It is unusual to do that. We tend to think that if we make it more open there is more risk."

> "I felt that a more directive style of teaching has created a safe environment for me to learn, as a real beginner aerialist."

There are many occasions to use directive or active ways of teaching, to serve all students. Some students develop themselves in an active way and others need a directive approach; it is good to have a combination of both for different circumstances.
So in conclusion… use the recipe that you like the most, try to mix all of the ingredients and use LCL in circus at the time that feels right.

The feedback from the exchange were very positive from all the participants, and they wrote some nice words, such as:

> "The experience of LCL has improved our way to teach, with new perspectives to see the teacher, empowering ourselves, using pedagogical models correlated to practice, and seeing different ways to lead a circus lesson. Lots of inspiration and freedom with the frame."



We played a lot, and we had lots of fun, lots of discussions and discoveries. And we realised that LCL methodologies can help students to be protagonists on their own learning path.

Circus education is not far away from LCL, it is already embedded there and being used whether consciously or unconsciously.

Throughout the project we had the opportunity to investigate it more; to question how we lead and teach circus, consider the wellbeing of our students and to focus on how we can motivate, support and empower them to be aware of what they can become and the value that they already possess.

THANK YOU,
MERCI,
GRAZIE,
GRACIAS,
DANKE,
DZIĘKI,
KIITOS,
AITÄH,
BEDANKT,
HVALA...



PART 5
REFERENCES



In the following pages you will find a bibliography and sitography which has nourished the entire research work and which can be useful to you to deepen these topics and study more in detail what interested you the most.

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PART 6
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

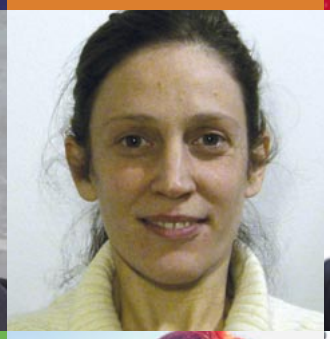
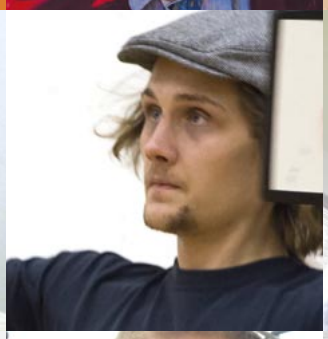
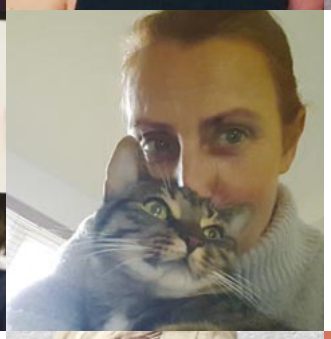
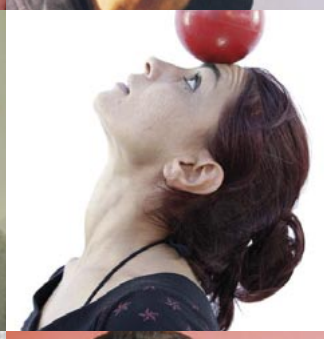








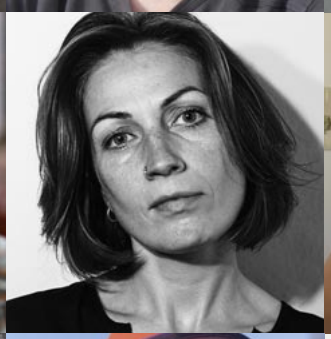
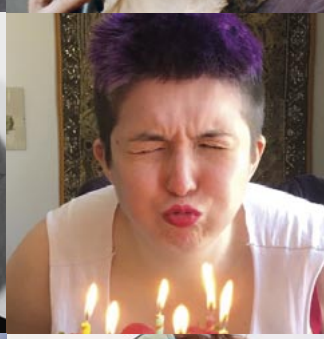


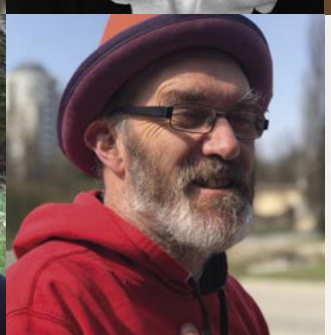




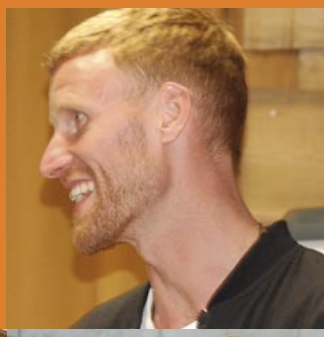




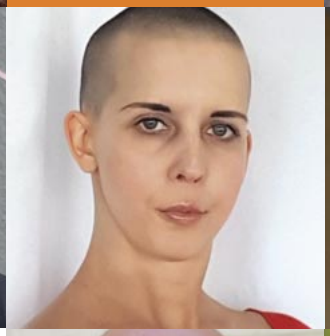
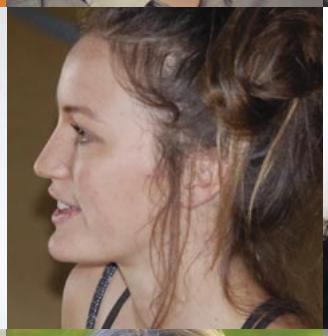
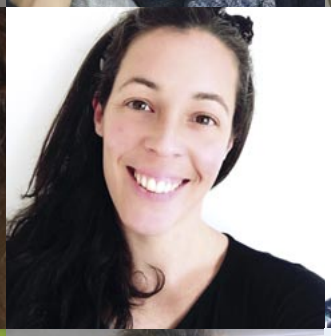



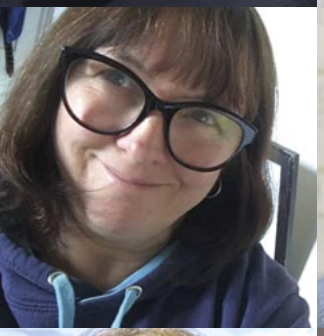

The contents of this handbook originates from a collective work which has involved many people during the two years of the LCL project. We wish to thank all of them for their contributions and here we include a full list and a portrait gallery of the expert trainers, managing staff and participants who took part in the process.
Included in this section is a presentation of the partners and major contributors who supported, ran and coordinated the LCL project, a list of partecipants and short bios dedicated to the pedagogical team of expert trainers who constantly led the process through its final steps and wrote this LCL handbook.

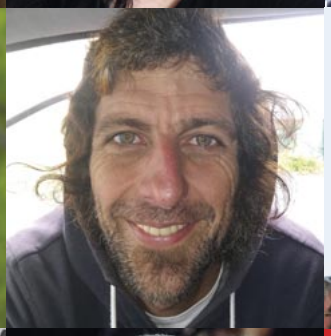


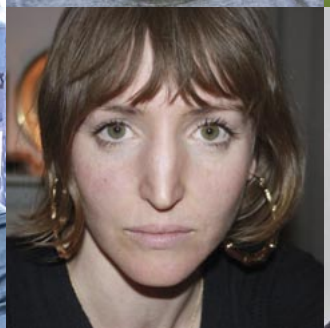








BAG Zirkuspädagogik (DEU)

bag-zirkus.de zirkus-vielfalt.de

The BAG Zirkuspädagogik e.V. is the association of children's and youth circus groups, regional youth circus associations, further circus education institutions and circus teachers. It represents the interests of children and young people and networks the youthcircus institutions as part of cultural education in Germany.Circus offers reach more than one million children and young people every year. They range from movement arts such as acrobatics, juggling and balancing to theatrical forms of expression, dance, music and modern forms of movement. The statue purpose is to improve the work of the circus schools and the circus teachers. Therefore, the BAG has developed standards of the formation of circus teachers and young circus trainers. Since 2018, BAG Zirkuspädagogik e.V. has been one of the 24 programme partners of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in the programme "Alliances for Education". The task as a supporter is to forward the federal funds to local circus projects and thus enable circus education projects nationwide.

Circuscentrum (BEL)

circuscentrum.be

The Flemish Centre for Circus Arts is the hub of circus in Flanders. It contributes in every respect to the development and quality of the Flemish circus arts. The Circuscentrum is both a knowledge hub and an anchor for all circus arts in Flanders.
Circus artists - amateurs or professionals, the general public and organizers from different sectors can call on Circuscentrum. It aims at optimal development opportunities and a public acceptance of the culture of circus arts. The field of youth circuses forms an important bases for the circus scenery in Flanders. The Circuscentre supports a network of 18 member youth circuses. One of the main objectives is to initiate training and exchanging for quality improvement. Other supporting measures such as: to create playing opportunities for the youth circuses, lending service for circus material, organisation and developing support (accountancy, legislation information, financial support, etc.).

Circuspunt

Former Circomundo
(NLD)

circuspunt.nl

Circuspunt was founded in 2019 to be the Dutch national circus umbrella organisation. In the foundation it combined the branch umbrellas for traveling circuses, youth circus and circus culture. As the national institution, it supports and encourages the overall development of the sector and represents circus interests to external parties.
Circuspunt offers a platform that unites and connects makers, businesses, festivals, theatres, schools, youth circuses, artists and circus studios. There are several expertise groups that tackle specific aspects of the field, such as talent development, youth circus, traveling circus and artists and makers.
The expertise group for youth circus focuses on the development of education and the relation to the rest of the circus field.



Circus Works
(GBR)

circusworks.org

CircusWorks aims to make a stronger, more connected Youth Circus sector and is made up of representatives from youth circus' around the UK. Since 2011 we have been creating festivals, conferences and networking opportunities to develop the future of youth circus. We provide opportunities to exchange training and good practice for young people and practitioners nationwide, and are the UK's representing body for European Youth Circus and are a member of EYCO.

Eesti Kaasaegse Tsirkuse Arenduskeskus
(EST)

tsirkusekeskus.ee

Eesti Kaasaegse Tsirkuse Arenduskeskus, Estonian Contemporary Circus Development Center NGO, was founded on September 12th 2014. The Estonian circus centre aims to promote and support the mission of the modern circus excellence and also high level of recognition at home and abroad. The 12 members are individual circus artists as well as circus schools and circus related unions. The circus centre promotes circus art in Estonia in various ways from grass root to aristic performances. The biggest event organised under ECDC is the Showcase for Baltic Professional Circus EPICIRQ.

FEECSE

Federacion Española de Escuelas de Circo Socio Educativo
(ESP)

feecse.es

FEECSE is the federation of training projects on introduction to the circus and social circus. It is formed by schools, cultural associations and educational projects. The FEECSE was founded in 2013 to create a national network for meeting and educational exchange between circus schools and the implementation of new projects together. Federation members are circus trainers, performers, educators, with many years of experience in the circus teaching field. At the moment, the FEECSE gathers 36 circus projects from all over Spain: preparatory circus schools, social integration projects which use circus as an educational tool, associations working with extraordinary people and amateur circus projects for children and young people.

FFEC

Fédération Française des Ecoles de Cirque
(FRA)
ffec.asso.fr

The «Fédération Française des Ecoles de Cirque» (FFEC) is a network of circus schools. It was founded in 1988 and currently has 151 members located all around France. The organisation works in collaboration with varied partners (public Departments, culture professionals, circus schools…) so as to provide a high quality circus training. The FFEC bases its quality on the founding precept "circus is an art, which is taught in respect for oneself and others". It is about, for the Federation, to obtain guaranties in the field of health, security, pedagogy, training, administrative functioning, conditions of practice (place, materials,…) and link with artistic. In addition, the Federation takes an active part as well in the structuring of diploma for circus arts teachers (at first an intern diploma, as there were no national diploma, and secondly the Federation joined the creation of two national diplomas)

FYCA

Finnish Youth Circus Association
(FIN)
snsl.fi

FYCA, national umbrella organisation of youth circuses in Finland, founded in 1991, promotes amateur youth circus activities and aims at providing better facilities for youth circuses, circus amateurs and circus teachers. The association brings together both amateurs and professionals and develops possibilities for children and young people to take part in circus activities. In order to reach its mission, FYCA also educates trainers, organizes events, courses and educational workshops and produces educational materials. A youth circus festival is organised every second year and it serves both as a meeting place, a training and performing opportunity. Main focuses in last years have been circus trainer education as well as increasing the accessibility of circus. FYCA also networks internationally being a founding member of EYCO and of the Baltic-Nordic Circus Network.

Sieć Pedagogiki Cyrku

Polish Youth Circus Network
(POL)
pedagogikacyrku.pl

Sieć Pedagogiki Cyrku (SPC or Polish Youth Circus Network) is an umbrella organisation founded in 2019 as the result of a three years long process of consolidating Polish NGOs and individuals engaged in circus pedagogy. Currently membership counts 6 NGOs and 20 individuals and its goal is recognising and answering the needs of educators who implement circus pedagogy methods in the formal, informal and non-formal education environment. In SPC's understanding circus pedagogy is focused more on the developmental and therapeutic potential of circus arts than the artistic effect. Activities run under the umbrella serve the goals of intercultural and intergenerational integration, social exclusion prevention and psycho-motoric development of people of varying ages, sexes, ethnicity and economical backgrounds. In order to stay up-to-date with European standards and also to cultivate the values of intercultural cooperation SPC is an active member of EYCO.

Giocolieri e Dintorni

Progetto Circosfera
(ITA)
circosfera.it

ASD Giocolieri e Dintorni, founded in 2002, works as a national umbrella association for promoting contemporary circus, youth circus (CircoSfera programme) and social circus (AltroCirco programme) in Italy. Together with publishing and distributing the quarterly Juggling Magazine, it has been specifically taking care of promoting youth circus gaining istitutional recognition from the Italian Ministry of Culture; printing and distributing publications specifically dealing with youth circus; holding entry level stages for youth circus teachers; organizing annual national meetings for youth circus teachers; networking of national youth circus schools and teachers; advanced training for youth circus teachers since 2006; partecipating to dozens of europen exchanges; representing the Italian field in NICE and EYCO

Cirkokrog

Slovensko zdruzenje za cirkusko pedagogik
(SVN)
cirkokrog.com

CirkoKrog Association is a group of circus educators who have been developing the circus as a medium for working with people for many years. Cirko Krog began when students of social pedagogy became acquainted with the youth circus, which has been recognized in Europe for many years as an effective medium of working with people. After several years of research on their own, they founded the Slovensko združenje za cirkuško pedagogiko cirkokrog in 2005. Within the association we develop circus pedagogy as a form of pedagogical work and non-formal education of children, young people and adults. Over the years, the CirkoKrog family has been joined and co-created by diverse people – jugglers, acrobats and artists from Slovenia and other countries. The binder was, and still is, a common development of circus skills and the development of using circus as a medium when working with people.

Managing staff and Expert Trainers

DEU
Wolfgang Pruisken, Tobias Lippek, Juergen Lippek, Sonni Ossapofsky

BEL
Peter Smets, Steven Desanghere, Mieke Gielen

NLD
Soesja Pijlman, Marjolein Wagter

GBR
Lynn Carroll, Leah Carroll, Pete Duncan

EST
Terje Bernadt

ESP
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FRA
Alain Taillard, Leïla Medejel, Raphaël Vigier

FIN
Katja Timlin, Evianna Lehtipuu,

POL
Ana Cukrowska

ITA
Adolfo Rossomando, Tommaso Negri

SVN
Kristina Debenjak

EYCO

European Youth Circus Organisation

eyco.org

EYCO dates back to 1999 when a small group of people thought about the need to create a European Circus Union. In 2005, this informal group organised the very first Network of International Circus Exchange (N.I.C.E.) Seminar. The idea was to bring together circus schools and national umbrellas to start discussions about creating a formal organisation. During subsequent N.I.C.E Seminars, the ideas started to become a reality and plans began to form.
These plans culminated in the creating of a first working group tasked to form an "Umbrella of Umbrella's". The concept of building a formal organisation was proposed at the N.I.C.E. Seminar in Amsterdam (2009). Soon after the European Youth Circus Organisation (EYCO), a non-governmental not-for-profit organisation, was founded. Formal statutes were registered in Paris and signed in London on November 9th, 2009. The EYCO office was then registered at the address of the French National Umbrella (FFEC).

The N.I.C.E. meetings were founded on openness, sharing and exchanging practices providing a place where everybody could have the opportunity to join, explore and exploit the benefits of having such a platform. This, therefore, became the first goal of EYCO.
In 2009 the EYCO Declaration of Youth Circus emerged as: "Circus is a multidisciplinary, multicultural art form and a means of non-formal learning based on and teaching respect for oneself and others. The Keywords are solidarity, equality, social citizenship, diversity and creativity. EYCO supports the ideal that circus is, for everyone, an easy, accessible tool for creative, personal and social development.

EYCO's goals are to:

- support national organisations using circus as a tool for personal, creative, artistic and social development
- support quality improvement and structural development
- make information accessible to the those working in the field and mental & institutional lobby
- network with those in related working fields and direct partners
- promote youth circus with the wider general public
- stimulate intercultural dialogue
- stimulate research and facilitate publication of facts and figures
- stimulate recognition of circus as an art form in all European countries
- serve the function of the European representative platform

After EYCO was established, youth circuses in several other European countries decided to form their own National Umbrellas and then to apply to become members of EYCO. These National Umbrellas can be very different in size and in the way they operate. This diversity has become one of EYCO's main strengths in nurturing continuous learning and sharing experiences. EYCO supports members of the European wide youth circus community including more than half a million young circus practitioners, over 2000 teachers and around 200 circus schools and circus centres.

EYCO currently has 13 members:

1. **BAG Zirkuspädagogik**
   (Germany)
   bag-zirkus.de
2. **Cirkokrog**
   Slovensko zdruzenje za cirkusko pedagogik
   (Slovenia)
   cirkokrog.com
3. **Circuscentrum**
   (Belgium, Flemish part)
   circuscentrum.be
4. **Circuspunt**
   (The Netherlands)
   circuspunt.nl
5. **Circus Works**
   UK Youth Circus Network
   (Great Britain)
   circusworks.org
6. **DUBAL**
   (Denmark)
   dubal.dk
7. **Eesti Kaasaegse Tsirkuse Arenduskeskus**
   (Estonia)
   tsirkusekeskus.ee
8. **FFEC**
   Fédération Française des Ecoles de cirque
   (France)
   ffec.asso.fr
9. **FEECSE**
   Federacion Española de Escuelas de Circo Socio Educativo
   (Spain)
   feecse.es
10. **FYCA**
    Finnish Youth Circus Association
    (Finland)
    snsl.fi
11. **Foundation Miasto Projekt**
    (Poland)
    carnival.com.pl
12. **Giocolieri e Dintorni**
    Circosfera programme
    (Italy)
    circosfera.it
13. **ÖBVZ**
    Österreichischer BundesVerband für Zirkuspädagogik
    (Austria)
    zirkusnetzwerk.at



EACEA

Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency
Erasmus+ programme
eacea.ec.europa.eu

Erasmus+ is the EU's programme to support education, training, youth and sport in Europe. It offered a life changing experience to more than 10 million participants over the last 30 years, and will continue offering opportunities for a wide variety of individuals and organisations for the next seven-year lifecycle (2021-2027).
The aim of Erasmus+ is to support the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, to contribute to sustainable growth, quality jobs and social cohesion, to drive innovation and to strengthen European identity and active citizenship.
In the period 2021-2027 Erasmus+ will continue building on its successful and broad experience focusing on three horizontal priorities: inclusion and diversity, digital transformation, environmental sustainability

In particular, the Programme will support

1. school development and excellent teaching;
2. the Copenhagen process on vocational education and training;
3. the renewed EU agenda for higher education and the Bologna process;
4. the renewed EU agenda for adult learning;
5. the renewed EU youth strategy; and
6. the EU work plan for sport.

Specific issues tackled by the programme include:

- Encouraging young people to take part in European democracy
- Promoting adult learning, especially for new skills and skills required by the labour market
- Contribute to reducing unemployment, especially among young people
- Supporting innovation, cooperation and reform
- Reducing early school leaving
- Promoting cooperation and mobility with the EU's partner countries
- Developing the European dimension in sport, in particular grassroots sport

Erasmus+ offers opportunities for:

- Individuals to spend a mobility period abroad and to receive linguistic training,
- organisations to collaborate in project partnerships in the fields of academic and vocational training, schools, adult learning, youth and European sport events.

Erasmus+ also supports teaching, research, networking and policy debate on EU topics.
Erasmus+ includes a strong international dimension: cooperation with Partner Countries notably in the field of higher education and youth, through institutional partnerships, youth cooperation and mobility worldwide.

Authors and contributes



Tommaso
Negri
Content chief editor

Confused by a degree in philosophy, he clears his minds in the circus pedagogical formation at the Ecole de Cirque de Bruxelles. He teaches circus around the world, believing and spreading the transformative power of circus, also as trainer for trainers for Cirque du Soleil. Back in Italy, starts working with Giocolieri & Dintorni, as pedagogical trainer in the Circosfera program, and he develops the "FiX", the Italian Social Circus Training Program. He has already collaborated with EYCO as pedagogical coordinator of the CATE training. Today he's juggling between the direction of AltroCirco, programme for Social Circus development and networking in Italy, and the management of his circus school in Siena "Badabam".



Andrea
Martínez Calzado
Content editor

When she discovered the circus world at the age 19, a big revolution came out. She discovered a tool for social intervention and a way of life. First as a sociocultural animator, after studying in different circus schools, also as an circus artist and musician, now she is focused as circus trainer and artistic direction, trainer for trainers and Social Circus projects. Manager/Coordinator of Circ Menut and Encirca't, a circus school near Barcelona. Networking with APCC at the training commission (Professional organization of catalan circus), with La Central del Circ, with the Spanish Umbrella, FEECSE, coordinating the national training for trainers, and with EYCO in the pedagogical team. She's curious, active, critical, passionate... Sometimes less, sometimes more. Always growing and believing in circus power.



Steven
Desanghere
Contributor

Twenty years ago Steven Desanghere was bitten by the circus bug and he has since then taught hundreds of classes, run numerous workshops and social programmes, worked with various 'special target groups', started the neighbourhood circusproject at Circusplaneet vzw, in Gent, Belgium. Interested in the art of working with groups he worked a lot around community circus initiatives, and wrote a booklet on it: Look at me! In recent years he facilitates EYCO projects and gives many trainings for Circus trainers, all around Europe. He likes juggling, reading, playing, discovering.

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2^ EXCHANGE FRANCE

Toulouse 9-13 march 2020
Esacto Le Lido / La Graineire

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Stichting Circaso
ROBIN SOCASAU
Lido

Thanks for all your work and generosity!!






NIKE






SHOULD I START WITH DIRECTIVE TEACHING OR WITH ACTIVE STUDENTS ?
DOES CIRCUS NEED ASSESSMENT? (or just show?)
P
FORMAL EDUCATION
TEENAGERS GETTING INSPIRED BY INSTAGRAM - SKILLS. HOW TO REACT AS A TEACHER ?
DISCUSS MORE ABOUT ELEPHANTS