

Evaluation of the international conference “Creative Approach to Teacher Education”

International conference “Creative Approach in Teacher Education” was held from 28th – 30th September in Požega (The Republic of Croatia). The conference was held in the Town Theatre and in the primary school Julie Kempf, which hosted the conference. At the end of the conference participants were given an evaluation questionnaire in which they were suppose to express their opinion about the conference through four questions. The questionnaire referred to the participants’ prevailing emotions, their attitudes about the conference expressed through the semantic differential scale, new things that they have learned at the conference that are important for their profession and situations when they have felt creative at the conference. Evaluation sheets were filled in and submitted by 67 participants of the conference in total.

How participants felt at the conference

Tab 1. How did participants feel during this conference?

Rank	Emotion	F
1	Curious	46
2	Nice	40
3,5	Encouraged	31
3,5	Proud	31
5	Happy	26
6	Grateful	24
7	Excited	21
8	Important	15
9	Elated	12
10	Irritated	2
11	Bored	1
12	Confused	1
13	Worried	1

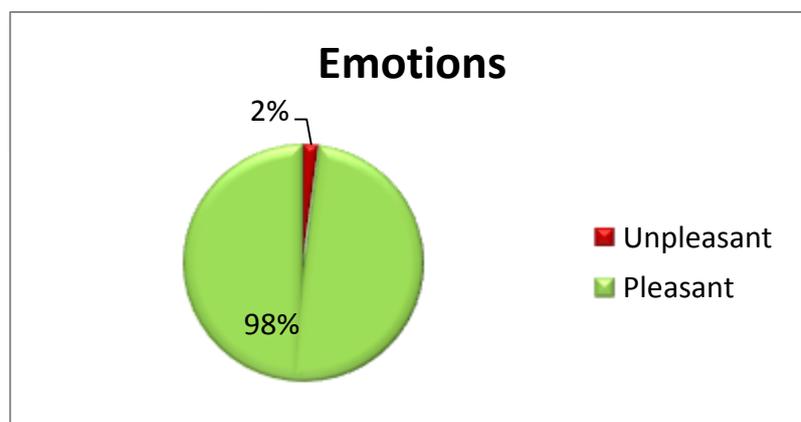


Figure 1. Relation between pleasant and unpleasant emotions.

Here are some typical explanations for why they felt that way:

"The atmosphere was very pleasant, encouraging, relaxing. Positive people around us. All of us even a bit smiling, and then everything is easier. Hosts – convivial, good organisers. Excellent organisation in the school. All in all, excellent work – straight A+. BRAVO!"

"I felt proud because I had a chance to hold a workshop at this level (an international conference) and had the opportunity to express creativity my way. I enjoyed all workshops. My wings have become stronger and I'm going forward."

"Because I felt:
The smell, shine, feeling of FREEDOM...
abundance of deep LOVE...
positive COMMUNICATION...
... 😊"

"The programme was rich, carried out in a creative way, it had all the participants engaged in the activities."

"I am proud because my knowledge, work and achievement have been recognised again. Certain workshops and plenums have encouraged me and given me strength so I can further refine my work. I am grateful for the chance and opportunity to participate at the conference and share my experiences with other colleagues."

"...All in all, this is the most vibrant and the most interesting conference that I have ever been to, and I'm also glad it is an international one, that is nice."

"I feel elated by finding so many educators who share my values, who have the courage and intention of developing education and sharing the journey. I am very grateful for this opportunity and am excited and now curious to see how we might continue to go forward."

"I am grateful for having been given a chance to take part in the conference. Thank you Ružica. I am happy because the time spent at the conference was relaxed, creative and very useful."

"Perhaps my emotions would be best described as nice, or, simply, I feel as a member of one big benevolent and warm family."

Attitude towards the conference

Participants have expressed their attitude towards the conference through semantic differential scale. The results obtained display that the participants, on average, find the conference very important, good, successful, optimistic, positive, active and warm. Participants have, on average, chosen the positive side of the scale, showing tendency towards very positive notions.

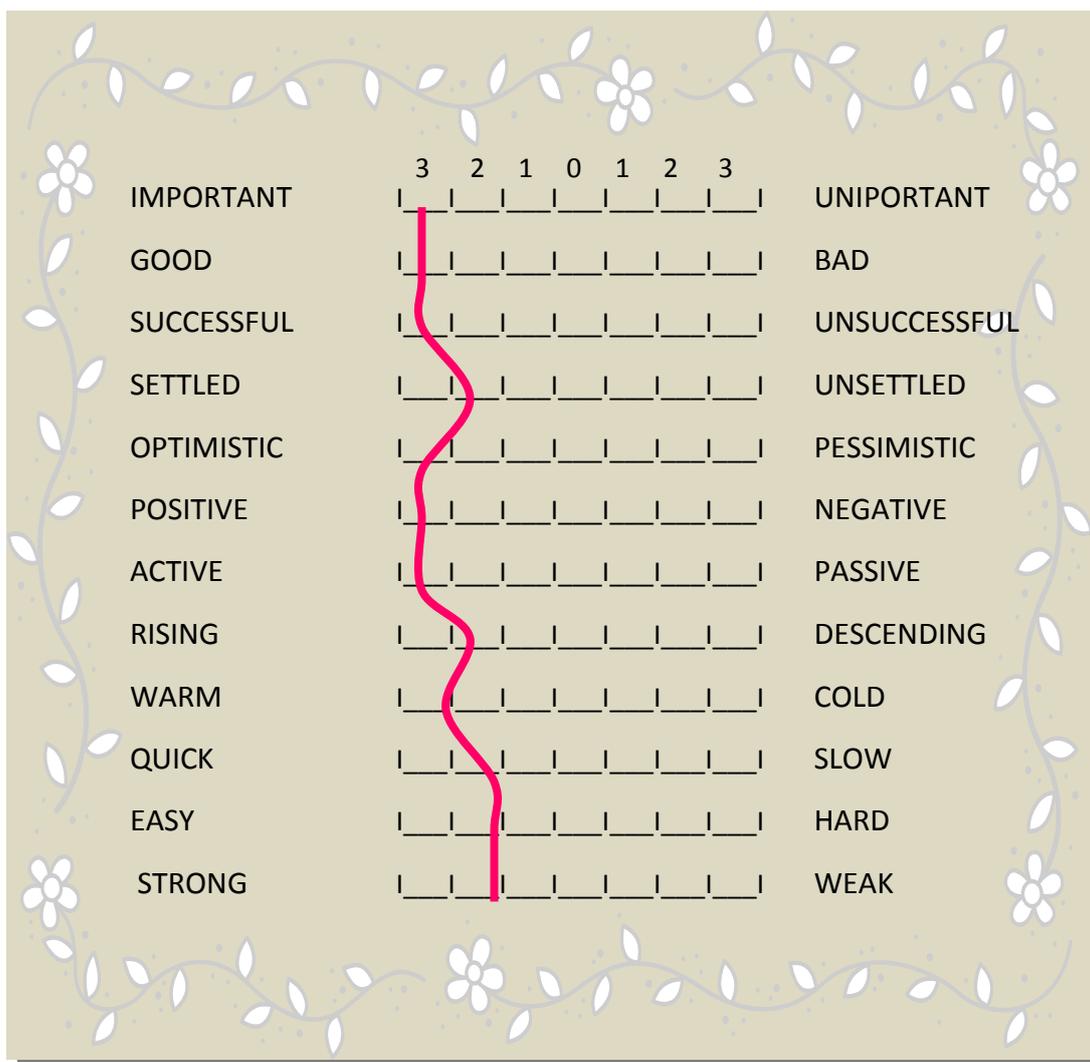


Image 1. Semantic differential scale.

And here are the things with which the participants were very pleased. We have classified all the answers into five categories: atmosphere, activities, organisation, participants and usefulness (Table 2).

Table 2. Things with which the participants were very pleased.

Category	Answer	N
Atmosphere	Welcome – pleasant and encouraging atmosphere, relaxed manner, humour	20
	Požega - town, trip, dinner and party in Kutjevo	10
Activities	Workshops	25
	Topics	8
	Diversity of activities	5
	6 hats – the song, performance, affirmation of De Bono method	5
	Round tables – the quality of discussions	4
	Interactive plenum	2
	World Cafe	2

Category	Answer	N
Organisation	Organisation	17
	New approach to the content presentation – interesting ways of work	7
	Exchange of experience – keeping pace with other countries	4
	International profile	3
	Idea and the carrying out	1
	The conference dynamics	1
	The conference as the basis for future cooperation	1
	Participants creatively divided into groups – cooperation with the people not known from before	1
Participants	Positive, motivated, active, imaginative participants	13
	Interesting and creative lecturers:	11
	Catherine Dean	4
	Ladislav Bogнар	2
	Sanja Španja	1
	Sanja Milović	1
	Serious approach of professors, assistants and students	1
Numerous young participants	1	
Usefulness	I learned more about action research	5
	Benefits for development of one's own creative practice	3
	Opportunity to express one's own opinion	1
	Confirmation of one's own creative work	1
	Insight into how Croatian practitioners have a greater methodical-didactic knowledge (when compared to other countries)	1
	Collection of works	1

In the Table 3 are presented things with which participants were dissatisfied.

Table 3. Things with which the participants were not pleased.

Category	Answer	N
Activities	Workshops were too childish; entertaining rather than informative	1
	Interactive plenums were too short	1
	Rather general questions in the World Café	1
	6 hats – performers lacked smile, brightness, casualness, and the melody is too high for singing.	1
	The lack of visual art content	1
Organisation	Impossibility to attend even more workshops	3
	More conversation is needed between the project participants	1
	Cancellation of the drama workshop	1
	Intensive programme, many activities	1
	Unorganised refreshment – sandwiches, snacks	1
	Projections were not completely visible (they were shielded by the desk, piano, presenters)	1

Category	Answer	N
Participants	Insufficient number of the university professors	1
	Not all the participants were active (some do the work, and some just get by)	1
	Some of the lecturers went off the topic, and the moderators didn't react	1
	"Foreigners were not as creative as I had expected"	1
	One participant's lack of tolerance in the World Café	1
Suggestions	The goal and purpose of the conference wasn't clearly stated	1
	Lack of practical examples and creativity	1
	Very few specific information, contacts	1
	Few verbal presentations, especially by the foreign guests	1
	Introduce content for the higher primary school forms and the secondary school	1
	Introduce different melodies for each of six hats	1
	"I'm not sure if I'll be able to encourage the teachers in my school to change."	1

The tables show that the relationship between satisfaction and dissatisfaction is on the side of satisfaction. Relationship is 87% to 13%, but we must carefully analyze these little discontents because they indicate what could be done better and more successfully.

What they have learned and what seems important for their own profession

With its variety of contents and activities the conference offered a wide choice so the participants had high chances to leave with the plenitude of new ideas, but they were also encouraged in what many of them had already been doing.

The most important thing is perhaps that many have recognised that creativity has an important role in changes in our schools, but also at universities.

Table 4. What participants have learned and what have been important for their profession.

WE HAVE LEARNED AT THE CONFERENCE	IMPORTANT FOR OUR PROFESSION
"New possibilities for the teacher's work and development, thus in school as well, through practical application of the action research."	"Application of the creative techniques in classroom practice."
"I have learned some new work methods that I can apply in my classroom practice. I have learned some new methods at the creative workshop with which I can do some good work with my pupils."	"It is important to develop both, teachers' and pupils', confidence, freedom to express ideas and openness to discussion about the ideas – responsible freedom for introduction of changes that will improve the practice."

WE HAVE LEARNED AT THE CONFERENCE	IMPORTANT FOR OUR PROFESSION
<p>"I have learned that one should focus more on communication between students and teachers, that is, it is necessary to listen to each other because we can learn a lot from each other."</p>	<p>"The importance of encouraging creativity in students by teaching many subjects. I intend to encourage the creativity of my students through educational workshops. I got a lot of encouraging ideas."</p>
<p>"That creativity definitely is an important generator of all the factors and processes and an excellent destroyer of dullness in our schools."</p>	<p>"New ideas that I will be using in my classroom practice and I will attach more importance to creativity."</p>
<p>"I have learned that creativity is part of us, that the strength needs to be drawn out of us – you have encouraged us, inspired us to go on with our creative work and the great freedom."</p>	<p>"I asserted my attitude that one should permanently learn and improve, but the most important thing is that I got an injection of courage for new challenges and plans."</p>
<p>"I have learned how important it is to be creative and encourage creativity when working with pupils, because this learning is extremely successful and productive. I have learned that we can apply creativity in all fields, including mathematics, physics etc."</p>	<p>"I have gained a better insight into the Six hats technique and I think that I will be able to use it in my own work."</p>
<p>"I have learned something important, and that is that literature does not serve a teacher to quote all what is in there, but that the teacher's task is to explain and show the children in the most creative way possible how to come to the sought answers, how to reach the goal. The teacher should fly where she/he needs to, move away from the books for the higher causes, as some have said – be a "disobedient teacher"."</p>	<p>"New ideas that I can use in my classroom practice." "Different approaches to creativity in all subjects." "This conference is one of those where I learn how to open to new ideas and motivate myself to change, my practice as well as myself in order to be a better teacher and better man."</p>

The situations at the conference in which participants felt creative

It is interesting to see in which situations the conference participants felt creative. Naturally, it is a subjective feeling, but important thing is that the conference had numerous opportunities for personal creativity on offer.

CONFERENCE SITUATION AT WHICH I WAS PARTICULARLY CREATIVE
<p>"I think that the World Café offered the best opportunity for us to be creative. Thank you!"</p>
<p>"Story workshop, when we had to invent the story with the given ending and create a play, and also when we were supposed to make up the mathematical story. The very atmosphere at the conference inspired some ideas that I am going to carry out in my classroom practice."</p>

CONFERENCE SITUATION AT WHICH I WAS PARTICULARLY CREATIVE

"I was the most creative in carrying out my own workshop – we threw out some things and we changed the order when we saw that that would be more appropriate with everything that was happening. When we had a debate on evaluation in art at the Internet Café in my group."

"I'd like to point out the work in the workshop: 'Developing creativity in Croatian language' where we made up the story and acted it out later."

"I was creative from the very beginning till the end. I was permeated by creativity. Thank you for everything I have learned here. I kindly ask you to invite me next time."

"We had to act, sing, draw, write. I felt creative in these situations – together we have created, exchanged ideas...with people whom I hadn't known from before."

"I was the most creative in the classroom filled with leaves, the shock that I felt at first gave way to the curiosity 'What is going to happen now? '. A very creative and strange workshop."

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On an overall basis we can conclude that the participants felt good during the conference, that they had a positive attitude toward the conference, that there were many things that they were satisfied with, and only few reasons for dissatisfaction. The conference had an abundance of ideas on offer that could be used in the classroom practice at different levels. Having had diverse forms, the conference created situations in which the participants could feel creative, but this was always a matter of personal choice.