



## **Teaching and Learning Through Theatre Education at The Secondary Education Level**

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### **ABSTRACT**

It's innovative and dynamic in an era that incorporates a style of teaching of secondary education by integrating performing art with academic learning toward fostering creativity, critical thinking, empathy and cross-cultural awareness. This paper delves into the role and methodology of theatre education for second-tier schools, with focus on Karnataka, India. This study draws upon the rich cultural heritage of Karnataka by including Yakshagana and Rangayana and it helps exemplify how theatre brings old arts jointly with new methods toward holistically improving student improvement.

The research established that theater education has improved the academic achievement, language capability along with personal as well as social competencies of students in line with the National Education Policy 2020's objectives, which underlines experiential with multidisciplinary learning and it has shown theatre's possible in Kannada language education in conditions of linguistic ability and educational satisfaction. However, challenge in terms of resource availability, time constraints and reluctance to non-traditional methods are seen as impediments for widespread adoption.

Teacher training, regional theatre practitioner collaboration and community support should be recommendations to make sure that the theatre is incorporated into conventional education. The previous investigations and experiential proofs of this examination affirm the transformative power of theatre education along with support its growth to foster inclusive, engaging along with culturally entrenched learning environments in Karnataka and beyond.

Keywords: Teaching, Learning, Theatre, School Education.

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## INTRODUCTION

Theatre education is a influential instructive tool that persuades creativity, critical thinking as well as sympathy and empathy of students at secondary education level. It integrates the performing arts into the learning process, making education more engaging and experiential. This paper explores the significance, methods, benefits and challenges of teaching and learning through theatre at the secondary education level, supported by relevant research and citations.

In the Indian context, theatre education is something that bridges cultural heritage with modern pedagogical practices. The richness of India's performing arts tradition - including the classical forms like Kathakali, Bharatanatyam and Yakshagana, besides folk and street theatre - presents an unmatched resource for experiential learning. It not only makes academic subjects come alive but also provides a sense of pride about one's cultural identity.

The theatre education is more relevant to India, considering diverse linguistic and cultural needs in Indian classrooms. Using drama allows the students to work and present in their first language and yet express universalism. According to Nair, (2016), "engaging Indian folk theatres have proven effective in connecting school going children in both urban and rural schools by stimulating a deeper understanding of the societal issues"

In addition, theatre is an effective medium for addressing the present-day challenges in Indian education, such as rote learning and disengagement. The National Education Policy (NEP) 2020 underlines "holistic, multidisciplinary approaches with experiential learning, which fit well with the standards of theatre education." Theatre makes learning interactive with reflective, thus bridging the gap between theoretical knowledge with practical application, a much-needed alter in India's education system.

Drama also helps in personality improvement, which is an imperative aspect of Indian secondary education. Role-playing training help the students to develop confidence and improve public speaking skills and expand leadership qualities - all of which are much in demand in the spirited academic and practiced environment of India.

## IMPORTANCE OF THEATRE EDUCATION

Theatre education engages using drama and presentation to teach academic subjects along with life skills and it also provides a multidimensional approach to education, addressing cognitive, emotional along with social development. According to Davis (2005), "theatre education encourages vigorous participation, enhancing students' capability to retain information along with develop interpersonal skills."

In the situation of secondary education, theatre lectures to adolescents' developmental needs for self-expression and collaboration. It aligns with 21st-century educational goals of fostering critical thinking, creativity, communication and cultural awareness (Booth, 2010).

### Importance of Theatre Education in Karnataka

Theatre education is vital in overall development, mainly in Karnataka, which is well-known for its rich cultural and creative heritage. The integration of drama in the curriculum gives children opportunities to develop cognitive, emotional and social skills creatively and interactively. Indian studies, such as Karnataka, highlight that this kind of learning through theatre affects the performance of students positively, enhances their motivation levels and fosters empathy in them (Kumar & Rao, 2018). The approach helps not only in keeping them interested but also in developing skills for effective expression and group work.

### **Theatre Education and Language Learning**

In Karnataka, where several languages coincide, theatre education has supported linguistic abilities, especially of the Kannada language, whereas adding drama to classes about Kannada enhances one's vocabulary, pronunciation, as well as comprehension. According to Basavaraj (2020), role-playings and storytelling in Kannada class activities have enhanced pupils' self-confidence and thus have increased their ability for good communication. Besides these activities offer a natural flavor of using the language while learning and at the same time making learning not just culturally relevant but an enjoyable process.

### **Bridging Cultural Awareness through Theatre**

Karnataka's rich cultural needlepoint is well-reflected in its customary forms of theatre, such as Yakshagana, Dollu Kunita and Rangayana inventions and these were inculcating such indigenous forms in the school theatre education system would not only protect the culture but also give students an individuality. According to Gowda (2019), studies have shown that adding local theatre forms to the educational environment helps build cultural awareness and respect for diversity, in keeping with the National Education Policy 2020, which espouses experiential and culturally rooted learning.

### **Theatre for Self Development**

In Karnataka, theatre education also has remarkable outcomes on self development. As a report by Ramesh and Rajeshwari in 2017 found out, theatre engagement boosts emotional intelligence, self-discipline and resilience in students. Adolescent youth also gain a sense of self-exploration and expression from theater participation, helping them get over their early stages more boldly and sensitively.

### **Theatre in Secondary Education: Meeting Modern Educational Goals**

Theatre is directly in line with the goals of education envisioned in the school curriculums of Karnataka that focus on critical thinking, creativity and collaborative learning. According to Shankar's study in 2021, the students who are involved in the theatre-based activities of learning performed better than those taught through conventional teaching methods in problem-solving and team-building exercises. Furthermore, it supports with the ambition of the learner of the 21st century as it arranges them for the outlook confronts.

### **Suggestions for Expanding Theatre Education in Karnataka**

With all these benefits, experts have suggested the development of theatre education programmes across Karnataka, predominantly in government schools. The enrichment of the curriculum could be done by training teachers in drama pedagogy and working in collaboration with local theatre practitioners like Rangayana artists. School outreach programs by the Karnataka Nataka Academy could be taken as models for mainstreaming theatre education.

Theatre education in Karnataka provides an altogether unique setting to integrate creative and cultural awareness with intellectual skills and life skills together. Because of its rare ability to address diverse development needs, theatre is not mere art; it is an art form to be used significantly in educational processes to increase the effectiveness of learning on all levels. Further studies and policies can ensure theater education to be a root for overall development in that state.

## **ROLE OF THEATRE IN SECONDARY EDUCATION**

**1. Improving Academic Performance:** Learning through theatre enhances academic competency because it encourages active engagement. For instance, involvement of drama in language enables students to comprehend complex and challenging texts through role enactment and dialogue. Catterall

(1998) conducted a study and results indicated that students who were undertaking theatre activities had enhanced skill in reading and writing.

**2. Creativity and critical thinking:** Theatre instills creativeness and careful critical thinking with students. In fact, students in improvisation will, for example need to act quickly and even think critically. Such an attribute also helps solve complex problems arising in subjects like mathematics or science.

**3. Develop Sympathy, Empathy and Emotional Competence:** During role playing, the varied characters of the students tend to build empathy for their counterparts in society. Thus, enhanced interpersonal skills in emotional competency (Hyland, 2014)

**4. Promoting Intercultural Awareness and Ethnicity:** Theatre exposes learners to diverse cultural narratives with traditions, making them appreciate diversity. In India, folk theatre namely Yakshagana or street plays be added to the curriculum to make students more connected to their inheritance (Nair, 2016).

#### **METHODS OF TEACHING THROUGH THEATRE**

**1. Scripted Plays:** Teachers use the scripted plays to discover any historical event, literary works or social matters. Like, performing any scene from Shakespeare's play will make students more recognizable with Elizabethan literature with all the themes related to the time.

**2. Improvisation:** Improvisation allows learners to express their selves freely as well as develop impulsive thinking and this method proves mainly effective in language learning, as it supports them to use vocabulary along with grammar in real time.

**3. Thematic Performances:** Thematic presentations related to topics from the curriculum combine drama with academic content. Like, students better learn about environmental science through dramatization of a play on climate vary.

**4. Process Drama:** In course drama, the student and the teacher are creating along with performing a drama together without the employ of a script. This technique encourages examination and finding and cultivates creativity and critical thinking (Neelands, 2009).

#### **BENEFITS OF THEATRE EDUCATION**

##### **1. Cognitive Benefits**

- It Increases memory along with understanding by doing
- It develops Language with communication skills

##### **2. Emotional Benefits**

- It increases self-esteem and emotional strength.
- This provides chance to articulate oneself and release stress.

##### **3. Social Benefits**

- It improves team spirit as well as teamwork.
- It is better awareness of the norms with values in society.

##### **4. Overall Development**

- Theater education is a complete package for students, arranging them to face academic and other life confronts.

#### **Challenges Faced in Implementing Theater Education**

1. **Resources:** Many schools lack the infrastructure, funds or trained personnel to put into practice theater programmes effectively.
2. **Time Constraints:** Integrating the theatre into the curriculum would difficult because it occupies much time.
3. **Resistance to Change:** Teachers and also administrators oppose innovative teaching techniques.

#### **Overcoming Obstacles:**

1. **Staff Training:** Professional development provides teachers with the techniques as well as skills to integrate theater in their teaching.
2. **Collaboration with Artists:** Team up with local theatres or artists to come with knowledge and resources into school.
3. **Advocacy and Awareness:** Highlighting the advantages of theatre education with conducting workshops, seminars as well as success stories garners support from stakeholders.

#### **RESEARCH EMPIRICAL EVIDENCES ON THEATRE EDUCATION**

The pressure of theatre education has been deliberated considerably across different contexts, wherein its advantages for cognitive, emotional as well as social growth are well recognized. Among all the Indian states, in Karnataka, the inclusion of theatre education has been valued since it promotes language learning and an understanding of culture.

##### **1. Theatre and Language Learning**

For Kannada, language acquisition had turned out to be even more effectual with the performing arts. Like wise, research conducted by Shanbhag and Rao (2019) in Mangalore focused on high school learners performing in Kannada drama workshop which brought about better vocabulary improvement along with sentence arrangement proficiency when compared to their generation learning throughout conventional language lessons. Role-playing and telling stories made students apply some concepts of linguistics that led to improved proficiency, especially in the Kannada medium of instruction.

In addition, Kumari (2021) mentioned that inculcation of Yakshagana dialogues into Kannada language classes provided the students with an understanding of regional idiomatic expressions and cultural nuances, thereby enhancing their overall language skills.

##### **2. Theatre in Indian Schools**

The use of original theatre shapes in Indian schools has uncovered to be a transformative mode of education. In the state of Karnataka, an assessment by Deshpande (2018) accounted about the employ of street theatres for teaching environmental science, where learners were found added engaged with maintained the theoretical knowledge better. The experience of theatre helped the learners connect the theoretical knowledge of environmental issues with practical use, thus making them think more profoundly about the concerned issues.

Likewise, Prakash (2020) examined the effects of implementing Rangayana productions into high school curriculums in Mysuru. Students who were uncovered to these performances demonstrated an increase in cultural sensitivity with a love for Kannada literary traditions and such initiatives did not only protect Karnataka's theatrical inheritance but also gave pride and identity among the learners.

### **3. Global Perspectives**

The international gratitude of theatre education as an instrument for the attainment of educational aspiration has been reflected in Indian contexts and UNESCO (2014) confirmed that arts education, including theatre, promotes inclusive and equitable quality education. Indian researchers, such as Menon and Thomas (2017), support this by demonstrating how theatre activities in government schools in Bengaluru enhanced the facet of inclusivity, wherein children from dissimilar socio-economic backgrounds collaborated efficiently.

In Karnataka, Narayana (2016) reported that the utilization of Bharatanatyam-based drama in classroom contexts enhanced the non-verbal communication skills and emotional skills of students. This, again, is in coherence with global findings that pinpoint the role of theatre toward the cognitive and affective domains of learning.

### **4. Theatre as a Resource for Personal Development**

An examination conducted by Gowda (2022) stated improved self-esteem, team-building skills with conflict resolution of adolescents involving in theatre clubs in urban schools in Bengaluru city and these findings were consistent with earlier studies conducted by Ramesh & Rajeshwari (2017), which examined the role of theatre in improving leadership skills and empathy among high school students.

### **5. Theatre in Dealing with Social Issues**

Theatre has also been used effectively to address social issues in educational settings. For example, Shetty and Rao (2015) explained how students in rural Karnataka staged dramas that focused on gender equality and sanitation, thereby creating more awareness and changing behavior in their communities. These performances were a link between education and social advocacy, empowering students to become change-makers.

## **SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION**

Though there are numerous benefits of theatre education as presented by the available body of work, systematic research in the long run on the same for Karnataka is needed. There can be collective efforts of the educational institutions, practitioners and policymakers to increase its outreach and impact. Furthermore, involving theatre in teacher education programs can empower the educators with skills to make use of its potential to the fullest.

Theatre Arts and Education in Karnataka as well as India is an efficient tool for increasing academic learning, encouraging cultural awareness with fostering personal growth. The studies and investigations gave evidence make the case for its acceptance in schools. Blending practice with innovation, theatre education would be an effective means to tackle the overall developmental needs of students in preparation for 21st century challenges and obstacles.

## **CONCLUSION**

Teaching and learning with theatre education at the secondary education level present a transformative advancement to education and fostering creativity, critical thinking, sympathy along with cultural awareness, theatre education practices students for academic as well as life challenges. Challenges notwithstanding, the benefits of integrating theatre into the curriculum far overshadow the barriers. With correct resources, teacher training along with advocacy, theatre education becomes a cornerstone of overall education in secondary schools.

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