

THE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF HUMANITIES & SOCIAL STUDIES

The Concept of Theatre in Higher Education

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Abstract:

The paper intends to find out the knowledge of students towards Theatre in higher education. To assess the opinion of the students about academic education through theatre and present the work in a manner which may be useful for educationists and teachers who are intending to work in this regard. The approach to the subject matter of scholastic subjects through theatre is an analytical approach. The paper concentrates on the nature of the theatre methods, and questions why and how they are used and their effects upon the students. Can theatre help in developing the curriculum and is it a stimulus for both students and the teacher? This is the question the paper focuses on.

Keywords: Theatre, higher education, teacher, student, curriculum

1. Introduction

Today's theatre has undergone tremendous changes and developed variety of techniques in performance, practice and also contributed to the field of therapy, education and socio cultural pedagogy. Numerous organizations and initiatives have used theatre as a development tool: for education or propaganda, as therapy, as a participatory tool, or as an exploratory tool in development.

It is observed that there are many problems faced by students in terms of learning or grasping what is taught in class. Students undergo difficulties where complex subjects and terms taught through conventional methods do not really have the desired effect on them. Theatre is a great medium for teaching as students will themselves perform the roles and involve in learning the subject, at the same time they have fun. This is what theatre does, fun learning. Students enjoy and are motivated as they themselves perform. Theatre practitioners throughout the World have constantly experimented with these elements of theatre to bring about a qualitative change in the field of education. Education is one such factor which adds to the quality of the living and many theatre directors have strived for it.

2. Methodology

The research design plays an important role in this study. Descriptive research design is used to give greater accuracy of students' opinion towards education and theatre.

The sample selected for the study is 100 Post Graduate students of various departments of Bangalore University, Bangalore, Karnataka. The survey method was adopted to collect the opinion of students towards concept of Theatre/Drama in Higher Education. It deals with conditions or relationship that exist, opinion that prevail process that are going on, effects that are manifest or trends that are developing. It is mainly concerned with the present though it often considers past events and influences as relating to current status.

A closed and structured questionnaire, in which the respondent answers by ticking wither 'Yes' or 'No' as the case may be in the other type, more than two alternative answers are given and the respondent ticks one or as many as he thinks pertinent.

3. Findings of the Study and Discussion

Sl. No.	Theatre Education Activities	Yes		No		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
a.	Department Theatre /Drama Club/Society	05	05.0	95	95.0	100	100.0
b.	Participation in the Theatre Festival	10	10.0	90	90.0	100	100.0
c..	Theatre Training class	05	05.00	95	95.0	100	100.0
d.	Touring performance of theatre companies	12	12.0	88	88.0	100	100.0
e.	Theatre within the formal school curriculum	09	09.0	91	91.0	100	100.0
f.	Physical activities as a method to teach subjects	05	05.0	95	95.0	100	100.0

Table 1: Table shows students opinion about theatre education activities in their departments

Source: Field work

From the above table it is inferred that according to the students, 05% of departments have theatre club/society and 95% do not have a particular club/society in their departments. 10% of students participate in theatre festivals and 95% of students do not participate. 05% of students have theatre training class with 95% stating no to it. 0% of students have theatre within their formal curriculum and 100% do not have. 05% of departments use physical activities as a method to teach subjects whereas 95% do not use this method.

The conclusion from the above table is that most of the departments i.e. 95% do not have theatre activities in their departments.

Sl. No.	Views on Theatre Education	Highly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Highly Disagree		No Comment	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Theatre enhances aesthetic development	33	33.0	66	66.0	1	1.0	-	-	-	-
2.	Theatre is an Effective teaching method	38	38.0	61	61.0	-	-	-	-	1	1.0

Table 2: Table shows students opinion about their views on theatre education.

Source: Field Work

From the above table it is observed that 33% of the students highly agree with the opinion that theatre enhances aesthetic development with 66% agree and 1% who do not go with the opinion. 38% and 66% respectively believe that theatre is an effective teaching method with 1% giving no comments. On the whole, 98% of students agree that theatre helps in developing aesthetic sense and is an effective teaching method which can be used successfully.

Overall conclusion from the above table is that more than 95% of students believe that theatre enhances aesthetic development and theatre is an effective teaching method.

Sl. No.	Theatre helps to develop students'	Highly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Highly Disagree		No Comment	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Self confidence	38	38.0	62	62.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
2.	Positive attitude	31	31.0	67	67.0	-	-	-	-	2	2.0
3.	Creativity	43	43.0	55	55.0	1	1.0	1	1.0	-	-
4.	Collaborative skill	33	33.0	66	66.0	1	1.0	-	-	-	-
5.	Observational skill	39	39.0	59	59.0	1	1.0	-	-	1	1.0
6.	Communication Skill	44	44.0	56	56.0	-	-	-	-	-	-
7.	Problem solving skill	25	25.0	65	65.0	5	5.0	1	1.0	4	4.0
8.	Sense of responsibility	27	27.0	69	69.0	4	4.0	-	-	-	-
9.	Empathy	27	27.0	67	67.0	4	4.0	-	-	2	2.0
10.	Self- reflection	30	30.0	64	64.0	2	2.0	1	1.0	-	-
11.	Critical Thinking Skill										

Table 3: Table shows students opinion about their views on development of personality through Theatre

Source: Field Work

The above table depicts that 38% highly agree and 62% agree, on the whole 100% students agree that theatre helps develop self-confidence. 31% highly agree and 67% agree with 2% students stating no comment when asked about theatre helps in developing positive attitude. 43% highly agree, 55% agree, 1% disagree and 1% highly disagree, overall 98% of students agree that theatre increases creativity skill. Most of the students 99%, (i.e.) 33% highly agree and 66% agree respectively to theatre as a developing tool of collaborative skill. 25% of students highly agree and 65% agree with 5% who disagree and 1% highly disagree with theatre as a developing tool to increase the problem solving skill. 69% and 27% respectively feel theatre helps develop students sense of responsibility with only 4% stating no to it. 27% and 67% highly agree whereas 4% and 2% do not agree when asked about empathy through theatre. 30% highly agree, 64% agree, 2% disagree, 1% highly disagree and 3% no comment respectively on the opinion about theatre as an increasing tool of self-reflection. 27% of students highly agree and 63% agree as theatre increases critical thinking skill among students, whereas 4% disagree 1% highly disagree and 5% have no comment in this regard.

Overall the above table concludes that most of the students believe that theatre increases and develops self-confidence, positive attitude, creativity, collaborative skill, observation skill, communication skill, problem solving skill, sense of responsibility, empathy self-reflection, and critical thinking skill. There are very few who disagree and have no comment on theatre as a developing tool.

Sl. No.	Learning and Teaching Outcomes	Highly Agree		Agree		Disagree		Highly Disagree		No Comment	
		F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Removes stage fear/inferiority complex	60	60.0	38	38.0	2	2.0	-	-	-	-
2.	arousing and enhancing the motivation to learn	40	40.0	57	57.0	1	1.0	-	-	1	1.0
3.	Enhancing language competence	45	45.0	53	53.0	1	1.0	-	-	1	1.0
4.	deepening understanding of subject knowledge	40	40.0	55	55.0	3	3.0	-	-	1	1.0
5.	integration of knowledge across subjects	28	28.0	66	66.0	3	3.0	-	-	3	3.0
6.	catering for individual differences	26	26.0	66	66.0	5	5.0	1	1.0	2	2.0
7.	fostering self-learning	36	36.0	60	60.0	3	3.0	-	-	1	1.0
8.	Transfer and application of knowledge	30	30.0	67	67.0	2	2.0	-	-	1	1.0
9.	Developing effectiveness and moral values.	42	42.0	58	58.0	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 4: Table shows students opinion towards achievement of learning and teaching outcomes through theatre education

Source: Field work

From the table it is observed that 60% of students highly agree that theatre removes stage fear or inferiority complex whereas 38% agree and 2% disagree in this view. About 40% of students highly agree and 57% agree that theatre arouses and enhances the motivation to learn whereas 1% disagree and 1% has no comment to this. 45% highly agree and 53% students agree that theatre enhancing language competence among them whereas 1% disagree and 1% do not have comment to this. 40% of students highly agree and 53% agree that theatre helps in understanding the subject better whereas 3% disagree and 1% has no comment to this. 28% and 66% of students agree that theatre integrates knowledge across subjects whereas 3% disagree and 3% have no idea about this. When it comes to catering for individual differences through theatre 26% highly agree with it and 66% agree whereas 5% disagree 1% highly disagree and 2% do not comment. 36% of students highly agree and 60% of them agree that theatre fosters self-learning whereas 3% disagree and 1% do not comment to this. 30% of students highly agree and 67% agree that theatre transfers and helps in application of knowledge. 2% of students disagree and 1% do not comment to this. 42% and 58% of students highly agree that theatre develops effectiveness and moral values. The table thus concludes that achievement of teaching and learning outcomes through theatre is agreed by the more than 95% students.

Sl. No.	Viewpoints	Yes		No		Total	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
i.	Incorporation of drama into the higher education as an Independent drama subject.	42	42.0	58	58.0	100	100.0
ii.	Incorporation of drama into the higher education as an a unit in the Education Curriculum	93	93.0	7	7.0	100	100.0
iii.	Theatre can be used as a method in the teaching of subjects	67	67.0	33	33.0	100	100.0

Table 5: Table shows students viewpoints, expectations and pleas on curriculum implementation.

Source: Field Work

From the table prepared from the information given by the students, it depicts that 42% of students expect theatre to be an independent subject in the curriculum, whereas 58% disagree with it. 93% say yes to theatre being a unit in Education curriculum with 7% saying no to it. 67% highly agree that theatre can be used as a method in teaching of subjects, and 33% of students disagree with it. The conclusion observed from the above table is that most of the students believes, theatre should be a unit in education curriculum and theatre can be used to teach subjects.

6. Conclusion

Students these days bring to class vast differences in maturity, personality, interest, gender, hopes, ability, dreams, ethnicity, social-class, culture, and so on. All over, today's education system seems unable or unwilling to grasp these differences. They treat students by grading them with the core – curriculum and education has become a one sided approach. Therefore, there is a need of a new method or technique which identifies encouragers and caters to the different needs of the students. Throughout the world, theatre practitioners have constantly experimented with elements of theatre to bring about a qualitative change in the field of education. Education is one such factor which adds to the quality of the present and future living and many educationists have strived for it. Implementing theatre in education truly gives joy to both the students and the teachers. It is that form of entertainment that is boundless and grows eternally. The imagination, adaptation and creative interest that theatre can capture has no boundaries. Theatre in Higher Education thus needs to be both sustained and encouraged by all.

7. Recommendations

In order to implement theatre in the higher education level, the following would be of great importance.

- The Government should take initiative and recognize departments which are in need of resources and provide adequate resource and support.
- Some books and periodicals which deal with using drama as a method in higher education should be made available for teachers so as to inform those who have some classical opinions on drama.
- The Association for modern theatre, Universities, particularly faculties of performing arts and education, and the Ministry of Education should organize seminars, workshops or conferences on the advantages and ways of using drama as a method in teaching subjects.
- The Government should recognize that students need to develop the creative skills where fast-moving technology and global communications call for an ability to produce creative solutions to complex problems in future.
- The Government must provide necessary theatrical equipments to the Universities so that teaching – learning process becomes more effective and successful.
- The cultural sense should be imparted to the students for their holistic development.
- Each state government should come up with clear cut cultural policy which helps and makes compulsory for the institutions to implement theatre in the curriculum.
- There should be a research centre which constantly looks into the ongoing dynamics in the field of education and gives scientific recommendations to implement cultural perspectives through theatre.

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