TEACHERS' EXCEL SHEET

For Excellence In Teaching, Pedagogies, Learning & Assessments

THEATRE AS A TEACHING TOOL

THEATRE AS A TEACHING TOOL

Definition and Forms

Theatre pedagogy, also known as Theaterpädagogik, is an independent discipline that blends theatrical art with educational practice. Unlike traditional drama education, which primarily centres on performance and stagecraft, theatre pedagogy "integrates both art and education to develop language and strengthen social awareness" and aims "to educate people outside the realm of theatre" (Nicholson, 2011). It emphasises embodied learning—through gesture, movement, and voice—and encourages collective creation as a means to explore real-life issues and to cultivate self-awareness, empathy, and communication skills. In the context of medical education, for instance, Radha Ramaswamy (2020) highlights how theatre pedagogy "improves communication between faculty and students and between physicians and patients", fostering humanistic engagement.

The purpose and impact of theatre remain widely debated. As theatre scholar Andreas Kotte (2005) notes, "on close inspection, there are hardly any two people who have a similar perception of theatre. Theatre is used as a label". Audiences typically seek theatre that aligns with their preferences, whereas theatre educators are required to critically examine their own as well as others' concepts of theatre. This becomes especially significant within educational theatre, where differing perspectives often intersect. The collaborative nature of

pedagogical theatre reveals how the choices made in each project are deeply shaped by the beliefs and attitudes of all participants. As such, each theatre-based educational initiative communicates—either implicitly or explicitly—various worldviews, notions of human nature, and definitions of what theatre itself represents (Kotte, 2005; Jackson, 2013).

To read more, visit-
https://www.researchbank.ac.nz/server/api/core/bitstreams/e8e35b5f-5fda-41cb-b910-c135f9c1e26b/content

Perspectives on Theatre

The Practical Perspective: Theatre as Competence, Skill and Craft - This perspective arises from a practical concern: How does one make good theatre? What does this involve, and how may it be learned? In this view, theatre is not questioned; instead, it appears as a given, traditional technique, in the sense of the ancient Greek téchne, as a competence, skill or craft.

The Educational Theory Perspective: Theatre as Subjective Experience - The driving motive behind this view is educational theory's explanation of theatre acting as a non-interchangeable (and therefore irreplaceable!) area of aesthetic education. Here, the attention is focused on the relation between theatre as an aesthetic product and process on the one side, and a subject (to be educated) on the other.

The Cultural Studies Perspective: Theatre as Cultural Practice - This concept of theatre exists in the context of trends in theatre arts toward the dissolution of boundaries within current culture; it has been scarcely elaborated so far in German theatre pedagogy. From a cultural studies perspective, theatre educators can consider themselves not only as experts in the art of theatre and in educational processes; moreover, they are required to engage with cultural practices and images beyond the theatre, and with the underlying power relations and societal conditions that produce them.

To read more, visit-
https://shorturl.at/0YEyv

Brief History of Theatre as a Pedagogical Tool

The integration of theatre into education has deep historical roots. In early societies, storytelling, ritual, and performance were central to transmitting knowledge, values, and traditions (Courtney, 1989). In Ancient Greece, philosophers such as Plato and Aristotle recognised drama's educational potential. Aristotle, in particular, argued that tragedy could serve a cathartic function, allowing audiences to experience and reflect upon emotions like fear and pity, thereby promoting moral understanding (Aristotle, trans. 1961).

During the Middle Ages, the Church used morality and mystery plays to educate largely illiterate populations about biblical narratives and Christian values (Hornbrook, 1991). These public performances combined spiritual instruction with communal engagement.

The Renaissance period brought a revival of classical learning. Theatre was used in schools to teach rhetoric, language, and critical thinking, particularly through school drama in England and Commedia dell'arte in

Italy (Somers, 1994). Performances served both didactic and entertainment purposes, fostering creativity and public speaking skills.

In the 20th century, progressive educators like John Dewey emphasised experiential learning, arguing that education should be active, student-centred, and connected to real-life experiences (Dewey, 1938). This philosophical shift laid the foundation for Drama in Education (DiE) and later Theatre in Education (TiE), which emerged in Britain in the 1960s. The Belgrade Theatre's TiE company in Coventry (1965) is widely recognised as the first to use professional theatre to explore social issues in schools (Jackson, 1993).

Later developments saw the rise of theatre pedagogy (Theaterpädagogik) as an academic and practical field in countries like Germany. It merged educational goals with artistic exploration, focusing on embodied learning and collective creativity (Kotte, 2005). Meanwhile, Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre, part of his Theatre of the Oppressed approach, became a global method for empowering marginalised voices and facilitating dialogue in educational, medical, and community settings (Boal, 1979).

To read more, visit-
https://collective-encounters.org.uk/centre-for-excellence/participatory-theatre-timeline/1960s-theatre-in-education/

Theatre in Education

Theatre, when used as a pedagogical tool, fosters experiential learning, emotional engagement, and critical reflection across diverse educational settings. Unlike traditional didactic methods, theatre-based pedagogy emphasises embodiment, dialogue, and role-play, allowing students to explore complex concepts through action and interaction (O'Toole & Dunn, 2002). Techniques such as process drama, forum theatre, and improvisation help learners develop empathy, communication skills, and self-awareness (Boal, 1995; Nicholson, 2011). Research has shown that integrating drama into classroom teaching enhances students' motivation, creativity, and collaborative skills by transforming passive content consumption into active knowledge construction (Neelands, 2009). Moreover, drama-based methods have been effective in promoting inclusion, critical thinking, and cultural literacy, particularly when addressing sensitive social or ethical issues (Gallagher & Freeman, 2011). As theatre educator Juliana Saxton notes, "drama is not just about performance—it's about perceiving, imagining, and making meaning" (Saxton & Miller, 2012). Thus, theatre pedagogy enriches education by humanising learning and empowering students to engage cognitively and emotionally with their world.

To read more, visit-
https://www.heinemann.com/products/e00628.aspx

Theatre in Primary Education

Giotaki and Lenakakis (2016) investigated theatre pedagogy interventions in kindergartens during times of economic crisis. Their study found that such interventions "generate empathy in kindergartners for what is unusual, different, or seemingly distant", demonstrating the power of embodied performance in early childhood education. Research on

school theatre in the context of personality development further shows that its core pedagogical principles—eventfulness, improvisation, personal creative activity, and diversity—are essential in "unleashing the creative potential of the child" while simultaneously fostering moral and artistic growth (Melikhov et al., 2021). In a broader sense, drama functions as a deeply pedagogical medium. As Cristina Pérez Valverde (2011) emphasises, "drama has a great deal to do with pedagogy... both phenomena rely on performance... and communication", forming a "shared experience that demands their affective and cognitive involvement."

To read more, visit-
https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10643-016-0774-1
https://docslib.org/doc/6890287/drama-as-a-pedagogical-tool-in-education

Theatre in Secondary Education

Theatre pedagogy has proven to be a powerful tool for enhancing learning in secondary school settings across diverse subjects such as social studies, science, and moral education. Karabağ (2015), in a study with 11th-grade students, found that Readers' Theatre improved historical understanding, reading fluency, and peer collaboration, making learning more engaging. Similarly, Öcal (2022) demonstrated that science theatre positively influenced seventh graders' attitudes toward science, showing how performance-based learning can humanise abstract content. In the realm of social studies, a quasi-experimental study by Adejoh and Ikwumelu (2016) applied theatre in education techniques - including improvisation and roleplay - with junior secondary students, fostering deeper understanding of cultural topics and enhancing imagination and cooperation. Thambu (2019) explored the use of Forum Theatre in Malaysian secondary moral education, highlighting its effectiveness in promoting ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and teamwork among adolescents. These findings align with the core objectives of critical pedagogy, where theatre functions as a dialogical and embodied method that encourages students to reflect on real-world issues and take action. Datoo and Chagani (2011) further emphasised this by showing how street theatre- using props, movement, and dialogue- helps secondary learners confront socio-political concerns and "reflect and trigger action ... to come out of socio-political oppression." Additionally, Kudryavtseva et al. (2022) argue that theatre pedagogy, rooted in ancient communal rituals, has now evolved into a structured and self-sustaining discipline with clear methods and theoretical underpinnings. Overall, theatre-based learning supports critical, creative, and moral development in adolescents, making it a transformative pedagogical approach in secondary education.

To read more, visit-
https://www.eu-jer.com/secondary-school-students-opinions-about-readers-theatre

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/310392558_Theatre_in_Education_A_Technique_for_Effective_Social_Studies_Teaching_in_Junior_Secondary_Schools_Classes

Theatre in Higher Education

Theatre pedagogy holds significant promise in higher education, particularly for training future educators and fostering critical, embodied learning. Hadjipanteli (2023) found that engaging student teachers in theatre-based coursework led to the development of internal values like trust, empathy, respect, and playfulness, reinforcing their beliefs about good teaching through embodied semiotics and dialogue (Hadjipanteli, 2023). Malinina (2022) demonstrated that integrating Forum Theatre into university classrooms enhances pre-service teachers' emotional intelligence, empathy, and social awareness by enabling them to "embody" real teaching scenarios and foster inclusive practices. In addition, interdisciplinary initiatives, such as those in engineering and psychology, have employed performing arts methods—like student-devised plays—to boost collaboration, role-taking, and deeper critical reflection on complex course material (Kloetzer et al., 2021). Furthermore, Tatiana Chemi's work with Odin Teatret highlights how theatre laboratory approaches create co-creative learning spaces in higher education, promoting inquiry-based practices that bridge creativity, pedagogy, and research (Chemi, 2018). Taken together, these examples show that theatre can serve as a powerful pedagogical tool in higher education, developing professional dispositions, empathy, creative problem-solving, and reflective engagement in university students. The benefits of using theatre in various fields of education are discussed in the following section.

To read more, visit-
https://ro.ecu.edu.au/ajte/vol48/iss3/4/
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/348584068_Teaching_through_performing_arts_in_higher_education_Examples_in_engineering_and_psychology

Theatre in Teacher Education

Theatre-based pedagogy in teacher education offers a powerful tool for developing empathy, communication, critical thinking, and classroom management skills among future educators. It encourages prospective teachers to engage in experiential learning through role-play, simulation, forum theatre, and dramatic enactments of classroom scenarios, allowing them to understand diverse student perspectives and explore inclusive practices (Gallagher, 2007). Researchers argue that theatre promotes reflective teaching by making participants confront real-life educational challenges in a safe, imaginative space (Conrad, 2004). For instance, applied theatre methods have been used to prepare teachers to handle sensitive issues like bullying, gender discrimination, and mental health with greater confidence and emotional intelligence. A study by Nicholson (2011) highlights how theatre can cultivate democratic and dialogic classroom cultures by training teachers to listen, improvise, and adapt in real time. Integrating theatre into teacher education aligns with constructivist and humanistic learning theories, helping future educators not only teach more effectively but also teach with heart.

To read more, visit-
https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230574236

Theatre in Maritime Education

Theatre pedagogy—particularly in the form of role-play, simulation, and scenario-based learning—has been increasingly adopted in maritime education to enhance students' safety awareness and decision-making abilities. One significant study by Ek and Akselsson (2013) details the development of an interactive learning module that incorporated elements of dramatic simulation and role-based storytelling to teach maritime safety culture to students in Swedish maritime programs. The module included narrative-based video scenarios and facilitated discussions that encouraged learners to reflect on their own behaviour and responses in simulated shipboard crises. The results showed that this approach deepened emotional engagement, improved communication skills, and strengthened learners'; sense of responsibility- all core goals of applied theatre in education. The study concludes that by immersing learners in realistic yet controlled dramatic situations, educators can effectively bridge theory and practice, making theatre pedagogy a powerful tool for maritime training (Ek & Akselsson, 2013).

To read more, visit-
https://www.researchgate.net/public
ation/350818404_Deep_learning_ele
ments_in_maritime_simulation_prog
rammes_a_pedagogical_exploration_
of_learner_experiences

Theatre in Hospitality Education

Hospitality programs increasingly incorporate role-play and multimedia-driven simulations to enhance language proficiency, service skills, and cultural adaptability. Purwanto et al. (2024) conducted action research on Indonesian travel-business students using role-play augmented with video tutorials and interactive simulations during three cycles. They found significant improvements in spoken English—pronunciation, intonation, and vocabulary—alongside noticeably higher student confidence when engaging in guest service scenarios. In Croatia, Huertas-Valdivia (2021) documented that role-play of staffing processes within hotel management courses increased student satisfaction, sharpened career competencies, and heightened realism of service operations. This integration of drama-based techniques thus shows a measurable impact on communication abilities and professional readiness in hospitality education.

To read more, visit-
https://publikasi.abidan.org/index.ph
p/refleksi/article/view/413

https://www.researchgate.net/public
ation/354184969_Role-
Playing_a_staffing_process_Experient
ial_learning_with_undergraduate_to
urism_students

Theatre in Media Education

Drama-based pedagogy is increasingly recognised as a vital teaching tool in media and communication degree programs, fostering storytelling, collaboration, and critical digital literacy. A recent report by the British Academy (2024) emphasised that media and communication studies are essential in cultivating graduates equipped with creative adaptability, ethical awareness, and the ability to critically navigate disinformation and AI-driven disruption. Alexander (2023) argued that drama-based techniques

help develop media students' reflexivity and ethical media awareness by simulating real-world storytelling scenarios. Moreover, initiatives like the British Council's stop-motion animation workshops illustrate how digital drama-based learning cultivates technical production skills and creativity in undergraduate classrooms (British Council, 2022). These findings affirm that integrating drama into media education strengthens students' ability to analyse, create, and question media narratives in a rapidly evolving digital environment.

To read more, visit-
https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/publications/media-screen-journalism-and-communication-studies-provision-in-uk-higher-education/

https://medium.com/@snalexander42/drama-pedagogy-as-a-tool-for-information-literacy-05b9b2ee93f0

Theatre in Design & Fashion Education

Design and fashion education increasingly draw on theatrical principles—performance, narrative, and embodiment—to shape students' creative identity and presentation capabilities. A comparative study by Haroon, Sajib, and Nizam (2023) highlights significant overlap between fashion and theatrical costume design, noting that both disciplines share creative processes, cultural referencing, and "textile storytelling", and suggesting powerful cross-disciplinary synergies. Fashion educator Craig Green champions "runway-as-theatre" pedagogy, urging students to "think innovatively" and create "fearless work" by integrating performance into

garment presentation and design thinking (Green, 2022). These strategies enhance design students' understanding of audience engagement, spatial dynamics, and expressive originality—skills that are crucial as they navigate the intersection of creativity, utility, and brand identity.

To read more, visit-
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/372221615_Comparative_Study_on_Fashion_and_Theatrical_Costume_Design

https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/17543266.2018.1462859

Theatre in Psychology

Theatre-based techniques play a foundational role in drama therapy, counselling, and leadership coaching. Studies show that methods inspired by Jerzy Grotowski—such as ritual practices and psychophysical exercises—enhance self-awareness, emotional regulation, and interpersonal empathy, supporting clients in connecting action with innate emotional responses (Conte et al., 2020; Grotowski, 2007). Augusto Boal's practices, particularly Forum Theatre and invisible theatre, have been shown to expand narrative competence, cultivate ethical reflection, and foster empathy by transforming spectators into active "spect-actors" (Boal, 1995; Pendzik, 2006). In the arena of applied improvisation, structured improv exercises (derived from Viola Spolin's teachings) have been empirically demonstrated to improve adaptability, emotional acuity, non-verbal communication, and trust competencies critical in both counselling and organisational teamwork (Frost & Yarrow, 1989;

"Applied improvisation," 2025).

To read more, visit-
https://pmc.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/articles/PMC6951090/

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/223395492_On_dramatic_reality_and_its_therapeutic_function_in_drama_therapy

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/358591250_Fostering_psychological_safety_Using_improvisation_as_a_team_building_tool_in_management_education

Theatre in Medicine

Role-play and theatre-based methods are increasingly integrated into medical education to develop empathy, communication, and clinical reasoning. Jacobsen, Baerheim & Lepp (2006) demonstrated that using "fourth-wall" framed simulated patient encounters helped students externalise internal experiences, improving reflexivity and empathy while receiving constructive feedback during debriefing. A 2020 study in France reported that two forum-theatre sessions increased students' empathy scores from 102 to 108, with active "spectactors" showing significantly larger gains than passive observers—an effect attributed to mirror-neuron activation supporting emotional attunement. Such immersive techniques have effectively mitigated empathy decline commonly observed in medical training.

To read more, visit-
https://bmcmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1472-6920-6-51

https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32093709/

Theatre in Pharmacy

Pharmacy education uses actor-led forum theatre and role-play to strengthen patient counselling, communication, and ethical competence. In the UK, a study of 752 undergraduates found role-play boosted reflective dialogue, self-awareness, and communication—themes highlighted in feedback about its value in ethical decision-making and rapport building. A 2024 survey of 74 Malaysian pharmacy students rated role-play highly across communication (mean 4.01/5), confidence (3.93), and conflict resolution (3.86); significantly, 82% endorsed ongoing use in curricula. These findings underscore interactive theatre's value in cultivating soft skills essential for modern pharmacy practice.
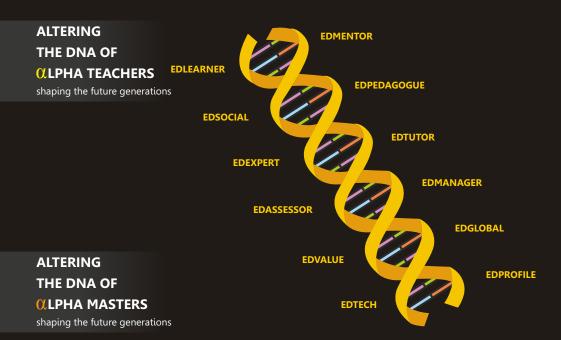
To read more, visit-
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331381144_Using_forum_theatre_to_teach_communication_skills_within_an_undergraduate_pharmacy_curriculum_A_qualitative_evaluation_of_students%27_feedback
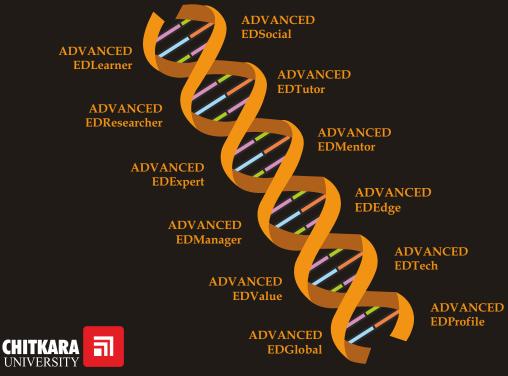
https://bmcmededuc.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/s12909-021-02776-8

https://gaexcellence.com/ijmoe/article/view/482

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