



OPEN ACCESS

Volume: 12

Special Issue: 2

Month: January

Year: 2025

E-ISSN: 2582-0397

P-ISSN: 2321-788X

Citation:

Upendran, K. "From a Theatre Arts Professional's Perspective: Teacher, Emotional Intelligence, and Teacher Education." *Shanlax International Journal of Arts Science and Humanities*, vol. 12, no. S2, 2025, pp. 5–8.

DOI:

<https://doi.org/10.34293/sijash.v12iS2-Jan.8856>

From a Theatre Arts Professional's Perspective: Teacher, Emotional Intelligence, and Teacher Education

Dr. K.R. Upendran

*Artist and Academician
BSK 3rd Stage, Bangalore*

Introduction

Teachers have a main role in building the nation. Any individual who ever chose the teaching profession has the great responsibility to instill hope and courage into young minds. The ethics and values of the teacher are the same, but the role of the teacher and the mode of teaching have started changing from time to time. At this juncture, hence India has become a powerful contributor to the Global Economy. There is a need for proper directives to the role and responsibility of a teacher. NEP 2020 has brought key points namely holistic education, equity, and inclusion. To deliver the expectation of the policy, the teacher has to restructure her role and deliver her duty effectively. As an individual how he presents himself in the workplace has a big role to play. This development and conviction has to come from within. Because every student is unique, teachers have to find an effective method to impress the students in their learning experience. It results in students grasping the content taught in the classroom to retain, process, and deliver whatever is needed in their lives. It is possible when the teacher sees his role as an actor/performer.

Emotional intelligence is a topic popularized by Daniel Goleman. In the context of India, it has become an important topic in both work and home settings. Indian Family has degenerated from a joint family to a nuclear family. There is no member to take care of an individual's emotional needs. In a joint family, many members mutually support each other to lead a harmonious life. There wasn't a need for separate support for the emotional issues, it was addressed holistically. In the early years, children spent most time in school after their house. However in school, there are subjects with their objectives, and teachers who are committed to the outcome may not have time to address the emotional needs of the child. Moreover, there is no proper experience in addressing the issue. Theatre Arts in the Syllabus of Teacher Education serves the purpose indirectly. The teachers participating in a play production help them to deal with the issue from a distance. In the process of building a play, the participants are involved in the physical training, analysis of the

script, character psychology, and understanding of the concept of “Rasa and Bhava” (aesthetic pleasure and emotions). This makes them look at the conflicts empathetically.

Teacher Education in India has incorporated many innovative changes in its program. But still, there is a need for strong content to contribute to their creative thinking process. In this modern time, students face many issues both mentally and socially. The teacher has to take care of the affective domain too. Every aspect cannot be addressed cognitively when the student is building his values and attitudes in the school. The NEP 2020 clearly mentions “No hard separations between arts and sciences, between curricular and extra-curricular activities, between vocational and academic streams;”. Theatre arts need not be seen as entertainment. It has important points related to the teaching and learning process. Modern theatre has evolved into various types, ‘Applied Theatre’ is one. The process involved in constructing a play, actor training process, and other processes used in the field of education. It involves the teacher education program students in a creative thinking process. It shares the tools and techniques to make the classroom experience vibrant.

Above said three standpoints dealt with in this paper arrive at making the following statements :

‘Teacher as a performer’, ‘Participatory and Experiential training program to teach Emotional Intelligence is needed’ and Teacher education shall have applied creative topics such as “. ‘Applied theatre’ in the syllabus makes the teacher a creative and critical thinker”.

Teacher as a Performer

Peter Brook, a British theatre director has defined the theatre as “[A]ny space in which theatre takes place.” “I can take any empty space and call it a bare stage. A man walks across this empty space whilst someone else is watching him, and this is all that is needed for an act of theatre to be engaged”.

A teacher has a minimum of 30 students in the classroom to watch and listen to the content delivered by him. If this is the case, the teacher has to be taught contextually to use the elements of performance while teaching. When a presentation has to be called a performance, the following four elements namely verbal, non-verbal (bodily action), objects, costumes, and psychosomatic elements have to be effectively used. Nandikeshvara (5th century – 4th century BC) was a major theatrologist of ancient India. He has authored the *Abhinaya Darpana* lit. ‘The Mirror of Gesture’. He mentions these elements as ‘*Caturvidhabhinaya*’, four elements of acting as follows *āṅgika-abhinaya* (Expression through body movements), *vācika-abhinaya* (expression through speech), *āhārya-abhinaya* (expression through appearance and costume), *sāttvika-abhinaya* (expression from within, including emotions and feeling, conscious mind and truth). Every teacher has to use his voice and speech with proper variation according to the content. An emphasis on the verb, subject, or object invokes a suitable meaning and multiple meanings make his presentation a performance. Effective and appropriate facial expressions, gestures, and postures add quality to the presentation. Every session is seen as a performance, care has to be taken in choosing the dress and connected to it. Finally, the teacher should apply the conscious mind to deliver the truth of the content .i.e the intent and objective of the content. If the teacher applies the elements mentioned above in his presentation, a mere classroom becomes a ‘stage’. Then the students were impressed with the presentation, the content delivered long last in their memory, and it shall be recalled by the students, whenever needed. Any teacher considering teaching as performance makes the classroom experience joyful for the students. It retains the curiosity among students to learn.

Being Emotionally Intelligent is not Exceptional, it is a Need

‘Participatory and Experiential training program to teach Emotional Intelligence is needed’ is the second statement decoded in this paper. Every individual experiences different situations in their life. They go through a change in their mind, resulting in experiencing corresponding emotions.

It is subjective, immersed in the experience does not give any learning. The real challenge for every individual is to handle the fluctuating emotion. A successful employee in an organization is measured through his ability to manage the emotions of the self and others. The teachers encounter a complex situation where for them the 'others', children are fragile. They have to be cautious while attending to children, they should have a hold in handling their emotions themselves and children. It is complex. So a training program consisting of topics play reading and analyzing, understanding the emotion of the act, and character, 'Rasa and Bhava' theory of the Natya Sastra (200BCE – 200CE), participating in the enactment of the scene. Rasa and Bhava theory explains permanent emotion and transitory emotion's role in enactment. The main crux is the explanation of 'aesthetic pleasure'. The training program involves psychophysical tasks that result in experiencing the emotional conflict of the character with an awareness. Hence it is not a subjective experience, a breakthrough is generated in the process. The pros and cons of the impact of emotion on the self and character (others) are sensed. Then it extends and makes the participants understand the importance of managing their emotions.

In the process of enacting a scene from the play, the participant portrays the character assigned to him. This is another way of making oneself 'stand on others shoes' in understanding the issue. Empathetic perusal leads to understanding co-human beings and building good relationships. This change in the individual communicates the society, about the importance of being broad-minded in addressing every human being. The above process is towards creating a self-awareness about emotions. Self-regulation happens when the participant addresses the emotional issues with a balanced mind in a real-life setting and a fictional setting. Any knowledge about emotion without participatory and experiential training is disastrous.

Theatre for Teacher Professional Development

Imaginative thinking is the base for creativity. Imagination has traditionally been associated with unreality and is commonly thought to be the antithesis of reason. As such, traditional schooling, which has focused on the cultivation of reason and the accumulation of facts, has devalued the imagination and frequently encouraged children to transcend their imaginative natures. Imagination is not opposed to thinking. Nor is the imagination a distinct form of thinking. It is integral to all thinking and, as such, is essential for living a meaningful life. The big challenge is how to apply this conceptual understanding in the classroom.

Theatre Games for Effective Teaching

Modern theatre training utilizes specific devised games, tasks, and exercises to teach the participant. This method is participatory and experiential. It is effective. For example to teach language theatre games related to storytelling, and speech exercises. There are games to improve focus, spontaneity, attention, concentration, and many more. It focuses on every participant through various settings namely in pairs, small groups, whole groups, and as an individual. Theatre training improves the creative thinking process among teachers. Any creative teacher will be capable of devising task-based and participatory teaching tools. It breaks the conventional 'chalk and talk' mode and makes the classroom vibrant.

Dramatic Play is an Instinct

Children engage in Creative Drama processes and it is built on the instinct of dramatic play. This is part of the larger concept of drama in education and it is informal drama that allows its participants to use their imagination and creativity to act out stories, poems, or original ideas. The chief concern of creative drama is the children. It is a child-centered process. In the child's education, dramatic

activity is essential. Early involvement in drama supports the exploratory nature of the child. It expands the child’s vision beyond his own experience. Through creative dramatics, the child will try to notice the limitations and strength of himself and others and discover his potentialities, his personality, his movement, and his language capacities. This topic helps the teacher to understand the nuances of children’s psychological processes and connect them to knowledge construction.

Process Drama

Process drama” in a classroom refers to a teaching method, “learning by doing” through dramatic enactment. Content about the field of study is contextualized and applied in the process. Its major aim is not a polished final product but to focus on the process of exploring in understanding the content. It uses improvised role-playing scenarios to explore a situation, topic, and issue. It allows teachers and students to simulate actual situations experientially. It is a useful tool that helps the participants to develop empathy and critical thinking. Process drama is used to teach basic science concepts. The task of the teacher is to find ways in which to connect the pupils with the content and enable them to develop responses to it through active engagement and reflection. This is really the center of process drama.

Conclusion

Theatre arts is a societal act. It is termed as the replica of the society. It expects big groups involved in constructing the play. It is by participating in or supporting the project. Any play production should have the broader objective of supporting harmony in society. It ascertains the importance of working as a group for the greater good. The topics mentioned in the paper tend to sensitize the importance of theatre arts in three areas namely Teachers, Emotional Intelligence, and Teacher Education, and emphasize the need for collaborative learning. Hence it is a group act, it breaks the hierarchy among group members. There is space for questioning, and reflecting upon their reality in the learning space. A connection between subject knowledge and the knowledge gained from the world is generated. The teacher works as a facilitator in the process of teaching and learning and accepts the learners as active participants in the co-creation of knowledge. Theatre arts make teaching professionals creative and critical thinkers, contributing to the holistic development of the students.

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