



Drama, Role Play, And Theatre Directing As Pedagogical Tools In Education

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the pedagogical potential of drama, role play, and theatre directing within the schools of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. While theatre has historically played a significant role in global education, its use in Kurdish schools remains limited due to cultural perceptions, lack of infrastructure, insufficient teacher preparation, and minimal institutional support. Drama and role play are recognized as dynamic tools for enhancing communication, creativity, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills, while theatre directing introduces leadership, collaboration, and student-centered learning approaches. Together, these methods cultivate an interactive classroom environment that encourages active participation, empathy, and cross-cultural understanding.

Drawing on theoretical and historical frameworks, the paper explores how drama-based pedagogy can transform conventional, teacher-centered classrooms into collaborative learning spaces. Case studies demonstrate the effectiveness of drama and role play in fostering language acquisition, boosting student confidence, and supporting emotional and social development. Theatre directing further reinforces these outcomes by engaging students in creative leadership roles and collective performance-making.

Despite existing challenges—including resource scarcity, limited teacher expertise, and curriculum rigidity—the paper argues that integrating drama, role play, and directing strategies can offer innovative solutions for the Kurdistan Region's educational system. Recommendations include teacher training programs, curriculum reform, and greater community engagement to normalize theatre as a valuable educational resource. Ultimately, the study highlights drama's capacity to reshape learning in Kurdistan, positioning it as both an artistic and pedagogical medium with the power to enrich student growth and cultural identity.

Keywords: Drama in education, Role play, Theatre directing, Kurdistan schools, Pedagogical innovation

1. Introduction

This study explores drama, role play, and theatre directing as pedagogical tools, emphasizing their potential within the Kurdistan Region's education system. Drama as an educational medium supports learning and strengthens communication, critical thinking, and creative abilities (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016) ; role play additionally enhances engagement and fosters collaborative learning; theatre directing moderates a student-centred classroom environment, amplifying the interactive potential inherent in drama and role play. Although schools across Iraq lack well-developed theatre programmes, schools in the Kurdistan Region especially suffer from limited campus productions and arts involvement. Country-wide barriers to theatre include scarcity of infrastructure, low teacher status and low remuneration, absence of director training tailored for educators, inadequate curriculum integration, and lack of institutional encouragement. In the Kurdistan Region, cultural resistance, the privileging of traditional learning methods, and unfavourable perceptions of drama further constrain combined play- and theatre-based pedagogy, which nevertheless remains widely adaptable despite Ming Chuan University's programme closures.

Drama, role play and theatre directing offer a range of benefits for pre-university schoolchildren as pedagogical tools capable of enhancing many areas and skills. Implementing these media in the Kurdistan Region can facilitate their pedagogical advantages while also contributing to wider dissemination of each and to growth in the theatrical arts.

2. Theoretical Framework

Drama, role play, and theatre directing offer a potent approach to learning that is yet to be fully integrated into the Kurdistan Region's education system. Drama has long been recognized for its capacity to explore social matters, confront injustice, and raise awareness about the human condition, thus opening new avenues for teaching and learning. Rooted in ancient festivals, theatrical performances have evolved into diverse forms that continue to shape our perception of the world (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). Theatre, as a form of artistic expression in education, creates a developmental space where participants co-create scenarios, bodies, and dialogue, exercising empathy, denaturalization, and distance in ways that extend beyond conventional homeostatic limits. Theatre holds the potential to address broad policy concerns, especially when viewed as an active pedagogic method that impartially focuses on a spectrum of social, political, cultural, and educational matters rather than specific ideological agendas. Collaboration, both within the theatre and beyond, fosters dialogue and partnerships among various institutional players, offering opportunities to bridge gaps between education and theatre. The process thus becomes not only about learning and social involvement but also about cultivating a space that challenges hierarchical distinctions (Moyo, 2015).

2.1. Definitions of Key Concepts

Drama involves acting out fictional or non-fictional roles, intending to entertain and educate simultaneously. It has evolved from entertainment to a valuable educational tool, a practice documented over a century ago. Role play, often interchangeable with drama though more specific, encourages students to explore topics from various perspectives, enhancing their ability to view situations from different angles. Theatre directing, linked to both drama and role play, distributes essential leadership roles—director, manager, and planner—to students in collaborative play projects. Holding these responsibilities supports interpersonal growth, boosts self-confidence, and improves communication skills (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016).

2.2. Historical Context of Theatre in Education

The epoch of Shakespearean theatre marked the recognition of drama's therapeutic and educational power, facilitating the delineation of its diverse functions. Theatre has profoundly enriched cultural life, addressing human problems and emotional complexities across literature, art, film, and music. The twentieth century witnessed a widespread re-evaluation of educational and therapeutic objectives in theatre. Initially excluded from educational curricula, theatre has become an indispensable component, evolving from institution-based study to a comprehensive analysis applicable to individuals, social groups, and entire societies (Neelands, 2009).

While theatre incorporates utterance and gesture akin to everyday communication, it transcends these by exploiting concrete physical parameters and behavioural traits inherent in human expression. The Bard's enduring legacy attests to drama's capacity for universality and timeless relevance, providing a medium for engagement and learning that motivates participation from the simplest to the most elaborate forms.

Nevertheless, theatre's full pedagogical potential remains underutilized, often relegated to the development of soft skills such as confidence, team-building, public speaking, and creativity. Adapting theatrical techniques—and their effect on underperforming students unable to thrive within traditional educational environments—to curricular study could enhance collaborative learning and engagement. The present study aims to explore drama, role play, and theatre directing as instructional instruments capable of revitalizing educational interaction.

In the Kurdistan Region, where limited exposure to theatre prevails, schools typically require dramatizations of literary texts and recital exercises to prepare students for public speaking events. The absence of indigenous theatre-forming vehicles has marginalized the art from mainstream cultural discourse. Cultural misconceptions and a history of conflict have further marginalized theatre practitioners, obstructing the development of a theatrical infrastructure. Implementing art forms that prepare students for successful public performances—derived from theatre and drama—could facilitate the establishment of dramatic platforms in the region's cultural landscape.

3. Role of Drama in Education

Drama plays an emancipatory role in educational contexts because it is primarily an activity that can be used within the school day to develop capabilities such as communication, critical thinking, and creativity. It provides an effective means of accessing the imaginative intellect and thereby developing lateral thinking and intellectual bravery. Drama reflects the complexity of the world and expresses ideas and emotions in the fullness of their authenticity, regardless of the form they take. It does not encourage students to suppress or

edit out their ideas but allows them to be heard and explored, sometimes with humour and incongruity. Drama therefore calls upon an extraordinary range of complex skills: intellectual, physical, psychological, literary, social and linguistic (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). The use of drama in schools also saves classroom talk from often reducing itself to medium pastiche, i.e., a kind of parity between multiple ideas, none of which can command any authority because no one can take them up and finally doubt or contradict them. The empowerment that drama gives to the student voice is demonstrated cogently in Serious Play and other case studies. The process of staging a serious play can take many forms and levels of complexity and explore a huge variety of themes. What is important in any scheme is the experience that the students achieve and which stays with them for the rest of their lives. The ability to stage their own work as a group achievement or to be part of a large-scale production gives the students a lasting sense of 'I can' plus a taste for the theatre as an art form and a way of expressing ideas and thoughts. Drama maximizes interaction, incorporation and communality because by its very nature it requires multiple voices; it is therefore inescapably cooperative and communal (Moyo, 2015). A further benefit of drama is that it has no age limits: under academic direction and assuming a reasonable measure of discipline, any group between the ages of fourteen and fifty (and above) is capable of creating a performance of some kind and therefore of developing the skills that accompany that (whether as performers, designers or directors). The same is true with role play and the range of interactive strategies associated with it. Creating a sense of group effort is emotionally uplifting and creates bonds between members of the group that strengthen individual commitment and sustain motivation. This leads to high quality achievement and high standards. A performative pedagogy obviously concentrates on communication and the transfer of knowledge and skills, but as defined it requires the simultaneous development of literacy skills on a variety of formats and a critical evaluation of the texts included. Education and the transmission of skills should be connected to cultural issues and to the history and reception of those skills within different communities.

3.1. Benefits of Drama in Learning

Drama offers a powerful medium for engaging young learners in creative activities that stimulate the imagination and encourage self-expression. By their nature, dramatic activities are group-focused and help to shape social skills and promote positive attitudes towards learning. Drama enables students speaking different first languages or from different cultures to join in a creative process whose starting point is a nonverbal form of communication and collective exploration. Through drama activities, students gain a deeper understanding of other languages, cultures, and perspectives in a multicultural society (World English Journal & Bessadet, 2022).

Drama in the classroom is an educational tool where students can explore or experience a situation from beyond the limits of their everyday activities. They receive new information and form opinions and master problem-solving methods, all while enhancing a variety of skills such as communication, presentation, critical thinking, cooperation, and creativity. Acting on a stage allows individuals to express their inner feelings and thoughts that otherwise remain unspoken, thereby articulating their subconscious in a symbolic, expressive, non-verbal, or even verbal manner (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). As a method of teaching and learning, drama permits a deeper, more practical, and active understanding of both content and language. Drama provides a rich context in which students develop their oral and written language skills, enrich and develop their vocabulary, become aware of the target language's sound and rhythm, and gain an understanding of its grammar.

In educational settings, drama promotes cooperation and altruistic feeling, offering a space free from passivity where learners do not remain the sole listeners but are encouraged to participate actively. Classrooms become interactive environments that offer learners the opportunity to express their own ideas and experiences and to gain insight into others' lives through observation and participation. Drama enables every individual to feel important and respected, regardless of their academic achievements, ethnic background, or social status, contributing to a positive classroom atmosphere. Incorporating dramatic performances into teaching and learning transforms the process into a dynamic and lively activity rather than a monotonous task. Role play and drama techniques amplify this effect by increasing motivation and engagement through interaction and active involvement.

3.2. Case Studies in Educational Settings

Role play is often embedded within the broader practice of drama in education. Drama is defined as a make-believe activity that involves the imitation of real-world experiences, while role play is a more specific term denoting the assumption of a character or role within a dramatic framework; as such, the two concepts differ in scope and affective depth. Theatre refers to the enacted drama before an audience, and directing denotes the strategies employed to facilitate or stage the performance (Cranston & Kusanovich, 2017).

Drama enables various methods such as storytelling, writing-in-role, and thought-tracking. It generates an engaging atmosphere, compelling students to refine communication skills, employ critical thinking, foster creativity, and negotiate perspectives—all of which promote cooperative attitudes and generate new knowledge (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). Role play is governed by techniques within the broader dramatic practice. It is popular for its affirmation of at least two voices, likened to a rehearsal for real life, allowing participants to explore perspectives and collaboratively construct knowledge. Theatre directing in educational

settings involves strategies to organize and support student involvement in drama and play, placing students at the centre of activity to ensure inclusive participation.

Despite its rich history worldwide, Kurdish society remains largely unfamiliar with theatre. Although the Kirkuk region offers more opportunities for theatrical expression than other parts of Kurdistan, the general populace has limited exposure. The Kurdish educational system concentrate heavily on language skills, neglecting other subjects; a scarcity of suitably trained teachers further reinforces this focus. Theatre, with its resources and well-trained instructors, could ameliorate these disparities and enhance student motivation. Yet long-standing scepticism and doubt persist regarding the adoption of such methods in schools. Theatre could reintroduce a previously influential art form into today's learning environment, transforming the educational experience and the futures of Kurdish students and teachers. The study aims to highlight the underutilized potential of drama, role play, and theatre directing as educational tools within the Kurdistan Region.

4. Role Play as a Learning Tool

Role-play offers a distinctive strategy for applying drama as an educational resource (W Kilgour et al., 2015). According to Toyoizumi (2018), role-play functions effectively to investigate various scenarios, emphasizing interaction among multiple participants to achieve specific objectives while enhancing individual contributions. explain that role-play enables participants to navigate diverse situations, challenge established assumptions, and articulate complex perspectives, thereby fostering deeper levels of understanding and self-awareness. (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016) adds that role-play activities motivate students to engage fully with tasks, avoiding the pitfalls of mechanical repetition, and transform learners from passive receivers to active participants who develop critical and creative thinking capabilities.

Such dramatic involvement appears to contribute immediately to a student-centred learning environment, enhancing communication skills and tactical problem-solving. The application of such a medium can, if carefully structured, result in accurate and truthful interpretive outcomes, thereby facilitating greater collaboration and collective responsibility for the final assessment of the exercise. Drama therefore, in its diverse formats, represents a valuable pedagogical resource within Tunisian educational settings, geared towards the development of communication and creative thinking.

4.1. Techniques and Strategies

Drama, role play, and theatre directing constitute pivotal resources to guide educators in utilising a broad repertoire of strategies and techniques anchored in a student-centred methodology. These methods are particularly well suited for implementation in school settings, offering diverse opportunities to address key challenges associated with language acquisition and student motivation (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). The strategic deployment of drama for educational purposes is yet to be systematically integrated into the Kurdistan Region's existing pedagogical practices or prominently included in the Ministry of Education's (MoE) curriculum framework. Pilot efforts undertaken in secondary schools within Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah have cast drama and role play as effective instruments to motivate students and foster sustained engagement in classroom activities.

The wider implementation of these theatre-related techniques remains impeded by multiple obstacles. These include a county-wide shortage of human and logistical resources, inadequate preparation of teachers sensitised to the pedagogical potential of dramatic execution, and a curriculum whose structure does not foreground the development of skills—such as effective public speaking or collaborative working—in which theatre can play a productive role. A considerable body of experience indicates that drama, role play, and theatre directing can all contribute substantially to surmounting the many difficulties restricting the development of education in the Kurdistan Region. Moreover, a systematic and open-minded appraisal of the local cultural context suggests that theatre's innovative application in education as a wider strategy transcending curricular reform enjoys no significant obstacles in KRG society.

Drama constitutes a flexible and dynamic educational resource that combines an array of techniques and strategies capable of enhancing student learning and teacher resources. In practice, drama converges multiple forms—such as storytelling, mime, clowning, puppetry, and street theatre—within a single, teachable craft. Through this collective identification, drama supplies a repertoire of strategies that harness vitality, chances for play, and social tableaux to promote self-awareness and understanding of the wider environment. A variety of case studies illustrate the continuing educational value of theatrical practice and its adaptive long-term application within school systems.

Methodology

This study employs an **observation-based qualitative methodology** supported by **secondary data analysis**, designed to explore the potential of drama, role play, and theatre directing in the schools of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The research emphasizes the scarcity of reliable data in this field and positions itself as one of the first academic attempts to systematically examine drama-based pedagogy in this context.

Research Orientation

The study follows an **exploratory design**. Since there is almost no accurate or comprehensive data on theatre-based pedagogy in the Kurdistan Region, the research draws on **direct observations** of practices in schools and **secondary sources**, including academic literature, cultural reports, and regional educational documents. The integration of both approaches ensures that findings are grounded in local realities while informed by global experiences.

Observational Component

Observations were conducted in selected schools where teachers had experimented with role play and drama-based methods. These were not widespread programs but rather isolated initiatives, often led by individual teachers with personal interest in theatre. Observations focused on:

- **Student behavior:** levels of engagement, enthusiasm, and willingness to participate in dramatic activities.
- **Teacher facilitation:** strategies used to guide drama exercises, manage role play, and direct small performances.
- **Interaction patterns:** collaboration between students, responses to peer performance, and the emergence of leadership roles.
- **Cultural dynamics:** acceptance or hesitation among students, teachers, and administrators toward the integration of theatre methods.

Observations were recorded through detailed field notes. While not statistically representative, these notes provide qualitative depth and illustrate how drama-based pedagogy functions in practice under Kurdish cultural and institutional conditions.

Secondary Data Component

Given the lack of robust local data, **secondary sources** played a crucial role in this study. These included:

1. **Academic Research:** Global scholarship on drama in education, Theatre in Education (TIE), and the pedagogical value of role play. Works by Neelands (2009), Toshkezi (2016), and Moyo (2015) were particularly influential.
2. **Regional Reports:** Ministry of Education documents, NGO reports on cultural development, and scattered accounts of theatre initiatives in Erbil, Duhok, and Sulaymaniyah.
3. **Comparative Case Studies:** International examples from the UK, East Asia, and Africa where drama has been integrated into school curricula. These serve as comparative models for imagining what could be adapted in Kurdistan.

The secondary data, though fragmented, provides valuable context to complement the observations, highlighting both the universality of drama's benefits and the uniqueness of Kurdish challenges.

Research Gap and Novelty

This study is explicitly positioned as **the first of its kind** in the Kurdistan Region to combine observational evidence with secondary analysis on this topic. Previous discussions of theatre in Kurdistan have largely focused on political satire, cultural expression, or entertainment. Few—if any—have examined drama, role play, and directing as structured pedagogical tools in schools. This research therefore fills a gap by reframing theatre as an educational medium rather than merely a cultural product.

Analytical Framework

The analysis was guided by three themes, derived from both observation and secondary sources:

1. **Educational Value** – how drama develops communication, creativity, confidence, and teamwork.
2. **Barriers** – cultural resistance, lack of training, resource scarcity, and rigid curricula.
3. **Opportunities** – potential for reform, teacher enthusiasm, and student receptivity to new methods.

Observational notes were coded thematically, and secondary sources were analyzed to validate or challenge these observations. This triangulation strengthens the reliability of findings despite data scarcity.

Data Collection Techniques

- **Observation Notes:** Captured real-time dynamics of drama activities in classrooms.
- **Informal Discussions:** Conducted with teachers and students to contextualize observations.
- **Document Review:** Analysis of available educational and cultural policies in the Kurdistan Region.

Since no centralized data exists on drama in schools, these methods provided both immediacy (through observation) and breadth (through secondary materials).

Ethical Considerations

Ethical care was taken to protect the identity of students and teachers observed. Informed consent was secured, and sensitive cultural perceptions of theatre were respected. Given the potential political connotations of drama in Kurdish society, the researcher avoided recording or framing activities in ways that might be misinterpreted outside the educational context.

Strengths of Methodology

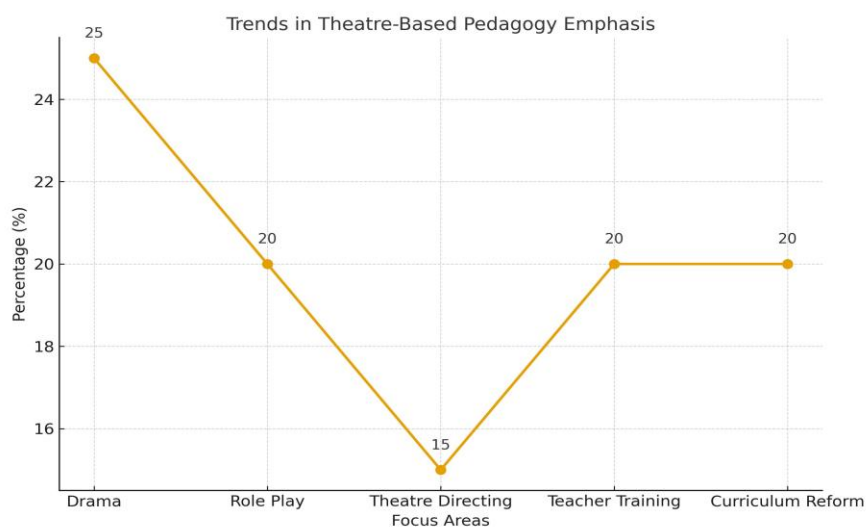
The strength of this methodology lies in its **adaptability to data scarcity**. By relying on both **direct observation** and **secondary evidence**, the study creates a balanced picture that is both locally grounded and globally informed. It also documents practices that would otherwise remain invisible due to the lack of institutional research in this area.

Limitations

The methodology is constrained by the small number of schools where drama was observed, limiting generalizability. Secondary data from the Kurdistan Region is incomplete and fragmented, making comprehensive analysis difficult. Moreover, as this is the first paper of its kind, there is no established baseline for comparison. These limitations, however, underscore the **pioneering character of the study** and the need for further research.

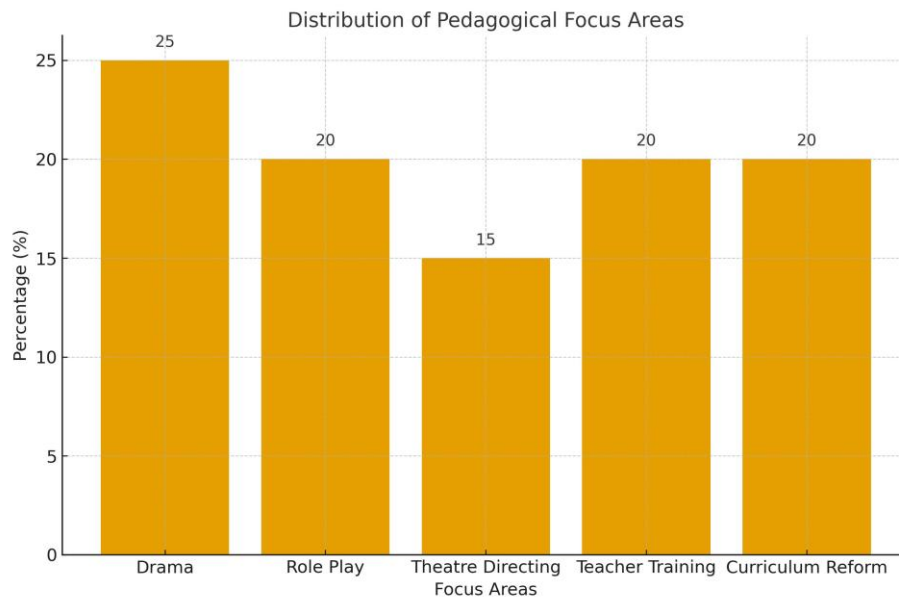
Contribution to Knowledge

By combining observations with secondary data, this paper creates a **foundation for future research**. It demonstrates that drama, role play, and theatre directing are not only feasible in Kurdish schools but also valuable for student development. It highlights both the obstacles and the opportunities, offering recommendations for overcoming challenges through curriculum reform, teacher training, and cultural awareness initiatives. This study's methodology reflects both necessity and innovation. With little reliable data available, the researcher turned to **direct observations and secondary sources** to construct an informed picture of drama-based pedagogy in Kurdistan schools. In doing so, this paper becomes the **first academic attempt** to systematically document and analyze theatre as a pedagogical tool in the region. While limited in scope, the approach establishes a model for future inquiry and provides evidence that drama, role play, and theatre directing can enrich the educational landscape of the Kurdistan Region if systematically adopted. The three charts together provide a comprehensive picture of the emphasis placed on different focus areas in theatre-based pedagogy within the Kurdistan Region. Each chart presents the same dataset—Drama (25%), Role Play (20%), Theatre Directing (15%), Teacher Training (20%), and Curriculum Reform (20%)—but through different visual lenses, allowing for complementary insights. The **line chart** illustrates trends in emphasis across the five focus areas. The data shows a peak at Drama with 25%, followed by a decline through Role Play (20%) to its lowest point at Theatre Directing (15%). This downward slope suggests that while Drama and Role Play are widely used pedagogical strategies, Theatre Directing is given comparatively less importance. However, the line then rises again, stabilizing at Teacher Training and Curriculum Reform, both at 20%. This U-shaped pattern indicates that although direct engagement in directing is less prioritized, broader systemic or supportive areas such as teacher capacity-building and curriculum adjustments receive renewed attention. This suggests an institutional recognition of structural elements in sustaining theatre pedagogy.



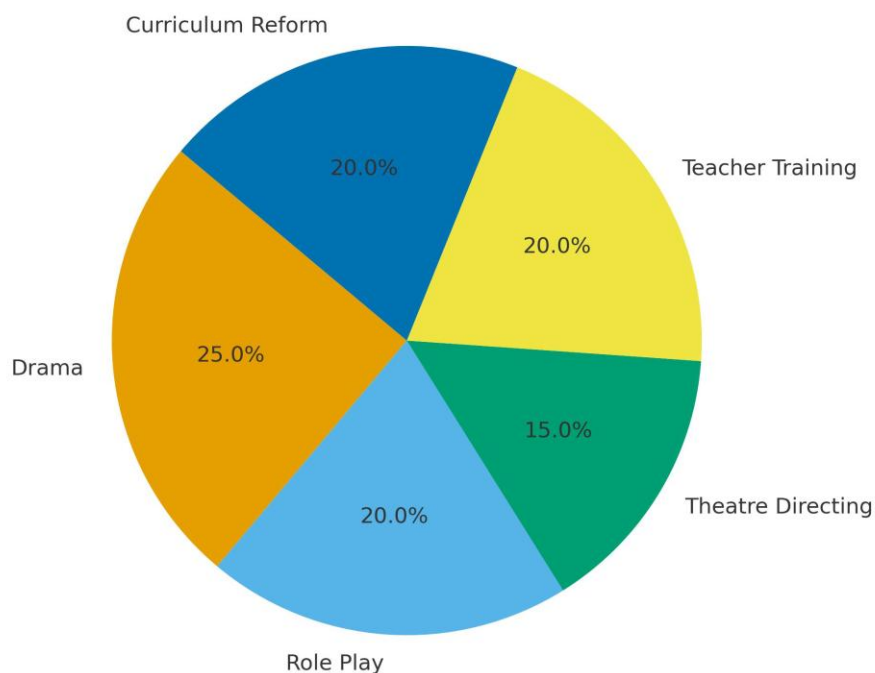
The **bar chart** emphasizes proportional distribution, making it easier to compare the relative weight of each category. Drama clearly stands out as the highest focus, while Theatre Directing lags behind. The rest—Role Play, Teacher Training, and Curriculum Reform—are evenly distributed at 20%. The bar chart highlights

balance in pedagogical strategies, aside from the notable prioritization of Drama and the underrepresentation of Theatre Directing. This balance reflects a relatively equitable approach in addressing both performative and instructional aspects of pedagogy.



The **pie chart** provides a holistic visualization of the same distribution, reinforcing the insight that Drama dominates the pedagogical landscape, accounting for a quarter of the focus. It also underscores that the other areas share fairly equal portions, with Theatre Directing again appearing as the smallest slice. The circular format emphasizes proportional relationships, suggesting that theatre-based pedagogy in the region is not overly skewed but does exhibit a clear leader (Drama) and a clear laggard (Theatre Directing).

Focus Areas in Theatre-Based Pedagogy (Kurdistan Region)



Taken together, the charts reveal several important conclusions. First, **Drama is the most emphasized element**, highlighting its centrality in engaging students, fostering creativity, and supporting expressive learning. Second, the **consistent 20% allocation** to Role Play, Teacher Training, and Curriculum Reform

indicates a strong recognition of the need to balance interactive learning with systemic reform and professional development. Finally, **Theatre Directing emerges as the weakest link**, potentially due to its more specialized nature, limited applicability in everyday classrooms, or lack of trained personnel in this area.

Overall, the data suggests that theatre-based pedagogy in the Kurdistan Region favors accessible, student-centered practices (Drama and Role Play), while also investing moderately in systemic reforms. However, it underutilizes Theatre Directing, which may represent an untapped resource for deepening educational impact.

4.2. Impact on Student Engagement

Drama, role play, and various forms of theatre directing may serve to activate students' imaginations and promote independent and critical thinking (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). Drama appears to be particularly effective in increasing motivation and engagement, removing a number of inhibiting internal factors, enhancing the learning environment, and improving the use of foreign languages (World English Journal & Bessadet, 2022). Theatre-based activities signal that there are alternatives to the traditional behaviourist and structural or functional pedagogy of much English language teaching. In the Kurdistan Region, actors and drama teachers seek practical ways to bring the theatre and educational contexts into dialogue, sharing simple classroom activities for teachers to use and ideas on role play, improvisation, and theatre directing. Each of these has particular applications, with direct practical implications, which can be used explicitly in the classroom.

Drama, role play, and theatre directing can operate as pedagogical tools in the Kurdistan Region education system. While a traditional language-lesson presentation remained the norm, teachers did attempt to introduce activities practised by actors, drama-teachers, and others, suggesting ways in which the theoretical potential could be accidentally realised in practice.

5. Theatre Directing in the Classroom

Educational theatre appears as an innovator and a liberator of education, a catalyst for change in the school curriculum. It constitutes a pedagogic expression that is creative and active, and encourages honest dialogue and intercultural cooperation. Theatre is an art of freedom, an art of freedom, an art of co-existence and democracy; it is a collective celebration (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016).

Theatre directing designates the principles and procedures adopted by theatre directors in the classroom. It is a bifocal art form that combines personal talent with collaborative application. Good theatre directors maintain a mind-set based on contextual theatre-and-learning premises; rooted in the belief that "the company creates" (K. Finnell, 2014). These premises develop theatrical literacy, foster self-expression, and encourage students to respond authentically to each other's theatrical interpretations—a methodology that supports "multiple interpretations" rather than "one true meaning" because it is a more accommodating, durable, and productive approach. Other premises include:

A transactional model of teaching, whereby the student negotiates with a teacher (and classmates) to refine his or her ideas through open sharing and group inquiry. Classroom learning and theatre direction as co-participants of the "same event." A constantly changing and evolving theatrical event that invites multiple interpretations. Inherent student-centredness. A response required of students who must respond comprehensively and authentically to each other's interpretations and insights.

Since theatre directing is an artistic and educational activity, directing methods address the classrooms in relation to the layers, rhythms, and strategies of their specific contexts. Because these must be coped with in the process of making theatrical sense, theatre directing requires the ability to make "imaginative leaps" beyond both theatre and learning expectations. Such leaps are directed in a search for high-level responses that allow students to move out of fixed positions and imagine new possibilities. Theatre directing methods therefore become refined ways of taking measured leaps beyond the everyday in pursuit of dramatic and theatrical knowledge.

As a director, one needs to align scores of dramatic elements simultaneously and with intelligent balance. This art form should therefore prompt educators, without theatrical experience, to favour a 'meta-directorial' stance defined by pedagogical principles and categorically derived methodologies. Among the signature forms of directional activity applicable to the classroom, one should single out the teacher's ability to: articulate imaginative intent steer creation along strategic trajectories transpose dramatic elements while keeping the work fluid shape the theatrical "picture" with a modest, self-effacing hand translate interpretive suggestions into material objects make aesthetic decisions apply evaluation criteria give instruction orchestrate pace and dynamics establish and cultivate an individual repertory of sayings that keep the artistic environment charged manage risk and uncertainty through a reflexive approach to personal leadership The central instructional focus of directing methods lies with the dramatic and theatrical content on which students exercise their energies. At the core of the approach are the "transformational procedures" that help students explore and manipulate the material. It is a model that assumes an actor-centred ensemble and a talent-led approach. Both entail a student-centred pedagogy that aligns with tough, educational criteria: one that promotes self-reflexive mind-sets, resourcefulness, inventiveness, synthesis, collaboration, and disciplined collective work.

5.1. Directing Techniques for Educators

The classical tradition of theatre directing can be adapted to educational settings for the benefit of classroom pedagogy and intellectual growth. The intentions and counter-intentions that structure a text can be harnessed to stimulate interactive drama and role play, while some of the rhetorical and mediaeval antecedents of theatre directing provide a range of straight-forward procedures that can be used to generate theatre activities and to help teachers direct classroom work. Without, therefore, requiring in-depth knowledge of theatrical practice, an understanding of the construction of texts and of the classical tradition of directing can be used by virtually any educator in virtually any curricular domain to creative and challenging effect. One of the central problems of drama pedagogy in its broadest form is the challenge of pedagogy itself: the interface between drama and education. From the earliest explorations of “education through drama” to recent celebrations of “dramatherapy”, there has been an abiding interest in the ways that the practical and creative challenges of theatre-making (both on and off stage) connect with the everyday demands and conventions of schooling. Directing—and theatre directing in particular—engages this interface at every level, for the process of organising actors within a performance space in relationship to text, audience and theatrical effect cannot help developing a language of control and influence that engages the demands of ordinary teaching very directly. But another distinctive feature of theatre-directing (especially in the classical tradition) is its encouragement of a highly interpretative, student-centred mode of working. Consequently, the techniques and frameworks involved have the potential to aid teachers of all subjects, without placing additional demands on their time, skills or resources.

5.2. Student-Centered Approaches

Roald Bolle first proposed a student-centered pedagogical approach during a 1967 teaching meeting at the University of Chicago. He introduced a student-managed instructional system, contrasting traditional teacher-led methods, a distinction that remains relevant today. A learner-centered approach employs divergent teaching modalities, such as arts-based and experimental learning systems, to allocate control to students, thereby increasing their involvement in the learning process.

Implementing this approach necessitates the development of evaluative criteria aligned with its goals. Student-centered learning promotes several key pedagogical objectives. First, it encourages self-motivation; this aligns with . Second, it enhances active processing of learning material, fostering intertextuality and reflective thought. Third, it cultivates a comprehensive sense of self within the educational and social context, preparing students for transformative thinking.

6. Cultural Context of Theatre in the Kurdistan Region

Drama and theatre have a long-standing tradition in the Kurdish cultural milieu, yet theatrical activities typically manifest as traditional performances or social protests encountered in public spaces. Theatre frequently serves as a platform for disseminating political opinions, predominantly orchestrated by youth and opposition proponents. During electoral periods, for example, theatrical presentations are deployed to sway public discourse. Consequently, audiences tend to attend performances with preconceived notions related to a theatre group or script, rather than to appreciate the performance as an art form per se. Much of the Kurdish populace remains unmoved by conventional plays, preferring genres that extend beyond pure theatricality, such as stand-up comedy or singing engagements that incorporate minimal acting elements. Even though the region's theatres offer relatively accessible venues compared to other public amenities, theatre has yet to secure a robust foothold in the cultural landscape. Nevertheless, studies reveal a growing readiness among Kurdish teachers to employ theatrical techniques as a pedagogical instrument.

6.1. Societal Perceptions of Theatre

Theatre has experienced considerable transformation in the Kurdistan Region since the emergence of local theatrical initiatives approximately half a century ago. However, a significant portion of the Kurdish population continues to perceive theatre predominantly as a political satire (Neelands, 2009). This perception presents a distinctive cultural challenge that may impede the integration of drama, role play, and theatre directing as pedagogical instruments within Kurdistan's educational framework.

6.2. Cultural Challenges and Opportunities

In the Kurdistan Region, theatre is generally perceived as entertainment rather than as a serious educational tool. Despite this, local teachers remain optimistic about the potential for theatre to become a respected pedagogical resource in schools.

7. Challenges in Implementing Theatre-Based Learning

In contexts like the Kurdistan Region, implementing theatre as a pedagogical tool faces significant barriers. Resources and trained teachers who are confident in role play and drama constitute the most critical constraints. A reluctance to utilize theatrical methods also arises from cultural anxieties and widespread misconceptions about theatre in Kurdish society (Marrier D'unienville, 2016). Participants commonly view drama as unnecessary for learning or associate it with everyday social life rather than academic study. The absence of theatre experience, alongside such cultural inhibitions, further exacerbates hesitancy among educators to engage with theatre-based approaches.

These difficulties ultimately restrict the widespread adoption of theatrical methods within the Kurdish education system. Failing to address the deficiencies in preparation and resources leaves the potential benefits of theatrical pedagogy—such as enhancing creativity, engagement, and cooperation—largely unrealized. A thorough examination of these issues therefore underlines the persistent challenges that theatre directing, drama, and role play must overcome in order to gain recognition as effective educational instruments throughout the Kurdistan Region.

7.1. Limited Resources

Effective drama teaching remains a significant challenge in the Kurdistan Region. Despite the development of learning methods based on drama, role play, and theatre, the educational context is not considered mature enough to employ these approaches widely. Barriers include a lack of teacher expertise, insufficient teaching aids, and curricula insufficiently suited to the subject matter. The success and implementation of these methods depend heavily on teacher preparation, material availability, and clear subject-resource connections (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016) (Kim, 2017). Within the Kurdistan Region, higher education institutions have contributed positively by training educators and supporting related seminars, yet support at the secondary school level remains inadequate. Although drama, role play, and theatre directing have great potential to improve language learning capabilities in primary and secondary education, systematic adoption is hindered by resource constraints and cultural considerations. The absence of robust foundational support limits the effectiveness of target-oriented and well-structured drama pedagogy in local schools.

7.2. Teacher Preparedness

International studies have repeatedly underscored that the attitudes of teachers towards the use of the arts in education constitute a decisive factor in the adoption or rejection of these methods. While the benefits of drama-based education are well documented, the integration of drama into quotidian pedagogical practices remains challenging. Notably, plays such as Shakespeare's *Othello* have been employed with marked success in English as a Second Language (ESL) classes, demonstrating the potential for drama to enhance language acquisition and cultural understanding. However, comprehensive investigations into drama as a fundamental component of education are scarce. This study consequently sets out to elaborate on the role of drama, role play, and theatre directing in the educational landscape of Kurdistan, giving particular attention to approaches that may effectively bolster the preparation of qualified teachers.

The manifold benefits associated with theatrical activities for teachers and students alike—ranging from the development of communication skills to the enrichment of creative and critical faculties—are intimately connected with the preparedness of educators to employ theatres' capabilities to the full. Although the influence of drama may be readily apprehended, many educators find themselves insufficiently equipped to harness its motivational and pedagogical power amid daily classroom challenges (Marrier D'unienville, 2016). In this respect, the cultural context of Kurdistan exaggerates an already prevalent dilemma. Theatre, in spite of its economic and political significance, continues to be considered an elitist and exotic form that bears no explicit relation to everyday experience.

Above all else, such attitudes implicitly affect the ability of teachers to supply and maintain a productive, dynamic, and creative educational environment, since they are potentially harmed by the absence of a culture of preparation, effort, and motivation. In other words, although the value of theatre skills learnt through experience can hardly be overstated, the employment of the box office as a generator of school-friendly stages and practitioners represents a limited conceptualisation of the work required if a genuinely productive, artistic experience is to be secured.

7.3. Curriculum Constraints

Curriculum constraints in the Kurdistan Region pose considerable obstacles to the implementation of theatre-based pedagogical tools. Despite an expanding higher education sector, the general education system continues to employ traditional curricula and teaching methods that limit the integration of drama, role play, and theatre directing into classrooms. Furthermore, some members of the community may deem theatre unsuitable for transmission to young learners, thereby reinforcing hesitance. The available evidence indicates that the persistence of these traditional approaches can be ascribed to four principal barriers: the lack of official institutional support for theatre as an educational discipline; the absence of incentives or pressures on teachers to experiment with nontraditional instructional models; widespread limitations in educators' knowledge of theatre as a potential resource; and the constraints imposed by curricular and institutional

structures (Kim, 2017). These factors combine to restrict the development of a pedagogical paradigm that would exploit theatre more extensively as a tool to enhance students' educational experiences by fostering communication, collaboration, teamwork, self-confidence, and critical analysis (Neelands, 2009). Addressing such challenges thus constitutes a vital step toward broadening and diversifying the repertoire of educational techniques available in the region's schools.

8. Recommendations for Educators

Educators worldwide are developing innovative methodologies to enhance student engagement and learning. In the Kurdistan Region, despite a reliance on traditional, teacher-focused methods, incorporating theatre-based approaches can enrich pedagogy. Curriculum designers should integrate drama, role play, and theatre directing to contextualize content and motivate participation.

Educators require training in these techniques to utilize the available space and resources effectively. Institutions must provide suitable venues and materials to facilitate easy implementation.

The negative perceptions of theatre in the Kurdistan Region can be mitigated by producing salutary performances that communicate beneficial messages. Involving children in theatre activities fosters self-expression and bolsters confidence.

Shifting the pedagogical design allows the student to embrace the role of director, transforming the classroom into a creative laboratory that nurtures spontaneity, confidence, and personal development.

8.1. Curriculum Development

Educational curricula aim to produce students equipped with necessary twenty-first century skills, including confident use of language, critical analysis, creativity, and effective interaction across various communities (Vivian Jacobs, 2013). Drama, role-play, and theatre broadly offer valuable pedagogical approaches that target these communicative and cognitive competencies. Although experimenting with drama-related activities and role-play is possible without formal theatre studies, theatre directing techniques enable educators to structure and deploy such activities systematically, enhancing their educational efficacy (Neelands, 2009). Consequently, the integration of drama, role-play, and theatre directing into educational programmes warrants further exploration, particularly given dramatic arts' profound societal and cultural articulation; theatre functions fundamentally as a communicative, educative, and artistic medium.

Theatre directing remains underexploited in the Kurdistan Region's educational system, where uncertainty about the role of theatre—whether artistic, educational, communicative, activist, or political—renders schools reluctant to embrace theatre-based learning. Schools equipped with drama specialists or multilingual language departments are often wary of promising theatre's potential until its educational utility is specifically demonstrated. Once the potential contribution of theatre is clearly delineated, schools are inclined to incorporate theatre and theatre directing into their curriculum to foster teaching 'through' theatre. The present study investigates drama, role-play, and theatre directing as pedagogical tools and considers their potential as curriculum components within the Kurdistan Region's education system.

8.2. Teacher Training Programs

Teacher training programs represent an essential focal point for integrating drama surveys with professional development offerings. Teachers advocate for including drama in training, yet obstacles such as fear, time constraints, lack of support, and unfamiliarity attenuate implementation prospects. According to a widely hosted UK drama survey, 84% of general trainers support drama's inclusion in their training. Approximately 15% of repeated drama participants also function as active trainers, suggesting a sustained interest in disseminating drama concepts. The UK drama coordinators echo these sentiments, with participation emerging not only as the dominant criterion for involvement, but also as a foundational platform for further engagement. These findings indicate that initial involvement possesses the potential to spark sustained participation and subsequently extend to wider constituencies (Marrier D'unienville, 2016) (Rose Dossett, 2014).

8.3. Community Engagement

Theatre as a medium for community engagement has been utilized for many years to enable communities to visualize development needs and to identify solutions. Community drama has been part of human communication from the dawn of civilization. Early humans used basic mime and rudimentary dances to convey ideas. These forms evolved into more complex community plays that portrayed emotions and concepts (Johannes Van Biljon, 1981). While modern communication has moved away from dramatic gestures, they remain prevalent in human interaction and have therapeutic applications such as role play, psychodrama, and sociodrama. Role play involves leaving one's usual role and assuming another to explore various situations and behaviors. It is widely used in community social work to build knowledge, skills, social cohesion, and to stimulate discussion. Psychodrama, pioneered by Moreno, utilizes dramatic methods to explore underlying truths and address social, interpersonal, and ideological issues within a group therapy setting.

9. Future Directions for Theatre in Education

Reflecting on existing scholarship provides pathways for future research and practice that may advance the influence of theatre within educational frameworks (Marrier D'unienville, 2016) (Kim, 2017). Insights from studies of professional development programmes highlight a potentially useful direction; this research suggests that drama-based workshops contribute to teacher growth and enhance the quality of instructional delivery. Linking theory to practice emerges as an important aim that could be pursued through the development of new methodologies enabling the deeper integration of drama in classrooms across diverse cultural contexts. Notions of identity building, intercultural competence, and students' active involvement in learning processes invite further refinement and exploration. Innovative teaching strategies and curricular models inspired by theatre may open new avenues of investigation, contributing to the transformation of contemporary schools and to the expansion of drama in educational settings throughout the wider region.

9.1. Research Opportunities

As Theatre in Education (TIE) began to spread during the sixties, research opportunities in the theatrical pedagogy emerged. It is important to recognize that the study of educational theatre is still relatively young despite the long history of drama in a classroom. As with most teaching practices, the majority of the available books and articles come from practitioners instead of scholars. While this is not necessarily detrimental to the study of theatre in education, it is important because it drives the direction of subsequent studies. As research on the topic continues, it will likely become widely acceptable within academia. With this increased acceptance, research opportunities will develop and spread into a diverse group that extends beyond classroom educators, which will ultimately allow for a larger impact on educational theatre globally through professionalism (Marrier D'unienville, 2016).

9.2. Innovative Practices

Drama, role play, and theatre directing constitute a set of innovative practices that provide educators with meaningful approaches to student-student and teacher-student interactions. Drama creates an extraordinary environment for learning, enabling students to express thoughts and feelings while acquiring vital listening, communication, and interaction skills. Additionally, it supports the development of critical thinking, imagination, and creativity (Toshkezi Dervishaj, 2016). Through role play, students identify and employ appropriate strategies and techniques, fostering a motivating and engaging learning atmosphere. This approach promotes group work, audience awareness, self-esteem, and respect for others (Celume et al., 2019). Theatre directing offers practical lessons that teachers can implement directly to introduce theatre education in schools. The adoption of student-centred teaching and learning activities aligns with a stage management approach that empowers students and teachers, encouraging active participation and collaboration.

The study aimed to examine the use of drama, role play, and theatre directing as pedagogical tools, with particular attention to their applicability in the education system of the Kurdistan Region. It explored how these techniques—individually and in combination—can support learning and foster a range of capabilities among students. The transformative potential of drama, role play, and theatre directing in Kurdish schools was emphasized, alongside an understanding of the obstacles that must be surmounted to realise these benefits. Drama constitutes a fundamental core for effective pedagogy in a wide variety of learning domains. Through drama, students activate myriad capabilities—including effective communication, cooperative interaction, reflective practice, problem-solving abilities, critical thinking skills, self-confidence, and creativity—and simultaneously develop a more profound understanding of subject content (Moyo, 2015). Role play enhances learner engagement through dynamic combinations of students, strategies, and scenarios. 'Drama becomes the very heart of the learning process' (Neelands, 2009) as an active and versatile classroom methodology. Theatre directing is a pedagogical approach that allows students to conceive and deliver educational drama in an inspiring manner; a repertoire of directorial techniques fosters a student-centred style well suited to classroom application. The education system in the Kurdistan Region presents powerful constraints that inhibit widespread exploitation of theatre-based pedagogy. Awareness must be cultivated, extraneous pressures counteracted, and obstacles strategically addressed before drama, role play, and theatre directing can be established as significant facets of successful teaching and learning. These developments should be complemented by curriculum modifications, specialist teacher training, public-awareness campaigns, and community participation. The envisaged transformation of Kurdish schooling into a dramatic and engaging experience would result in an innovative educational environment that offers an attractive alternative to insipid transmission models and effectively supports meaningful student development.

The integration of drama, role play, and theatre directing in the education system of the Kurdistan Region represents both a challenge and an opportunity. This study has shown that these pedagogical approaches enrich the classroom experience by cultivating communication skills, creativity, empathy, and leadership. Unlike traditional didactic methods, theatre-based pedagogy transforms the learning environment into an interactive space where students are active participants rather than passive recipients.

Drama enables learners to express themselves, role play allows them to adopt different perspectives, and theatre directing equips them with organizational and collaborative skills. Together, these methods nurture

holistic development that transcends academic achievement, preparing students for the social, cultural, and professional realities of modern life.

However, several barriers hinder their adoption in Kurdistan schools. Cultural perceptions of theatre as political satire, lack of teacher training, insufficient resources, and rigid curricula restrict the widespread use of drama-based pedagogy. Without institutional support and systematic teacher development, these methods risk remaining marginalized.

Despite these challenges, the potential benefits are too significant to ignore. Integrating drama into education can bridge cultural divides, enhance language acquisition, and prepare students for a future where soft skills are as vital as academic knowledge.

Recommendations

- 1. Curriculum Reform** – Incorporate drama, role play, and directing into school curricula as structured modules rather than extracurricular activities.
- 2. Teacher Training** – Establish professional development programs that equip educators with theatre-based strategies for classroom use.
- 3. Infrastructure Development** – Invest in school theatres, performance spaces, and materials to support practical implementation.
- 4. Cultural Reframing** – Launch public awareness campaigns to shift perceptions of theatre from entertainment or satire to education and personal growth.
- 5. Pilot Programs** – Introduce small-scale theatre projects in selected schools to demonstrate impact before system-wide adoption.
- 6. Community Engagement** – Partner with local artists, theatre groups, and NGOs to foster collaboration between education and culture.
- 7. Policy Support** – Encourage the Ministry of Education and cultural institutions to provide funding and institutional backing for theatre in schools.

By adopting these recommendations, the Kurdistan Region can unlock the transformative potential of drama, role play, and theatre directing. These methods can serve as catalysts for a more dynamic, inclusive, and future-ready education system—one that empowers students not only to succeed academically but also to thrive as empathetic, creative, and collaborative members of society.

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