

Review Of Literature On The Drama And Theatre Arts On Academic Performance

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Abstract: Previous reviews of literature on the effects on constructs of self and student participation in a theatre arts program are inconclusive. While they hold convergent findings on the positive health effects in relation to student participation in theatre arts, their findings diverge on the effects of the constructs of self and are inconclusive. The literature suggests the need for more research in this field with additional qualitative data. This leads to the purpose of this review of literature which is to update the current literature and expand the qualitative research on the relationship between theatre arts participation and students' learning outcomes. Research suggests theatre arts participation benefits student's academic and nonacademic outcomes. The purpose of this literature review was to identify the extent to which a relationship exists between participation in theatre arts and student outcomes for students K-12. Fourteen articles met the inclusion criteria. Results found theatre arts programs were positively related to self-beliefs, provide positive outcome experiences, foster student development, increase interpersonal and social skills, and expand theatre arts skills. The results indicate the importance of the creative process in theatre arts, which includes play production, theatre devising and theatre workshops and classes. The evidence from these findings suggest that students may benefit from the experiences of participation in a theatre arts program through the creative process and increase student outcomes through social and emotional development, enhancing self-beliefs, and increasing theatre arts skills. This informs current practice in implantation of a theatre arts program, which could include play production, theatre devising and theatre classes and workshops.

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Introduction:

The term 'drama' comes from an ancient Greek verb meaning 'to do' or 'to act', and this is when it all began for the tradition. Come to think of it, the literal meaning of this word is very apt in describing the activity, yet the word has evolved over time to offer different meanings since its beginning. For example, in today's world, the word 'drama' is normally associated with situations that involve a conflict of emotions.

There were originally thought to be two types of drama: comedy and tragedy. That said, when you refer to dramas from the 19th century, this term actually refers to a staged theatrical performance that is neither one nor the other (thus the term took on a new meaning of its own).

Rome was introduced to Greek drama and Greek comedy around 250 BCE, and many Romans reworked the original plays, dividing the stories into episodes, removing the choruses and replacing them with a musical element like an orchestra, or having them singing.

The Roman times were still influenced by Greek gods and mythological Greek culture, but Roman theatre

was equally expressive of themes significant to Rome, Sicily and society in Italy in general, as well as classical literature and religious rites. Performances would have been composed of Venetian masks, ceremonial dancing and stylized with a range of facial expressions.

Hundreds of years after the first ever creations of tragedy and comedy, Medieval Drama brought something totally new to theatre, in a move away from reworking older styles. With the Christian Church originally opposing theatre, seeing it as controversial, religious holiday stories and scenarios from the Bible naturally started to be performed by leaders of the churches, and eventually, these performances became more elaborate and moved to other parts of the community (i.e. the stage).

Review of literature:

Research suggests theatre arts participation benefits student's academic and non-academic outcomes. Participation in theatre strengthens development of identity, sense of belonging, builds confidence and provides an outlet for expression. Theatre arts programs have lifelong impacts in creativity, cognitive

thinking, communication, and personal development (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; McCammon, Saldaña, Hines, & Omasta, 2012; Ngo, 2016; Sonn, Quayle, Belanji, & Baker, 2015). The term theatre arts encompasses the overarching term to describe theatre and drama (Davis, Ferholt, Clemson, Jansson, & Marjanovic-Shane, 2015; National Core Arts Standards, 2014). The distinction between theatre and drama is that theatre refers to the live performance of a theatrical piece, whereas drama refers to the creative process. In this study we will use the term theatre arts except when we need to identify a specific component or form under the term theatre arts. While research suggests the possible benefits of theatre arts for students, there is a dearth in qualitative research in the educational setting for theatre arts and students' learning outcomes and how the theatrical process contributes to these outcomes (Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al., 2008). What does the current research indicate about student participation in theatre arts and learning outcomes and what are the theatrical processes that contribute to these outcomes?

In order to frame the research problem and purpose, we will first discuss the general research on theatre arts and students' learning outcomes. Research suggests theatre arts participation benefits students' academic and non-academic learning outcomes. Academic learning outcomes refers to students acquiring knowledge and skills in the student-learning objectives and standards, graduation rates, and school-based achievement. Non-academic learning outcomes refer to the larger notion of societal and life outcomes in relation to self-beliefs (Great School Partnership, 2013). First, theatre arts positively impact academic learning outcomes, including academic achievement, supporting varying learning styles, cultivating a positive learning environment, and increases retention rates. Theatre arts skills can transfer to general education skills leading to greater academic achievement (Kindelan, 2001). Theatre arts benefit students in reading, language skills, mathematical skills, thinking skills, social skills, motivation and creates an overall positive learning environment (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Kindelan, 2001; Ruppert, 2006). Theatre arts reaches students who might not traditionally succeed in school, and aids those with different learning styles (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012). Furthermore, theatre arts foster cooperation between students and creates a positive school environment, where students are more likely to be excited to learn, thus transferring to student success (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Hoxie & Debellis, 2014). Enrollment in a theatre arts program leads some students, who do not enjoy other classes, to attend

school, thus increasing retention rates and student engagement contributing to student academic learning outcomes (McLauchlan, 2010). These programs can provide non-traditional educational practices and engage students who may have negative school experiences, thus reinvigorating their learning, leading to successful academic learning outcomes (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Hoxie & Debellis, 2014; Ruppert, 2006). Second, theatre arts positively influences students' non-academic learning outcomes including: development of identity, emotional development, and social and personal development. Participation in theatre strengthens the development of identity by providing a sense of belonging, building confidence, and offering an outlet for expression (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001). Theatre arts participation strengthens emotional development by exposing students to risks and uncertainty in a supportive structure, provides opportunities for one to explore self through a creative process and supports social development for students by encouraging expression, risk taking, and reinforcing social skills (Hughes & Wilson, 2004). Furthermore, theatre arts participation supports emotional development by having similar traits of positive affective development found in families (e.g., emotional predictability, emotional openness, adults playing a positive supportive role) (Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon et al. 2012). Theatre arts programs have lifelong impacts in social and personal development (Hanrahan & Banerjee, 2017; Holloway & LeCompte, 2001; McCammon, Saldaña, Hines, & Omasta, 2012; Ngo, 2016; Sonn, Quayle, Belanji, & Baker, 2015). Adolescents learn social reality through the creative drama process, and they learn they can create new roles for themselves in their own life (Conrad, 2010).

This systematic review of the literature examines relevant literature related to the impact of students' participation in theatre arts on academic and non-academic learning outcomes. The first step in this review of literature was to systematically identify and summarize the findings of previous relevant literature. Second, I conducted a systematic literature review to answer the following question: What is the relationship between students' participation in theatre arts and academic and non-academic learning outcomes and what aspects of theatre arts affect the relationship? This review included identifying search terms and inclusion criteria; this was followed by a successive three-phase design, which included an electronic database search, hand search, and reference review (Cooper, 2017) to provide an in-depth review of the literature. The sections that follow summarize the findings from previous literature reviews on

theatre participation and students' academic and/or non-academic learning outcomes, describe the systematic review purpose and search procedures, identify, describe the results, and discuss the findings of the included studies that were included.

In order to locate previous relevant reviews of literature a search was conducted on all dates up to October, 23, 2018 using the following search terms: "theatre", "theater", "drama" AND "systematic review", "synthesis", "meta-analysis", "literature review". The inclusion criteria were the following: (a) included K-12 students, (b) included at least one form of theatre arts, (c) addressed academic or non-academic learning outcomes, (d) published in peer reviewed journals (e) published in any country as long as it was in English. The results revealed three systematic reviews of the literature that discuss the relevant literature on the impact on academic and nonacademic learning outcomes for students participating in theatre arts (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen, Rankin, & Åstedt-Kurki, 2008). These will be summarized in the sections that follow. Conrad and Asher (2000) investigated self-concept and self-esteem through drama. The inclusion criteria comprised the following: (a) experimental or quasi-experimental in design, (b) studies used creative drama as a teaching strategy, and (c) studies examined the effects of creative drama on self-concept or self-esteem. All of the selected studies ($n = 8$) were doctoral dissertations. The authors did not define search years. Authors find creative drama has no effect on the selfconcept of elementary students. The authors note and the findings suggest a need for more research for other affective and cognitive variables. Daykin et al. (2008) report on participation in the performing arts and its effects on health and behavior. Their mixed-methods synthesis includes performing arts (i.e., music, drama, performance, dance), health (e.g., HIV/AIDS, alcohol, tobacco, illegal drugs), and social benefits (e.g., peer interaction, social skills, empowerment). The inclusion criteria were: (a) participants were between 11 to 18 years of age, (b) in community settings, (c) studies were published between 1994 and 2004, (d) studies included a drama, dance or music intervention outside the curriculum, (e) studies were published in English. The authors identified 14 studies meeting their inclusion criteria. The participants were actively involved in drama or participating as audience members. The authors identified key themes related to the positive effect of theatre arts participation on students' learning outcomes, including academic improvement, mental health, empowerment, behavior, social skills development and increase in peer interaction in regard to performing arts participation (Douglas et al., 2000;

Lasic & Kenny, 2002; Mattingly, 2001; McArdle et al., 2002). Overall, the findings suggest drama interventions benefit participant's academic learning outcomes, health, and social development. In addition, Daykin et al. identified three articles which either find that theatre arts had a limited effect or negative effect on social development, or the study was low in quality (Jackson, 2003; Lasic & Kenny, 2002; Walsh-Bowers & Basso, 1999). The authors note many qualitative studies lack detail such as data collection procedures and data analysis. The authors suggest the qualitative research should be more rigorous and researcher should apply reflexivity in their qualitative research (Daykin et al., 2008). At the time of publication, the authors find a dearth in the research on drama interventions for students outside clinical settings and suggest areas for potential future research in student outcomes, performing arts processes, and data collections and analysis procedures. The authors also suggest while there is a need for more quantitative and qualitative research in this field, qualitative research may be the better form of research to gain insight on the process of performing arts and health (Daykin et al., 2008). Finally, Joronen et al. (2008) reviewed the literature on school-based drama intervention for health promotion. They report focused on health behavior (e.g., HIV, smoking and eating) and social and mental health, which is associated with non-academic learning outcomes (e.g., selfconcept, social skills, social transition). The study inclusion criteria contained: (a) drama or theatre as the primary method in the intervention program, (b) evidence of effectiveness of the intervention, (c) participants between the ages 6 to 18, and (d) published in peer-reviewed journals. The authors identified only four articles that met the inclusion criteria (Freeman et al., 2003; Wright, 2006; Walsh-Bowers, 1992; Walsh-Bowers & Basso, 1999). The authors indicate that school-based drama intervention positively effects health promotions (e.g., anti-smoking, drug prevention) in students; however, studies lacked statistically significant effects on non-academic learning outcomes in self-concept. The authors also note that the studies contained weak or insufficient reporting of methodology and supporting theory in drama intervention. The authors suggest that future research should include qualitative research to understand the entire drama process and not just the outcomes. The findings suggest drama interventions positively effects health awareness but does not impact non-academic learning outcomes in self-concept. The authors suggest currently the research on school-based drama intervention methodology is weak on describing the drama process used in the interventions as most of the research reports on outcomes and not

the drama process used in the intervention (Joronen et al., 2008). Systematic reviews by Conrad and Asher (2000), Daykin et al. (2008), and Joronen et al. (2008) present several convergent findings. First, all three of the study's findings converge on the need for more research on the effects of theatre arts on students. Conrad and Asher (2000) find the need for more detailed and quality research. Second, Daykin et al. (2008) and Joronen et al. (2008) find a need for qualitative research to examine the process of participation in theatre arts rather than just focusing on the outcome. Third, two of the studies find positive health outcomes for students receiving a theatre arts intervention (Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al., 2008). The studies diverge on their findings on the effects relating to student outcomes. While Daykin et al. (2008) find several impacts of theatre arts developing self-confidence, social skills, improved interaction with peers and increased co-operation, Conrad and Asher (2000) and Joronen et al. (2008) find no significant effects of a theatre arts intervention in relation to student outcomes, and find the studies are inconclusive. Fourth, previous systematic literature reviews are inconclusive on the impact of theatre arts participation and student outcomes; however, they agree on the need for more research on participation in theatre and student outcomes (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al.; 2008). Overall, more research is needed to examine the relationship between participation in theatre arts and student academic and non-academic learning outcomes.

In order to update and expand upon the previous literature reviews (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al.; 2008) I conducted a systematic review of the literature. In expanding upon previous literature reviews (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008; Joronen et al.; 2008), I developed an inclusion criterion, then followed a sequential three-phase search procedure to identify all relevant studies on theatre arts participation and student academic and non-academic learning outcomes (Cooper, 2017).

Many students have low levels of positive academic and non-academic outcomes (Buhs, 2005; Caraway, Tucker, Reinke, & Hall, 2003; NCES, 2016). Research suggests students with low outcomes tend to doubt their abilities and focus on their insufficiencies, are less independent, unmotivated, have behavioral issues and perform at a lower level academically and socially, contributing to feelings of failure (Bandura, 1994; Quiroga, et al., 2013; Valentine, DuBois & Cooper, 2004). This may lead to high levels of stress, anxiety and depression. Students displaying these symptoms achieve at a lower rate academically, have a higher dropout rate and low selfbeliefs (Bandura, 1994;

Donnellan et al., 2005; Quiroga, et al., 2013). Fortunately, theatre arts have been shown to improve academic and non-academic outcomes which improve school performance and enhance self-beliefs (Catterall, Dumais, & Hampden-Thompson, 2012; Hoxie & Debellis, 2014; Larson & Brown, 2007; McCammon et al. 2012; Ruppert, 2006). Researchers and practitioners are still unclear on the best method to integrate and implement theatre arts programming to improve students' outcomes (Conrad & Asher, 2000; Daykin et al., 2008).

Participation in a theatre program intertwined the four-step play creating process (i.e., script writing, rehearsing, performing, reflecting) with five sequential developmental stages of performing arts (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment, vision), which promoted a positive youth development model. Each experience in theatre enabled the participants to experience the developmental phase at a more complex level, thus allowing them to move to the next level (e.g., sequentially moving up in the developmental phases) (Beare & Belliveau, 2007). The inclusion phase of development related how the student fits in to the group. Once students felt acceptance of the group, they were able to proceed to control. Theatre students used their theatre skills by exploring their boundaries and limits to find their voice within the group. Once the students experienced control over their group inclusion they moved to intimacy, where the main focus was friendship and strong connections with peers. Once the students felt completely comfortable with the group and the theatre process, they reached the empowerment stage. In this stage the sense of self intertwined with the theatre process. The students connected their personal self and their theatre process. Finally, students in the vision phase tended to be the leaders in the play-creating process. They had keen insight on how others moved through the stages in the playcreating process and helped facilitate the process for others in leadership positions. Beare and Belliveau (2007) found participation in a theatre program promoted positive sequential student development (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy, empowerment, vision) through the four-step play creating process (i.e., script writing, rehearsing, performing, reflecting). The authors found most of the students operated within the first three developmental phases (i.e., inclusion, control, intimacy), with each participant experience being unique. The study suggested that identifying with the theatre group, honing theatre arts skills, and creating a friend group was the main focus of the student participants

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