

Youth theatre provides a space for young people to gain skills they need to succeed

Home > Impacts of arts and culture > Educational impacts of arts and culture

This research was conducted by **Jenny Hughes and Karen Wilson** at the **University of Manchester**

Summary

This paper presents the findings of a study of youth theatre. The paper explores some key questions around the impact of taking part in youth theatre on young people's personal and social development. Overall they found that youth theatre created a protected space for young people to develop important personal and social skills and resources, whilst also confronting uncertainty and risk and therefore helping to prepare them for adult life.

The researchers made contact with more than 300 young people participating in youth theatre

They also reviewed more than 700 youth theatre companies across England. The use of a qualitative approach (a combination of questionnaires, interviews and workshops), was based on the fact that they were most interested in identifying and explaining (rather than assessing the extent of) the impact of youth theatre. Youth theatre is an umbrella term: researchers identified 25 types of theatre organisations in the course of the study. Fundamentally youth theatre can be categorised as a grouping of organisations that work with young people in theatre-related activities in their free time for no or little cost.

The findings were positive and suggested that young people engaged in youth theatre in ways that positively developed their personal and social skills

The focus was on personal and social development which was defined explicitly in relation to today's social and economic climate characterised by uncertainty and instability, especially for employment. This situation means that young people must create their own pathways to success, by being more creative and using their own initiative to create opportunities for themselves, and be able to adapt to different situations. Some of the skills developed by youth theatre included: an ability to use own initiative; take risks; take part in a work-like and committed process; explore and express feelings; use performance and creative process as part of improving personal skills. The benefits of these included improved confidence, ability to work with others, greater open mindedness and happiness. The paper found that there was a benefit for young people to take risks and responsibility and in so doing assert their independence, and the positive experience of working through a creative process.

This summary is written by **Charlotte Fereday, King's Knowledge Exchange Associate**

Keywords

theatre **creativity** **UK** **social** **children**

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