

Theatre Approach in Cultivating Emotional Intelligence of Students at the Institute of Teacher Education

Nor Shuradi Nor Hashim¹, Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman²

¹Sultan Idris University of Education

²Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM)

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.903SEDU0749>

Received: 05 December 2025; Accepted: 11 December 2025; Published: 20 December 2025

ABSTRACT

This article aims to evaluate the effectiveness of the theatre approach as a strategy for fostering emotional intelligence among students at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG). The study focuses on the three main components of emotional intelligence, namely self-awareness, empathy and social skills, as well as how theatre activities can support the development of these competencies. The study employs a qualitative methodology, specifically a case study, involving 30 second-year students from the Drama Education course. Data were collected through observation, semi-structured interviews, and written reflections, then analysed using thematic analysis methods to identify changes in students' emotions, social interactions, and reflection processes throughout their participation in theatre activities. The findings indicate that emotional improvisation serves as a mechanism for enhancing students' self-awareness and emotional regulation. Furthermore, role-playing activities cultivate empathy by allowing students to engage with and appreciate the perspectives of diverse characters. Mini-drama performances contribute to the development of social skills, emphasising the importance of collaboration and effective communication. Additionally, reflective discussions provide a framework for students to deepen their understanding of their emotional experiences in a comprehensive manner. The study highlights the notion that theatre transcends its traditional role as an artistic medium, functioning as a significant pedagogical tool for developing the emotional intelligence of teacher trainees. Consequently, it is imperative for the IPG curriculum to incorporate more systematic opportunities for integrating theatre as an experiential learning approach. This integration is essential for cultivating teachers who are not only empathetic and emotionally mature but also adept at managing interpersonal relationships within the educational environment.

Keywords: Emotional Intelligence, Theatre Approach, IPG Teacher Trainer

INTRODUCTION

Teacher education at the Institute of Teacher Education (IPG) in Malaysia plays a crucial role in shaping professional educators who are not only knowledgeable in academic fields but also skilled in managing emotions and fostering healthy social relationships. In the 21st-century education era, emotional intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognized as an important ability for teachers in ensuring the effectiveness of teaching, classroom control, and positive interactions with students. Teachers who possess high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle pressure, manage their emotions effectively, demonstrate empathy, and communicate clearly, thereby creating a conducive learning environment. However, the reality of teacher education in Malaysia still shows that the development of emotional intelligence is not given due emphasis. The curriculum in IPG remains more focused on academic achievement and pedagogical mastery, while aspects of emotional management and empathy are only briefly addressed through co-curricular programs or general courses. This situation raises the question of whether student teachers are truly prepared in terms of personality and emotional intelligence to shoulder the responsibilities of future educators. In this context, the theatre approach is an effective alternative. Theatre is not only an artistic medium, but also an educational space that is reflective, interactive, and directly experiential. Through theatre activities, students have the opportunity to experience various roles, understand emotional conflicts, and practice communication and collaboration skills. This article aims to examine how the theatre approach can be used to cultivate the emotional intelligence of IPG students by focusing on aspects of self-awareness, empathy, and social skills.

PROBLEM STATEMENTS

The concept of emotional intelligence has been extensively examined by scholars on a global scale, including Beaumont (2025), Kasper (2022), Anand (2019), and James (2019). However, within the specific context of prospective teachers at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG) in Malaysia, this crucial dimension remains largely overlooked. This article posits that the IPG curriculum prioritizes academic and pedagogical competencies over the essential aspects of emotional development. Consequently, many student teachers encounter significant challenges in regulating their emotions, managing academic stress, and engaging in effective interpersonal communication with peers and faculty members. This issue has been highlighted in the works of Nur Ameera Shauqina & Surat (2025), as well as Ali (2021) and Noraini Mohamad (2015). The need for a more balanced curriculum that integrates emotional intelligence training alongside academic rigor is critical to fostering the holistic development of future educators.

Previous studies (Brackett & Rivers, 2014) have shown that teachers with low emotional intelligence often struggle to manage their emotions in the classroom, experience stress more easily, and find it challenging to create a positive learning environment. This lack of emotional control ultimately hinders student motivation and achievement. Beaumont (2025) notes that traditional methods, such as lectures and co-curricular activities, do not provide student teachers with opportunities to practice emotional skills in a meaningful way. As a result, there is a need to explore more interactive and reflective approaches. Theatre, through techniques like acting, improvisation, role-playing, and post-activity reflection, has the potential to address this gap. However, research on the effectiveness of theatre in developing emotional intelligence among IPG students in Malaysia remains limited. This issue indicates the need for alternative approaches that are more interactive and encourage reflection. Theatre, through acting, improvisation, role-playing, and reflection sessions, has the potential to be a method that can overcome these shortcomings. Therefore, research on the emotional intelligence of teacher trainees is important because it not only adds new knowledge to the field of teacher training but also helps institutions choose more effective approaches to support the emotional well-being of prospective educators.

In this regard, the main objective of this article is to discuss in depth the need for the development of emotional intelligence among students of the Teacher Education Institute (IPG), since emotional competence is an important element in the teaching profession. In addition, this article also discusses how the theatre approach can be used as an effective pedagogical strategy to cultivate emotional intelligence through acting experiences and reflection. Finally, this article discusses the potential of theatre activities in increasing self-awareness, empathy and social skills of student teachers, which are three important components in emotional development and professional interaction.

LITERATURE HIGHLIGHTS

3.1 The Concept of Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is defined as the ability of an individual to identify, understand, and manage their own and others' emotions (Kasper, 2022). Anand (2019) outlines five main components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, emotional management, motivation, empathy, and social skills. In the context of education, teachers who have high levels of emotional intelligence are better able to manage the classroom, maintain positive relationships, and inspire students (Beaumont, 2025; Kasper, 2022). According to Anand (2019), emotional intelligence comprises not only the five fundamental components of self-awareness, emotional regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills, but also the capacity to modulate emotional responses in relation to the social context. Anand posits that emotional intelligence functions as a regulatory mechanism, enabling individuals to make more rational decisions, even when confronted with emotional stress. From an educational standpoint, Anand (2019) contends that teachers who effectively integrate these components demonstrate enhanced pedagogical effectiveness, particularly in dynamic teaching and learning environments that necessitate continuous interaction, conflict resolution, and emotional support for students.

Furthermore, James (2019) views emotional intelligence as a form of social literacy that requires continuous development through reflective experiences and interpersonal interactions. James emphasizes that teachers with

high emotional intelligence have an advantage in reading students' nonverbal cues, identifying student stress or anxiety, and adapting teaching strategies to mitigate emotional barriers that can impact learning. According to him, emotional intelligence in the teaching profession is not just an additional skill, but a form of core competency that supports teacher well-being and student academic success. From the perspective of Nur Ameera Shauqina & Surat (2025), emotional intelligence is viewed as a crucial component in developing the self-management competence of teacher trainees. They argue that a stable level of emotional intelligence helps teachers control spontaneous reactions, manage the stress of practicum training, and maintain healthy professional relationships with colleagues and mentors. Their study also demonstrates that emotional intelligence can be enhanced through experiential learning methods, including drama, classroom simulations, role-playing, and regular self-reflection activities. This highlights the need for emotional development in teacher training.

Hence, Ali (2021) highlights emotional intelligence as a crucial psychological skill that helps teachers maintain emotional balance in challenging situations. He notes that teachers with poor emotional control are more susceptible to burnout, interpersonal conflicts, and inconsistent teaching practices. Additionally, Ali points out that emotional intelligence is closely linked to the ability to make ethical decisions. Uncontrolled emotional reactions can influence how teachers handle disciplinary issues, evaluate student performance, and address social challenges among students. Therefore, enhancing emotional intelligence is essential for strengthening teachers' professional integrity and mental resilience.

3.2 Theatre as a Medium of Education

Heathcote (1984) and Bolton (1992) introduced the concept of Drama in Education, which highlights theatre as a medium for experiential learning. Theatre provides students with opportunities to express themselves, understand diverse perspectives, and appreciate various human experiences. Boal (1995), through his work in the Theatre of the Oppressed, emphasizes that theatre serves not only as a platform for social reflection but also as a tool for liberation. He further explains that the Theatre of the Oppressed expands the role of theatre by transforming participants from passive spectators into "spect-actors." This allows them to analyze, challenge, and change situations of oppression. In an educational context, these concepts illustrate how theatre can be a vehicle for developing intellectual, emotional, and social awareness.

This international view is reinforced by local scholars who have developed theatre as a pedagogical tool. Nadarajah Tambu (2017) asserts, in her study on Forum Theatre Pedagogy Generating Community Morality, that forum theatre has the potential to develop morality through the exploration of value conflicts, open dialogue, and student participation in dramatic situations that resemble social reality. Through this process, participants not only gain an understanding of moral issues but also learn to make decisions based on empathy and ethical considerations. Haneem Said (2022) study on creative drama also demonstrates that drama activities, such as character exploration, dramatic imagination, and structured acting, help increase students' creativity, selfconfidence, emotional regulation, and collaborative skills. Creative drama, she says, provides an active learning space that supports cognitive and affective development simultaneously.

This finding aligns with Nor Shuradi (2024) study on environmental drama among street children, which demonstrates that theatre can serve as a medium of social empowerment, particularly for marginalised communities that require a safe space to express their life experiences. Through drama activities, participants can reveal trauma, build self-awareness, develop empathy and learn problem-solving strategies in a controlled environment. The overall findings from Heathcote (1984), Bolton (1992), Boal (1995), Nadarajah Tambu (2017), Haneem Said (2022), and Nor Shuradi (2024) show that theatre, as an educational medium, is holistic not just delivering learning content, but also shaping the emotional, social, moral, and human development of participants. Theatre, therefore, serves as a vehicle for self and community transformation.

3.3 Theatre and Emotional Intelligence

Beaumont (2025), Nur Ameera Shauqina & Surat (2025), and Ali (2021) found that students' involvement in drama programs not only enhances their artistic skills but also contributes significantly to their emotional development. Through activities such as role-playing, improvisation, and character development, students learn to view the world from the perspective of others. This process naturally develops empathy, the ability to

understand and feel the emotions of others more deeply. In addition, drama training that demands focus, controlled expression, and management of stage pressure also strengthens students' emotional control in real-life situations. Goldstein and Winner's findings confirm that drama is not just a creative space, but an empirically proven platform for emotional development. Haneem Said (2022) and Arnard (2019) contribute to this discourse by positing that theatre education cultivates a reflective environment that is frequently absent in conventional pedagogical approaches. Participation in theatre activities compels students to interrogate issues of identity, values, and the internal conflicts inherent in dramatic narratives. This engagement not only enhances students' awareness of their own emotions and behaviors but also fosters the ability to critically evaluate their actions. As articulated by Heathcote (1984) and Bolton (1992), theatre functions as an educational space that integrates emotional expression with self-awareness, thereby rendering the learning experience more profound and humanistic.

In the local context, Nadarajah Tambu (2017) study continues to demonstrate that community drama can shape students' personalities through collaborative experiences that prioritise the values of empathy, cooperation, and communication. Community drama, which often addresses real social issues, provides students with the opportunity to appreciate the complexities of society through a closer and more participatory perspective. Students not only act, but also build relationships with the community, understand social dynamics, and practice noble values in real-world contexts. Through this, drama builds connections between emotional experiences, social interactions, and personal character, thus making it an effective tool for character education.

As a result, the findings of Goldstein & Winner, Haneem Said (2022), and Nadarajah Tambu (2017) all demonstrate that theatre provides an educational experience that surpasses traditional classroom learning. It fosters holistic development in individuals emotionally, socially, morally, and reflectively. Theatre not only entertains but also educates, develops, and influences people in ways that are often unattainable through conventional teaching methods.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative case study design to examine in depth how participation in educational theatre activities contributes to the development of emotional intelligence among students at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG). The case study approach was chosen because it offers the opportunity to understand educational phenomena in a real context, where students' interactions, emotional experiences, and reflection processes can be observed holistically. As Yin (2003) emphasises, this design is particularly appropriate when research involves complex social processes and requires a deep understanding of the participants' perspectives.

A total of 30 second-year students who attended the Educational Drama workshop were selected as the study instrument. Their selection was made purposively due to their willingness and activeness in attending the workshop, which was directly related to the study's objectives. These students participated in various theatre workshop activities designed to assess and develop aspects of emotional intelligence, including self-awareness, empathy, emotional control, and social relationships. Their presence in all workshop sessions allowed the researcher to obtain a comprehensive picture of the emotional development that occurred throughout the study period. This study employed three data collection instruments: classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and written reflections by students. Classroom observations were conducted throughout the theatre session to identify behavioural changes, emotional expressions, and social interaction dynamics among students.

Semi-structured interviews provided space for students to share their experiences, thoughts, and meanings they constructed as a result of participating in theatre activities. Written reflections collected each week served as narrative evidence that authentically depicted the emotional evolution, self-understanding, and challenges experienced by participants.

An eight-week theatre programme based on activities designed to stimulate emotional development through dramatic experiences. Emotional improvisation activities enable students to express their feelings spontaneously and develop the ability to identify their own emotional nuances. Role-playing provides them with the opportunity to explore the perspectives of different characters, thereby fostering empathy and social understanding. Mini-drama performances require teamwork, communication and stress management skills, while reflective

discussions at the end of each session help students connect dramatic experiences with real emotional development. All of these activities are designed progressively to reinforce the element of experiential learning.

The collected data were analysed using the thematic analysis method as described by Braun & Clarke (2022). The analysis process involved carefully reading the data, initial coding, theme formation, and refinement until the final findings successfully formulated clear patterns and meanings. Through this analysis, the researchers identified key themes related to the development of emotional intelligence, including increased self-awareness, progress in emotional regulation, building empathy, and strengthening social skills. The results of this analysis not only provide a clear picture of the impact of theatre on students' emotions, but also confirm the potential of theatre as an effective educational medium in the context of teacher training.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

5.1 Emotional Improvisation Activities

Improvisation activities were conducted to provide students with opportunities to express emotions spontaneously in unexpected situations. Observation results showed that students initially felt awkward and unsure, but after several sessions, they were increasingly able to control their emotional expressions without losing focus. Improvisation helped students become aware of their internal emotions, such as anger, anxiety, or happiness, and then practice self-control in social situations. Interviews revealed that students perceived improvisation as a “safe space” to test their emotional courage. This finding supports the self-awareness and emotional management components of Goleman (1995) model of emotional intelligence.

5.2 Role Playing

Role-playing provides students with the opportunity to experience different characters, such as a student with disciplinary problems, a strict teacher, or a caring parent. Data analysis reveals that students tend to understand the perspectives of others better, particularly when they are required to assume roles that conflict with their own personalities. Written reflections show that this experience evokes a more profound sense of empathy. This theatre activity suggests that role-playing is an effective strategy for honing empathy and social skills.

5.3 Mini Drama Performance

Students were instructed to produce mini dramas based on social issues such as bullying, exam stress, or family conflict. This performance not only tested acting skills but also required group cooperation in terms of scriptwriting, time management, and performing in front of an audience. Observations revealed that the minidrama performance enhanced students' interpersonal communication and conflict resolution skills. Several students admitted that this experience taught them to appreciate different perspectives within a team. This finding reinforces the social skills and collaboration component of emotional intelligence theory.

5.4 Reflective Discussion

After each theatre session, students are encouraged to discuss their feelings and experiences. This reflective discussion provides students with an opportunity to express their feelings, identify their own weaknesses, and learn from the experiences of their peers. The results of the analysis of written reflections show that students become more aware of their emotional reactions in various situations. This discussion also functions as a self-assessment tool that helps students structure their thinking. It is in line with the recommendations of Beaumont (2025), Kasper (2022), and Anand (2019) that critical reflection in theatre educates students to be more sensitive to feelings and human values.

5.4.1 The Potential of Theatre Activities in Enhancing Self-Awareness

Self-awareness is a fundamental component of emotional intelligence. Through emotional improvisation, students are exposed to spontaneous acting situations that challenge the control of self-expression. This activity has the potential to be a space for self-discovery, as students learn to recognise their natural reactions to various stimuli. Several students stated that they were only recently aware of their tendency to get agitated or nervous

when given sudden tasks. The potential of this activity lies in its ability to provide a safe space for students to try, fail, and improve themselves.

In addition, reflective discussions after improvisation provide students with the opportunity to reevaluate their actions, identify weaknesses, and formulate emotional control strategies. This reflection process strengthens self-awareness because it combines practical experience with self-analysis. Thus, theatre is not just entertainment, but becomes a deep introspective vehicle for prospective teachers.

5.4.2 The Potential of Theatre Activities in Developing Empathy

Empathy is the ability to understand the feelings of others. Role-playing allows students to empathize with characters who are different from themselves. For instance, students who typically assume the role of "teachers" can be placed in the position of "problematic students," enabling them to experience the psychological stress that real students may face at school. The value of role-playing lies in its capacity to encourage students to see the world from others' perspectives.

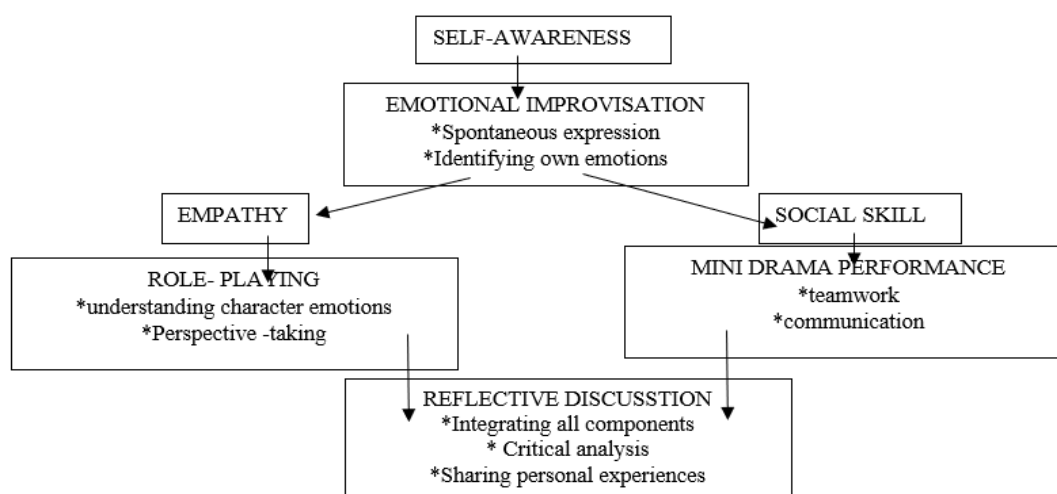
Additionally, performing mini-dramas that address social issues such as bullying, academic stress, or family conflict helps students appreciate a broader aspect of humanity. Many students have reported feeling "touched" when portraying the roles of bullying victims or stressed parents. The strength of these activities is in their ability to foster social sensitivity, which can ultimately enhance teachers' abilities to understand the feelings of both students and parents.

5.4.3 The Potential of Theatre Activities in Strengthening Social Skills

Social skills encompass the ability to communicate effectively, collaborate with others, and resolve conflicts productively. Mini-drama staging requires students to collaborate in script writing, character allocation, time management, and joint rehearsals. Its potential lies in the collaborative nature of theatre that demands collective discipline, tolerance for differences of opinion, and a willingness to accept criticism. Students learn that the success of a staging depends on the cooperation of all parties, not just individual talent.

Additionally, reflective discussions foster social skills through open communication. Students need to listen to their peers, express their opinions constructively, and offer emotional support to one another. The potential of this activity lies in creating a culture of empathetic and inclusive communication, which is crucial in the teaching profession. Overall, these four theatre activities complement each other in fostering emotional intelligence:

Table 1: Theatre Activities & Emotional Intelligence Components



From the table 1, each theatre activity plays a unique yet complementary role in fostering students' emotional intelligence. For instance, emotional improvisation activities allow students to express their feelings spontaneously, enabling them to identify their emotions more clearly. This process not only enhances selfawareness but also trains students to understand how their emotions influence their thoughts and actions.

Additionally, role-playing provides opportunities for students to explore the perspectives of different characters, gaining insight into conflicts and emotional backgrounds that differ from their own. This experience strengthens empathy, as students learn to view the world through the eyes of others. At the same time, performing a minidrama requires cooperation, effective communication and mutual trust within the group. The need to coordinate, make joint decisions and solve stage challenges collectively makes this activity an important arena for developing social skills. The value of togetherness and peer support that results from the process strengthens students' interpersonal abilities. Finally, reflective discussions serve as a bridge that unites the entire dramatic experience. Through discussion and self-reflection sessions, students have the opportunity to connect what they do, feel and learn, and evaluate how the experience has influenced their emotional development. This reflective process integrates self-awareness, empathy and social skills, making the entire theatre experience more meaningful and building emotional intelligence holistically.

In short, the primary advantage of this approach is that it offers hands-on experience that is challenging to attain through conventional lectures. Theatre not only trains student teachers to manage their own emotions, but also educates them to become empathetic and highly socially skilled individuals, which are essential characteristics of a 21st-century educator.

5.5 Overall Discussion: Theatre Approach in Cultivating Emotional Intelligence of Teacher Education Institute Students

This study demonstrates that the theatre approach employed in the Educational Drama course has significant potential in developing the emotional intelligence of teacher trainees at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG). Through a combination of improvisational activities, role-playing, mini-drama staging and reflective discussions, students not only learn performance techniques but also hone emotional sensitivity and social skills that are important in the teaching profession. In the context of teacher training, emotional intelligence is a fundamental skill that influences classroom management, interpersonal relationships and professional wellbeing. Therefore, the findings of this study emphasize that theatre is not just an artistic medium, but an effective pedagogical tool to shape the emotional competence of future teachers.

5.5.1 Increasing Self-Awareness of Teacher Trainees

Emotional improvisation activities have been proven to play a significant role in increasing students' self-awareness. Spontaneous situations that require quick responses prompt students to be aware of their own emotional shifts. They learn to identify feelings such as anxiety, nervousness, happiness, or tension, thus improving emotional regulation in unexpected situations. For a teacher, the ability to understand one's own emotions is crucial in avoiding impulsive responses when interacting with students. This finding supports the self-awareness component in Goleman's theory (1995), which is the cornerstone of professional emotional intelligence.

5.5.2 Increasing Empathy Through Character Role-Playing

Role-playing allows students to explore a wide range of human perspectives, including those of characters who face stress, injustice, or social conflict. By staging scenarios such as bullying, emotional neglect, or academic failure, students can engage more deeply with the experiences of others. The empathy developed through this process is crucial for teachers, as they need to understand the backgrounds and emotions of their students to provide effective learning support. This approach aligns with Goleman's (1995) concept of emotional intelligence, particularly the empathy component, and resonates with Boal's (1995) view that theatre serves as a space for critically and humanely understanding social reality.

5.5.3 Strengthening Social and Collaborative Skills

The mini-drama performance activity requires close cooperation, communication, confidence, and the ability to handle group conflict. Students need to negotiate, share ideas, adapt roles, and collectively solve performance challenges. This process improves interpersonal communication effectiveness and teamwork skills two key elements of a teacher's social intelligence. This finding reinforces the social skills component of Goleman's

(1995) model, demonstrating that learning through theatre provides an authentic environment for developing leadership skills, tolerance, and respect.

5.5.4 Theatre as a Space for Personal and Social Reflection

The reflective discussion held at the end of each session acts as an important bridge connecting all of the students' dramatic experiences. In this session, students re-evaluate their actions, feelings and collaborative processes, and relate them to real-life situations in the world of education. This reflective discussion not only enhances emotional awareness but also fosters the ability to evaluate social issues more maturely. This theatre activity aligns with Boal's (1995) concept, which views theatre as a space for social reflection, where participants not only understand conflicts but also consider their solutions.

5.6 Overall Discussion: Theatre Approach in Cultivating Emotional Intelligence of Teacher Education Institute Students

This study demonstrates that the theatre approach employed in the Educational Drama course has significant potential in developing the emotional intelligence of teacher trainees at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG). Through a combination of improvisational activities, role-playing, mini-drama staging and reflective discussions, students not only learn performance techniques but also hone emotional sensitivity and social skills that are important in the teaching profession. In the context of teacher training, emotional intelligence is a fundamental skill that influences classroom management, interpersonal relationships and professional wellbeing. Therefore, the findings of this study emphasize that theatre is not just an artistic medium, but an effective pedagogical tool to shape the emotional competence of future teachers.

5.6.1 Increasing Self-Awareness of Teacher Trainees

Emotional improvisation activities play a significant role in enhancing students' self-awareness. When faced with spontaneous situations that require quick responses, students become more aware of their own emotional changes. They learn to identify feelings such as anxiety, nervousness, happiness, and tension, thereby improving their emotional regulation in unpredictable situations. For teachers, the ability to understand their own emotions is crucial for avoiding impulsive reactions when interacting with students. This finding supports the self-awareness component of Goleman's (1995) theory, which is a foundational aspect of professional emotional intelligence.

5.6.2 Increasing Empathy Through Character Empath

Role-playing also opens up a vast space for students to explore other human perspectives, including characters who experience stress, injustice, or social conflict. Through the staging of issues such as bullying, emotional neglect or academic failure, students are trained to experience other people's experiences more deeply. The empathy that develops through this process is crucial in the teaching profession, as teachers must understand the background and emotions of their students before they can provide adequate learning support. This aligns with the empathy component of Goleman's (1995) emotional intelligence and also Boal's (1995) view that theatre is a space for critically and humanly understanding social reality.

5.6.3 Strengthening Social and Collaborative Skills

The mini-drama performance activity requires close cooperation, communication, confidence, and the ability to handle group conflict. Students need to negotiate, share ideas, adapt roles, and collectively solve performance challenges. This process improves interpersonal communication effectiveness and teamwork skills—two key elements of a teacher's social intelligence. This finding reinforces the social skills component of Goleman's (1995) model, demonstrating that learning through theatre provides an authentic environment for developing leadership skills, tolerance, and respect.

5.6.4 Theatre as a Space for Self- and Social Reflection

The reflective discussion conducted at the end of each session serves as an important bridge, connecting all the

students' dramatic experiences. In this session, students re-evaluate their actions, feelings and collaborative processes, and relate them to real-life situations in the educational world. These reflective discussions not only increase emotional awareness but also build the ability to evaluate social issues more maturely. This theatre approach aligns with Boal's (1995) concept, which views theatre as a space for social reflection, where participants not only understand conflicts but also consider their solutions.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

This study demonstrates that the theatre approach has significant potential as a pedagogical strategy to promote emotional intelligence among students at the Teacher Education Institute (IPG). Through activities such as emotional improvisation, role-playing, mini-drama staging and reflective discussions, students not only acquire acting skills, but also experience significant emotional development. Theatre activities have been shown to help increase self-awareness, foster empathy, and strengthen social skills, three key components that are crucial for the teaching profession, especially in the context of classroom management, teacher-student relationships, and long-term professional well-being. From an implication point of view, this study suggests that the IPG curriculum should provide more systematic and comprehensive space for the use of theatre arts as an approach to developing the personality and emotional competence of trainee teachers. Theatre should also be considered as a reflective pedagogical method in teacher education courses, given its interactive, holistic, and experience-oriented nature. In addition, the findings of this study indicate that future teachers trained through a theatre approach have the potential to become more empathetic and emotionally sensitive educators, and to guide students more effectively in terms of learning and character development.

For future studies, the researchers suggest that large-scale quantitative studies be conducted to measure the effectiveness of theatre approaches on emotional intelligence more objectively and statistically. Further studies could also involve comparisons between different institutions or cohorts to assess the feasibility of theatre approaches in various teacher training contexts. Overall, this study confirms that theatre is not only an artistic medium but also a valuable pedagogical tool in shaping teachers who are more cognitively, emotionally, and humanistic balanced.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This research was supported by the Educational Research-Based University Grant (Geran Penyelidikan Universiti Berteraskan Pendidikan, GPUBP) 2019, under Research Code: 2019-0080-107-01 (Code: 20200121), provided by Sultan Idris Education University.

REFERENCE

1. Ali, M. F. (2021). Pembinaan dan kesan modul intervensi kaunseling kelompok Brief Coping Stress (Briscope) terhadap stres guru pelatih IPGM [Tesis sarjana, Universiti Sains Malaysia]. USM e-Repository. <https://erepo.usm.my/handle/123456789/17458>
2. Anand, P. V. (2019). Emotional intelligence: Journey to self-positive. The Readers Paradise.
3. Beaumont, J. (2025). Understanding emotional intelligence. Publisher AS.
4. Boal, A. (1995). Theatre of the Oppressed. New York: Theatre Communications Group.
5. Bolton, G. (1992). New Perspectives on Classroom Drama. London: Simon & Schuster.
6. Brackett, M. A., & Rivers, S. E. (2014). Transforming students' lives with social and emotional learning. International Handbook of Emotions in Education, 368–388.
7. Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2022). Thematic analysis: A practical guide. SAGE Publications
8. Goleman, D. (1995). Emotional Intelligence. New York: Bantam Books. Goldstein, T. R., & Winner, E.
9. (2012). Enhancing empathy and theory of mind. Journal of Cognition and Development, 13(1), 19–37.
10. Heathcote, D. (1984). Collected Writings on Education and Drama. London: Hutchinson.
11. Haneem, S., Deneerwan, M., Nor, M. M., & Nor Shuradi, N. H. (2022). He took off my pants! The implementation of creative drama in a sex education module. Research in Drama Education: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance.

12. James, R. (2019). *Emotional intelligence: The definitive guide to understanding your emotions, how to improve your EQ and your relationships*. UK. Hammersmith Bridge Books.
13. Kasper, N. (2022). *Emotional intelligence. Meaning and significance for individuals and collectives*. Bod Third Party Titles.
14. Nadarajan Thambu, Muhammad Hasbi Abdul Rahman. (2017). *Forum Theatre as a Behavior Change*
15. *Strategy:Qualitative Findings from Moral Education Class*. The Journal of the South East Asia Research Centre for Communications and Humanities Vol. 9 No. 1, 2017, pp. 25-46
16. Noraini, M. (2015). *Tekanan kerja dalam kalangan guru: Kajian di sebuah sekolah menengah daerah Kluang Johor Darul Takzim [Kertas akademik Sarjana Sains (Pengurusan Sumber Manusia), Universiti Utara Malaysia]*.
17. Nur Ameera Shauqina, N. A., & Surat, S. (2025). *Tekanan guru: Mekanisme penyesuaian dan faktor iklim sekolah dalam kajian rintis [Teachers' stress: Coping mechanisms and school climate factors in a pilot study]*. 7(3), artikel 2. <https://doi.org/10.55057/jdpd.2025.7.3.2>
18. Nor Shuradi, Dwiyan Habsary, Mohd Kipli Abdul Rahman, Muhamad Faisal Ahmad, Amsalib Pisali. (2024).
19. *A Review on Integrating Digital Technologies into Teaching and Learning Activity: Engaging Street Children in Interactive Learning*. Journal of Advanced Research in Applied Sciences and Engineering Technology 55, Issue 2 (2026) 192-208. <https://doi.org/10.37934/araset.55.2.192208>.
20. Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and methods (3rd ed.)*. SAGE Publications.