

**How does young people's involvement in
theatre effectively promote the use and
empowerment of young people's voices?**

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Yr Athrofa: Education and Humanities

DECLARATION FORM



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1. This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

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2. This dissertation is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of ...BA Young People, Communities and Youth Work.....

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3. This dissertation is the result of my own independent work/investigation, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references.

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AI DECLARATION

I confirm that I have not used any AI tools in the research and creation of this assignment. I confirm that I have not presented any AI generated materials as my own work. I confirm I have copies of my drafts, notes, and other resources I used, which I may be asked to provide in evidence.

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ABSTRACT

This research project was inspired by the researcher's own experience of the power of theatre and the expressive arts in their own life. The researcher wanted to explore how young people's involvement in theatre could empower and encourage them to find their voice, use their voice, and therefore, eventually being able to advocate and speak up for themselves. Throughout the research project, it became clear that theatre is a very powerful tool for young people in a range of ways, such as – empowerment and being empowered to learn and take action, getting to learn and develop their skills that are also transferable to various other parts of life, as well as theatre and other forms of expressive arts being significantly beneficial to young people's mental and emotional health. One interesting insight that was discovered during this research process was how theatre can allow young people, especially young men, to be taught and to learn how to be emotionally vulnerable in a safe and forgiving space. Using a qualitative research method, the researcher was able to explore this topic and uncover some aspects that they had perhaps not come across before, just like the previous sentence explained. Throughout this research project, it has been obvious that there are many more opportunities for further research into this area of working with young people, as well as many more opportunities for theatre to be a more common way of working with young people in youth work, and therefore, many young people would have easier and better access to creative opportunities.

ACRONYM

There were no acronyms used in this project.

INTRODUCTION

This is the introduction chapter of this research project which will briefly explore the history of transformative movements of theatre as well as the researcher's interest and inspiration into the research question, "***How does young people's involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices?***"

One piece of research that has piqued my interest, especially in the area of empowerment of young people and change is "Theatre of the Oppressed" by Augusto Boal, which led to the creation of "Legislative Theatre" years later. Within his book "Theatre of the Oppressed", Boal suggests and explores the idea that all theatre is political because being human and political attitudes are intertwined (Boal, 1979). Boal also suggests that theatre is an effective weapon, which when used in the right way can be a "weapon of liberation" but fully suggests that theatre is an agent of change (Boal, 1979). After "Theatre of the Oppressed", Boal developed "Legislative Theatre" which showed how theatre can "directly influence political change" (Collective Encounters, 2019). Although this research by Boal is not directly linked to the research topic, his research may lend some suggestions as to how including young people in theatre can empower them, by giving them opportunity to use their voice to influence current and new ideas, and change in a society that is constantly changing.

The transformative nature of theatre has been demonstrated through many different eras of theatre and through different shows (musicals and plays) throughout the years. After 1979, there was the AIDS crisis which inspired shows, showing the impact of the crisis on the LGBTQ+ community and on the bigger picture of society also. There was The Boys in the Band (play) by Mart Crowley, led by Kenneth Nelson, in 1968 Off-Broadway and its revival played on Broadway in 2018, led by

Jim Parsons, which was turned into a Netflix film in 2020. Then the Normal Heart (play) by Larry Kramer, which premiered Off-Broadway in 1985 and on Broadway in 2011. Then there was Falsettos (musical) by James Lapine and William Finn which got its revival on Broadway in 2016/17 after premiering as two one-act musicals of March of the Falsettos in 1981 and Falsettoland in 1990. The original Broadway cast of Angels in America: Millennium Approaches (play) by Tony Kushner in 1993. Then there was Rent (musical) written by Jonathan Larson in 1996.

Some other transformative theatre works include Hamilton: An American History (musical), written by Lin-Manuel Miranda in 2015, which had a voice on the history of America and the current political climate at the time. In 2016, Dear Evan Hansen (musical), book by Steven Levenson and music and lyrics by Benj Pasek and Justin Paul, looked at mental health, the impact of suicide on family and friends, and the impact of bullying and being a bully. SIX the musical by Toby Marlow and Lucy Moss in 2018, loosely follows the story of the six wives of Henry VIII, which displayed a view of feminism and women's rights onstage and offstage, including the fact that as far as possible, every cast, crew, and band member is female. Then Come From Away, a 2021 musical by Irene Sankhoff and David Hein which is a retelling of the events of 9/11 but from the perspective of people living in Gander, Newfoundland when it happened as planes were landing there in the airport that no longer was functioning to give people a place; this musical had much social and political impact upon its premiere 20 years after the events of 9/11. In 2024, Suffr by Shaina Taub premiered, which was inspired by and based on the events of women's suffrage, looking at women's rights and the feminist movement. The Theatre community (especially across the West End and Broadway) have been a part of many projects, protests and movements that have had social and political impact.

These include topics such as anti-war, Feminism and women's rights, LGBTQ+ rights, working class rights, and Environmentalism and Climate Change.

Another reason that this topic interests me so much is that recently in 2026, there has been a petition around musical theatre and dance education in Wales. There is currently a risk that the funding for Welsh residents to study musical theatre or dance in further education outside of Wales will be removed. This means that any young person in Wales wanting to study a musical theatre or dance subject at higher education will not be able to receive Student Finance. As someone who has a background in the arts and who has many friends in the arts, this would change so much for people invested in their craft. These performing arts based subjects are vital to our society, especially in the West. Also, many young people love these subjects because it is a physical and emotional outlet for them and it is something that many young people across the UK are passionate about pursuing.

So why are we, as a country, limiting the access that our young people have to the performing arts experience and to be educated in those areas? The expressive arts as a whole has increasingly declining funding, especially in rural areas, even when they are so important to a young person's development. Theatre and the performing arts gives people of all ages, especially including young people, a voice that can affect change. So why are we taking away young people's chance at having a voice in their way?

LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter of this dissertation, the researcher will be exploring the existing research and literature written about and concerning their research project. As a reminder, the research question is “*How does young people’s involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices?*”.

One important writer about theatre and voice is Augusto Boal, who wrote “Theatre of the Oppressed” (Boal, 2008), followed by “Legislative Theatre” (Boal, 2005). In Boal’s book, “Theatre of the Oppressed” (Boal, 2008), he expresses much emphasis on empathy and the role it plays in theatre and the performing arts. He describes empathy as “the most dangerous weapon in the entire arsenal of theatre and related arts” (Boal, 2008, pg.93-94), as well as suggesting that empathy is powerful in theatre and the “related arts” because it “functions even when there is a conflict of interests between the fictitious universe and the actual one of the spectators” (Boal, 2008, pg.93-94). Boal also suggests that even “learning is an emotional experience” (Boal, 2008, pg.85) and there is a lot of learning that goes into creating and putting on a theatre show. Additionally, Boal also suggests that there are also negative or indifferent emotions that are expressed through theatre; for example, Boal conveys that “ignorance causes emotion, and one must oppose this kind” (Boal, 2008, pg.85). The fact that theatre is such a powerful vehicle for empathy to be presented through is another reason why the researcher is eager to explore “*how young people’s involvement in theatre can effectively promote*

the use and empowerment of young people's voices". Empathy plays a significant role in everyone's roles, but especially in the roles of people onstage, in the creation, development, and sharing of a theatre show. This is why it is so powerful as a young person because gaining empathy and growing in it helps people to understand others' perspectives, as well as being able to voice their own opinions and support others if needed. Empathy is such an important and strong tool for young people to gain and have access to, especially in regard to empowering young people to use their voice, in a respectful, confident, and responsible manner.

Empower Arts runs drama classes, workshops, and summer theatre schools for children and young people between the ages of four to eleven and then eleven and above (Morgan, 2024). The founder, Taja Morgan (2024), suggests that there are five reasons "Why Theatre is Perfect for Teenagers" (Morgan, 2024, np) and three main things that young people get from being involved in theatre. Morgan suggests that young people gain "Hands-On Learning", "Creative Freedom", and "Fun and Friendship" from being involved in theatre (Morgan, 2024, np). The idea of "Hands-On Learning" also links to the youth work concept of experiential learning (Morgan, 2024, np), which suggests that young people learn best by experiences and learning by action. It is also important that young people get to experience "Creative Freedom" (Morgan, 2024, np) because it opens up their mind and imagination, allowing them to have ambitious hopes and dreams for themselves, as well as instigating motivation with the young people. Another advantage for young people being involved in theatre is that it instigates and creates friendships. For youth work, creating a safe space where the young people can socialise, learn and have fun is a core principle of practice, which is what including young people in

theatre does. The five points that Morgan (2024, np) also uses to support their statement of *“Why Theatre is Perfect for Teenagers”* are the benefits and skills that young people can gain to use for themselves throughout their lives. These five points include; “Building Confidence and Self-expression”, “Fostering Creativity and Imagination”, “Developing Communication and Teamwork Skills”, “Cultural Appreciation and Awareness”, and “A Sense of Belonging and Community” (Morgan, 2024). These are all skills and qualities that will aid, enable, and empower young people to use their voice and advocate for themselves and/or others, (WAG, 2007, WG, 2019, Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022). For example, a young person gaining confidence and being aware of their individual self-expression can help them to use their voice in a respectful and responsible manner, in a way that is comfortable for them. Another example would be that a young person who has “A Sense of Belonging and Community” (Morgan, 2024, np) learns how to be a respectful, communicative, resilient, and active participant in the community, and in a place and with people that feel safe and trustworthy, young people are therefore then able to speak out and advocate for an idea they have or when they have seen or experienced something is not right or does not feel safe. Additionally, another example is that a young person who has a cultural appreciation and a cultural awareness can advocate for the accepting, respectful, and equal and/or equitable treatment of someone who maybe is different or someone who struggles with being social, or someone who does not necessarily fit in naturally or easily. This is in addition to the fact that communication and teamwork skills are needed and used in most, if not every, part of life. This is especially important because for an individual to be able to use their voice, they need to be able to communicate well and clearly. Theatre is powerful in this way and that is why it is not only useful for building

communication skills and friendships, but also for giving young people the skills to be able to use their voice when needed and to help them and enable them to feel empowered while doing so (Fuller, 2025, np).

When thinking about young people using their voice, it is essential that their voice is listened to by practitioners, such as youth workers, teachers, facilitators, and decision makers, so that they can know how to empower their young people and make themselves open and approachable for the young people to be able to speak out in a comfortable and safe environment. As mentioned previously, theatre creates a safe space for young people to gain and develop useful and transferable skills, not just for theatre and the arts, but for their everyday lives also. Using voice and good, clear communication is vital when putting together something for the theatre. Each role has its part to play and communication between every actor, director, producer, set designer needs to be clear, accurate, and respectful. This plays a significant role in how theatre promotes the use of voice, especially in theatre for young people, because it helps them to develop the skills they need for themselves as they are growing up and their brain is developing. This is especially important when considering marginalised, neurodivergent, disabled young people as well as young people from a range of minorities and backgrounds of deprivation. This is because, for a range of reasons, these (and others) are young people who have less opportunity to use their voice, and therefore have far less opportunity to be empowered, and also to be empowered to use their voice.

Linking theatre to education, Ken Robinson (RSA Animate, 2010) talks about Changing Education Paradigms and how in the current state of the government and country, and the need for everything to be proven and measured, the arts are “victims of the mentality” because it is an “aesthetic experience”, which means that the brain is operating at its peak. This also speaks to the fact of the lack of funding in the arts means that less young people are getting the opportunity to experience theatre and the arts, and therefore, not necessarily gaining the opportunity to learn to use their voice in a way that is productive and advantageous to them.

Furthermore, linking back to Boal’s *“Legislative Theatre”* (2005), Bowden (2024) seems to suggest in her article *“Young People Care About Political Issues”*, that children and young people that are eight years old and above are really interested in their world and their surroundings, including what is going on around them and what affects them. In addition to this, Bowden (2024) also suggests that young people ~~are~~ really want a voice to share their opinions, views, and concerns about what they are seeing. Furthermore, Bowden (2024) conveys that the “younger generations are much less likely than the older generations to believe they have control over their success” and she adds that one of the main reasons for this is the “result of the collapse of young adult homeownership.

In conclusion, through reviewing literature, there is evidence that young people’s involvement in theatre does promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices. As has been mentioned previously, theatre in itself is a powerful agent of the voice, but especially for young people who, through their voluntary participation in theatre, have developed the transferable skills to communicate

clearly and effectively, as well as teamwork, empathy, social skills, confidence, amongst other skills and qualities. Additionally, all of these skills and qualities are transferable into other industries or areas of education, but also into everyday life skills and everyday activities. Furthermore, most of these skills and qualities are needed by young people and adults throughout their life, including at school, at work, at home, and in social environments. These skills and qualities help individuals to get through and deal with society as it currently is. Linking back to the research question, all of the areas explored in this chapter mean that young people can be empowered and are already being empowered to use their voice through the instrument and method of theatre.

In this chapter, the researcher has explored some of the existing research and literature that links to the research question, *“How does young people’s involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices?”* In the next chapter, the researcher will explore the methodology and methods of their own research for this project.

METHODOLOGY/METHODS

This is the methodology chapter of the dissertation. As a reminder, the research question of this project is *“How does young people’s involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices?”* This chapter will explore how the research will be carried out and will consider the research methodology and methods, what ethical considerations and biases have been identified and dealt with, as well as other integral details of the research project.

The researcher’s methodology will be a qualitative approach, and mixed methods research is aligned with an interpretivism philosophical worldview (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), qualitative research focuses on the lived experiences of people and could, for example, open-ended questions to learn more about an individual’s life and story. Therefore, the chosen methodology is qualitative, mainly because the chosen research methods are the questionnaires, which is usually more of a quantitative method of research, but the topic really needs responses to open-ended questions with views, opinions, and personal experiences, therefore the research will be a qualitative research method.

There will be two questionnaires to reflect the different research participants; one questionnaire will be for university students who study theatre-based subjects, and one for practitioners and facilitators of theatre and performing arts for young people. For the university students who are in theatre-based courses (e.g. acting, stage management, technical theatre, etc) - the questions will be designed to explore how the individual got interested in their specific role in theatre that they are studying and specialising in. It will explore whether this was something that they had the

opportunity to explore within school or as a young person, and also how their role in the theatre environment has been an empowering experience to participate in. The other questionnaire will be created for practitioners who facilitate theatre opportunities for young people. The questions will be designed to explore how these practitioners promote engagement with theatre, how their young people participate, and how every young person can be fairly included. Also, there will be a question around how they, as practitioners, have seen young people that they have worked with be empowered by being involved in theatre. The questionnaire will provide practitioners with the opportunity to consider what young people gain from being engaged with youth theatre. The sample size of participants responding to the research questionnaires will hopefully be between twelve and fourteen participants, which is considered an appropriate number for generating in-depth qualitative insights while remaining manageable within the scope of this study.

The reason that the researcher has chosen this qualitative type of research is because what they are trying to find out is something that is found through personal and professional experience, in a similar way to how experiential learning is effective with young people (Kolb, 1984). Theatre is something that a person does and experiences. It is an activity that involves an individual's physical, mental, and emotional capacity, both within the person and within their character. This is something that the researcher has both seen and experienced throughout their time being involved in performing arts over a period of fourteen years in different ways. There is so much involved with theatre including acting, set design, sound and lighting, music, stage management and so much more.

To analyse the data from the research, the researcher will engage in thematic analysis (McLeod, 2024), which will involve identifying patterns and common themes between the answers from the questionnaires, as well as identifying differences in the answers and taking into consideration the demographic and locations of the participants responding to the questionnaire. The researcher will also examine answers that surprised them and that were unexpected, and addressing what exactly the researcher has learned from the research.

When engaging in research, it is important to think about ethical considerations. For example, the first stage was to seek ethical approval from the University (please see Appendix 8.1). Another important ethical consideration is to ensure participants can give informed consent. This meant it was important that the researcher ensured that participants fully understood the purpose of the research and what was expected of them. Another important research consideration was that the researcher made sure to inform the participants that participation is completely voluntary. Additionally, in the event that a participant wants to withdraw from taking part in the study, they have the right to withdraw, and they can do that by emailing the researcher and asking to withdraw. Anonymity is another key ethical consideration, and every participant has also been made aware that their participation is completely anonymous. The questionnaire does not require any participants to note down their name, and each participant will be referred to under a pseudonym, therefore no-one will be able to be identifiable from the research. The pseudonyms will be Student 1, Student 2, Practitioner 1, Practitioner 2 and so on; for example, S1, S2, P1, P2, etc. Another ethical consideration within this research project has been the researcher's own bias. This comes from the fact that the researcher has been involved with some type of

performing arts for over thirteen years, as well as the researcher being someone who is passionate about the expressive and performing arts, especially for young people, and interested in making them more accessible to all young people. Additionally, as the researcher is someone who is passionate about all of these things, gaining more knowledge about the impact of performing arts on young people and the barriers to young people to get into performing arts is something that the researcher is particularly passionate about. As someone who has been interested in how the performing arts in many forms can benefit young people in significant ways, the researcher needs to be unbiased when reporting and analysing the findings of the research.

There are several research considerations to think about within to this research project because it is a small scale project which means that there is only a small amount of time to complete it, a small word count, and a small number of participants. Therefore, the research might not be as detailed as it could be with more time and more participants. The responses, especially from the students, may also be similar because most of the researcher's connections in the performing arts are from Wales and from and/or are studying in rural areas of Wales. As this is the researcher's first research project, their lack of experience in research is a limitation in itself as the researcher does not necessarily have the skills to make the most of the short time of research due to the lack of previous experience.

In conclusion, there are limitations to this dissertation research project due to lack of experience and lack of time and resources. However, there have been ethical and

research considerations made throughout the process, and this makes the planning and execution of the research easier, despite the challenges and limitations.

Now that the researcher has discussed the study's research methodology and methods, the next chapter will be the presentation of data, which will convey the research obtained from the questionnaires to further support the researcher's study which explores "*How does young people's involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices?*"

PRESENTATION OF DATA

This chapter is the Presentation of Data and will explore what the data from the researcher's own research questionnaires have said in relation to the topic of the research question; "*How does young people's involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices?*" To maintain

participants' anonymity, the students will be referred to as S1, S2 etc, and the practitioners will be referred to as P1, P2 etc.

Barriers:

A key theme which emerged from the data is the barriers that are faced. It was identified that there are several barriers to young people having opportunities in theatre, including as noted by S4 that young people are "afraid" that being involved in theatre will give them a "bad reputation" with others. Both practitioners and students agree that there is a lack of finances in the industry, in the lack of funding for youth theatre or any kind of theatre for young people. P1 also suggests that there is a lack of genuine inclusion in how some youth theatre groups are run, especially for neurodivergent young people. Understanding that there is a distinction between allowing young people to attend and genuine inclusion is crucial. P2 suggests that geographical location also makes a significant difference to access to opportunity for young people, especially in more rural areas. This is as well as the fact that, as P3 suggests, theatre is not seen as "the cool thing to do" for young people, and young people and especially young adults rarely have the time to do the learning that is needed to be in theatre/shows. Additionally, it is difficult to attract boys and young men to theatre and the arts, especially up until sixth form age. This is on top of the fact that many young people end up having to choose between music and the arts and sports. The students also suggest a lack of advertising as well as a lack of theatre memberships in many places. Additionally, theatre is expensive which easily puts people off. Furthermore, S5 suggests that the creative side of theatre, like the set, costume, sound, and lighting design, etc, is not talked about anywhere near

enough, and therefore, there is also a lack of a variety of experiences for young people.

Practitioners: Impact and Skills Development:

All practitioners highlighted the impact that engaging in theatre has on young people, and articulated several skills that are developed. This next section presents data from each of the three Practitioners that completed the questionnaire, starting with P1 before moving to P2 and P3.

P1 is a musical director and singing teacher and was inspired to do it for a love for music and storytelling as an initial impetus; after they saw the impact this had on young people, they strove to work more within the field. They have seen theatre empower young people who lack of confidence and, self-belief, and young people who have suffered with trauma, and theatre has helped them overcome what could have seemed like “insurmountable obstacles”. They have seen young people who suffer with anxiety around public speaking be transformed into people who can “stand on stage and shine”. Additionally, they have seen young people struggling to find or know their identity “suddenly come into their own” through being involved in theatre. Some skills that they believe young people gain through being a part of theatre are confidence, belief, public speaking, empowerment, friendship and teamwork. They suggest that theatre for young people run with neuro affirming practitioners can offer life changing experiences, including support, friendship and life-long positivity.

P2 is a Youth Theatre Company Director who was inspired to do what they do after years of leading expressive arts departments in school, and they “felt a clear

need for further performance opportunities outside of the educational system". They aim to "help instil the same self-confidence in young people that the arts gave me" which led them to establish a local Youth Theatre group of their own. They have "consistently" seen theatre as a powerful tool for empowerment. It provides a "unique environment" where young people can transition from "being shy and unconfident to performing on stage in front of hundreds". They suggest that this process "empowers them to take risks and find their inner confidence". Additionally, for many young people, especially those who may struggle in academic settings, "the stage is a place where they feel a sense of pride in themselves". This participant has seen the transformative nature of theatre by working with neurodivergent children and young people who had been previously told that they would "struggle to succeed", then only to see that theatre transformed what others thought of them, and eventually the career path they chose and succeeded in came from their experience in theatre as a young person. They suggest that theatre is transformative because it provides a platform where young people can be individually "celebrated rather than ridiculed". The skills that they have seen instilled in young people through theatre are resilience, adaptability, accountability, working with others, time management, and it helps young people develop emotional intelligence. Theatre is a place where young people can feel a sense of belonging, where individuality is celebrated, where being valued is important, which is also important for mental well-being, and this can "last a lifetime" (P2).

P3 is a Deputy Director of Expressive Arts in secondary school, and has also directed and been a musical director for multiple amateur musicals. Their inspiration for their job was their first music teachers, and they note how; "the peripatetic service teachers were brilliant, really inspirational", and allowed them to do two weeks of

work experience and that is when they knew that is what they wanted to do. Theatre “allows many young people to find a voice which they don’t necessarily have in any other part of their lives (school, youth club, etc)”. It gives both young and older generations a way to build self-confidence; for example, going from the chorus to a lead role. Personal development is also seen, and people develop new skills/hidden talents, –“For example, in the right setting they may become dancers, singers or have comedic timing which they didn’t realise they had”. They believe that their skills as an actress are used every day, and they turn theatre skills into creative ways to teach, and that builds confidence and self-belief in their abilities. The skills that they believe young people gain are commitment, adaptability, poise, professionalism, time-keeping, and improvement of social skills through theatrical opportunities. In their “opinion”, regular participants in music and theatre become more rounded people as adults, with better employment opportunities and being more sociable people. They also believe that it should be a fundamental part of school until GCSE’s, so everyone gets the same opportunities and that funding should be made available for this. Participating in theatre benefits a person’s wellbeing, a mental strength, creativity and confidence, and these are some of the “most important things for youngsters these days”.

Students: Empowerment, Skills and Skills for Life:

The students articulated the empowerment gained from engaging in theatre in all its guises. They also showcased the skills they have developed and outlined their transferability. This next section presents their data beginning with S1 and through to S5.

S1 is an acting student on an acting degree who chose their subject for a love of performing. Their most empowering experience so far in acting has been touring with a show and their experience has mostly been amateur theatre so far. The skill that they have gained most from their experience in theatre is confidence and it has “really brought me out of my shell”. They also said that theatre is “such a helpful tool”.

S2 is also an acting student on an acting degree who chose their subject because of a love of Shakespeare as well as the fact that for them, theatre is the one thing that they can focus on without getting distracted. Their main experiences have been local musical theatre and college courses and their most empowering experience has been performing for a full theatre. The skills they have gained from being in theatre are confidence, self-care, and comprehension of literature and they have said that it gives them “tools to use outside of the performance perspective” and it gives them life skills to use. This participant also added the point that theatre gives the space for young men to be taught and to learn how to be “emotionally vulnerable”.

S3 is a set design and production degree student whose speciality is design, and the subject was chosen because they were passionate about the subject. Most of their experience as a young person were several courses for young people that they were a part of, and their most empowering experience has been writing a song and performing it on stage. The skills they have gained from being a part of theatre are confidence, problem solving, and being hardworking, and they have said that theatre can be used to “share important messages”.

S4 is a set design and production degree student whose specialty is set construction and decoration. The subject was chosen by this student because of a love of theatre and film, and a love for building and creating things, so it was a perfect fit for them. Their main experiences as a young person before university was local theatre shows and an art foundation pre-degree. Their most empowering experience has been constructing a set for an internship. The skills they have gained are practical skills and problem solving, and they have said that theatre is “transformative”.

S5 is a set design and production with a speciality in set design and prop making. They chose the subject because they were interested in it and in doing it, as well as loving seeing how everything helps to create the story. They explained that they did not really have opportunities as a young person to explore their love for the subject and/or interest but their experience of going to the Harry Potter Studios and seeing how creating things happens as a young person inspired them to move forward with their love for creating things and for the course that they are currently studying. This is also their most empowering experience of seeing how a show is created and how things come together. The skills they have gained is confidence, making friendships, and being creative in a range of ways, and they have said that although they have not necessarily experienced it yet for themselves, they know that theatre is such a powerful tool to tell stories.

In conclusion, the data gained has been insightful. The next chapter will be the Data Analysis chapter which will explore this on a deeper level.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

This is the Discussion chapter which will explore and analyse in more depth the data that the researcher gained when exploring the research question, “***How does young people’s involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices?***”

Throughout the empirical research of this project, a few patterns have emerged that both the students and practitioners agree on; these include that theatre

is a strong tool of empowerment, that theatre is a powerful tool in building confidence, that there are several barriers to young people accessing theatre, and that theatre, as well as other forms of arts and creativity, are significantly beneficial to young people's mental health.

Empowerment through involvement in theatre:

Throughout the empirical research that was carried out, one of the biggest themes that arose was how empowering being involved in theatre can be in a range of ways. Observations made included being empowered in emotional intelligence, being empowered in skills development, being empowered through inclusion of everybody, and being empowered to have and to use their voices.

Young men are given space to be taught how to be emotionally vulnerable within theatre (Doll, 2023). In their thesis research, Doll (2023) explores "*How Theatre Teaches Men Emotional Vulnerability*", which supports what came out of the empirical study where participant S2 said that in their experience, theatre is important because it is a space for young men to be taught emotional vulnerability. Not only but theatre gives every young person that opportunity as that is not something exclusive to young men but something that seems more significant for them, for the most part (Hughes and Wilson, 2004, pg 64).

Another point that was made a few times is that theatre allows young people to be empowered to learn new skills and qualities. This includes skills like communication, social skills; such as learning social cues, resilience, adaptability, accountability, confidence and self-esteem, amongst others. These are all transferable skills that can be used in other parts of life and in general life, which was

mentioned by one of the participants in the research (S2). This also highlights the “educative”, “expressive”, and “participative” pillars of youth (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022, pg.5-6)

Additionally, findings highlight that there needs to be a distinction between allowing young people to attend and real and genuine inclusion (P1). This is crucial to theatre groups and programmes being run well (P1). This was mentioned in the empirical research regarding neurodivergence, but this could also be true of any type of additional need (learning or otherwise) or any type of disability.

One participant (P3) said that involvement in theatre gives young people a voice, and emphasised that they may not have a voice in other parts of life, in school, in work, or at home. This is important as young people need a safe space to be able to use their voice and speak out about what they are feeling and what affects them (Guide Inc, 2026, np).

Skills Development through Involvement in Theatre:

As previously explored in the Literature Review, Morgan (2024), the owner and founder of a youth theatre company, highlighted that she had seen young people gain several skills and important qualities from their involvement in theatre. Skills development through engagement in theatre was also highlighted by the Department of Theatre and Dance of the Appalachian State University (2026, np). There are skills such as communication skills, problem-solving, working independently and “co-operatively”, commitment, dedication, willingness to accept responsibility, concentration, and self-confidence (Department of Theatre and Dance, accessed 2026, np), as well as others that were also mentioned in the

researcher's empirical research (2026). These are all skills that will be helpful for any young person to be enabled to use in everyday real life, as well as in something that they love and are passionate about. Young people need these skills and need opportunities to build these skills as much as possible, so they can have the best chance at being a respectful and active citizen as young adults, moving forward through the world.

Barriers to being Involved in Theatre:

As mentioned in the empirical research, there are many barriers to providing creative opportunities, in theatre and otherwise, to young people. This is especially true in Wales and in rural and deprived areas. This comes from a lack of funding, finances and resources in many places across the country. In addition, other barriers include lack of access due to location, including rurality, and barriers linked to how expensive accessing opportunities in the arts can be. These ideas and insights are supported by Dawson (2025, np). Throughout his article, he explains how he has seen the barriers to youth theatre in Wales, especially in terms of funding, finances and access to theatre in rural areas (Dawson, 2025, np). This was also identified in the empirical research.

A student who participated in the empirical research identified that young people are afraid that being involved in theatre will give them a bad reputation (S4). Participant P3, a teacher, made an observation that could be viewed as similar to the student's observation, as they have seen that young boys, especially, are reluctant to join in with music and theatre. As Dawson (2025, np) identifies how "creative opportunities are important for teenagers' mental health". As such, the researcher

believes it is important to explore ways of increasing young people's engagement in theatre. This includes breaking down any barriers they may face, be they financial, geographical, or their reluctance to engage due to perceived reputational damage. Promoting young people's engagement in theatre is something that the researcher is passionate about, and is something that should be researched more. Engagement in theatre also requires more attention and funding because of its significant benefits to young people and their mental health.

In conclusion, analysing the empirical research, alongside the existing research provides interesting insights, and provides several ideas and useable pathways for further research, as well as recommendations for practice. The next chapter is the Conclusion chapter, which will share final conclusions. It will also provide recommendations for further research and consider implications for youth work practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter is the final chapter of this research project which will summarise the whole project, and explore further recommendations for research and opportunities for young people in this area.

As has been discussed previously throughout this research project, the opportunities for young people to discover and explore a love for theatre is lacking in some ways, due to funding, finances, resources needed, and being located in rural areas makes it even harder for the most part. Additionally, there needs to be more opportunities

for neurodiverse young people to be involved in theatre and opportunities to be creative. As one participant suggested in the empirical research (P3), there needs to be funding, even in schools, for every young person to get equal creative opportunities, especially in music and theatre. The opportunity to be creative and have a positive outlet is essential to young people's mental health, as well as their physical, emotional, and spiritual health (Hughes and Wilson, 2004). As has been discovered throughout this project, theatre also plays a vital role in allowing young people to have and use their voice in a safe and secure place, in a space that also allows them to make mistakes and try again, therefore learning from their mistakes and learning in an educational way also. Theatre is such a powerful tool in young people's lives, and accessing these opportunities should not be so hard for young people. Theatre, as well as other types of arts, empowers young people in a range of ways through their lives, especially as they learn to live and work in the world and the struggles that they are surrounded by.

Although the research had some insightful results, there were research limitations. These limitations include a small sample size, time restrictions, and a small word count for the module's assessment. The total research participant number was eight, which consisted of three practitioners with a range of backgrounds, and five university students studying theatre-based subjects - such as acting and set design and production. The time restriction also meant that less research was able to happen, and therefore, if there had been more time, some focus groups and interviews may have been helpful to answering the research questions. This is something that could be done moving forward is to get more in person research done with young people under the age of eighteen and in person with more practitioners, whether that is in one-to-one interviews or in focus group sessions.

Therefore, a recommendation would be to carry out further research in-person with young people, students, and practitioners and facilitators to keep exploring the real life impact for young people being involved in theatre.

One practitioner (P3) suggested that theatre allows young people to have a voice that they perhaps do not have in other parts of life, such as in school, in work, or at home. This voice and learning how to use it in the best way possible for themselves, especially in learning to advocate for themselves when it is needed. This also links to the skills development that theatre offers in terms of being able to learn how to be good communicators. It also links to how theatre provides opportunities to learn social skills, such as social cues, facial expressions, and body language.

Additionally, in theatre and in the real world, helps young people to build strong and sustainable relationships, which is at the heart of youth work in general. Theatre teaches young people to make friends and how to maintain relationships and keep them moving forward. The lived experience and the experiential learning opportunities that young people can have through being involved with theatre are valuable, even to their futures and developing into adulthood.

Another recommendation from this research is to look at how more funding and attention can be turned towards opening up more creative and theatre-based opportunities for young people, especially if it is proven that theatre, as well as other forms of expressive arts, are this valuable and significantly beneficial to the lives of young people. From the research that has been done previously, the experience and learning opportunities that young people gain from being a part of theatre seems to be worth the time and funding to be explored in more depth and have the chance to get more funding to prove that given the right leadership, resources, and funding, it could help so many young people in a range of ways throughout their childhood,

youth and adulthood. The ability to be able to learn to communicate well and to build strong self-confidence and self-belief is so important to young people and to their futures. It helps them to be more employable and to be able to voice their views, opinions, and ideas well, and even to help them to know how to get their voices heard. Theatre can also give young people the confidence to make mistakes and learn from their mistakes and then to try again. It builds resilience and perseverance in young people, which are hard things to teach to anyone, even to young people. From the existing research and the empirical research, it seems that creative opportunities are essential and valuable to the development of young people. It empowers them, and supports young people to develop their voices. However, the opportunities are sometimes incredibly hard to access for a variety of reasons, and this is another reason why there should be more funding out towards theatre and other forms of arts, like music for example. One participant (P3) agreed with this and suggested even that every school should have funding to give every young person equal opportunities and access to creative opportunities like theatre and music.

In summary, the research question of this project is, “***How does young people's involvement effectively promote the use and the empowerment of young people's voices?***” This question is important to research and find out more about because of the significantly beneficial aspects of theatre, and the expressive arts, especially to young people's mental, physical, and emotional health. The research highlighted the importance of theatre because of how powerful it is as a tool of empowerment as well as how it aids young people in skills development. Another point that was emphasised from the empirical research was that there are several barriers, especially in rural areas, which is a negative for young people, because

theatre and the expressive arts are highly beneficial to young people and for them to learn to use their voices.

Finally, to conclude, as a result of engaging in this project as the Researcher, the concluding further recommendations for practice and research will follow:

Recommendations for Practice:

- Include more theatre-based practices in general youth work to aid skills development, communication, and confidence building.
-

Recommendations for Further Research:

- Further research on how more funding can be placed for young people to access theatre and the arts more easily, and with less barriers.
- Further research could be done on the full physical, mental, and emotional benefits of doing theatre with young people, especially when looking at emotional vulnerability.

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APPENDICES

Appendices 8.1 Ethics Form

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Bethany Rose Sexton			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student

3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	Institute of Education and Humanities Academic Discipline of Childhood, Youth and Education
4	Campus:	Carmarthen
5	E-mail address:	2300108@student.uwtsd.ac.uk
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07377905276
For students:		
7	Student Number:	2300108
8	Programme of Study:	BA Young People, Communities, and Youth Work
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Angharad Lewis

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
		Institute Research Committee	☐		
		Other (write in) Angharad Lewis	☒	24.02.26	

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.
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1	<u>UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice</u>	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here] BERA Guidelines</i>	☒
4	<i>Youth Work National Occupational Standards (CLD Standards Council Scotland, 2019)</i>	☒
5	<i>United Nations Conventions for the Rights of the Child (UNICEF, 1989)</i>	☒

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution	N/A				
2	Contact person name	N/A				
3	Contact person e-mail address	N/A				
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☒	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☒	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☒
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☒
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☒
9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☒

Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☒
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate). N/A				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	How does young people's involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices?		
2	Proposed start date:	25 th January 2026	Proposed end date:	7 th May 2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how <u>Existing Research</u> has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>			
3	Purpose of Research Activity The purpose of the research activity will be to find out to what extent does young people's involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices. The project will explore how young people's participation in theatre helps a young person's social and personal development. It will also explore how accessible youth theatre is and how youth workers and/or youth work projects or organisations could make theatre opportunities for young people more accessible and affordable. One piece of research that has piqued my interest, especially in the area of empowerment of young people and change is "Theatre of the Oppressed" by Augusto Boal, which led to the creation of "Legislative Theatre" years later. Within his book "Theatre of the Oppressed", Boal suggests and explores the idea that all theatre is political because being human and political attitudes are intertwined (Boal, 1979). Boal also suggests that theatre is an effective weapon, which when used in the right way can be a "weapon of liberation" but fully suggests that theatre is an agent of change (Boal, 1979). After "Theatre of the Oppressed", Boal developed "Legislative Theatre" which showed how theatre can "directly influence political change" (Collective Encounters, 2019). This research by Boal may lend some suggestions as to how including young people in theatre can empower them, by giving them opportunity to use their voice to influence current and new ideas and change in a society that is constantly changing. (this box should expand as you type)			

4	Research Question How does young people's involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices? (this box should expand as you type)
5	Aims of Research Activity 1. To learn how young people's involvement in theatre on stage and off stage encourages their empowerment. 2. To discover how young people's voluntary participation in theatre and activities that help their personal and social development as well as meeting youth work values. 3. <u>To explore how different forms of youth theatre participation (e.g. acting, devising, scriptwriting, backstage roles) provide opportunities for young people to express their views, experiences and identities.</u> 4. To identify how young people's involvement in theatre encourages them to be inclusive with their friends and peers, regardless of background, similarities or differences to themselves as unique individuals. 5. To find out how affordable and accessible any kind of theatre group is for young people and how youth work could make theatre activities and opportunities more accessible to young people, and how well funded are theatre projects for young people. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity - Create a questionnaire for university students who are studying theatre in some form and discover how they found their role in theatre, and how participating in theatre has and continues to empower them as young person/young adult. - Create a questionnaire for practitioners to consider and investigate how they facilitate a "participative", "inclusive" and "empowering" space for young people to explore their place in theatre and what they love. - Using existing research, investigate how theatre is "participative", "inclusive", and "empowering" for young people and how youth work can use this research to their advantage, with youth workers using ideas from theatre for activities for their young people. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a brief summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those

	listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here, but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	My methodology will be a mixed methods approach, and mixed methods research is aligned with a pragmatist philosophical worldview (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). According to Creswell and Creswell (2018), mixed methods research is a combination of quantitative research, which is research with numbers, statistics, and closed-ended questions, and qualitative research, which is research with open-ended questions and about life experiences. So, my chosen methodology is mixed methods, mainly because two of my chosen research methods are the questionnaires, and so there will be quantitative questions, but the topic really needs responses to open-ended questions with views, opinions, and personal experiences, therefore the research will lean more towards a qualitative research method. A questionnaire will be created for university students who are in theatre based courses (e.g. acting, stage management, technical theatre, etc). The questions will be designed to explore how the individual got interested in the role in theatre that they are studying and specialising in, and whether this was something that they had opportunity to explore within school or as a young person, and also how their role in a theatre show has been an empowering experience to participate in. Another questionnaire will be created for practitioners who facilitate theatre opportunities for young people. The questions will be designed to explore how these practitioners promote engagement with theatre, how their young people participate and how every young person can be fairly included. Also, there could be a question around how they, as practitioners, have seen young people that they've worked with be empowered by being involved in theatre. The questionnaire will provide practitioners with the opportunity to consider what young people gain from being engaged with youth theatre. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	Questionnaire shared with university students across the UK who study in theatre and theatre arts courses – onstage and offstage Questionnaire with practitioners in rural South West Wales (this box should expand as you type)

	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO	☒
		YES	☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☒	☐
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☒	☐
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☒	☐
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	A More Equal Wales: “A society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio economic circumstances)” The topic of this independent project works towards “A More Equal Wales” because the research will hopefully provide ideas as to how theatre and maybe other types of expressive		

	arts could be open to more young people, regardless of their “socio-economic circumstances”. The research will also explore how this type of expressive arts could or will empower young people to meet their potential in many ways, not just in the arts. Theatre can also play a role in the aim of “Fair Work” (Future Generations Commissioner for Wales, 2015) as theatre can lift up an individual’s self-esteem and make them aware that they have skills, value, and potential. There are also educational opportunities within theatre, including interactive work like Theatr Fforwm Cymru provide in partnership with schools and young people. Participation is a vital and essential part of theatre in many different forms, including on stage and off stage roles – theatre does not happen if participation does not happen. This is also an essential point in working with young people as one of the pillars of Youth Work (Youth Work in Wales Review Group, 2022). A Wales of Cohesive Communities: “Attractive, safe, viable and well-connected.” The topic of this independent project may meet the value of “A Wales of Cohesive Communities” as it is a way of staying well-connected and networking within the community and local area. The theatre community is also place of belonging and safety as trust is essential between all cast and crew members to be able to put on a show of any kind. This project will explore ways that theatre for young people is “viable”, and how it can be more “viable” and accessible for young people, especially as being part of a theatre company or taking theatre classes can be expensive and not sustainable for many families, especially those in deprived and high poverty areas. Theatre and expressive arts can be “attractive” as they can be a lot of fun and very vibrant. This also includes people being active in the community, which theatre groups like youth theatres and amateur operatic societies usually are. These types of groups also tend to be community anchor organisations and often they have connections in the local area to signpost people to, especially for mental and emotional health. A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language: “A society that promotes and protects culture, heritage and the Welsh language, and which encourages people to participate in the arts, and sports and recreation.” Theatre and expressive arts are a big part of Welsh culture and the continuation of these, especially in young people, creates the ability to sustain the creative culture in Wales. Involvement in theatre hits each one of the points in this value and helps people develop skills that are transferable to other aspects of life. In theatre, there is also a supportive community of people, where many find a sense of safety and belonging where they haven’t found it anywhere else. Theatre groups, societies, and organisations often become great sources of comfort and support to the people involved, regardless of age. Within theatre, there are many opportunities to address wider societal issues and hot topics of the moment, focusing on them in creative ways which help people to process and understand them with a positive outlet. In terms of “Culture and the Welsh Language”, theatre can easily be bilingual and/or be done in the Welsh language, especially embracing the Welsh culture, as Wales has a rich creative and expressive arts history. The arts are also a great way to get people, especially young people, who may or may not be that interested, engaging and embracing with their own culture and becoming prouder of where they are from. (this box should expand as you type)
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SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☐	☒

4	Use of participant diaries?	☐	☒
5	Use of video or audio recording?	☐	☒
6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☐	☒
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☒
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☒
	Details of any other primary data collection method: N/A (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☒	☐
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒

4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups: (this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	Eight to fifteen on each questionnaire (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	University students studying theatre-based subjects Practitioners who facilitate theatre for young people (this box should expand as you type)
12	How will you identify the participants?	For the questionnaire group for the university students, I have friends there that I will ask if they would like to be involved, and I will ask if they can ask some of their peers to be involved as well. Hopefully in this way, I will be able to get responses from students from several different specialities, which will open the research up to various perspectives from young people. For the questionnaire for practitioners, I will ask some people that I know that are practitioners or facilitators for young people in theatre are, who may be teachers, leaders of stage classes or school, youth leaders involved in youth theatre somehow, and others involved in theatre for young people. (this box should expand as you type)

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐

15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☒	☐	☐
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☐	☒
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☒	☐	☐
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☒	☐	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐
26	Are there any financial or other interests to the investigator or University arising from this study?	☐	☒	☐
27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☐	☒
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
		No	☒
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: Possible emotional distress depending on whether the questions evoke memories of sensitive topics. Participants should not come to any physical harm and mental/emotional harm, while possible, is unlikely. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: To try and mitigate harm as much as possible, participants will be clearly informed that participation is voluntary and that they can withdraw at any point. Some organisations that may be able to support an individual through mental or emotional distress will be listed as signposts for participants if anything does come up. It will also be optional as to how much detail the participants want to give, therefore any information or detail in any answers that may cause distress do not have to be added. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities		
	N/A		

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest	
	Risk to the investigator: There should be no risk, physical, mental, or emotional to the investigator. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: If any mentally or emotionally distressing topics arise from the research, the investigator will have organisations or individuals to reach out to for help if needed, however unlikely this may be. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection	
	Risk to the University: The only possible risk to the university is under data protection for the participants involved and what happens to their data, once the research is over. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: The investigator will take all steps necessary to keep all of the participants' information safe and will follow ethical guidelines as to how data is to be kept and then destroyed after the research is completed. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems	
	Risk to the environment: N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

Disclosure and Barring Service				
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.	001817637583		

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when?
	If participants from either questionnaire groups would like feedback from the research, the researcher will offer the option as a part of the questionnaire to receive an email when the project is completed with an overview of the findings of the research. The participants could also email the researcher and ask for the feedback if they did not opt in for feedback as part of the questionnaire. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation.
	For both questionnaires, there will be a part at the beginning to consent to participate in the research and with a clear explanation that participants have the choice to opt out of participating at any point during the research. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity

	Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case.
	The anonymity and confidentiality of the participants in the research will be kept as no names will be used in the research and there should not be enough personal information involved that anyone could identify a participant from the answers to the questionnaires. When the data and information that has been collected is being written about for the project, all participants will have a letter and number assigned to them that depends on which part of the research that they have been a part of but no personal information will be involved in the choosing of how they will be labelled for the purposes of writing about the research. Full confidentiality should be kept unless there is a safeguarding issue or any concern of harm or risk that arises, in which case, safeguarding procedures will be followed and therefore, other people (e.g. safeguarding officers) will have to be informed of the information provided. For the questionnaire for the students, the participants will be referred to by the letter S (for Student) followed by a number. For the questionnaire for the practitioners, the participants will be referred to by the letter P (for Practitioner) followed by a number. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 “GDPR” and the Data Protection Act 2018 “DPA”)?	YES	NO
1	“Personal data” means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person (‘data subject’). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO

3	“Special category data” means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects’ – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes),	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	N/A (this box should expand as you type)		

	Will data from the research activity (collected data, drafts of the thesis, or materials for publication) be stored in any of the following ways?	YES	NO
5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☒	☐
6	University computers?	☐	☒
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	“Cloud” storage or websites?	☐	☒
11	Other – specify: N/A	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation: All data collected and stored on the researcher’s password protected laptop will be anonymised and all participants will be referred to by a pseudonym. Any data collected and stored on paper will be kept in the researcher’s on-campus accommodation and will be put in safe place in their room which is always locked. Any and all stored data will be permanently deleted or destroyed after the research project is completed. (this box should expand as you type)		

Data Protection			
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO

13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐ ☒	☒ ☐
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐ ☒	☒ ☐
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate): All data collection and storage will be done with consent from every participant in the research and with ethical approval from the university. No unnecessary personal information will be collected from any participant during the research to minimize the risk of data collection and storage. All data collection and storage within this research project will follow the university's guidelines and align with the current GDPR and Data Protection Legislation. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity: Bethany Sexton (researcher) <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity: Bethany Sexton <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not. Data will be stored on the researcher's personal computer which is password protected and no other person has access to the computer. The data will be stored on the researcher's laptop until after the research is over. The work will be kept until after the Exam Board at which point it will be destroyed. Any data or research collected on paper will in a safe and secure place in the researcher's on-campus accommodation where the door is locked at all times. This data will also be stored until after the research is completed. No data will be archived except for whatever is written up in the Presentation of data chapter within the research project. All other data will be permanently deleted or destroyed after the research project is complete to ensure the safety, anonymity and confidentiality of the research participants.		

	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtسد.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i>		
	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtسد.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants. In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtسد.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/		
1	Signature of applicant:	bethanyrs	Date: 04/12/2025

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:		Date:
3	Signature:		

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:		Date:
5	Signature:		

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Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☐	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) <i>ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT</i>
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Appendices 8.2 Questionnaires

Practitioner questionnaire:

How does involvement in theatre promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices?

My name is Bethany Sexton, and I am a final-year Youth Work student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project, which explores the following question:

“How does young people’s involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices?”

This research is aimed at university students studying theatre-based subjects and practitioners who facilitate theatre for young people. As a practitioner involved in providing theatre opportunities for young people, I would like to invite you to complete this short questionnaire. If you choose to participate in this research, the questionnaire will not require you to add your name. All questionnaire responses will remain strictly confidential and accessible only to the researcher. At no time will individual responses be shared publicly. This allows you to express your views anonymously while contributing to meaningful research. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the questionnaire at any stage.

After the data has been carefully analysed, I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the findings upon request.

If you consent to participate in this research, please select 'Yes' to Question 1 and complete the remaining questions. If you do not consent, please select 'No' to Question 1 and then you can close the Questionnaire.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the following email address:

2300108@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Section 1

1. Do you consent to your involvement in this research, understanding that your participation can be withdrawn anytime up until the submission of this dissertation? Required to answer. Single choice.

Yes

No

Section 2

2.What is your role? (What is your job as a facilitator/practitioner of theatre for young people?) Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer

3.What inspired you to do what you do?Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

4.Have you seen theatre as being an empowering force for young people? If so, in what way? Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

5.Have you experienced theatre as being transformative or as being an agent of change? If so, please explain... Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

6.What transferable skills do young people develop through participation in theatre opportunities?Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer

7.Do you consider there to be barriers and/or missed opportunities for young people to take part in theatre? If so, please explain... Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

8.Is there anything else you'd like to add about how participating in theatre affects young people?Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer

Student questionnaire:

How does involvement in theatre promote the use and empowerment of young people's voices?

My name is Bethany Sexton, and I am a final-year Youth Work student at the University of Wales Trinity Saint David. I would like to invite you to take part in my research project, which explores the following question:

“How does young people’s involvement in theatre effectively promote the use and empowerment of young people’s voices?”

This research is aimed at university students studying theatre-based subjects and practitioners who facilitate theatre for young people. As a university student studying a theatre-based subject, I would like to invite you to complete this short questionnaire. If you choose to participate in this research, the questionnaire will not require you to add your name. All questionnaire responses will remain strictly confidential and accessible only to the researcher. At no time will individual responses be shared publicly. This allows you to express your views anonymously while contributing to meaningful research. Participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the questionnaire at any stage.

After the data has been carefully analysed, I will be happy to provide you with a copy of the findings upon request.

If you consent to participate in this research, please select 'Yes' to Question 1 and complete the remaining questions. If you do not consent, please select 'No' to Question 1 and then you can close the Questionnaire.

Thank you in advance for your time and participation. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at the following email address:

2300108@student.uwtsd.ac.uk

Section 1

1. Do you consent to your involvement in this research, understanding that your participation can be withdrawn anytime up until the submission of this dissertation? Required to answer. Single choice.

Yes

No

Section 2

2.What course are you studying?Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer

3.What is your performing arts / theatre speciality? (e.g. acting, lighting design, costumes, sound, music, etc...)Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer

4.Why did you choose this subject? Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

5.What opportunities did you have as a young person before you went to university to learn about the subject you are studying now? Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

6.What has been your most empowering experience in theatre? Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

7.What skills do you think you've developed from taking part in theatre activities?Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer

8.Have you experienced theatre as being transformative or as being an agent of change? If so, please explain...Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

9.Do you consider there to be barriers and/or missed opportunities for young people to take part in theatre? If so, please explain... Required to answer. Multi Line Text.

Enter your answer

10.Is there anything else you'd like to add about how participating in theatre affects young people?Required to answer. Single line text.

Enter your answer