

LEARNING THROUGH THE ARTS (LTTA) APPROACH TO THE TEACHING OF PERFORMING ARTS AND LANGUAGES IN THE DIGITAL ERA: A TEEM FRAMEWORK WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO KERALA

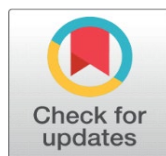
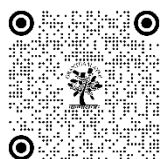
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ABSTRACT

For teaching various folk and performing arts including diverse languages, the paper suggests the use of LTTA (Learning Through the Arts) model. The paper explores as to how teaching of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) could be made more effective using TEEM (Teaching EFL Management) framework, and so also other languages and performing arts. Considering the typical educational scenario of the State of Kerala in India, the paper demonstrates the relevance of the LTTA approach for developing effective learning models like TEEM that can make education more lively, scientific and practice-oriented. Accordingly, the practical significance of the courses and hence the employability of the graduates can be improved. Also, by way of effectively utilizing the local resources along with the specialized skills and knowledge of the graduates, regional economic development is possible. For instance, in Kerala tourism sector needs skilled graduates, both from diverse languages and performing arts, for assisting the tourists. Foreign tourists are growingly attracted towards the unique yet diverse forms of performing arts, local cultures, and festivals. Graduate courses like BBA and their respective post-graduate courses, may be restructured using an LTTA approach for better employability of the graduates. Inclusion of ICT and allied advances like AI (Artificial Intelligence) makes this process more meaningful in this ICT era.

Keywords: Folk Arts, Performing Arts, LTTA, EFL, TEEM, Sustainability, ICT, AI

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1. INTRODUCTION

This paper proposes an innovative and alternative approach to the entrepreneurial task of material development in an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) or in similar kinds of academic settings. The relevance for encouraging the application of folk and performing arts of different regions of India in the EFL

focusing on the LTTA (Learning Through the Arts) education model has been highlighted in the paper. This is because of the fact that such an approach can allow the agents, whose culture and language constitute the subject matter, to co-construct the learning materials along with the language teachers—the end users of the product. An LTTA approach to developing effective learning models like TEEM (Teaching EFL Management) has been pointed out as one which can make education much more lively, scientific and practice-oriented. As an example, sectors like tourism in Kerala need graduates (or post-graduates), both from language disciplines as well as performing arts. If courses like BBA and BA or their post-graduate counterparts are restructured using LTTA approach, then employability of these graduates improves, and tourism services can be provided more scientifically; ultimately leading to faster regional economic development. Given the vast potential of ICT, graduates need training in the use of ICT. Inclusion of ICT and allied advances like AI (artificial intelligence) gives another dimension to the teaching of performing arts and languages in this ICT era.

2. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

This paper seeks to develop a systematic, collaborative, and research-based model for teachers of English as a foreign language (EFL), so that it includes information on specific cultural artifacts of India and (ii) India's approach to multilingualism issues. Besides, it seeks to restructure courses using an LTTA approach for better employability.

The paper is descriptive and conceptual in nature and is exploratory too. Data from authentic secondary sources have been analysed objectively to arrive at logical findings.

3. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

It is widely recognized that EFL teaching, and its management deserve special attention in countries like India where English is a foreign language. In States like Kerala where there are plenty of folk arts and performing arts, the same can be meaningfully incorporated in EFL. Also, this paper seeks to restructure the BBA (Bachelor of Business Administration) and such other courses in Kerala with a view to provide it the much-desired literature support and also scientific base so that it becomes theoretically sound and practically more relevant. The need for orienting the degree students with Folk and Performing arts in Kerala is also sought to be addressed in this paper. An LTTA approach to EFL teaching as per TEEM framework is sought to be explored here.

4. EFL TEACHING: RELEVANCE OF A TEEM MODEL USING AN LTTA APPROACH

There are some specific reasons that force us to re-look into EFL teaching methodology by effectively using an LTTA approach involving Folk and Performing arts in Kerala. Thus, with an underlying LTTA framework, a TEEM model can be duly developed.

First of all, at present there is a lack of pedagogically sound digitalized, multimodal, and interactive EFL teaching materials, which can be easily updated and evaluated, and are co-constructed by members of the culture and community they are supposed to represent. There is no mention of the need for these materials

to rely on various media inputs and include different forms of expression. In fact, EFL text books are required to be complete and available for independent use of any other medium. This leads to a lack of high quality EFL teaching materials that can be easily updated and evaluated. The main arguments in the literature against the infusion of new technologies into language learning are high costs, simple repetition of textbook activities, de-humanizing language learning experience by reducing human interaction and relying on the possibilities of new media rather than on pedagogical principles Tomlinson (2012). Studies on education, like, the one by Haleem et al. (2022) have underscored the need for digital technologies in education for better quality, specifically pointing out UN's 2030 agenda on sustainable development. Such studies stress on the need for quality education using digital tools and in response to these issues, this research paper concentrates on the importance of developing learning materials that can be considered innovative since they make use of the interactive, social, and flexible nature of modern digital media, which allow for more authentic opportunities for cross-cultural communication, making them pedagogically sound. Besides, such materials, contrary to print works, allow for constant development, evaluation, and modification. Most importantly though, giving voice to one specific target group, the Indian community, who is the subject matter in EFL classes, to co-construct the content that is supposed to represent it, humanizes the experience. This move is remarkably innovative, is distinct from the status-quo of single textbook authors, acting in Lewin (1947) and Shoemaker & Vos (2009) terms as the gatekeepers, who create the representation of the world of Englishness for other people largely based on their own intuitions, subjective interpretations, and experiences. Tomlinson (2003) reveals that many experienced text book authors indeed rely on their own gut-feeling what works and what is a good topic.

Secondly, at present there is a lack of an explicit focus on authentic elements of the Indian culture as a representative of the English-speaking world. Although the field of EFL teaching has experienced a steady and gradual pedagogical paradigm shift to communicative language teaching, which resulted in the need to incorporate authentic and culture-infused materials into teaching, such materials have often been reduced to means to teach language only. By now, however, the notion that language and cultures that use it are firmly intertwined and thus cannot be taught in isolation has been widely accepted on the theoretical level Byram (1997), Kramersch (1993). Yet, massive, tested, and reliable practical solutions to incorporating authentic representations of culture in learning materials are still virtually non-existent. This is especially true for the content that deals with the Indian part of the English-speaking world. In response to these issues, this paper seeks ways to deliver a reliable, stereotype-free, and authentic representation of the Indian culture that can be used as material in EFL classes which fosters language and inter-cultural skills of pupils.

Thirdly, at present there is only limited concrete practical solutions how to apply the arts and cultural artifacts as pedagogical tools in International EFL classrooms in a sustainable way. There is some indication in the literature that the inclusion of the arts can have a beneficial impact on learners' performance, largely stemming from the success of the Learning Through the Arts (LTTA) education model, which took birth in Canada during the mid-1990s in the form of "artist-teacher-institutional collaboration" Elster (2007), 19. The LLTA model sought to infuse the arts straight into the general curriculum in such a way that it could help acquiring the requisite knowledge of diverse disciplines. LTTA's effectiveness has been studied using wide empirical investigations. LTTA is found to be beneficial from emotional, cognitive, physical, and social fronts through its involvement in

learning the respective arts [Upitis & Smithrim \(2003\)](#). This finding is confirmed by other studies, which have also shown that involvement in various arts has correlations with [Eisner \(2001\)](#): (a) better academic results [Catterall \(1998\)](#), [Deasy \(2002\)](#), (b) improvement in skills viz. analytical skills, thinking skills and problem-solving skills [Csikszentmihalyi \(1990\)](#) & [Greene \(1995\)](#); (c) inculcation of natural curiosity in learners [Pitman \(1998\)](#); (d) rise in the relevance of learning for learners from varied cultural settings [Pitman \(1998\)](#); (d) thrust on the associations between academic topics and activities outside the classrooms [Miller \(1994\)](#), [Drake \(1998\)](#), (e) improving teamwork habits [Pitman \(1998\)](#); (f) reinforcing the capacity to use and gather information and to master diverse kinds of symbol systems [Abbott & Ryan \(1999\)](#), [Gardner & Miller \(1999\)](#); and (g) improving the process of making the very meaning of learning [Greene \(1995\)](#). Moreover, based on assimilation of 685 studies, [Hattie \(2009\)](#) has noted that creativity programs, which seek to nurture fluency as well as flexibility in thinking and also while responding to questions or problems [Cohn \(1986\)](#), apply a large influence on the learner's achievement outcome which is at par with the one happening undergoing one year of formal schooling. An identical effect could be noted for educational programs that infused play into them [Hattie \(2009\)](#). Having noted the LTTA's success, it may be stated that various arts and cultural artifacts could be valuable tools for the EFL teaching, globally. In the EFL parlance, the predominant paradigm during the past three decades has been the CLT (Communicative Language Teaching) model. CLT approach presumes that foreign languages could be best learned by way of exposure to comprehensible inputs, in collaboration with and in premises which support developing the thinking skills of learners and also their autonomy. Besides, the latest classrooms based on EFL/CLT, the teachers should involve themselves as co-learners, and should emphasise on expressing the meanings, possible by way of curricular integration [Jacobs & Farrell \(2003\)](#). Considering the issues as above, this paper seeks ways to design reliable and sustainable classroom solutions to include the various types of folk arts exercised in India as well as its cultural artifacts that exert a positive effect on students' learning processes, creative and analytical thinking, as well as problem-solving skills.

Fourthly, at present there is a lack of strategies to accommodate to linguistic diversity of Indian pupils and to search for synergies between the languages spoken in India, but are applicable globally. India is a prime example of a country in desperate need for innovative strategies to deal with linguistic diversity of the citizens. Teachers' tendency to fail at recognizing and treating linguistic diversity as a norm is still strongly visible in practice. This paper emphasizes the vastness of a very specific target group, who needs specific linguistic support in order to develop their existing multilingualism into an entrepreneurial asset that helps with better market integration. With two official and 22 regional languages recognized in the Eighth Schedule to the Indian Constitution, India needs to apply better strategies to accommodate to linguistic diversity, which could prove useful in the highly multilingual global context currently lacking such solutions. In response to these issues, the paper seeks ways to introduce sustainable classroom solutions to search for synergies between various languages spoken by pupils, to award linguistic diversity the recognition it deserves and to identify strategies, which enhance the EFL learning process through the inclusion of other linguistic forms. From the perspective of Indian business administration students and staff, the paper offers a chance to study the processes of product development for a specific audience, to practice communication management in an intercultural setting, as well as needs-based presentation and adaptation of content and its digitalization.

5. RESTRUCTURING BACHELOR OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION (BBA) AND OTHER COURSES

There is at present a need for restructuring Bachelor of Business Administration (BBA) course in the Kerala context by ensuring a sound theoretical background along with adequate practical understanding as well. BBA, the bachelor level course in Management (Business) studies course has not progressed adequately till date, as per its original motive. Rather, BBA still remains as a conventional degree course, like, BA, BSc or B.Com. While there is nothing wrong in adopting a conventional structure for BBA program also, it should be understood clearly that unlike the conventional degree courses (e.g., BA in English or BA in Economics), BBA lacks a proper literature support as well as sufficient level of scientific base. Hence, the two goals (viz. literature support and scientific base) need to be realized properly for BBA also. The development of a needs-based product in an international context, one which provides a solid practical and theoretical basis for the BBA course, specially its original objectives, is really relevant. Encouraging BBA students to develop their entrepreneurial skills on an individual basis and also with the help of teachers, inculcates in them the core skills – what they really need. Similarly, the linkage between languages and performing arts must be taught to the BA graduates in languages. Such linkages between languages through the platform of arts fosters national integration.

A product is any offering which can satisfy a need or want, like, one of the ten basic offerings of goods, services, experiences, events, persons, places, properties, organizations, information, and ideas [Kotler \(2002\)](#). Given that the ability to develop products is the core idea behind business and management, being exposed to a process of product development offers the students a unique chance to look into the mechanisms that underlie the creative process as well as international transactions. Furthermore, the process of product development in this case is authentic as it is driven by actual customer needs. [Koshy \(2012\)](#) emphasizes that the relevance of customer value is the driving force behind all marketing decisions. Yet, business is also about generating value. In the case of the project, we find a potential class of customers for our product in India and worldwide and thus expect a fruitful result. The aspect of social sensitivity of which [Koshy \(2012\)](#) also highlights, is equally strong in the case of the project as it primarily focuses on internationalizing and popularizing the ‘Performing Arts’ of Kerala (or, India). The rest of the world needs to be convinced about the depth and width of ‘Indian Tourism’ so that the social sensitivity will peak and generate revenue to Kerala, create employment and finally lead to socio-economic-cum-infrastructure development. Another benefit is its positive impact on the domestic tourism. So, this approach may be considered as an outreach program of any institute that promotes tourism, by slightly deviating from the traditional way of product development. This can accelerate the growth rate of BBA course in Kerala.

The management of English as a foreign language (EFL) and medium of higher education in India with no less importance given to other regional and scheduled languages could enhance the scope of the present paper. The Schedule VIII to the Constitution of India has listed out 22 languages that are referred to as *Scheduled Languages* and are granted the recognition, status, and also official encouragement. All these scheduled languages are fully spoken, independent and classical. The novel, poetry, and literature of all the 22 languages are equally encouraged and enjoyed. The people of different states in India enjoy the classics of each language and all of the languages have an established existence in the infotainment through

cinematography, drama, novels and poetry. The fact, this is a model for the rest of the world highlights the interest in these aspects of the Indian linguistic culture shows that giving importance to regional and scheduled languages, among other advantages, focuses on the needs and wants of potential international customers. Thus, there is a clear need to find ways to manage the presentation and presence of all of the 22 languages in international communication. Although the government is able to encourage all the scheduled languages and their literature, the English language largely influences the higher education system. In classes where all the learners share identical first language or national language, the teachers should use a number of options for encouraging the learners to opt for the second language to the extent possible [Nation \(2001\)](#). This issue provides ample scope for research and it leads to many research areas as follows:

- 1) The quality of higher education that use English as a medium of study.
- 2) A comparative analysis of the quality of higher education that use English as medium of study on one side and other languages as a medium of study on the other side.
- 3) The intellectual output of the present system.
- 4) The relevance of usages of various languages in higher education along with English.
- 5) More importantly, the management of English as a foreign language, for the teachers as well as the students, both.

In fact, the management of EFL along with recognition of other languages is another innovative aspect of the approach that is sought to be developed. The huge potential of ICT and allied technologies including Artificial Intelligence (AI) needs to be tapped here. It may be pointed out that the concerned Ministry should develop a web portal that focuses on a balanced representation of India's linguistic culture. Also, there is the need for digital internationalizing the culture, system, and tourism of the home country through the education system. The EFL web portal product development will help the students with an exposure to internationalize the culture, system, and the tourism of the home country. The vast potential of ICT, AI etc. needs to be used for sustainable economic growth. This approach can be perceived as an effort for Indian students to strengthen their connections with their local surroundings, their domestic culture, and the linguistic peripherals and at the same time, to present and package their cultural artifacts on the international arena as marketable products that can be of use to stakeholders in the communication/literature discipline, which ultimately leads to the fostering of tourism and hospitality. These are crucial skills to be acquired in modern business, in the ongoing era of globalization.

Today's era of ultra-modern businesses demands highly techno-savvy and digitally literate actors, those who can leverage the huge potential of ICT and associated technologies, like, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning (ML) etc. Specially designed and practice-oriented academic courses should be included in the curriculum of BBA and other degree courses, like BA (English), BA (Economics) etc. Such papers offer the students chances to develop their skills in using Internet and other ICT-based or online tools. Such papers seek to enhance the depth of courses of Management Studies and EFL incorporating the arts, artifacts and performing arts in it adopting LTTA.

6. FOLK AND PERFORMING ARTS IN KERALA: LTTA MODE OF INCLUDING IN DEGREE COURSES

Examples of performing arts applicable for the LTTA model from Kerala State only (cultural arts and artifacts and performing arts of other Indian States must be included) are:

- 1) **Koodiyattom** - a kind of Sanskrit drama or theatre, and a Human Heritage Art that is designated by the UNESCO
- 2) **Kathakali** - a 500-year-old type of dance-drama which interprets the ancient epics.
- 3) **Kerala Natanam** - a popularized offshoot of kathakali that is developed in the 20th century by veteran dancer, Guru Gopinath.
- 4) **Koothu** - is a very light-hearted sort of performance, similar to the modern stand-up comedy- an ancient art originally that was confined to temple sanctuaries, but was later popularized by the renowned performance artist, Guru Mani Madhava Chakyar.
- 5) **Mohiniyaattam** - a sort of graceful, choreographed dance performed by women which is accompanied by musical vocalizations also.
- 6) **Thullal and Padayani**- these are very popular forms of performing arts in Kerala.
- 7) **Theyyam**- Baali, Puliyoora Kaali, Mavilayi Daivathar, Raktha Chamundi, Kalakattu Karimkuttisasthan, Aryakkarabhadragavathi, Elamkolam, Muchilottu Bhagavathy etc. are different forms of Theyyam.
- 8) **Thirayattam**- an excellent form of folk art in Kerala; this vibrant ritual performing art is enacted in courtyards of "Kaavukal" (sacred groves) and in village shrines
- 9) **Kummattikali**- is a tribal folk-art form; this famous colorful mask-dance form of South Malabar in Kerala is often performed during the Onam festival of Kerala.
- 10) **Kanniyar Kali** (also called as *Desathukali*) is a fast moving, militant dance form that is attuned to the rhythmic devotional folk songs and asuravadyas.
- 11) **Oppana** - an Islam themed dance form which is extensively common among the Muslims in Kerala and has its origin in Malabar (north Kerala); it encompasses group dance that is accompanied by beat of rhythmic hand clappings and *ishal* vocalizations.
- 12) **Margam Kali**- is an ancient round group-dance practiced by the St. Thomas Christians.

Thus, it may be pointed out that various traditional art forms, especially the Folk arts and Performing arts in Kerala should be incorporated into the degree course curriculum by adopting an LTTA approach. Accordingly TEEM could be made very meaningful. So also courses like BBA (or its post graduate version viz. MBA) and its variants, as well as other traditional courses could be made more value added, practice-oriented, and scientifically sound. So, the employability of the graduates goes up and so also economic development because of more earnings (e.g., tourism, hospitality, and allied sectors). Use of the immense potential of ICT, AI etc. for this purpose gives another dimension to such efforts. Various Indian

languages and their association to specific art forms (e.g., Tamil-based verses in the Kerala-based performing art *Chavittunatakam* – evolved in the Portugese regime in Kerala) should also be included in the curriculum of graduate courses in languages. This fosters the harmony between the languages and also States and hence promotes national integration.

7. FOLK AND PERFORMING ARTS IN KERALA IN THE ICT ERA: FOR ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

It may be noted that scientific and qualitative improvements to academic courses have got direct bearing on the employability of the graduates concerned, especially when such improvements seek to impart practice-oriented (like, LTTA approach to folk and performing arts, as in the present case) courses to the students. Moreover, with the active support of the Government for promotion of such folk and performing arts or specific languages or cultures, the requisite infrastructure could be improved. With the advent of ICT-based tools and technologies (including AI, ML etc.) high quality web-resources and virtual archives could be developed and showcased. High demand for such unique art forms and geographical locations from the foreign tourists, for instance those visiting Kerala fascinated by the folk and performing arts which are peculiar to this State, eventually could be translated into creation of tremendous jobs as well as foreign exchange earnings into this State. Students with this specialized knowledge and ICT skills become instrumental in promoting tourism. Apart from the qualitative improvements in human resources (in the form of employable and skilled graduates) initiatives as above can bring about balanced and equitable economic development of the State. This is because of the fact that the local community getting benefited from such initiatives are mostly the rural poor, including women, like, those engaged in diverse kinds of folk and performing arts in Kerala.

In view of the foregoing, it is relevant to suggest a model for balanced and equitable economic development of Kerala by way of promoting LTTA-based courses relating to folk and performing arts in Kerala in graduate courses and also effectively using the rich ICT foundation of the State as well as Governmental policy support. Adequate infrastructure development with Government's support (including ICT/Internet facilities across the State) can attract more foreign tourists into this State, often promoted as '*God's own Country*'.

Here, the ICT imperative that every sector of the economy should adopt for its survival and growth deserves mention. The case of ICT adoption while embracing an LTTA model for including folk and performing arts is no exception. Because, there are numerous instances where ICT comes handy as a key tool for the attainment of efficiency, competitiveness and transparency. The utmost need for environment friendly tourism for long-term sustainability (including by ICT adoption) has been noted by [Manoj \(2010\) \(a\)](#), and so also its role for successful performance of HFCs ([Manoj \(2010\)\(b\)](#) & [Manoj \(2011\)](#)), properly running micro enterprises of women [Manoj \(2012\)](#). The "Green" imperative, through environment-friendly homes [Manoj \(2013\)](#) and the positive role of ICT in this regard and in gaining the satisfaction and goodwill of customers [Nasar & Manoj \(2013\)](#) are widely recognised. The need for conducive industrial relations [Nambiar & Manoj \(2014\)](#), the utmost need for E-banking in rural areas for financial inclusion of women [Nambiar & Manoj \(2014\)](#) and the need for work-life balance of women [Nambiar & Manoj \(2014\)](#), role of housing microfinance in uplifting the poor, rural women [Manoj \(2015\)\(a\)](#) &(b), and the need for improving their living and working conditions of migrants

VidyaViswanath & Manoj (2015) have been recognised. Need for eco-friendly practices and ICT-adoption is noted in all these studies.

ICT imperatives include social banking and financial inclusion Manoj (2019)(a) as well as Banking HRM in this ICT era Manoj (2019)(b). So also, there are cases of ICT-based banking applications like E-CRM Shanmugam et al. (2015) & Shanmugam et al. (2017), service quality in rural banking Lakshmi & Manoj (2017) and the use of banking technology for better service quality Joju & Manoj (2019). Equally important is the case of ICT integration for effective bank marketing Manoj (2016) (a) and promotion of innovative products such as REITs Manoj (2016) (b). The findings of most of the above studies indicate the positive influence of the adoption of ICT and ICT-enabled applications or technologies like AI, ML, E-CRM etc. in boosting the service quality, competitiveness, cost-savings etc. thus resulting in better returns and long-term sustainability of businesses. These findings are corroborated by an international research report by the United Nations (UN) (2005) on gender equality and women empowerment through ICT wherein many instances of ICT adoption resulting in women empowerment, rural development, and financial inclusion have been discussed, included many Indian examples. Recent studies, like, Haleem et al. (2022) for instance, have noted the need for using digital technologies for ensuring quality education as envisaged in UN's 2030 agenda on sustainable development. In the parlance of design of academic degrees using LTTA too, the ICT imperative that is prevalent elsewhere is equally relevant. After all, learners of such academic courses will themselves end up in one or more of such sectors (like, tourism, real estate, etc.) once they complete their courses. ICT is very much relevant in all these sectors.

As already noted, the inclusion of diverse Indian languages and their linkages with regional level performing arts would promote harmony between languages and cultures and hence national integration. Use of ICT gives another dimension to such initiatives, besides enhancing quality (e.g., E-books on performing arts, preferably in different languages). Certain forms of performing arts are prevalent across States and also across languages as well. (e.g., *Theyyam* in north Kerala is also prevalent in some parts of Karnataka). Of late, the most recent policy initiative of the UGC on Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in higher education curricula (March 2023) also seeks to incorporate IKS in higher education curricula (say, UG and PG level courses).

Thus, in view of the foregoing discussions, a conceptual model for the LTTA-based curriculum design that duly incorporates ICT adoption is suggested as follows. (Figure 1).

Figure 1

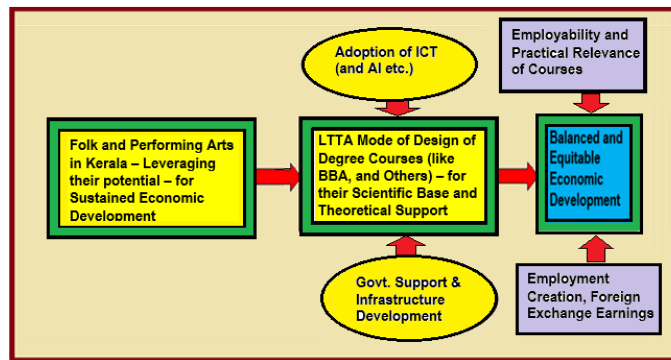


Figure 1 Use of Folk and Performing Arts for Sustained Economic Growth in Kerala
Source Developed by the Authors.

8. CONCLUDING REMARKS

Meticulously designed academic courses at degree levels with suitable inputs from real-life experiences, as in LTTA-based approach, can effectively improve the quality and employability of the students, along with adding value to the courses by way of relevant literature support and scientific basis. This in turn can be meaningfully translated into sustained and equitable economic development of the State. Concludingly, it may be noted that even for higher level courses such as master's in business administration (MBA) or MA degree in Economics, History, Sociology etc. too a similar LTTA approach can be used. Needless to mention, adopting an LTTA approach as well as incorporating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) etc. at UG and PG level curricula auger well with the recent UGC guidelines in this regard, including those issued in June 2023.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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None.

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