

Quality Teaching With the Help of Drama : An Analytical Study

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Abstract:

Drama in education aims to give students the tools to express themselves and imagine alternative worlds, but formal exposure to it stops after primary level. Drama in education – the use of embodied make-believe – has proved to be a highly effective teaching and learning tool, from ancient Greek times to the present day. Drama and improvisation skills can stimulate creativity and enjoyment in educational processes for teacher students. Drama requires the ability to teach creatively, to be a teacher who is ready to become as part of a group as one of the learners in the drama education situation. To implement this kind of teaching, this is both creative and dialogic. Drama requires of the teacher an ability to function simultaneously in many kinds of roles. The paper analyses that how the teacher performs different roles for the students in quality teaching.

Key-words: *Classroom Applications; Teaching Tool; Emotions and Learning; Hands-on Learning and the Brain.*

Introduction:

Drama is a natural, innate form of learning for children. As young as toddlers, children play house and pretend to be doctors, teachers, or some other career, which fascinates them. These children are using drama to practice for or imitate life. “Playing is one of the most powerful ways for a child to learn. He looks at the world around him and plays what he sees—going to the office, driving a bus, make-believe stores or parties and on and on. He tries different ways of acting, assumes various roles and challenges himself with all sorts of problems” (Koste). Dramatic play helps children prepare for life and cope with growing up. It allows children to explore and make sense of the complexities of life without experiencing failure. Drama education is an activity in which teacher students invent and enact dramatic situations for themselves rather than for an outside audience. This activity, perhaps most widely known as drama education, has also been called classroom drama

Since dramatic play is so innate in children, it should be carried on into the elementary classroom. It is something that children are very good at and love to do. “Children bring with them to the classroom the universal human ability to play, to behave, “as if” ; many children spontaneously engage in such dramatic play from as young an age as ten months” (Wagner). It is very natural for a child to use his or her imagination to transform him or herself even as young as infancy. They are experts in the field. Renowned psychologist, Sigmund Freud states, “We ought surely to look in the child for the first traces of imaginative activity. The child’s best loved and most absorbing occupation is play. Perhaps we may say that every child at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better...” (Koste). When children transform themselves their imagination is set free. They are then able to make connections between their previous experiences and the unknown. It is this connection that helps children and adults learn best.

Drama is a way of life. It is embedded in each and every person's lives from birth to death. We naturally use drama to learn, explore, and solve problems in new and difficult situations. John Dixon states, "The taking on of dramatic roles, the dramatic encounter with new situations and with new possibilities of the self is not something we teach children but something they bring to school for us to help them develop" (Wagner). Not only should teachers use drama to teach the elementary curriculum, but also use drama to teach the students. The educator's job in the classroom is to teach students the curriculum and help them become life-long learners. To become a life-long learner or someone who uses their skills to teach himself and solve everyday problems, the person must acquire some basic social and problem solving skills. Drama is a great way to develop these skills.

Drama-based Education, is using the concepts in the fundamental elements of what it takes to build stories in Drama and apply those to interactive classroom environment. So at the moment, when the students are learning from the lecture and their brains are filled and they are potentially getting bored because their brains are filled, they are wondering what to do with it. That's when we get them on their feet and we teach them to build stories, to enliven, own and physically engage the lesson. Drama and storytelling, as tools in Education, are very helpful in that they encourage both introvert and extrovert students to engage in the learning process just as they are. And this is very crucial when we build confidence in students and when we encourage active participation in classrooms. Through drama-based education we can learn the same contents and concepts but in a way that is more memorable by being active and engaged in our learning

Classroom Applications:

Drama has many practical classroom applications for teaching curricular material. Important concepts, ideas, events, and people can be dramatized through improvisation, pantomime, and playwriting to stimulate interest, convey knowledge, gain comprehension, and improve retention.

Drama can be the vehicle for the following applications:

- Role play situations to model/observe new skills or behaviours.
- Develop scenarios to introduce new concepts.
- Dramatize a meeting between characters or historical figures.
- Re-enact a real event.
- Dramatize a scene that might have happened in a story.
- Improvise a scene that expresses the topic or theme.
- Act out scenarios as a way to approach writing dialogue.
- Create literary sketches.
- Stimulate ideas for composing essays, poetry, or fiction.
- Portray famous people.

Teaching Tool:

Drama is a teaching tool that allows students to participate, demonstrate, and observe in a "controlled," or non-threatening, environment. In other words, it provides another "non-traditional" opportunity for students to learn and to demonstrate learning. At the same time, drama helps students get in touch with their creativity and spontaneity as well as to develop confidence in the expression of their ideas. Finally, it teaches self-discipline, acceptance of and positive response to criticism, and cooperation with others.

Drama is a performing art, an outlet for self-expression, and a way of learning. Drama is an effective learning tool because it involves the student intellectually, physically, socially, and emotionally. Activities in improvisation, pantomime, play-making, and scene re-enactment serve to develop the creative potential in the participants and help to develop critical thinking skills.

Emotions and Learning:

Students elicit speech, senses, emotions and motor skills when occupied with a drama activity. Therefore, educators who use drama in the classroom are adopting the “whole-brain” approach to learning. Many different parts of the brain are being activated. This generates a much bigger possibility that the students will learn the subject. The area of the brain that operates emotions makes up 20 percent of the entire brain. Until modern brain research began focusing on emotions, educators did not associate emotions with learning. Now that this connection has been made, it seems obvious that emotions can positively impact the way we learn. “They (the arts) provide rich multisensory experiences that engage the whole mind-body-emotional system” (Dickinson).

Emotions can be in the form of a positive past experience, or what the drama participants feel when they are actively in role of an imagined figure. “Facts and information become relevant when they are relevant to the lives of the people the students imagine” (Edmiston).

Hands-on Learning and the Brain:

Not only has it been proven that emotions and personal experiences advance learning, but hands-on approaches to teaching progress learning as well. During the Specific Diagnostic Studies it had been found that only 15 percent of the population learn the strongest through auditory means. Forty percent of the population learns the strongest through visual means and 45 percent of the population learn best by kinesthetic or hands-on types of teaching. The kinesthetic learners need manipulatives and other hands-on activities to conceptualize and grasp concepts. “Understandably, many of them have difficulty learning in conventional classrooms since very little hands-on learning is available in most classes after early primary grades” (Dickinson).

Drama in the classroom can really benefit the kinesthetic learners. Students are almost always moving around and actually creating something using their bodies during drama activities. It would be very typical to an observer of a drama-integrated classroom to see students working together out of their seats. Students may be engaged in creating scenes, producing role-plays, and spontaneously using their imaginations to learn. One might hear a whole class discussion or small group discussions reflecting on experiences. The students are involved and actually doing something in addition to just listening. “Students have to do something with information they learn, and then they can process information more deeply. Students need to use what they have learned to reinforce it” (Feden). Drama is doing just that. It is taking the information and creating something new with it, which makes it relevant to the student. Although it may seem obvious that this type of learning would benefit young children, many classrooms have yet to adopt the model.

Brain research has now proven that children cannot maintain the extensive attention span that some teachers require of their young students. Dr. Perry makes the analogy of the brain fatiguing as a muscle would. “Learning requires attention. And attention is mediated by specific parts of the brain. Yet, neural systems fatigue quickly, actually within minutes. With three to five minutes of sustained activity, neurons become ‘less responsive’; they need a rest (not unlike your muscles when you lift weights)” (Perry). This is why children will not learn when lectured to over a significant period of time. Their attention is lost, unless they are somehow involved in the learning process. Drama, among other hands-on teaching methods, allows students to learn without losing their attention.

Conclusion:

Drama is effective in teaching the elementary curriculum. It can easily be adapted and integrated to teach all subject areas. Today's education system often put children through unnecessary stress. This stress translates to a negative attitude towards school and learning. It burns out our natural instinct to want to learn. Learning cannot take place unless the child has a motivation and is stimulated through engaging activities. Drama gives educators the opportunity to teach their students in a way, which would create a love for learning. It provides valuable problem solving, social, and creative skills. Drama embraces the child's imagination and emotions, which in many classrooms are shunned. Perhaps the most important point of all is that participants of drama are being involved in the learning. They are engaging in activities and immersed in the roles, which they assume. We are naturally equipped with the ability to use drama in our lives. It can be said that drama is a way of life. We use drama from birth to death to overcome difficult situations, prepare ourselves, or learn something new. Drama activates the whole brain and also engages many different kinds of intelligences. It reaches students who need a challenge, as well as students who are not reached through traditional teaching methods.

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