

Drama in Education

Dr.Chaluvvarajaswamy K T
Assistant Professor
St.Joseph's College of Education
Jayalakshmipura, Mysuru-12

Meaning, importance and Advantages of Drama in Education

Content

- Drama in education (die): concept & history
- A philosophical base for drama-in-education
- The importance of drama in education
- The advantages of using drama

Learning Outcomes

After the completion of the unit students will be able to

- Learn about theatre and performing arts and transform simple stories into wonderful scripts.
- Equip critical thinking skills, performance skills, speaking and writing skills, public speaking skills.

DRAMA IN EDUCATION (DIE): CONCEPT & HISTORY

Drama in Education (DIE) is a different concept compared to Drama Education. The DIE is learning through drama and Drama Education is learning about theatre (Lighting, stage management, directing, etc.).

DIE is the use of drama techniques to support learning in the classroom. Drama in education was at first called creative dramatics and the founder of the field was Winifred Ward. By creative dramatics she meant a classroom teaching method that emphasizes self-expression, training in spoken English and literature appreciation. The term is also sometimes used interchangeably with development drama, educational drama, informal drama, process drama, and framed expertise.

In DIE, Drama is a platform for interesting, stimulating, and stress-free education where children are challenged with different questions, then are guided to use their imagination, to release their creativity and capacities to resolve problems – independently. Children, by means of imagination, can think, understand, experience imaginary problems in a safe space. DIE is a unique teaching method where skillful teachers engage students through drama. This unconventional teaching space provides unequalled opportunities for teachers and children to learn from both observation and interaction – in short, they learn by actually doing, not merely memorizing the data of others. DIE mainly influence the emotional and cognitive abilities of the students. It stimulates and provokes the child's imagination, concentration, expression, moods and intelligence to help them grow as an independent and self-confident being.

The students express themselves interactively during the learning process which brings them to learn instead of perform. This skill and method can be applied for any subject. Teachers provide guidance with a customized and constructive strategy; while children can fully use their imagination and express themselves. Through this process, children receive an esthetical experience and develop their cognition and knowledge. They also learn to better focus their thoughts and develop empathy for others and self-responsibility for their choices. Self-esteem and pride progressively increase throughout the learning process.

A PHILOSOPHICAL BASE FOR DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION

The field of Drama-in-Education is related to the larger field of Curriculum Studies in Education. It currently fits into the New Ontario School Curriculum in three significantly practical ways: as a subject, as a method, and as a helping or therapeutic medium. However, prior to the implementation of the 1981 Curriculum Guideline, Dramatic Arts, Intermediate and Senior Divisions, the curriculum development and implementation of Dramatic Arts as either methodology or subject discipline were limited to the following:

- Awareness of Drama as a mode of education involving active learning;
- Sparse inter-school, extra-curricular activities (i.e. play productions),
- Interest in theories and techniques of child development,

□ Theatre Arts courses, limited mostly to senior grades and only at the general level.

Nonetheless, the value of Drama as a classroom teaching methodology was gaining recognition throughout the system. Indeed, the Ministry acknowledged the value of Drama in developing its general educational goals for primary/junior students as *The Formative Years* (1975) and *Drama in the Formative Years* (1984). Likewise for secondary students, *Dramatic Arts: Intermediate/Senior* (1981) emphasized the role of Drama, particularly in the affective areas of learning. And it was expected that boards through their principals, directors of education, would begin to implement the guidelines no later than September, 1982, to enable teachers to design effective courses of study and to provide practical directions for implementation and programming. In 1981, Drama was defined by the Ministry Guidelines as follows:

1. Drama can be considered both as process and as form.
2. Drama can be considered both as method and as subject.

Drama, in the educational context, can be a lively and enjoyable method of exploring and learning about a number of other subjects and can be a separate subject and discipline in its own right. Drama, as a process in the curriculum, offers unique educational opportunities, which relate directly to the four goals of education for the Province of Ontario:

The curriculum will provide opportunities for each child (to the limit of his or her potential):

1. To acquire the basic skills fundamental to his/ her continuing education,
2. To develop and maintain confidence and a sense of self-worth,
3. To gain the knowledge and acquire the attitudes that he or she needs for active participation in Canadian society,
4. To develop an aesthetic sensitivity necessary for a complete and responsible life.

As a learning strategy in other subject areas, Drama can aid in understanding personal and human experiences, allowing students to enter into the reality of imaginary situations and characters. Students can explore emotions, attitudes, opinions and relationships, and accommodate these abstract concepts more readily by representing them in a Dramatic, and therefore, more concrete form.

Second, because Drama makes constant demands on a person's imagination, it develops a student's ability to think more effectively. A student involved in a Drama activity will be called upon to practice several thinking skills, such as: inventing, generating, speculating, assimilating, clarifying, inducing, deducing, analyzing, accommodating, selecting, refining sequencing, and judging.

Third, the skills of group interaction are fostered through Dramatic activity by the need to work in groups, to discuss, to negotiate, and to reach consensus. (Ministry Guidelines, 1981)

There is a prevailing philosophical base for Drama being employed as a subject discipline or a teaching methodology in the educational field. Practitioners and authors in the field from England, the United States, Australia and Canada have contributed to the philosophy that Dramatic Arts is "developmental" or "creative", which means that it is "process-oriented" rather than "product-oriented", and melds together notions from education, social anthropology, social work, therapy, dance, music, psychology and theatre.

The pedagogical contributions of a number of noted authors to the field include concepts, teaching strategies, structures, and approaches that have influenced the curricular development of Drama as either subject discipline or methodology implemented across the curriculum. The common thread in all theories (whether they be specific discipline or learning-medium based) of Drama-in-Education over the past fifty years, is the recognition of its inherent value to the whole school curriculum.

THE IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN EDUCATION

Drama gives meaning to any situation explored – in the same way as we “play” – through symbols and through answering questions in order to express our understanding of a particular situation. All the analyses theories from education and drama concur to emphasize that drama, in general, belongs to our process of growing up, exists in our lives in many forms and, can serve to preserve the child inside us, because it nourishes imagination. It is important to stress that, in this chapter, the selected reading and referencing aims to juxtapose and highlight similar elements from the theories, so as to point towards the necessity of a redefinition of the teaching practice in the Algarve, especially as regards the development of autonomous human beings, in the context of their capacity to learn and understand. From this

perspective, the activities currently taking place in key stage one classrooms need to include the unique qualities drama activities bring to learning. Drama as complementary form of pedagogy is about nurturing “experiences lived” in the classroom. It is about respecting the world of symbolization created and retained by all children in their “growing up” process, a world that accommodates differences among children in the classroom and opens up the opportunity to integrate any subject from the curriculum. It is about challenging children’s imagination in the context of any subject. It is about developing children’s capacity to interface with what they see, hear, read, taste, touch, smell, like or hate. It is about working with active students looking for meaning in their learning. It is about motivation through dialogism. It is about developing a critical consciousness about any matter, a consciousness fed by the process of questioning – which is inseparable from drama.

Furthermore, drama as a complementary form of pedagogy can provide motivation, as said by Fleming “A more convincing explanation of drama’s motivational force is that it harness the inclination to play which while at its strongest in early childhood persists into adolescence and arguably into the whole of adult life”

Drama as a complementary form of pedagogy can also provide:

- Continuous use of imagination in different problem-posing scenarios, in all sorts of contexts through many different roles.
- Active participation rather than passive learning with the chance to be part of an active group with equal rights where all points of view are given credit.
- Time to negotiate and explore alternative solutions to situations, therefore giving children the opportunity to understand different contents of areas of the curriculum, from various perspectives.
- Time to use the make-believe world and for children to be whoever they want to be and even “live an adventure”, to help them to learn in an environment they are familiar with.

Finally, learning through drama in the classroom gives children the opportunity to relate real-life experiences to all educational areas of the curriculum. As Morgan observes “It has become clear that interest, motivation and learning all result when drama is employed for educational ends”

THE ADVANTAGES OF USING DRAMA

So far it can be seen from the article that drama is an important device of educational experience which should be available to all students in elementary schools. This section of the article is concerned with the advantages of using drama. There are two main advantages of using drama: one of them is Self-Actualization and the other one is Personal or Emotional Development.

Drama can make a unique contribution to the development of the child. Its purposes, and the particular character of its activity, provide the means by which the child can achieve an enhanced awareness of self and can experience a unique mode of learning. It can:

- Give each child the opportunity to approach new knowledge through the dimension of imaginative activity and experience
- Give each child the opportunity to approach knowledge in the ways that are most suitable to him/her
- Create the motivation and interest that can spur the child to research, and thus foster an attitude that views knowledge as essential in adapting his/her perception of the world
- Provide the means by which the child can relate knowledge, in a special way, to previous learning and experience
- Help the child to see pattern and unity in seemingly disparate pieces of knowledge encountered in different subjects
- Make distant what is close and make close what is distant at both a cognitive and an affective level, so that aspects of life can be explored closely enough to afford effective examination but distant enough to provide safety for the child
- Give the child a rich oral language experience and afford the opportunity to experiment with different registers of language

- Give the child experience of drama as an art form
- Help the child to assimilate and accommodate the experience of other cultures
- Help the child to assimilate a changing environment through anticipating psychological development and through allowing him/her to transcend immediate experience by trying out other worlds through drama
- Facilitate the child's imaginative, intellectual, emotional and physical development in a contemporaneous and holistic way
- Foster the child's creativity, invention, insight, discovery and problem solving through exploring actively the intuitive and the spontaneous
- Allow the child, through the dramatic fiction, to experience, understand and practice the life skills needed in reality
- Promote empathy with the ideas, attitudes and feelings of others.

The content of educational drama is life. It encompasses the entire range of a child's experience and every facet of his/her personality; and because it constitutes a unique way of learning it should be an indispensable part of the child's experience in school.

Check your Process

1. What is Drama in Education?
2. Explain the Importance of the Drama in Education?
3. Discuss the advantages of Drama in Education
4. Take any Lesson from Secondary level History lesson and write a Drama in Education lesson plan