

# DRAMATIC METHODS AS VERITABLE TOOLS FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION IN THE EDUCATIONAL SECTOR

**DR. OMADA ALACHI**

*Department of Curriculum and Teaching,  
Benue State University,  
Makurdi.*

## **Abstract**

*From time immemorial our educational policies have always contended that education must be child centered. Series of attempts have been made to implement this policy but a lot of gaps are still left to be filled. At the secondary school level which is the focus of this paper for instance, lessons that would have been made much more rewarding to the child through pedagogical approaches have been rendered in a rather abstract way, leaving the child with the option of learning by rote which is detrimental to the mental growth and development of the child. This paper attempts a discussion on how some lessons can be made more rewarding and practical through the dramatic methods. Dramatic methods such as storytelling, music, songs and drama are used as examples to demonstrate how some identified subjects can be made more meaningful and rewarding, thereby creating a long life impression on the child. The approach demonstrates that a carefully planned lesson adopting the dramatic methods can indeed go a long way to making education child centered since such children will be the ones taking lead roles in the lessons, thus exposing them to experiential learning. Thereafter, the paper puts forward some suggestions which if implemented would facilitate a more regular use of dramatic methods by teachers in our schools.*

The use of dramatic methods (play-way) in our educational system has been in existence overtime. Scholars from Aristotle to the present time have written extensively on the efficacy of dramatic methods as a tool for effective learning both at the infant, junior and even adult levels. These most probably explains why educational policies the world over has always contended that education must be child centered. Series of attempts have been made to implement the policy, but a lot of gap still exists in their quantum and these gaps must be filled if rapid development is to take place. At the secondary level for instance which is the focus of this paper, lessons that would have been made much more rewarding to the child through pedagogical approaches have been rendered in a rather abstract way, leaving the child with only the option of learning by rote which is detrimental to the mental growth and development of the child. As a way forward, this paper discusses with practical examples how some lessons can be made much more rewarding and practical through dramatic methods. Dramatic method

which embraces storytelling, music, songs and drama is used separately or as a mixed grill to demonstrate the teaching of some selected lessons.

### **Why Dramatic Methods**

In appreciating and advocating the use of dramatic methods for teaching, Mccaslin (1975) stresses that the methods provide and enhance quality performance by the children particularly because it allows for creativity and exploration. That apart, the approach allows for children to assume the responsibilities, accept group discussions, group work and peer reasoning.

Similarly, drama as a creative activity provides a medium through which the individual can express his reaction to the impression he receives and by expressing it, learns to evaluate them. Drama provides immediate opportunity for self assessment and it is only through proper evaluation, which comes during reflection, that the participant's idea are sharpened, focused and properly coordinated which enables him to recall such experiences in facing the future.

Drama as an educational medium allows the child to freely express his views without inhibitions through improvisation. In this regard, teachers should stimulate the child so as to enable him to respond to his interpretations. What this simply means is that the teacher should provide an enabling environment in the class for the child to freely express his views without fear or inhibition. That enabling environment is what drama offers. It can be said emphatically therefore that dramatic methods allow the child to freely express himself in the classroom. By so doing, the adage that, what I hear, I forget, what I see, I remember and what I do, I understand is conformed with. The child should be allowed to participate in class activities through choice of the teaching methods adopted by the teacher because through participation and practice, the child becomes perfect.

In a related development, Slade, (1954) a foremost advocate of child drama, avers that drama makes the child a happy and balanced individual because it tells the teacher who and what the child is, thus making the teacher a friendly and sensitive person who understands the child's capabilities. According to him, drama enables the child to gain emotional and physical control, confidence, and ability to observe, tolerate and consider others. Continuing, he explained that it affords the child the opportunity to blow off steam; it is also an avenue where adventure and discovery are encouraged. However, he cautions that child drama is not an activity of idleness but the child's way of thinking, working, remembering, relaxing and absorbing, and should be tapped, harnessed and used as a means of educating the child. This, will invariably, put the child into the best frame of mind for learning at school. The good environment and

atmosphere will further help to produce a future adult who will be of value to himself and the society.

Siks cited Alachi (1996) admitted that the greatest value of drama lies in its unique power to stir human emotions through its sensory qualities. In her opinion, drama can serve as a teaching tool because it will be used to help children explore other subject areas and experiences encountered in real life. She warned that these learning experiences must be thoughtfully planned, structured and guided.

## **Dramatic Method**

### **Instances of the Dramatic Method and the Teaching of Some Subjects**

The use of drama as a teaching tool is eclectic. This is because it is a two way medium of interaction as it demonstrates and also has the capability of dialogue during and at the end of demonstration. Drama method as advocated for here calls for creativity which as defined by psychologists is a combination of flexibility, originality and sensitivity to ideas which enable the thinker break away from usual sequence of thoughts into different, but satisfying productive sequence.

The process of development which is anchored on the humanities and sciences, places lots of emphasis on individuality but pays close attention to team work. Through creative solo exercises and role playing in a dramatic situation, the sense of individuality is groomed, nurtured and developed to its optimum. Since an individual cannot function in isolation, going through processes involved in the drama methodology, one is prepared for the required team work which is the crux of all developmental process. In the process of rehearsing for instance, the child begins to function at the beginning as an individual and later as a member of the team. This situation encourages problem solving activities with which students gain more confidence and self reliance.

At the early stage of inculcating ideas in both the humanitarian and science, focus is on two areas; originality and interpretation. Dramatic methods teach these very effectively. Children are made to be creators of the various ideas they experiment with while the teacher acts as a guide ensuring that everything is done properly. Children supply relevant ideas which the teacher modifies and uses to guide them through various experiments. Once an idea is suggested, the teacher watches closely while the children play around with it. Experimentation is important for a thorough exploration of the suggested ideas, as children's imaginative power will be at their peak.

Group work which is an essential aspect of learning can be achieved through dramatic approaches that are based on improvisations. Children are at first allowed to work together in their various groups. The teacher maintains order and helps each group

to attain the highest level of understanding through exploration. To achieve this, the teacher must operate with a clear framework, each exercise or group having its own specific objectives.

Within the framework of learning through drama, the teacher gives clear instructions on what is expected to be done and who is to do what but leaves the responsibility of how things are to be done to the children, paving way for an urge to conquer, which in turn leads to originality of thought, inventiveness, tireless exploration and heightened concentration. One distinctive feature of this method is the involvement of pupils in the fundamental process of all activities. This is vital because it affects the children's thinking, feeling and doing and it goes a long way in affecting their growth and development.

### **Demonstration Lesson in Biology**

Based on the above arguments, the following improvisational sketch is put forward to teach Biology at the junior secondary school level.

- Subject:** Biology  
**Time:** Two periods  
**Topic:** why plants and animals are living things  
**Previous Knowledge:** students have already had an introductory lesson on characteristics of living things.  
**Instruction:** clear a good space in front of the class.  
**Method:** miming and music making to be followed by dialogue  
**Content:** students are divided into three groups and assigned roles: group one consists of students who are to dance; group 2, trees; and group 3, animals.

### **Introduction**

The teacher reminds the students of general characteristics of living things and informs them that they are going to learn through dramatic improvisation what makes human beings, plants and animals living things.

### **Action**

#### **(Group 1)**

Drummers beat drums while others sing. The dancers looking very fresh start dancing slowly at first but energetically later. After some time, the teacher asks each group to stop. They all wipe off their sweat as they continue to breathe very hard. The teacher now explains the meaning of respiration and excretion to them tells them why they are primary characteristics of living things. The teacher also explains irritability and why it occurs if he/she observes some of the students fidgeting or scratching themselves. The teacher should allow a moment of discussion and further classification

here. Note that the process of acting this script out is quite important as it presents students the opportunity of experiencing the real thing. Here lies the power of drama as an effective tool for teaching sciences.

### **Group 2 (Trees)**

While the dancers are resting, some trees shoot up and start to grow, until they bear fruits. The dancers (group 1) eat the ripe fruits and leave some under the trees. Once again, the teacher explains growth and why it is a primary aspect of all living things. Further discussions and explanation will follow.

### **Group 3 (Animals)**

As soon as the dancers leave some fruits under the tree, animals emerge from different corners, move towards the fruits and eat them up. The dancers notice them. Stab them and while struggling they fall on the trees which fall on animals that collapse and die. The teacher now explains movement, nutrition and death as characteristics of leaving things to the children.

### **Demonstration Lesson in Social Studies**

The following improvisation skit is suggested for the teaching of social studies at the junior secondary school.

- Subject:** Social studies  
**Period:** Two periods  
**Topic:** Types and characteristics of primary social groups  
**Previous Knowledge:** students already know the meaning of social groups and have been introduced to types of social groups.  
**Instruction:** Clear a good space in front of the class  
**Content:** Students are divided into six groups and assigned roles: the groups include - 1, family members, 2, classmates (age groups), 3, worshipers in the same religion or faith, 4, community, 5, members of the same political party and 6, workers in the same establishment.

**Action:** The drum beats and the town crier announces a meeting at the village square. The chief announces that the objective of the meeting is to put a stop to the ongoing killings and maiming in the community. The first man speaks and he is challenged by the second who gets support from some of those present. War song is rendered and actors mime fighting with one another till the chief manages to stop them. He turns to the first man and demands to know if he has ever met any of those he is fighting with. The first turns to the other and says, he is supporting him because they are classmates. They all turn to their right and ask similar questions e.g. don't you worship together, don't you work in the same establishment, don't you belong to the same political party, are you not of the same community? Etc.

The chief asks if it was feasible to go back to their larger groups and seek solution to the ongoing fracas. They all agreed it would be possible and one after the other they explained why it would be possible. The reasons given include:

- a. We know one another very well
- b. We relate to one another very well
- c. We communicate freely with one another
- d. We feel free with one another
- e. We are very intimate with one another
- f. We can easily organize ourselves
- g. We work for one another

Drawing out the lessons: the drum beats and they all dance away

The teacher explains to the students that the six groups stand for types of social groups while the points made and captured from their discussion are the characteristics of primary social groups.

The above lessons can never be forgotten by the students. Rather than learn types and characteristics of primary social groups and why plants and animals are living things in an abstract manner, they now think about their creative ingenuity, giving life to the topics. Students will not only know how living things excrete for instance but why they do so. Lessons like the two examples above will always remain indelible in the minds of the children because they have participated in the learning experience and it will always remain with them. Adopted from (Alachi J.A. and Alachi O.V, 2008)

## **Conclusion**

The paper has shown that drama can play an important role in the development of educational skills. In particular, it can be used to enhance students' power of imagination, creativity, observation and group interaction. The use of dramatic method demands for attitudinal change of both principals and teachers who regard the method as mere dancing and clowning instead of methods that create the ever lasting impression in the children. Through seminars and workshops teachers who do not have those skills can be trained and those who already have dramatic method skills can be trained for current emerging trends.

## **Recommendation**

For effective use of the dramatic method, the following suggestions are put forward. Lessons must be carefully planned and adequate preparations made to make the lesson not only interesting but participatory. To this end, an inter-phase between the Education Faculty and the Theatre Arts students could organize dramatic method workshops and seminars during which participatory approaches to learning are not only discussed but experimented upon. On the other hand, Theatre Arts students should

*Dramatic Methods As Veritable Tools For Policy Implementation In The Educational Sector-*  
Dr. Omada Alachi

organize a weekly programme on dramatic methods for all the teachers in the school where they undertake their children Theatre practicum. This will go a long way to develop the skills of other teachers who are less exposed to this method of teaching. The period of the practicum should be extended to a full semester to enable the new entrants into this new approach to teaching to acquire relevant skills such as improvisation making, pantomime and scenario formation in lesson planning. Their final presentation should be scaled up to embrace further discussions with relevant stakeholders such as those from the ministry of education, particularly those in the planning unit, principals and headmasters, PTA members etc. during such a meeting, critical issues such as funding, participation, time-tabling and other logistics are discussed.

### **References**

- Alachi, J.A. (1996) *Promoting maternity health in evaluation of Naka experience* (AJOLIS. Vol. II)
- Alachi, J.A and Alachi O.V (2008) *Trends in the theory of practice of theatre in Nigeria*. Edited by Duro Oni & Ahmed Yerima. Lagos: (SONTA) Nigerian Theatre Artistes.
- Mc-Caslin, N. (1975) *Children Drama*, New York: David Mokary Company Inc.
- Slade, Peter (1954) *Child Drama*. London: University of London Press.