A Study of the Effects of Psychodrama in Teaching and Learning Process in Upper Basic Education in Ogun State, Nigeria

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Abstract
Psychodrama as a teaching technique remained for many years uncovered in the process of knowledge production and distribution especially, teaching and learning of art and science. Many researchers seem not appreciate it pride of place in knowledge distribution in schools. There is, therefore, a need to uncover the strength of psychodrama for the benefit of educational scholars, biologists, physicists, psychologists, teachers, curriculum developers among others. Psychodramatics is an effective tool in pedagogy. This paper, therefore, explored the relationship between psychodrama and teaching and learning, and identified various teaching and learning challenges, the factors responsible for them in teaching and learning process and how psychodramatics affected teaching and learning process on the long run. Four private schools were selected in Ijoko, Ifo Local Government Area in Ogun State with learners from JSS1-JSS3. The teachers (especially the subject teachers) and the students were well briefed and monitored for a whole term (twelve weeks). The study employed observation method for the period. Psychodrama technique was deployed to monitor progress and challenges arising from the use of this technique. Findings revealed that learners were more active in class than they used to be before the technique was employed. It was also discovered that there was more enthusiasm and willingness to participate in various class activities and group tasks. Extroverts among learners in JSS1 especially were quickly integrated because the system proved to be all encompassing and inclusive. However, close observation revealed some challenges such as anxieties, fear, antisocial personality and bully. Although these challenges were found to be temporary and not permanent, corrections and re-

direction through interpersonal relationship of warmth, trust and gift, reassurance and support, learners' confidence were restored and there was willingness to learn. It was, therefore, suggested that psychodrama as a technique should be introduced in the Upper Basic education as a teaching method. Again, teachers of Upper Basic education should be adequately trained on the effective use of psychodrama as a technique in the process of teaching and learning in schools.

Keywords: Challenges, Learning, Inclusive, Psychodrama, Teaching

Introduction

If one takes time to see schools in our neighborhood, one will realize that learning is constantly ebbing and thereby begging for survival. The understanding of the term, 'learning needs, perhaps a careful redefinition in practical terms. There is no doubt the fact that poor teaching results in poor learning, just as using wrong approach or methods to pass certain instructions. The result is obvious. It is a case of round peg in a square hole. A common goal in defining any psychological concept is a statement that corresponds to common usage. The common destination in the journey of knowledge acquisition and epistemology generally, is when the unknown is made known and this is generally referred to as learning. However, the process of getting to this destination varies both in practical and theoretical terms. The truth about learning is so varied and diverse that its inclusion in a single category may not be warranted. Recognizing the danger, Kimble (2002:41) proposes that schools should see learning as a relatively permanent change in a behavioural potentiality that occurs as a result of reinforced practice. Although the definition is useful, it still leaves gaps, and these gaps or challenges are now areas of interest to psychodramatists.

The Concept of Psychodramatics

The concept of psychodramatics has not gotten a wide-spread acceptability in definition: it means many things or even different things to different people. This is, perhaps, as a result of diversities of fields of study, ranging from education, psychology, science and arts, therapy studies, literature and more specifically, drama. Even though psychodramatics is seen in education as a method or technique of imparting knowledge, psychology sees it as a means of psychotherapy, and science/arts, therapy studies, as a way of solving problems. In applied literature such as psychodrama, it is generally a method for treating physically, mentally, emotionally and socially challenged people, most especially children and learners. Psychodrama specifically, focuses on

helping individuals to gain an understanding of the causes of their problems, and attempting to modify thoughts, orientation, behaviour, and performance through the fusion of drama and psychology.

It is important to stress that a simple definition of the term, psychodramatics is not easy to come by. Nevertheless, some meaningful definitions will be examined from scholars, and finally, giving a working definition will just be appropriate. Our primary concern, or rather the framework of this study is to place emphasis on dramatic technique in conjunction with psychological theories or principles to solve learning challenges in objective terms. Alfred (2004), like others, sees psychodramatics from a professional point of view. The term was further described by Alfred as a process of acting out a personal situation by a patient with the help of an audience or other actors, using psychotherapeutic techniques to reveal to the patient the socio-behavioural significance of their problem and aid in emotional adjustment. As a matter of caution, learners should not, at any time, be referred to as patients, and their challenges (be it mental, social, physical, emotional, cognitive, affective or psychomotor) should not be regarded as problems - they are temporary, not permanent.

The problem we may have from the above definition may not be unconnected with the fact that the scholar does not put into consideration, the school setting. For the purpose of presentation, let us quickly examine Ellman's (2004) definition that says psychodramatics is a practical theory of using dramatic principles (improvisation, imagery, themes, characterization, storylines) along with psychotherapeutic techniques (self observation, free association, group therapy, relaxation training and motivation) to form a self-reflection drama where learners having challenges are assigned roles to be played spontaneously with the primary aim of understanding self along with others, to solve their challenges, and to bring about an effective learning. The above definition, to some extent captures the essence of psychodrama in teaching and learning. It shows us the practicability of theory more than mere theoretic frame, showing also that it is an applied literature, where drama is applied with psychology to train, help and solve learning challenges of students in secondary schools. Here, the teacher improvises a storyline, using familiar characters (such as those originally prepossessed by the learners) and images adequately visible by the learners to pass messages (themes) based on the behaviours the teacher desires to get from the learners. This, ultimately,

helps them to understand themselves, associate freely, get motivated and eventually learn from the role they played and the lesson the dramatic piece teaches.

Methodology

The study utilized qualitative method which also involved observation, interviews and report. Four schools were selected for the study: Braingate Model Schools, Arepo, Royal Lane, Arepo, Focum Group of Schools, Arepo and Deltos Schools, Oyero all in Ifo Local Government Area, Ogun State. The focus of the study was on JSS1 to JSS3. The population of the study involved all students in JSS1, JSS2 and JSS3 totaling 370 in all the selected schools for the study. The population spread is as follows:

- i)   Braingate Models School JSS1 60, JSS2 35 JSS3 45
- ii)   Royal Lane JSS1 30, JSS2 25 JSS3 40
- iii)   Focom Group of Schools JSS1 30, JSS2 25 JSS3 43
- iv)   Deltos School JSS1 12, JSS2 10, JSS3 15.

All subject teachers were involved in the utilization of psychodrama in teaching and learning over a period of ten weeks. Both teachers and learners were closely monitored and observed over this period with weekly report of progress and challenges made with reference to its effectiveness. The school subjects involved are divided into four areas viz: science oriented subjects, arts oriented subjects and commercial oriented subjects to determine the areas psychodrama is most effective and convenient. The school subjects in JSS1 to JSS3 are

English

CRK/IRK, Social Study, CCA, French, Mathematics, Computer, Agricultural Science, Basic Technology, PHE, Basic Science, Home Economics, Business Studies, Civic Education, Entrepreneurship

For proper observation and monitoring, two subjects were selected in each of the three areas of science, arts and commercial and they are: Agriculture& Basic science (Science), English Language & Social Studies (arts) and Home Economics and Business Studies (commercial). Face to face interviews were also conducted to know the level of understanding of teachers and the challenges of using psychodrama.

Techniques Used in Psychodramatics

Psychodramatics, like any other literary elements has its own unique techniques which, if properly employed, will bring about desired result. They are:

i. Dramatic techniques
ii. Psychotherapeutic techniques

These two concepts provide a framework for the study.

Dramatic Techniques

The common dramatic techniques used in psychodramatics are imagination, storyline, themes, characters and imagery. Note that all these techniques (elements) work organically.

a. Improvisation: It is a fundamental dramatic technique of making use of resources (human, financial, material) available in a spontaneous manner suiting the purpose of developing the personal skills of learners, enhancing the creative possibilities of the skills, and increasing effective learning.

b. Storyline: There must be a storyline arranged chronologically in a linear form, such that it is easily understood, interpreted and appraised by the players and the audience.

c. Theme: This is the main issue in the storyline of the play. It is the central idea of events, having simple subject matters, motif and intention derived from the set behavioural objectives.

d. Characterization: The technique of characterization is a highly sensitive aspect in psychodramatics. Learners creating their own character (personality) or a teacher doing the creation must do it carefully so as to avoid defamation of character.

e. Imagery: This is a mental picture, though abstract in the mind of the audience. These images are enhanced by props, costumes, make-up, lines mannerism and movement of actors and actresses on stage. They must therefore appeal to the senses of the players before transcending to the audience.

Psychotherapeutic Techniques

The major psychotherapeutic methods, despite variation, include: self-observation, free association, group therapy, relaxation training and motivation.

a. Self-Observation: Self-observation skill is an interpersonal relationship which gives the individual the capability to accept his/her challenges knowing the inherent vulnerabilities, developing his or her talents and interest, becoming involved with others, and finally knowing when exactly to seek help.

b. Free association: This is a process of allowing the individual learners to deal with one another freely, without biased feelings, orientation or belief.

c. Group therapy: This is primarily the process of allowing the learners to work together as a team, having similar purpose, feelings, opinions, characters, perceptions, orientations and challenges, organically worked out by the group leader with the aim of finding solution to their learning difficulties.

d. Relaxation training: This is a regular rehearsal of lines, movements, delivery, and actions prepared to yield a desired change in behaviour.

e. Motivation: This is a positive reinforcement of behaviour by the group leader, the audience or the individual actor (learner).

The questions now are: How do these techniques work as an organic whole? How do we employ the fusion of drama and psychology to educate learners or to solve learning challenges in the learners?

Dayton *et al* (2004) proposes a way thus:

> Form a group or more where there is high degree of self-observation and free association of members. Improvise (or script) a storyline where the subject matter of the story is coined from the challenges facing the learners and the basic central ideas are based on the set behavioural objectives. Create characters with simple, understandable imageries. Rehearse the play repeatedly, using relaxation training techniques (RTT) to master the performance. Make an outstanding group performance, and see if there is validity and reliability of performance i.e. whether the set behavioural objectives measure what they intend to possess high level of consistency.p.68

Cruz *et al* (2018) identify dditional fresh eleven psychodramatic techniques in psychodrama literature in recent time. Moreno (1972) believes that "The full psychodrama of our interrelations does not emerge; it is buried in and between us. Psychodramatics has had to develop a number of techniques to bring deeper levels of our inter-personal world to expression" p.190. Among other psychodramatic techniques are *Doubling* (Hudgin and Toscani, 2013) including the introduction of doubling for safety in trauma-focused psychodrama (Gacomuci, 2018, Dayton, 2005), *Mirroring*, *Soliloquy* (Nolte, 2020), *Initial Review* (Nolte, 2020), *Scene Setting* (Nolte, 2020), *Self Presentation* (Moreno, 1972, Nolte, 2020), *Sculpting* (Blatner, 2000), *Resistant Interpolation* (Cruz *et al*, 2018), *Games* (Blatner, 2000, 2013), *Intermediate Objects* (Cruz *et al*, 2018), *Role Training* (Blatner, 2000) and *The Empty Chair and Multiple Empty Chairs* (Nolte, 2020) .

A Sample Psychodrama for Learning in Upper Basic Education

This sample psychodrama contains a general overview, topic, objectives, casts, supplies, time, procedure, variation, trips, suggested debrief questions, a sample (stretch), and of course its significance to learning.

Overview

Learners are assigned different roles to be played concerning the various challenges affecting the learners, most especially anxieties and antisocial personalities.

Topic
Red gift
Objectives
Team building
Responsibility
Creativity
Communication
to measure and
Need assessment
Individuality and perception
Problem solving

Cast
❖ Joe - a friend of Emeka
❖ Emeka -a childhood friend to Doctor Joe, an epistemologist

❖ Frank -a wanderer

❖ Titi- young girl who has lost trust in friendship

❖ Others

❖ Supplies

❖ A red cover book

❖ A pen

❖ A doll

❖ Time 3-5 minutes

Procedure

• Form a group
• A story divisible by sketches
• Create character
• Rehearse the story
• Perform the play
• Motivate the learners, and
• Ensure learning in the learners

Variation
• Play so that a member of the group technically confuses another member.
• Play so that the member gets confused with reality
• Play so that another member of the group complicates the member's state of confusion.
• Play so that one person rejects a group of others.
• Play so that the isolated member is involved in the group.

Tips
• This is an excellent exercise for exploring group dynamics
• Create enough space and time for rehearsal.
• Ask the participant's permission to play, and let them know ahead of time what they will be doing.
• Choose a format that maximizes the individual's involvement.
• Decide on the level of practicability that you are looking for. Is this a realistic problem-solving one?
• Make sure you are capturing all the ideas
• The experience can be a revelation for those watching as well as those playing.

Suggested debrief questions:
• How did it feel to belong?
• How did it feel to exclude?
• How do these dynamics play out in your workplace?
• What felt right?
• What still feels troubling?
• How much of what we created feels possible?
• What do we still need to do?
• What behaviour led to exclusion and anxiety?
• How do you feel about your ability personality to affect the realization of self and group?

The sample play (sketch)
(Joe and Emeka, the class prefect, have come to the residence of their friend, Frank, to make the acquaintance of his friend, Titi, who has completely disassociated their company)

Emeka: We have brought along a little something for you, Frank.

Frank: That's most kind of you. But you shouldn't have

Emeka: Just a token of esteem. Doctor Joe, would you like to give it to Frank?

Joe: Sure, Best wishes, Frank. I hope you like it. (Doctor Joe hands Frank an elegantly wrapped present, square and quite light. Frank begins unwrapping it)

Titi: I don't think I will want any present from anyone.

Frank: The present is generously made to you. Accept it.

Titi: Of what use will it be. I think I'II rather be left alone

Frank: Common pal. We don't even have idea of what it might be.

Titi: I wonder too what it could be.

Frank: We'll soon find out (completes the unwrapping and pulls out the gift. It's a red cover book)

Titi: (surprised) A book!

Frank: How exciting! But there is no lane. Uh-oh is this another of your specials?

Titi: I think I like the gift. What is its content?

Emeka: It's a story book, a story about a beautiful princess who once lost her beauty to solitariness but later regained it through the bliss of multitude of friends. They cheered her up and she was happy ever after.

Titi: How nice! Thank you for the gift (as Titi gladly accepts the gift, Joe goes in an aside with Frank)

Joe: Come on Frank, what colour is the book?

Frank: Is it not red?

Joe: Aha just as I thought! Your whole colour and mechanism has gone out of kilter. But fortunately your condition is curable and I will have you in perfect shape in a couple of weeks.

Frank: Come on! Don't insinuate I have colour blindness, Is the book not red colour?

Joe: You don't use question to answer question.

Frank: (curious and desperate) Emeka, please come here. (Emeka advances) Somebody is trying to get me confused here. Joe is asking me the colour of the present you gave Titi, or what colour do you think it is?

Emeka: Practically speaking, what colour is it?

Frank: It seems red to me

Emeka: Wrong!

Frank: I don't think you heard what I said. I merely said that it seems red to me,

Emeka: I heard you and you were wrong.

Frank: Let me get you clear, did you mean that I was wrong that this book is red, or that I was wrong in it seems red to me?

Emeka: I obviously couldn't have meant that you were wrong in that it is red, since you did not say that it is red. All you said was that it seems red to you, and it's this statement which is wrong.

Frank: But you can't say that the statement "it seems red to me" is wrong.

Emeka: If I can't say that, how could I then?

Frank: I mean you can't mean it

Emeka: Why not?

Frank: But surely I know what colour the book seems to me!

Emeka: Again you are wrong.

Frank: But nobody knows better than how things seems to me.

Emeka: I am sorry, but again you are wrong (Everyone laughs, as Frank gets more iritable and furious)

Frank: But who knows better than I?

Emeka: I do

Frank: But how could you have access to my private mental states?

Emeka: A man can be wrong when he asserts that he believes such and such. I have discovered how to settle such questions experimentally.

Frank: How could you possibly decide such things empirically?

Emeka: By reading a person's thought directly

Frank: You mean telepathy?

Emeka: Of course not. I have constructed a brain-reading machine also known technically as a cerebrecope. I thus can read your every sensation and thought and it is a simple objective bulb that this book does not seem red to you.

Frank: (thoroughly subdued) Goodness gracious, I really could have sworn that the book seemed red to me, it sure seems that it seems red to me!

Emeka: I'm sorry, but you are wrong again (everyone laughs including Titi)

Frank: Really? It doesn't even seem that it seems red to me? It sure seems like it seems like it is red to me!

Emeka: Wrong again! (people's laughter increase, Titi could not resist throwing off herself into the arms of others) and no matter how many times you reiterate the phrase "it seems like and follows it by "the book is red" you will be wrong.

Frank: This is fantastic okay, let me retrace the statement. I believe that this book is red. True or false?

Emeka: Just a moment while I scan the dials of the brain-reading machine- no, the statement is false.

Frank: And what about I believe that I believe the book is red"?

Emeka: (consulting the dials) Also false. And again, no matter how many times you reiterate "I believe ", all these belief sentences are false.

Frank: Well, this has been a most enlightening experience. However, you must admit that it is a little hard on me to realize that I am entertaining many erroneous beliefs)

Emeka: Why do you say that your beliefs are erroneous?

Titi: But you have been telling him this all the while!

Frank: Yes, haven't you?

Emeka: I most certainly have not!

Frank: Good God, I was prepared to admit all my errors, and now you tell me that my beliefs are not errors.

Titi: (to Emeka) What then are you trying to do, drive him crazy. It's been some misunderstanding.

Emeka: Look, try to recall, when did I say or simply put that any of your beliefs are erroneous?

Frank: Just simply recall the infinite sequence of sentences. (I) The book seems red to me (2) It seems that it seems red to me (3) I believe this book is red (4) I believe that this book is red, and so forth. You told me that everyone of these statements is false.

Emeka: True

Titi: Then how can you consistently maintain that his beliefs in all these false statements are not erroneous?

Emeka: Because, as I told him, he doesn't believe any of them

Frank: I think I see. Yet I am not absolutely sure.

Joe: It's like the very falsity of each of the statements that you assert saves you from an erroneous belief in the preceding one, am I right?

Emeka: Yes the first statement is, as I told you false. The second statement is simply to the effect that you believe the first statement.

Joe: If the first statement were true, then you would believe the first statement, and hence your belief about the first statement would indeed be error.

Emeka: But fortunately the second statement is false, following the falsity of the preceding statement.

Frank: Now, I see perfectly! So none of my beliefs were erroneous, only the statements were erroneous

Emeka: Exactly

Frank: Most remarkable! Incidentally, what colour is the book really?

Emeka: It is red

Frank: (confusedly amazed) What!

Emeka: Exactly! Of course the book is red. What's the matter with you, don't you have eyes?

Frank: But didn't I in effect keep saying that the book is red all along?

Emeka: Of course not! You kept saying it seems red to you. It seems like it seems red to you, you believe it is red, you believe that you believe it is red. When we originally asked you "What colour is the book?" If you had simply answered "red", this whole painful discussion would have been avoided.

(Frank enlightened, admits his error, has better understanding, Titi unconsciously amends her antisocial personality and regains the group of friends through a thought-provoking argument among Emeka, Joe and Frank, everything eventually comes back to normal)

Significance and Lessons

Learners often show certain behaviours regarded as challenges to learning. These challenges (anxieties, depression, substance abuse, isolation, lost of reality and antisocial personality) are temporary, not permanent. Such challenges, most especially physical, mental and emotional challenges can be corrected, and re-directed to an effective learning. Correction and re-direction through, interpersonal relationship of warmth, trust and gift, reassurance and support, desensitization of orientation, reinforcement of adaptive responses, and understanding through enquiries of what is and what is not. Titi becomes self-aware and her personality re-informed through the concerns, love and affection shown by friends. The mental state of Frank is put to test, helping him to clarify between perception and understanding. The roles of Emeka, Joe, among other characters on stage remain highly significant to change in behaviour, hence, emphasizing the effect of group-play

The Effects of Psychodramatics on Instructional Process (Learning)

This is reiterating the fact that scholars do not agree on a particular teaching method that will produce desired learning outcome, however, following the reviews so far, the effects of combining dramatic principles with psychotherapeutic techniques cannot be over-emphasized. The following are the manifest positive effects of psychodramatics especially in learning process:

1. Psychodramatics helps to identify problem areas as challenges to learning and proffer solution to them.

2. It helps to create warm and trustworthy interpersonal relationship among learners (Alfied, 2004).

3. Psychodramatics helps to give reassurance and support to learners who temporarily developed learning difficulties (Dayton, 2004)

4. It helps learners having the challenge of anxiety especially fear and worry to lessen or eradicate the challenge through desensitization, putting events that are disturbing into words in a more realistic form (Ellman, 2004).

5. Psychodramatics enhances learning through reinforcement of adaptive responses, either individually or in a group (Dollard and Miller, 2005)

6. It helps to increase positive attitudes and actions following performances of their adapted negative forms (Dollard and Miller, 2005).

7. Psychodramatics helps learners to have better understanding of themselves and other members of the class.

8. Psychodramatics helps in building the minds and the imaginative powers of the mentally, physically and emotionally challenged learners. It enables them to recreate things for themselves, and be independent in ideology and concept.

9. Learners derive a lot of pleasures from the performance through the discovery of self, situations and environment in which they are. (Russel, 2006)

10. Psychodramatics serves as teaching aid to instructors since it is simple, realistic, basic and functional, it brings the world of abstract into an understandable reality (Western, 2006).

11. Psychodramatics serves as a source of emotional mechanism, a measure for understanding the emotions of happiness, love, jealousy, sadness, hatred, loneliness, melancholy, anger, anticipation, fear, worries, anxiety, depression, and so on.

12. It helps to build a better personality by inculcating the right type of norms, attitudes and values that are morally acceptable for the survival of the challenged learners in schools as well as at homes

13. Psychodramatics ensures the significance of appropriate skills, abilities and competencies of physical, mental and emotional characteristics of the learners, which is the ultimate goal of arts work. (Kappette, 2002).

14. Psychodramatics enables the challenged learners develop or to think rationally and logically, hence, communicating their thought and feelings clearly and convincingly.

However, teachers have challenges of time and space. Most of the schools selected do not have a theatre hall, or a good space where psychodrama can be meaningfully employed. Again, it was observed that psychodrama method can be time consuming, so the 40 minutes allotted to a subject proved to be inadequate. Teachers in science-oriented subjects encountered challenges of writing scripts and creating characters for the contents of their subjects.

Conclusion and Recommendations

No doubt, psychodrama as a veritable instructional technique tasks learner's capacity to reason and teases mental operation for learner to distinguish between perception and understanding. More importantly, the fact that psychodrama is inclusive and participatory, learners tend to internationalize teaching objectives or subject matter and retain knowledge over time. With particular reference to the problem of study and the preceding finding (research), the following recommendations have been made:

i. The physically, mentally, socially and emotionally challenged learners should not be abandoned, but be assisted.

ii. Psychodrama, (as drama) should be included in the National Education curriculum, and be made a compulsory subject for both junior and senior secondary school students apart from literature in English.

iii. Schools should be compelled to have a theatre-workshop building for dramatic and other literary performances.

iv. There should be regular drama competitions for the senior secondary school students, based on their respective challenges, prizes and awards should be used to motivate them.

v. Lastly, teachers are recommended to use psychodrama as medium of instruction to the challenged learners.

If all the measures are strictly followed, the rate of moral, social, cultural, and socio-political decadence, resulting from physical, mental, social and emotional challenges in the society and schools will be reduced to the barest minimum if not completely wiped out.

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