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Perceptions of Teachers towards the use of Instructional Drama in Early Childhood Education Centres in Elgeyo-Marakwet, County, Kenya

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Abstract

Drama has been used as a tool for teaching for a long time. However, the ways in which it is used today may differ in a number of respects from the ways it has been used in the past. This study sought to determine the teachers’ perception towards the use of drama in teaching and learning in Early Childhood Education. The study was guided by Piaget’s Cognitive development theory. Data was collected from 513 respondents comprising 334 teachers, 172 Head teachers, and 7 officials in charge of ECDE in Elgeyo Marakwet County. Data was collected using questionnaire and interview schedule. Data was analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques whereas the hypothesis was tested using person’s chi-square. The study established majority of the teachers do not enjoy using drama in teaching ECDE class. Further, dramatic arts in ECDE schools were not seen as co-curricular activities. The study recommends that teachers of ECDE schools to join in-service training so that they can learn about using drama as a method of teaching and learning in ECDE and that there should be partnership between schools and teachers training colleges to fully prepare teachers adequately for use of drama in teaching ECDE class. It is hoped that the findings of the study will be used by the Ministry of Education, ECDE head teachers and other educational stakeholders to enhance the use of drama as an effective method for teaching and learning process in ECDE centre in Kenya.

1.0 Introduction

When young children are provided an environment rich in language and literacy interactions, and full of opportunities to listen and use language constantly, they can begin to acquire the essential building blocks for acquiring successful literacy and academic skills (Christie et al., 2007). An effective way in which children can acquire such skills is through drama. While preschool children benefit from meaningful interactions with print rich environments, they need social interactions with their peers and teachers during literacy events. Drama is an activity where the participant portrays himself/herself in an imaginary situation providing an opportunity for the learner to listen, speak, read and write (Paley, 2004). Drama provides an opportunity for learners to practice what they have acquired in the classroom. Mounkoro (2005) suggests that drama can be a very valuable tool to encourage participatory learning in schools. People often hold back from saying things, for fear of losing favour or looking spiteful after making mistakes. Drama gives an opportunity for actors to share messages without having to worry about its implications. According to the Kenya National Drama Festival Syllabus (2013), learners are supposed to benefit immensely from the use of drama in their communication. Gathumbi and Masembe (2005), support the use of interactive learner centered approaches as important and essential in language learning.

Despite the foregoing findings, using drama as a teaching tool is vastly different from other types of teaching tools. To begin with, drama is not as rigidly structured as other forms of instruction, such as the lecture method, and it requires a great deal of prior planning (Ustundag, 1994). Furthermore, drama is more interactive in nature, and requires children to actively participate in group activities. While this offers scope for them to improve their social and language skills, children in ECD vary widely in their capabilities, and thus the teacher has to structure the drama to ensure that the less confident children do not feel isolated (Paley, 2004). According to Ruppert (2006), use of dramatic enactment can make a measurable difference in helping students reach such important curricular goals as story understanding, reading comprehension and topical writing skills. Teachers could use drama to provide a beneficial supplemental approach. Allowing pre-kindergarteners to act out their favorite part of a story fosters the development of their literacy skills. Dramatic play also serves as a...
motivator for learning. Students’ overall understanding of a story improves once engaged in the enactment of the story. Despite the significant role played by use of drama in the teaching and learning, there is a tendency of both teachers and parents to emphasize on reading and writing well and even good performance academically. There has been a decline in children’s creativity since 1990, especially in younger children (Carlsson-Paige, 2008). Other research indicates that teachers believe drama is an important part of their curriculum, yet they often fail to plan for drama experiences and rely on their instincts in lieu of specific goals and objectives for drama (Bodrova & Leong, 2004). Linking the drama activities to the curriculum is also a challenge, especially where there is no specific provision for drama in education. While it may be fairly straightforward to use drama to teach, it is not immediately apparent how they can use drama to teach numeracy skills. This may be complicated further by the teachers’ attitude towards the use of instructional drama. It is with such concerns in mind that the current study sought to determine the teachers’ perception towards the use of instructional drama in ECDE.

2.0 Methodology
The study was guided by Piaget’s Cognitive Development Theory. The theory of Piaget describes drama for children as optimal learning times. The goal of the theory is to explain the mechanisms and processes by which the infant, and then the child, develops into an individual who can reason and think using hypotheses. According to Mwamwenda (2009), it is absolutely possible to incorporate Piaget’s theory in the classroom. Piaget takes a constructivist point of view and believes that learners are not passive in their knowledge. Piaget’s theory suggests that students need a curriculum that supports their cognitive development by learning concepts and logical steps. Therefore, by incorporating drama into ECDE learning, pupils acquire agency towards their learning, and become active participants in it, rather than passive recipients (Nieto, 1999). This study was carried out in Elgeyo Marakwet County, targeting ECDE teachers, ECDE headteachers and Elgeyo Marakwet County ECDE officials. The county has a target population of 573 ECDE centre, 1090 ECDE teachers, 573 Head teachers and 7 ECDE officials. The researcher used stratified sampling to stratify Elgeyo Marakwet County into sub-counties that form 155 Keiyo North, 144 Keiyo south, 118 Marakwet East and 156 Marakwet West. Simple random sampling was used to select 47 ECDE schools from Keiyo North, 43 from Keiyo South, 35 from Marakwet East and 47 from Marakwet South sub-counties. Simple random sampling was used to select 2 ECDE teachers from each of the selected schools. All the 172 headteachers in the schools selected were included in the study.

Data was collected by questionnaires and interview guide. Qualitative data was organized into themes and the quantitative data was calculated from the data obtained in the field. Quantitative data was analysed using descriptive statistical techniques (frequencies and percentages). Inferential statistics was also used to test the hypothesis (Pearsons chi-square). Data was presented using frequency tables.

3.0 Findings
Gender of the Respondents
As shown in Table 1, 54.8% (167) of the teachers who participated in this study were male whereas 45.2% (138) were female.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>54.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>45.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching Experience
There was need to determine the teaching experience of the teachers who participated in this study. This is because teacher experience might have an effect on the use of drama in teaching and learning in the schools where the study was done. Teachers’ responses are presented in Table 2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Below 1 year</td>
<td>171</td>
<td>56.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-5 years</td>
<td>106</td>
<td>34.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-10 years</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11-15 years</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Above 15 years</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>305</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It should be noted that 56.1% (171) of the respondents stated that they had a teaching experience of less than 1 year, whereas 34.8% (106) had taught for 1-5 years. Another 0.9% (18) had taught for 6-10 years. Only 0.7%
had taught for a period of more than 15 years. This shows that majority of the teachers who participated in this study had taught for less than 5 years. This implies that majority of the teachers who participated in this study did not have long experience in teaching profession. This has a bearing on the way they use drama as an instructional method and the attitude towards the same.

**Teachers’ Perceptions towards the Use of Instructional Drama in ECDE**

Perception differs from one individual to another. Different teachers might have different perception towards the use of instructional drama in ECDE. The third objective of the study was to establish teachers’ perception towards the use of instructional drama in ECDE class. The teachers who participated in this study were asked to rate thirteen statements related to their perception towards the use of drama. Their responses are stated in Table 3.

**Table 3 Teachers’ Perception towards use of Instructional Drama in ECDE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoy using drama in teaching ECDE class</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>27.9</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>31.1</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dramatic arts in ECD schools are seen as co-curricular activities</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>19.3</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>23.6</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching improves pupil ‘ability to use symbols and to think abstractly</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>17.4</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>12.1</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching improves cognitive/intellectual capabilities</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.1</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>19.0</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>18.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching improves communication skills of the pupils</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>11.8</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>14.8</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>12.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching improves reading skills of the pupils</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>18.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching improves pupils ‘sense of sight, hear and touch</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>14.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching and learning is time consuming</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18.0</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama is meaningless</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>30.5</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama requires a lot of materials that are not available</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>20.7</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>15.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama arouses learners’ curiosity</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>17.0</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>24.3</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>5.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama triggers learners’ participation in class</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>16.7</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>4.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of drama in teaching and learning puts a lot of demand on the teachers</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>11.1</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>20.0</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>5.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in Table 3, 33.1% (101) of the teachers stated that they enjoy using drama in teaching ECDE class while majority (59%) do not enjoy. This shows that majority of the teachers do not enjoy drama in teaching ECDE. This was contrary with a study done by Dogan and Ozberk (2013) who concluded that the attitude of teacher candidates towards theatre and drama applications courses was generally positive. Similarly a study by Okvuran’s (2003) established that majority of the teachers who participated in his study found the lesson being fun and entertaining, it strengthened cooperation, it is pragmatic, relaxing and comforting, built self-esteem and courage, controlled their anxiety, socialized, had fun and were happy when using drama as an instructional resource. It is worth noting that the use of drama makes courses more joyful (Yılmaz, 2006).

It is also clear that 43% (131) of the teachers asserted that dramatic arts in ECDE schools were not seen as co-curricular activities while 35.4% (108) stated that dramatic arts in ECDE schools are seen as co-curricular activities. The finding that drama is one of the applicable learning methods is consistent with that of Ormancı and Şaşmaz-Ören (2010). The educational needs should be met and insufficiencies of teachers of various fields in drama should also be supplied (Özdemir & Üstündag, 2007).

There were 49.5% (151) of the teachers who stated that the use of drama in teaching improves pupil ability to use symbols and think abstractly. However, 29.5% (90) disagreed. Another 47.6% (145) agreed that use of drama in teaching improves cognitive/ intellectual capabilities while 34.1% (104) disagreed. As stated by 60.6% (185) of the teachers, use of drama in teaching improves communication skills of the pupils whereas 26.6% (81)
disagreed. Drama or theatre in education is important due to the reasons such as these forms being means of communication, having important roles in adjusting to social life, enabling the child to transform incidents in its environment to substantial experiences and contributing to the child for applying many elements learned (Koc & Dikici, 2003). In his work, Fulford et al. (2001), state that participants make sense of themselves, others and many aspects of the world they live in by creating, progressing and reflecting the same. In this case, people, by presenting different opinions, are able to analyze their own opinions against others. As stated by Güney (2009), effective factors for the use of drama and solutions for potential problems regarding its use should be analyzed. Güney (2009) regards drama as animation and as learning through doing and play.

Table 3 also shows that 44.9% (137) of the teachers asserted that use of drama in teaching improves reading skills of the pupils whereas 36.4% (111) were of contrary opinion. Similarly 52.8% (161) of the respondents agreed that use of drama in teaching improves pupils sense of sight, hear and touch but 33.1% (101) disagreed and 14.1% (34) remained neutral. As shown in Table 4.10, 57.7% (176) of the respondents stated that the use of drama in teaching and learning is time consuming whereas 35.7% (109) disagreed. Majority (61%) of the teachers who participated in this study disagreed with the statement that use of drama is meaningless. This implies that majority of the teachers were of the view that the use of drama was important.

Further, there were 54.8% (167) of the respondents who agreed that the use of drama requires a lot of materials that are not available whereas 30.2% disagreed. Another 53.2% (162) of the respondents who stated that the use of drama arouses learners’ curiosity while 69.5% (212) stated that the use of drama triggers learners’ participation in class. Majority (63%) of the teachers who participated in this study were in agreement that the use of drama in teaching and learning puts a lot of demand on the teachers. Kara (2011a), in his study on the effects of the method for creating stories through drama on the attitudes of second level students of Turkish language, reached the conclusion that as in many countries in our age, drama takes its place as a modern method for developing fundamental lingual skills, creativity and grammar teaching in our country as well.

There was also need to establish statistically whether there was a relationship between teachers’ perception towards the use of drama and the frequency of use of drama instructional method in teaching and learning in ECDE. The hypothesis was stated as:

\[ H_0: \text{there is no significant relationship between teachers’ perception towards the use of instructional drama and the frequency of use of instructional drama in ECDE.} \]

There were 13 items measuring teachers’ perception in the questionnaire which were scored using a five point likert scale whereby the scores were allocated depending on the favourableness or unfavourableness of the responses (Orodho, 2005). In the questionnaire, strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) were scored as 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively. The highest score was 65 and the lowest was 13. A respondent who scored 52-65 had a positive perception while those who scored between 27 and 51 were ambivalent and those who scored 26 and below had negative perception towards the use of instructional drama in ECDE.

The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4: Contingency Table for Teacher Perception and Use of Drama

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Perception</th>
<th>Frequency of use of Drama</th>
<th>.labels/</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>Sometimes</td>
<td>Not sure</td>
<td>Rarely</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>101</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ambivalent</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>305</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[ \chi^2 = 310.758, \text{df}=8 \text{ and } \text{sig} = 0.000 \]

The output shown in Table 4, reveals a Pearson’s chi-square value of 310.758, degrees of freedom of 8 and p-value of 0.000 was obtained. Since \( p < 0.05 \), the null hypothesis is rejected. This implies that there was a significant relationship between the teachers’ perception towards the use of drama and the frequency of use of instructional drama in ECDE.

**Conclusion**

The study concludes that majority of the teachers do not enjoy using drama in teaching ECDE class. Further, dramatic arts in ECDE schools were not seen as co-curricular activities. It was also found that teachers were of the opinion that the use of drama in teaching improves pupil ability to use symbols and think abstractly, improves cognitive/intellectual capabilities, improves communication skills of the pupils, improves reading skills of the pupils and improves pupils’ sense of sight, hear and touch. The study established that using drama activities enable children to express and communicate their feelings and understanding in their own ways and
that using drama to teach ECD pupils increases sensitivity involvement in sharing with other people and party by determining for himself the sort of the world he wishes to live in. Majority of the teachers have strong belief that drama enhances interpersonal relationships outside of the classrooms.

Recommendations of the Study
As revealed in the findings of the study, majority of the teachers do not enjoy using drama in teaching ECDE class. The study therefore recommends that teachers of ECDE schools should join in in-service training so that they can learn on how to use drama as a method of teaching and learning in ECDE and that there should be partnership between schools and teachers training colleges to fully prepare teachers adequately for use of drama in teaching ECDE class.

References