

**USE OF DRAMA AS A CREATIVE MEDIUM IN INCLUSIVE SETTINGS**

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**ABSTRACT**

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*Drama is a unique tool to explore and express human feeling. Drama can be used effectively and as a creative medium for children with special needs in inclusive settings. Drama lessons give children the opportunity to explore themes, to work in a group, to play leadership roles and to raise self-esteem. Drama play provides the opportunity enhance the skill of co-operation. Drama assists in the development of the use of imagination powers of creative expression, decision making and problem solving skills, understanding of self and the world and develops self confidence. This calls for a teacher education where all student teachers develop good enough drama competence to continue their ongoing professional development when facing the challenges of the inclusive classroom*

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**Introduction**

Teaching and learning are complex processes and there is no simple way to fulfil the increasing demand for inclusive education. This demand was stated by the Salamanca Declaration (UNESCO, 1994) in the following terms: “The fundamental principle of the inclusive school is that all children should learn together, wherever possible, regardless of any difficulties or differences they may have”

The challenge is to find a good balance between being included in a learning community and learning activities adapted to each student’s abilities and possibilities. This is not at all easy, and there is not one right way or method to success, but research suggests that qualities like variation in teaching and learning methods combined with a structured and well conducted process can be one out of many ways to provide quality in education.

To an extent, all children engage in speech, movement and drama activities. This happens particularly when they are younger, since these are features of the primary school programme. The activities are designed to be fun and motivating in an effort to unlock the creative spirit, and indeed, music, art and drama combine to balance the curriculum in the early years.

## **What is drama?**

**Drama** is a unique tool to explore and express human feeling. **Drama** is an essential form of behaviour in all cultures, it is a fundamental human activity. Drama can be used effectively and as a creative medium for children with special needs in **inclusive settings**.

Drama has long been recognised as an important part of the curriculum, providing as it does, the opportunity to express feelings of anger, sadness and frustration in a controlled situation. Although it may, and often does, provide a platform for performance, this is not its main or primary purpose. Drama lessons give children the opportunity to explore themes, to work in a group, to play leadership roles and to raise self-esteem. The importance of self-esteem for learning and for life cannot be overestimated.

The lack of self-esteem can form a barrier, which prevents an individual from achieving his or her potential. Sadly, this applies to many who have specific learning difficulties, because they feel they are not quite good enough. It is easy to see how dyslexic children (reading and language disorder) may have difficulties when it comes to drama. Lack of confidence is probably the most acute problem, but then there are the other characteristics of dyslexia. These include:

1. Lack of fluency and speed in reading
2. Inability to use context in reading
3. Hesitancy and losing place in reading
4. Failure to recognise simple words
5. Low level of comprehension
6. Poor organisation and time keeping

However, it is worth remembering that a number of our more successful actors and actresses are dyslexic and are becoming more willing to share with others how they overcame their problems. Take the example of Abhishek Bacchan who was labelled as a dyslexic (LD) but is recognized as a successful actor today.

Abhishek Bacchan was suffering from dyslexia, a learning disability, when he was a child. The world came to know about it from none other than Amir Khan in 2007 directorial **debut** *Taare Zameen Par*.

## **Why teach drama?**

"The future of our nation depends on our ability to create-and to be creative. During the coming decades our most important national resources will be human resources. If our nation

is to continue to meet the challenges of the future, today's schools need to develop creative leaders."

*(Performing together: The Arts and Education*, jointly published by The American Association of School Administrators, The Alliance for Education and The John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts in 1985.)

Drama also boosts the communication skills of students with special needs. Group negotiation and communication skills developed through drama can feed back into other subjects. It's worth bearing in mind that some students will find 'untaught' group work and communication skills hard, so don't make assumptions that certain things will come automatically. Drama makes an important contribution to the 'how to' of these skills.

A drama club or group especially for students with special needs will help you to concentrate on key activities and skills.

Drama in school, whether building on English work, in its own dedicated curriculum-drama time allows children to try out another point of view. They can recreate situations using other perspectives and reach new conclusions. Doing that collaboratively, trusting others by sharing our thoughts and being open – and in return being respectful through constructive criticism – is what makes drama so effective in developing the whole child and adolescent.

While collaboration is the central principle where all involved share responsibility for the effectiveness of the finished piece in performance, it is exploration and curiosity that are at the heart of the playfulness that drama allows for. This keeps that child-like sensibility alive.

Watch young children. When left to their own they engage in- play-acting. It seems that drama play comes naturally. Kids "play house", pretending to be mummy or daddy; dash around acting like a superhero, or raise their arms in victory when emulating a favourite sports star. Most children come into formal educational situations having gone through their imitative stage of drama play and having experienced some imaginative, creative, self-directed play. Tapping into this natural interest in drama play can give educators a way of providing students of any age with an enjoyable learning experience through which they not only gain knowledge but develop many life skills.

For example, drama play provides the opportunity enhance the skill of co-operation. Learning to cope with the inevitable differences in opinions, working styles and emotional weaknesses is of utmost importance if a project is to be successful.

Starting early with informal drama play in the classroom setting can help to ease children into oral presentation. As students become accustomed to performing, they can be encouraged to

memorize scripts or poems , express a range of emotions through voice, facial expressions, and body language and even develop their own characters.

Along the continuum from informal role-playing to formal staged and costumed musical drama learning opportunities are many. Thus Drama play should be an integral part of every student's education. Drama assists in the development of :

1. the use of imagination
2. powers of creative self expression
3. decision making and problem solving skills
4. and understanding of self and the world
5. self confidence, a sense of worth and respect and consideration for others.

In keeping with the famous Chinese proverb

"Tell me and I will forget.

Show me and I will remember.

Involve me and I will understand." (Chinese Proverb)

### **Conclusion**

Integrating drama in whole class teaching is one out of several ways to fulfil the demand for inclusive education. The challenge is the class teachers' lack of drama competency. Process based drama is a demanding way of teaching and learning that expects the teacher to be a proactive leader taking responsibility for a teaching and learning process that is structured so it is possible for all students to be active and participate in inclusive education.

This calls for a teacher education where all student teachers develop good enough drama competence to continue their ongoing professional development when facing the challenges of the inclusive classroom

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