

Training the Trainer: Preparing Teachers for Effective Implementation of Drama in Education as Methodology

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Abstract

Teacher training is a very germane prerequisite for anybody that intends to be a teacher, especially currently that professionalism in this field is the order of the day. Since the abolition of the Grade 1 and 2, National Certificate of Education (NCE) has become the minimum requirement in teaching. While some teachers proceed to universities to obtain Degrees (B.ED), others are comfortable in their practice with the NCE. To bridge this gap, the government and relevant bodies organize periodic trainings to renew, revitalize and re-engineer the enthusiasm and zeal of teachers. This has become necessary to meet the mounting needs and demands of the learner, technology and other social factors. This was the background for carrying out this research in Badagry Local Government of Lagos State. The study is set out to re-introduce Drama in Education (DIE) and ensure its effective implementation in select schools. Subsequently, training sessions will be organized to rekindle latent talents and creativity in teachers participating in the study by encouraging them to adopt DIE as a viable tool during teaching and learning sessions. It is also expected that there would be a considerable impact of this methodology in the academic performance of learners.

Keywords: *Training, drama, drama in education (DIE), teaching and learning, methodology.*

Introduction

Training and re-training of staff is one of the most viable ways of keeping personnel abreast of new trends in their various fields. It is a means of updating knowledge, avoiding stagnation and remaining relevant in the profession. Teachers in government primary schools that must have been found qualified initially at the point of employment need to constantly and periodically undergo trainings. Currently, the minimum qualification for employment in government primary schools in Lagos State is an NCE in cognate areas. Since most of the teachers have long years of experience, the need to keep up with new trends in classroom teaching and learning becomes paramount. This becomes very important when a concept and methodology like Drama in Education (DIE) is to be effectively implemented into the school system.

Introducing Drama in Education becomes even a greater task for teachers, since translating the concept of drama in education into practice becomes a challenge due to lack of competent and experienced teachers in this area. Bamidele (2007:23) identifies the training of teachers in arts education as the first hurdle to be crossed. Having observed a dearth of arts education teachers, he suggests organising constant in-service workshops for teachers in order to enhance and equip them with “what to teach and how to teach it...” Teachers are saddled with the huge task of affecting learners’ behaviours and attitudes to achieve changes in academic achievement. To attain this height of responsibility, there is the need to equip teachers with the right tools and methodologies. Discovering the need to introduce teachers to DIE methodology and improve their capabilities and capacities in using the methodology, this researcher decides to adopt the train-the-trainer approach with the overall objective of making classrooms vibrant and interesting as they should be.

Drama in Education

Education is a vital tool for self-development. In order to produce a responsible and well rounded individual, there is the need to expose learners to various experiences at different stages of learning. Creating an enabling environment for learning is therefore essential. There are

various tools for creating this enabling environment and drama in education has been identified as one. Studies have shown that drama in education helps in personal development of children. Wright reports that drama in education intervention program can lead to improvements in children's role taking and vocabulary, and that, if the intervention is of significant duration, children's self concept can also be enhanced. (2008:6).

There are some observations, research and studies, which support the above assertion that drama engages and excites learners in a way that few other subjects do. Ulas (2008: 87) admits that "...drama activities are useful in motivating students, holding their attention and stimulating their creativity". This is not surprising because of the elements of play and the characteristics of drama and drama in education. Basinstoke (1971) in Adedina (1993:2) sees drama in education as "... one fundamental means of personal or group expression...the identification of oneself with character within and instructively impel that inward vocal expression". This definition implies active participation of students in the teaching and learning process. The outcome is that learners will be able to develop their intellect and ability to learn more and confront challenges through the acquisition of problem solving skills.

Also, O'Toole (2004:55) sees drama in education as, "*a functional role play and 'service' within the curriculum*". Drama here simply fits in with other subjects, to be a teaching subject. As a functional role play, drama is assumed to be an artistic order which has a positive effect on teaching and learning situations. When a drama in education lesson is properly utilized, it would equip learners to acquire skills, attitudes and values. All these enable them to go through problem solving, thereby enhancing their self-confidence. Most importantly, drama in education encourages learners to be independent and to develop skills of self-help. It gives an all-round development to learners, thereby helping in the fulfillment and realisations of objectives of education.

Theoretical Framework

This study is hinged on two theories of cognitive learning by Jean Piaget, a Swiss (1896-1980) and David Ausubel, an American (1918-2008). Piaget strongly advocates a child's direct interaction with his environment in

constructing a schematic understanding of his/her physical and social world. He sees cognitive development as a continuous process of unfolding at stages where children are allowed to manipulate objects and symbols to test their supposition against reality. He maintained that the development of children is constructed in an organised sequence of stages. Ausubel was greatly influenced by Piaget's 'Cognitive Development' theory where 'cognitive constructivism' emerged from.

In furtherance of this theory, Ausubel came up with a theory known as 'advanced organisers' (that is, comparative and expository organisers). Ausubel related Piaget's ideas of conceptual schemes to his explanation of how people acquire knowledge. He theorised that understanding principles, concepts and ideas are achieved through deductive reasoning. People acquire knowledge primarily by being exposed to it rather than through discovery and that meaningful learning is the best approach to learning as opposed to rote memorisation. To him the most influencing factor in learning is what the learner already knows. Both theories explain the philosophies of learning premised on the construction of understanding by reflecting on experiences rather than memorization. It is based on this, that Piaget's 'cognitive development' and Ausubel's 'advanced organiser' were adopted for this study because of their relevance to the age (7-11) and level of pupils in primary schools and developmental activities that take place during this stage. These theories were arrived at based on their significance to a child centered learning for the following reasons:

- Ausubel agrees with Piaget and acknowledges the age level differences in cognitive maturity as significant to the learners' developmental readiness for different kinds, components, levels of difficulty and methods of teaching of subject-matters (Ausubel and Fitzgerald, 1961).
- Both agree that a child's exposure to his immediate environment is essential in the learning process because it allows for meaningful learning through personal experiences.
- They both share the view that rote memorisation is essentially insignificant in the learning process.

- Both acknowledge a systematic and gradual integration of new ideas to existing ones in a way that removes confusion in the mind of the learner.
- Both support a well planned curriculum to be actualised by educators/teachers to enhance logical and conceptual growth through the learner's experiences.

Aims of Training

The aims of this training for teachers are simply summarized below.

They are to:

- assess the exposure of teachers to drama in education as teaching methodology
- equip teachers with tools necessary for deploying drama in education in their classes
- appraise the level of compliance with this methodology by teachers
- encourage and enhance creativity in teachers during teaching and learning process
- improve the level of compliance to adopting drama in education as a methodology
- come up with a lesson plan template to be used for teaching

Procedure

The stages and procedure of training are extensively discussed below:

Planning and Preparation

The approval to embark on field work in selected schools in Badagry Local Government Area in Lagos State was officially granted by the State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB). Subsequently, the researcher proceeded to a period of observation for four weeks in the selected schools to see teachers at work without interfering in the teaching and learning process. The essence of this observation period was to ascertain the level each school had reached in adopting DIE as teaching methodology and also to identify areas and aspects that needed to be enhanced further in the classroom towards effective deployment of DIE methodology.

Selection Process

In selecting the area of research, the schools to be used, the training centre, the subjects to be taught and teachers to participate, the following factors were taken into consideration:

Experimental schools: The choice of selected schools for the research was based on their locations in Badagry Local Government area. To achieve this, the Local Government was grouped into five: Iworo-Ajido, Aradagun, Ibereko, Ajara and Badagry town. A school was selected randomly from each of these areas and this automatically qualifies teachers of Mathematics and English in the upper primary (four and five) as participants in the programme.

Training centre: The choice of Ajara LA I as the training centre was based on the fact that it is a model school with good facilities like, classrooms, playing ground, accessibility and convenience. Incidentally, the school is also one of the selected schools for the training.

Choice subjects: The two subjects, Mathematics and English Language, focused on during training are core subjects in the school curriculum. The two subjects are also taken as the main planks for the development of verbal and numeracy skills needed for a child's further development. Elementary school is the preparatory stage where learners come into first contact with these subjects. The experiences and exposures of pupils to these core subjects at this early stage in life will go a long way in determining their sustained interest and performance in the future. While English seems a familiar ground for pupils to thread on due to their exposure to the spoken language from home and its relatedness to drama, an examination of the literature on drama indicated that few studies have focused on the use of drama in mathematics education (Omniewski, 1999; Saab, 1987; Southwell; 1999 in Asuman and Behiye (2009). This implies that there is the need for teachers to adopt new strategies, approaches and techniques in teaching these subjects and this is the point of emphasis in this training.

Participants: The teachers trained were drawn from the five sections that Badagry LGA was grouped into for the purpose of training. Selection of teachers was premised on subject specialization in Mathematics and

English language. The teachers teaching these subjects in primary four and five automatically qualify for training.

Training Process

The training session was in two sessions. This is due to the fact that the first session involved all Mathematics and English language while the second will be specifically for teachers that will handle the experimental classes. Each session comprised two-day-based activities intended to expose them to DIE. The first training session had in attendance all primary four and five subject teachers in English Language and Mathematics from the five (5) selected schools in Badagry Local Government Education Authority (LGEA) in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State; while the second session was held specifically for teachers in the select experimental schools.

The training spanned the hours of 9.00am to 4.00pm daily and was held at Ajara L.A Primary School I, Ajara. The training also had facilitators who were vast in DIE. The sessions were characterized with discussions on Fundamentals and Elements of Drama, Objectives of Drama in Education, Tools of DIE, Playing and Learning, and so on.

There was room for questions and clarifications where a lot of issues relating to how to use DIE were raised and clarified at the end of each training session. Afterwards was the group work where all the participants were grouped to work together to achieve a set objective evolving lesson plans based on the topics in the scheme of work in English Language and Mathematics for first term for primary four (4) and five (5). The final selection was done based on expertise, experience and availability of subject teachers in their cognate areas from respective schools.

There was room for discussions at the end of each lecture where germane issues were raised by participants as well as the facilitators. Participants in turn identified inhibitions that could affect full implementation of DIE as methodology in their various schools. A lot of issues were generated, some of which are common and a few peculiar. They include:

- Overpopulation/overcrowding (not less than 50 pupils in a class)
- Lack of specialists and shortage of teachers
- Lack of interest in learning by students
- Language barrier
- Inadequate classrooms
- Lack of writing and instructional materials for students

Having completed the training, a model lesson plan for DIE was arrived at through the joint efforts of the researcher and participants. Also participants had opportunities to make presentations using their lesson plans. At the end of the presentations, participants were grouped for a feedback session. During feedback, it was discovered and agreed that participants still needed to be well grounded in DIE methodology and the best way to do this was by constant practice. It was therefore agreed that this group of teachers proceed to the field as vanguards of change in their schools for a period of one term, comprising the first term spread over thirteen weeks of teaching and learning in the 2012/2013 School Session. A review of the entire training sessions was held and participants were encouraged to be receptive to this innovation in teaching to make their lessons more interesting and rewarding.

Area of Study

The main reason Badagry Local Government Area was selected for this study is based on a number of factors. Badagry was the first port of call of the British colonialist where Western education was introduced in the Western part of Nigeria. One would therefore expect that educational activities would be at its peak in this area. However the situation at present is contrary to this expectation. Good school structures, conducive environment for learning, availability of learning aids and specialists in subject areas are issues that are germane but which pose a serious threat to the education industry in Badagry Local Government Area of Lagos State. Also, Badagry is often referred to as the “backwaters” of Lagos State. By reason of its geographical location, it is closer to the Republic of Benin than Lagos state. This could probably account for the slow rate of development when compared to other districts in Lagos State like, Ikeja, Lagos Island, Lekki, Ikorodu and Epe.

This is more pronounced in the lack of infrastructures such as, well established companies, good access roads, improved power supply, public health and so on.

Population of Study

The total number of participants for this study is twenty five. The schools are re-named and represented with letters of the alphabet, like, A,B,C,D and E for the purpose of this study. The breakdown from each school is as follows:

School A	-	5(one)
School B	-	6 (four)
School C	-	5 (four)
School D	-	5 (two)
School E	-	4 (two)

Findings

The training session had a rippling effect on the participants. The set aims were achieved, a new fire was ignited into participants as they welcomed change in their teaching. The most notable aspects impacted upon will be discussed below.

Feedback

Feedback characterized the training sessions. The participants were not talked to, rather they were talked with. They freely engaged in discussions, arguments and counter arguments but always arrived at an acceptable position. They also asked questions and answers were provided either by the researcher or the group. They freely made contributions during training. Although they had previous knowledge of role play, they admitted that they hardly used it in teaching. Discussion sessions revealed that a lot of challenges which are man-made could actually impede the practice of DIE in schools. The issue of inadequate infrastructure, (in terms of classroom) resulting in overcrowding in the classes was extensively blamed. At the end of the training, participants admitted that it had been a worthwhile experience.

Test Teaching

Test teaching is an exact replica of Micro Teaching. Participants took turns in individual and group presentations especially during the second training session. It was a period of self- appraisal and evaluation in the presence of other colleagues. The critique that followed each presentation gave room for in-depth examination and assessment of teachings carried out by participants. Thereafter, the presenter was allowed to justify, clarify or explain grey areas in the presentation. Afterwards, the presenter would accept areas of inadequacies especially those that could pose a threat to the execution of this method in the classroom.

Lesson Plan Template

The need to design an acceptable lesson plan for classroom teaching arose during the training. Participants were already used to preparation of lesson plan based on the scheme of work for the various arms. A little alteration was, however, made to presentational steps to accommodate new approaches during teaching. Such include, arrangement of facts from known to unknown, drawing from learner's experiences, encouraging full participation and giving room to expressions. Lastly it gave room to obtaining feedback from pupils to ascertain the level of achievement of both teacher and pupil. This template is intended to serve as a model to be used especially in a DIE oriented teaching. It is not expected to be rigid rather it is expected to be flexible and be able to accommodate creative ideas such as, songs, movement or other related activities that could take place in the classroom based on the teacher's discretion. A sample of this template is shown below:

Subject:

Date:

Class:

Average age of students:

Time/Duration:

30minutes

Topic:

Sub Topic:

Previous Knowledge
Behavioral Objectives
Presentational Steps

Activity 1 : Singing of signature tune to entertain and arouse the interest of learners

Activity 2 : Let pupil move and swap sitting positions still singing. This can be achieved by allowing them to move round in a circle and sitting wherever they are when the song stops.

Activity 3: Introduce the topic to pupils using any tool that is applicable, such as objects, gestures, storytelling, mime, dramatisation and so on,

Activity 4: Explain the lesson by allowing pupils to be involved in role play

Activity 5: Sing a song again. This time ask pupils to return to their original seats

Activity 1: Assign activities, not necessarily in writing based on the lesson, to pupils in pairs or groups. Write such activities on a piece of paper and ask them to mime, narrate, dramatise, sing or dance when carrying out the activity.

Activity 2: Teacher should acknowledge pupils' contributions through reinforcement using words like, "very good of you", "excellent attempt", "that's brilliant of you" and so on.

Evaluation

Teacher should base evaluation on the experiences pupils gathered from the lesson and assist them to re-live such experiences in simple ways orally, in re-enactment or writing.

Assignment

Teacher gives take-home or class work to assess pupils.

Question Pool

A pool of questions was drawn from participants based on the scheme of work. They prepared questions in their subject areas, that is, English Language and Mathematics. These questions were used at a later date for the pre and post-test for pupils to be involved in the second phase of this research.

Observations and Suggestions

Some challenges characterized the period of training. They, however, did not deter the training process but gave cause for concern especially when teachers return to the classroom to implement the methodology. Solutions were also arrived at to serve as coping mechanisms for these challenges that are highlighted below.

Creativity: This was perhaps the first hurdle to be crossed during training. The Latin word "creo" means to create, produce, make, give origin to or bring forth. Creativity here is seen from Gallagher's (2007) perspective, as "a notion, not as something entirely new, original but of recognition, familiarity or resonance with something already known within us". Creativity is the first demand to be met for DIE to be effective. The inability of participants to be creative had an impact on their self-confidence in the way they perceive themselves as regards their own artistic abilities. This is two dimensional; their abilities and skills they possess to assist pupils learning and their preparedness to teach. To allay these fears, participants were advised to adopt the "do it again" approach, that is, repeating the same activity or action over and over again until it is fully mastered and a new idea begin to evolve from it. To achieve this, they have to be attentive and observant to pupils' activities in the classroom and be flexible in thinking and action. This in Gallagher's (2007:1230) opinion will lead to "the modification of previous ideas based on increased information".

Teacher's Exposure: It was discovered that the trainees had little or no exposure to creative arts although most of them claim to have heard about role play and play way method, yet they could not effectively adopt them during Test Teaching sessions. A formal background in arts is essential for DIE as a teaching methodology. This indicates a major flaw in the teacher trainer's curriculum in colleges of education and universities. One or two courses in DIE throughout the duration of study are not enough to inspire artistic talents in teachers.

Time Management: Preparing lesson notes following the template was also a major hiccup during training. Participants found it difficult to depart from the format already in use. A valid argument put up in defense of this was that the proposed format would not be accepted if the details differ in their various schools, especially when school inspectors come for routine check. However, they all made attempts at abiding by the template (where major inputs are in the presentational steps) during Test Teaching. Subsequently, they spent more time preparing lesson notes and achieving them in teaching. Some of them overloaded their lesson notes to the point that they were unable to complete and achieve their lesson objectives in the stipulated thirty (30) minutes of teaching. To correct this, they were advised to start with simple and already known facts and activities during presentation before attempting complex ones.

Improvisation: Participants complained at length of the non-availability of instructional materials. This, according to them is characteristic of government owned schools which, to a great extent, adversely affects teaching and learning. To counter this obstacle, participants were advised to look inwards by improvising from what they have around, because therein lies the pointer to re-creating or making use of inanimate objects as well as pupils in the classroom. They could also bring items from home or ask students to do likewise if they are truly prepared to make a difference in teaching. Involving students in dramatisation or role play could also replace the absence of teaching aids. This actually is the whole essence of DIE as methodology.

Conclusion

The non availability of experienced and efficient teachers in teaching methodologies applicable to pupils in their local environment make them incompetent later when exposed to competition with their peers from privileged societies, who had exposure to such opportunities at an early stage in learning. This has long lasting impacts on their self-esteem, confidence and finally rubs off on their personalities. At present, the state government like her counterparts in the global community, is laying

emphasis on child centered learning and learner-oriented approaches to teaching and learning, especially in public schools. As a backup, education administrators such as, State Universal Basic Education Board (SUBEB), Local Government Education Districts (LGEA) and other educational bodies, organise periodic trainings in form of conferences, workshops and seminars to expose and acquaint teachers with new trends in child education. This study is, therefore, complementing these efforts by re-engineering the interest of teachers to adopt DIE method in teaching and learning. This is with the intention of equipping them with strategies that will boost their teaching and make them innovative.

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