

Constructivist approach to drama in the classroom

[Literature](#), [Drama](#)



How does constructivist approach underpins what happen In drama? What is Drama? Drama is the act of using the imagination to become someone or something other than yourself. It can be done at any place to any period of time. According to Richard Courtney, a professional in the area of drama in education defines drama as, " The human process whereby imaginative thought becomes action, drama is based on internal empathy and identification, and leads to external Impersonation". Courtney believes also that " life Is a drama. " Humans are always acting and improvising. When e meet someone for the first time, we Improve our conversation.

Life has no script written for us, however, we can use role-play to practice the anticipated situation What is constructivism? The term refers to the idea that learners construct knowledge for themselves; each learner individually (and socially) constructs meaning, as he or she learns. Constructing meaning is learning. The dramatic consequences of this view are two fold; we have to focus on the learner in thinking about learning (not on the subject/ lesson to be taught) There is no knowledge Independent of the meaning attributed to experience constructed) by the learner, or community of learners.

As quoted by Ben]amyl Frankly, " Tell me, and I'll forget. Show me, and I may not remember. Involve me, and I'll understand". This is indeed a fact for students to remember and understand what is taught, when drama is included. Drama is highly regarded as an effective and valuable teaching strategy because of its unique ability to engage reflective, constructivist and active learning in the classroom as well as enhancing oral skills development. Teachers should definitely incorporate drama in here

classroom as this motivate the students that we teach and appeal too range of learning styles.

Betty Jane Wagner, an Internationally recognized authority on composition Instruction and the educational uses of drama believes that " Drama Is powerful because Its unique balance of thought and feeling makes learning excellent, challenging relevant to real-life concerns, and enjoyable". As educators, if we are not providing a fun and jobs. Research indicates that using drama in the classroom as a means of teaching helps students learn academically, socially, and developmentally. " When drama is employed in the classroom.

It can reach students who otherwise couldn't be reached, and challenge students who have already grasped the concepts. Drama provides a fun means of learning. It brings the affective back into the classroom, an institute where emotions and learning are categorically divided. Recent brain research by D. O. Webb, university professor of psychology, proves that emotions are linked with learning. When we connect to the concept emotionally, we will have a better understanding of it. When we teach using the arts we are linking prior experiences with new stimuli. Teaching using drama brings emotion and learning together.

According to Wagner, when drama is used in the classroom to teach it gets students involved and gives them the power to have a key role in their education. " Through drama, students became a part of the learning process rather than mere observers or inactive receptacles of the rich experience of learning; in this way, their learning becomes more sustained, and infinitely

more complex" Drama is a natural, innate form of learning for children. As young as toddlers, children play house and pretend to be doctors, teachers, or some other career, which assassinates them. These children are using drama to practice for or imitate life. Playing is one of the most powerful ways for a child to learn. He looks at the world around him and plays what he sees such as; going to the office, driving a bus, make-believe stores or parties and on and on. Children also try different ways of acting, assume various roles and challenge himself with all sorts of problems" (Wagner). Dramatic play helps children prepare for life and cope with growing up. It allows children to explore and make sense of the complexities of life without experiencing allure. Since dramatic play is so innate in children, it should be carried on into the classroom.

It is something that children are very good at and love to do. Wagner also argue that, " Children bring with them to the classroom the universal human ability to play, to behave, " as if" ; many children spontaneously engage in such dramatic play from as young an age as ten months". It is very natural for a child to use his or her imagination to transform him or herself even as young as infancy. They are experts in the field". Psychologist, Sigmund Freud ought surely to look in the child for the first traces of imaginative activity. The child's best loved and most absorbing occupation is play.

Children at play behaves like an imaginative writer, in that he creates a world of his own or, more truly he rearranges the things of his world and orders it in a new way that pleases him better"(Wagner). When children gets the chance to transform themselves their imagination is set free. They are

then able to make connections between what they already know and the unknown. This connection helps children learn and have a better understanding of Incorporating drama in the Classroom In using drama in the classroom, the main goal is to teach the core curricular areas using drama.

Betty Jane Wagner, states, " role playing is improvisational, not scripted and memorized to present a performance for an audience. The emphasis is on drama as an intentional teaching strategy to enhance learning in a particular curricular area". There are many ways in which drama can be integrated into the classroom. Drama can be a way to teach all subject areas, which includes Language arts, social studies, and science are subject areas, and will definitely foster a higher level of understanding with our students " It is particularly effective in making a historical event come alive for students," (Wagner).

Act out the Dialogue One of the easiest ways to incorporate drama in the classroom is to have students act out the dialogue from their textbooks. Simply pair them up, have them choose roles, then work together to act out the dialogue, figuring out for themselves the " blocking," or stage movements. This is effective for a beginning activity of incorporating drama in the classroom. **Perform Reader's Theater** Another good beginning exercise is to do Reader's Theater. Hand out copies of a short or one-act play, have students choose roles, and then read the play from their seats without acting it out.

However, do encourage them to read dramatically, modeling as necessary.

Act out the Story If students are reading a short story such as " The Chaser,"

about the man who buys a "love potion" for his unrequited love, have students act out the story or part of the story, working in groups and assigning roles and determining the blocking. This is particularly effective with short stories, one-scene stories with limited characters. Write the Dialogue for a Scene Watch a brief clip of a movie without the sound on. Have students write the dialogue for it and act it out. Emotion Give students an emotion, such as "anger" or "fear".

Have students, either singly or in groups, first act out that emotion then put words to the emotion. Give Voice" to an Inanimate Object What would a stapler say if it could talk? Or an apple? Have students write monologues with inanimate objects as the character. A monologue is a short scene with just one character talking, either addressing the audience, God, or himself or herself. Psychologists have viewed drama as a way of learning. While studying the growth of humans cognitively, psychologists have found that drama provides a sound foundation for development. Level Viscosity and Jerome Burner both see cognitive growth as dependent upon interactive play and upon children imagining themselves acting in worlds that are developmentally a bit above their actual physical and intellectual level. Both provide a solid foundation for using drama in the classroom as a way that deepens and enlarges understanding" (Wagner). Drama is a form of "learning by doing. Dewey a known psychologist spoke on the importance of imagination, and stated that meanings are derived from past participant's use of imagination. The curriculum should integrate the imagination with the cognitive world of the student.

Wagner stated that " John Dew's, 'learning by doing theory shaped the progressive era in education". It is also important to know that drama is beneficial because of how much the participants engage with each other. This helps to develop valuable social skills in young children. In order for children to be able to learn, they have to feel safe and comfortable. The engagement with each other in drama builds trust and strong relationship.

Brain Research It is also important to know how humans learn, this will foster our understanding on the importance of drama.

Juliann Sexton, who is the co-chair of drama in education conference, explains that recent brain research shows how drama can plays a part in how students learn. Each person learns best a little differently. Some learn best by visualizing, some by audible, and some by kinesthesia. However, not every person falls into one of these categories. I am sure that many people would confess that they remember something best by using a combination of all three types of learning. This is why teachers must utilize all methods of teaching in the classroom.

Using drama can be of benefit to all types of learning. James R. Lawson, author of the article, " Brain-Based Learning," describes the process of how our brain works when drama is incorporated. He states that, the brain undergoes an electrochemical process in which information is transferred from one neuron to the next. The brain is made up of billions of these nerve cells called neurons. " Neuron connections are flexible, webbed, overlapping, and redundant. Internal and external stimuli collaborate in the formation of pathways and patterns of excited neurons.

The more frequently pathways or patterns of neurons are used the stronger the pathways and patterns become" (Lawson). It is important that these pathways and patterns become stronger because as they do it becomes more probable that they will be created again. " Simultaneous excitation of multiple pathways and patterns create growth of new neuron connections, thus increasing the potential of the brain to learn. It is important when teaching to connect the new eternal with student's past experiences because it is this " simultaneous excitation" that helps us learn.

Drama is also a means of problem solving. When students work together in drama, they may run into problems where, for example, they do not agree on a solution or action the rest of their group is taking. Wagner states, " Participants in drama must negotiate their roles. Unless they can agree and cooperate, the game is over". Like all group work, students must problem solve how they will handle this conflict of interest. This will help students to become life long learners. Most definitely as adults e all face problems in our social lives.

Whether problems occur at home, school, or education calls for more group work, so students obtain the crucial skills needed throughout life. It is quite evident that the frontal cortex part of the brain is very much triggered using drama. Conclusion Drama gives educators the opportunity to teach their students in a way, which would create a love for learning. It provides valuable problem solving, social, and creative skills. Drama embraces the child's imagination and emotions, which in many classrooms are shunned.

Students will be able to engage in activities and immersed in the roles, which they assume.

We are naturally equipped with the ability to use drama in our lives. It can be said that drama is a way of life. Drama activates the whole brain and also engages many different kinds of intelligences. It reaches students who need a challenge, as well as students who are not reached through traditional teaching methods. If educators want to reach their students and teach them in the most effective possible way, then they will integrate drama and the arts into their classroom. The impact that this kind of authentic learning can make on a child is priceless.