

Drama as learning medium in young children



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Running Head DRAMA AS LEARNING MEDIUM Drama as Learning Medium in Young Children: A Constructivist Approach Abstract

Conforming to the theory of cognitive development of Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner's theory of the importance of structure in learning, drama is an excellent learning medium for young children, through which the children's understanding of themselves and their environment is enhanced.

Drama as Learning Medium for Young Children

Drama has always been considered an excellent learning medium for children, especially young children. The construction of reality in the small child is enhanced by drama. It helps the child to view drama both as external and internal, giving his emotional and intuitive intelligence scope to develop. Being rooted in the child's experience, drama as a learning medium involves thinking, questioning, taking responsibility for actions, and use of space. Since there is active participation of children in drama, learning takes place spontaneously, which leads to later learning of higher order. The theories of educationists like Jean Piaget and Jerome Bruner contribute to the use of drama as a learning medium.

According to Jean Piaget, the child goes through several stages of development, one of which is the Preoperational stage from ages 2 to 7. At this stage, the child is acquiring motor skills. Magical thinking is foremost at this stage. He appreciates drama and relates to it. A child at this stage learns quickly from the dramatized version of 'Jack and the Beanstalk' or "The Lion King", elements of vocabulary, arithmetic and a little geography. Since at this stage of the child's development his egocentrism has begun, he can relate to the central character of the drama. But, according to Piaget, he cannot conserve or use logical thinking yet, which he starts using in the next

stage of his development.

The next stage of development in children is the 'concrete operational stage' which spans the ages from 7 to 11. At this stage of their development, children have started thinking logically, and concretely, but they need aids for conserving and thinking logically. Higher order thinking is beginning and they are helped by drama at this stage of learning. After the age of 11, children start to think and conserve abstractly. Here, they appreciate and learn from drama based on detective stories such as Sherlock Holmes.

Piaget explains that the child 's perceptions of notions of 'right' and 'wrong' , and 'valid' , 'proper', and 'necessary' develop during these stages. He constructs his theory of actions which are correct and effective, by the process of objectification, reflection and and abstraction.

Very young children reflect on their own actions and learn to quantify. Taking part in a play helps to develop their discriminating ability .

Piaget's works have been instrumental in the transformation of American education , leading to a 'child centered ' approach. Piaget did not want to transform the child into a typical adult of the society, but through education he wanted to lead more children to creativity. He wanted education to make more scientists and innovators, and drama, being one of the most creative forms of learning, is most suited for it.

The eminent educationist Jerome Bruner, in his book *The Culture of Education* says " We have finally come to recognize ,(how one conceives of education) is a function of how one conceives of culture and its aims, professed or otherwise." (Bruner 1996: ix-x) He emphasized the role of structure in learning. According to Bruner, earlier learning can make later learning easier by providing a general picture. He advises a practical

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approach to learning.

Drama, with its structure and practical approach is a viable learning medium, which enhances the children's understanding of themselves and their environment, at the same time encouraging creativity in the young children.

References

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