

An Analysis of Drama-in-Education as an Effective Teaching and Learning Methodology in Early Childhood Education: A case of Mogoditshane Child Development Centre

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ABSTRACT

This research is a critical analysis of drama-in-education as an effective teaching methodology in early childhood education in Botswana. The target group was 15 pre-school learners and three ECD teachers from Mogoditshane Child Development Centre. The theoretical framework of this study is underpinned by Drama-in-Education (Heathcote, 1982), Theatre for Development (Boal, 1982) and Social Cognitive (Bandura, 1986) theories. These theories consider the use of theatre elements as essential in achieving both its pedagogical and artistic objective (Bolton, 1993). The study used a participatory case study approach within the qualitative action research paradigm. Data was gathered through focus group discussion and participant observation. Research instruments included in-depth open-ended interviews, an observation checklist, and data was also digitally recorded. The literature survey included books, journals, newspapers and organizational records on internet reports. Teacher-in-role and freeze-frame/tableau were the overarching drama-in-education teaching techniques essential for pre-school learners to be able to understand concepts in class. This research showed how the safety of drama through the creation of dramatic elsewhere, distancing, framing and role playing, works towards a deeper understanding by pre-schoolers in class. The research noted that if ECD learners are told something, they tend to forget. If they are shown something, they remember, but if they are involved practically, they understand. Findings call for efforts to conduct lessons in early childhood education experientially through drama-in-education as a teaching strategy. This research recommends early childhood schools and education authorities in Botswana to explicitly consider drama-in-education as an effective early childhood teaching methodology in the 21st century. This paper concludes with a strong plea for the inclusion of accredited drama and theatre pedagogical courses in pre-school teacher-training colleges.

Keywords: Critical analysis, Drama-in-education, Early childhood education, Effective teaching methodology, English medium pre-schools

1. INTRODUCTION

Twenty first century presents both unprecedented challenges and opportunities for early childhood education practices. Rapid technological advancements, the necessity for innovation, and the increasing demand for industrialization require a fundamental rethinking of early childhood educational teaching and learning methodologies. Traditional early childhood pedagogical approaches are no longer sufficient to equip EDC learners with the skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of today's world. There is a pressing need for early childhood educators, policymakers, and stakeholders to rethink and reshape ECD teaching and learning methodologies to meet the demands of the twenty first century. It is in view of this need that, this research project sought to critically analyze how drama-in-education can be used as an effective teaching and learning methodology in pre-school at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre in Gaborone, Botswana. Mogoditshane Child Development Centre is a privately-owned pre-school situated along the road that demarcates Mogoditshane from Block 7 in Gaborone. The research project was conducted with a group of 15 early childhood development learners aged between five and six years and three ECD teachers in 2018. Early childhood development is defined as the period from pregnancy and birth to the age of eight (The World Bank, 2010; Thomas and Thomas 2009). This means that early childhood education is the care of children from birth through to the age of 8, including their families (Chikutuma 2013). For this study, drama-in-education in ECD involved role playing, song, dance, rhymes, and sing along, among other dramatic processes in a classroom set up.

According to Chinyowa (2012) education worldwide is suffering from narration sickness. A careful analysis of teacher-student relationship even at early childhood level involves a narrator, (teacher) and patient, listening objects (students). Corroborating with Chinyowa (2012), Rooth (1995) posits that knowledge is never a concrete thing presented by an expert to the unknowing-rather, true knowledge comes from experiential learning where learners are responsible for, and are active in the production of their knowledge and the power of learning lies in them.

Miranda (2004), argues that teaching methods and techniques have functional qualities that help children to be more attentive, develop memory capacity and engage in the learning process. Play/drama allows pre-school learners to assimilate information they get from the outside environment into their minds, and assists them to make sense of it (Ailwood, 2003). Thus, during play, children practice skills that they acquire during non-play situations. It is in view of this need that the study critically explored how drama-in-education could be used as a teaching methodology in early childhood education in Botswana to combat the narration sickness in the education system and enhance preschool learners' level of understanding. Linington and Excell (2011), assert that children who actively participate in drama during preschool will have advanced intellectual development and the ability to think inventively. During role playing, young children create safe spaces in which they practice skills that they acquire during non-play situations. This is corroborated by Ailwood (2003) who argues that play allows preschoolers to assimilate information they are gathering from their environment into their minds and helps them to make sense of it. Song fosters children's learning and development (Chikutuma, 2013). In the same vein, Miranda, (2004) asserts that from birth, music is an intuitive form of communication between mother and child. Even the use of song facilitates the development of literacy skills in young children (Berk, 2009). Zembat and Zulfikar (2006), postulate that stories and tales have important effects in Mathematical concept development such as geometry, measurement and graphics abilities. Thus, without dramatizing, children's skills and knowledge would be lost.

Nevertheless, research (Diemont 2007; Mtukwa 2010; Ahirirwe 2012) indicates that there is insufficient evidence showing drama-in-education being used in Southern African schools. Educators are faced with challenges in implementing drama in their classrooms because drama is a specific subject that has its own framework, skills, and concepts (Diemont, 2007). So, most

classroom learning environments in preschools within and around Gaborone still involve learners sitting passively in their chairs during the course of their learning processes. Effective learning should strike a balance between theory and practice. Theory without practice suffers from verbalism/narration and practice without theory is unsubstantiated (Chinyowa, 2012). For most preschool classroom situations in Gaborone, the teacher status, relative to that of the ECD pupils, is high. This can be perceived as a barrier to the realisation of a more open, creative learning relationship between pupils and teacher which is needed in a drama process (Bowell and Heap 2001).

Chinyowa (2012) highlights that, much of Southern African educational practices in countries like South Africa, Zimbabwe and Botswana operate at a safe neutral level without the space for emotional engagement. Yet the notion that emotion plays a fundamental role in learning has been put forward by many educational researchers (Jensen 2008; Ahirirwe 2012). In view of the above background, the central questions in this research project are;

- ❖ How can drama-in-education be utilized as an effective teaching and learning strategy in early childhood education to equip ECD learners at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre in Gaborone with skills and knowledge needed to navigate the complexities of twenty first century?
- ❖ What are the potential benefits and limitations of using drama-in-education as a teaching and learning methodology in early childhood education at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre ?
- ❖ What are the key considerations and best practices for implementing drama-in-education as a learning and teaching methodology to prepare ECD learners in Gaborone for success in an interconnected global landscape?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Chapman and Hough (1998), Booth (2000), Botvin and Griffin (2001), O'Toole et al. (2005), Taylor (2007), Mtukwa (2010), Ahirirwe (2012) commend drama as an appropriate intervention tool. This study rests squarely on the same conviction because drama in education, like applied theatre practices, has the power to engage creatively, productively and meaningfully with a wide range of issues; from extreme poverty to AIDS, violence, sexual and racial intolerance and Human Rights (Boon and Plastow, 2004).

Since its invention by drama-in-education pioneers, exponents of drama-in-education have developed many drama-in-education techniques for various purposes. This study has expound on those drama-in-education techniques which have been of fundamental importance in the execution of this project. Bolton (1998) asserts that Dorothy Heathcote's pioneering work in drama-in-education in England was developed to stimulate student participation in the classroom. Heathcote (1995)'s teacher-in-role is used as a way to empower learners through active participation in their learning when they create roles for themselves. Bowell and Heap (2001) corroborate this when they note that process drama, particularly with teacher-in-role as a central strategy is a powerful means by which teachers can empower learners. The possibility that teacher-in-role could be one of the most effective ways of managing the power shift between teachers and pupils in the context of a fictional world is shared by this research project.

However, for this study, teacher-in-role was used as child/student initiated, teacher-directed and student-directed play-a way of empowering preschool learners to raise their level of understanding about topics explored in class (Miranda, 2004). O'Neill (1995) posits that drama-in-education gives access to "dramatic elsewhere", in which students become empowered when they experience new roles and fresh relationships. This research focused on how the safety of

drama in education through the creation of “dramatic elsewhere”, distancing, framing and role playing, works towards the deeper grasping of concepts taught to pre-school learners in a class at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre in Gaborone, Botswana.

Kramer (2014) carried out research with children and adults at early childhood education institutions in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil to identify interactions between adults and children to rethink the teaching practice in pre-school. Kramer (2014)'s research in Rio de Janeiro is related to Chikutuma (2013)'s study on the quality of early childhood development programmes in Harare primary schools in Zimbabwe. Both studies recommended the training of all stakeholders in early childhood development management and organisation. Chikutuma (2013) argues that parents must be invited as resource persons when teaching certain concepts in order to improve the quality of ECD programmes. This study critically analysed drama as an effective teaching tool in early childhood development education in Botswana in order to improve the quality of ECD teaching methodologies.

University of North Carolina's Abecedarian early childhood intervention programme showed that children who received an enriched drama-oriented early childhood programme had higher IQs at the age of 5 than comparable group of children who did not get a play-oriented programme (Johansson and Samuelsson, 2006). In the same vein, Too (2012) asserts that play is an activity that leads to development in children. This is corroborated by Ailwood (2003), who highlighted that children learn best when they act upon their environment and construct knowledge for themselves. During the course of this research project, children used to perform with real objects which were symbols for something they would have experienced directly or indirectly as part of their short dramatic skits in class to enhance their level of understanding.

Maundeni (2013) carried out research on the accessibility of early childhood care and education by children from disadvantaged backgrounds in Botswana. Until recently, early childhood care and education in Botswana was mostly offered by the private sector (Maundeni, 2013). This made early childhood care and education to be very expensive and inaccessible for less privileged children in Botswana. Maundeni (2013), concludes that early childhood care and education in Botswana is a necessity that is accessible to a few children. Whilst Maundeni (2013)'s study explored accessibility of early childhood care and education in Botswana, this created a knowledge gap about the efficacy of drama-in-education as an effective teaching methodology in early childhood care and education in Botswana.

2.1 Theoretical overview of drama-in-education / edutainment

The theoretical framework of this study is underpinned by, and attempts to answer the research questions through the lens of Dorothy Heathcote (1975)'s drama-in-education principles. The general philosophy behind Heathcote (1975)'s drama-in-education theory is; “I hear and I forget. I see and I remember. I do I understand” (Confucius). This informed the study's process drama principles that were used as an active participatory teaching methodology.

The overriding objective of drama-in-education theory is to encourage learners' participation in their learning. Leading drama educators, O'Neill (1995) and O'Toole (1992) assert that role play is a central element in drama-in-education. Drama-in-education encourages learners to have a practical engagement with knowledge. It emphasises the importance of a change in understanding through make-believe. In order for this to happen, role play becomes central to drama education. This study is informed by drama-in-education both as theory and practice. The drama teacher must build the play using what children already know and select dramatic elements that suit the learners' needs. A fundamental characteristic feature of drama-in-education is symbolic or make-believe play.

Cameron (2003) notes that drama-in-education is a framed activity where role creation allows learners to behave “as if” they are in a different context and to respond “as if” they are involved in a different set of interpersonal relationships. This pedagogy relies on imaginative creation to develop fictional lived experiences. The development of a fictional world allows learners to explore ideas in a safe space of their creation. In this case, a state of belonging actively to both the real and the fictional world becomes make belief. Boal (1982) defines this as “metaxis”. As early childhood children play some dramatic roles in class, they put themselves in other people’s shoes which enhances their understanding of themselves, others and concepts learned in a classroom set-up. This study is informed by the drama-in-education theory to establish how process drama can be effectively used by educators as a teaching method at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre in Gaborone.

2.2 Theoretical overview of social cognitive theory

The other theoretical framework of the research project is grounded in Bandura (1986)’s social cognitive theory. According to Bandura (1986)’s social cognitive theory, students’ behaviors are influenced by their environment, social interactions and the ability to respond emotionally to stimuli. In terms of behavioral patterns, social cognitive theory considers a number of factors that interact to influence a person’s overall self-perception. Bandura’s social cognitive theory underpin this study’s theoretical framework because the three factors that influence students’ behaviors (environment, social interactions and ability to respond emotionally to stimuli) will be adopted to inform the participatory aspect of the research project.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study falls within the qualitative action research paradigm. This approach was appropriate for this study because, it enabled the researcher to examine opinions, feelings, values and behavioral patterns of Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre teachers and learners with regard to the use of drama-in-education as leaning and teaching methodology. The qualitative action research paradigm is participatory, and this means that the researcher had an opportunity to take part in a series of drama-in-education classroom workshops at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre with ECD teachers and learners.

The research project adopted a case study research design. It was conducted at the Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre because the preschool is strategically positioned at the demarcation between Gaborone city’s Block 7 low density suburbs and Mogoditshane high density suburbs. As a result of its strategic site, the preschool enjoys a relatively bigger catchment area, with learners from different socio-economic backgrounds. The Mogoditshane Child Development Centre is an English Medium preschool that uses English as a medium of communication. This made communication easier during drama-in-education classroom lessons with both learners, teachers and the researcher because despite different backgrounds, all participants were English speakers. The Mogoditshane Child Development Centre’s catchment area covers parts of the City of Gaborone and Mogoditshane high density suburbs. Drama-in-education classroom workshops were conducted and digitally recorded within a period of six months with fifteen preschool learners and three ECD teachers at the child development centre.

This research project was carried out in four (4) phases, conducted over six months. The first phase was the brainstorming stage, where pre-schools or ECD centers using elements of drama-in-education as teaching and learning methodology in Gaborone were identified over a period of one (1) month. The second phase was exploration of the elements of drama-in-education employed as learning and teaching tools by identified ECD centers and resource mobilization over one (1) month. The third phase was participation and execution of ECD drama-in-education

classroom workshops at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre over a period of three (3) months. The fourth phase was the write up of the research project over one (1) month.

3.1 Teacher-in-role

This is one of the drama-in-education techniques which played a pivotal role in the execution of this research. "In process drama, the teacher frequently needs to take a role in the drama herself. This is known as teacher-in-role...." (O'Neill, 1995:46). Thus, teacher-in-role is a process convention and teaching strategy where the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre teachers managed their class from within the drama by taking a role to deepen and extend ECD students' inquiry and learning.

In the same vein, O'Toole (2012) defines teacher-in-role as when the drama leaders or teachers take part in role themselves. He or she can help to control what is happening in a crowd scene by finding a way that will make the drama more tense and exciting. For example, one can come into a scene with an unexpected message. During drama-in-education classroom workshops at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, the teacher/facilitator assumed a role in the dramatic world and related to pupils as that role in the drama rather than a teacher (Ahirirwe 2012). The effectiveness of teacher-in-role resided in the skill of the teacher and her ability to solicit participation from a group of ECD learners used to conventional passive learning. The teacher's usual position of authority with all the answers was subverted by becoming an ECD fellow explorer involved in solving challenges posed in the fictional dramatic world created by the whole class.

After using teacher-in-role, especially in the "hot seat", the ECD teachers made it very clear to the class the moment they stopped being teachers and started to take on a role. ECD teachers used a simple prop like a hat, bag or scarf to indicate this (O'Toole 2012). Gustave Weltsek (2005) describes teacher-in-role as one of the most effective ways to distance the teacher (researcher) from the position of authority and remove obstacles from the student (participant) exploration.

Concurring with the above, Howell and Heap share the same conviction that, "Process drama, particularly with teacher-in-role as a central strategy is a powerful means by which teachers can empower learners" (2001:52). At the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, through teacher-in-role, the teachers suspended their usual positions of authority and fountainhead of knowledge by choosing a role which was vulnerable. This left ECD learners/participants confronted with the decision-making, problem-solving and team working necessary to resolve the central dilemma of the drama. Thus, ECD drama-in-education participants' thinking processes were enhanced and responded to the stimulus of the teacher-in-role. At the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, drama-in-education equipped teachers as facilitators to choose roles during the course of the drama classroom workshops, which enabled them to throw the ECD pupils back into their own resources, decision-making processes about singing, rhyming or signing.

The possibility that teacher-in-role could be one of the most effective ways of managing the power shift between teachers and ECD pupils in the context of a fictional world is a view shared by this research project. Teacher-in-role as a process and not an end product was used in this research as a tool to shift the power structure between ECD learners and their teachers as facilitators / educator during classroom learning.

The advantage of using this technique is that, "teacher-in-role enables the teacher to operate strategically from within the drama and so negotiate and renegotiate circumstances within the fiction in order to enhance learning opportunities" (Howell and Heap, 2001:55). Hence, teacher-in-role changes the relationship of the facilitator to the participants and allows the facilitator to control the process from within (Ahirirwe, 2012).

3.2 Interviews

This study used hot seating as an interview technique to gather data. The fifteen pre-school learners who took part in this research were aged between five and six years and they were old enough to speak English and follow instructions during the drama-in-education classroom lessons. The three ECD teachers who participated in the study had specialised in either drama, music or theatre. Only the three ECD teachers and the researcher assumed roles during hot seating in the improvised performances and answered questions whilst in role. Roles were hot-seated individually. For this research, the hot seated character would take the centre stage on a chair in front of the class in a circle. Questioning at this stage was crucial and the type of questions asked were not close-ended questions. These were questions which could not be answered by a 'Yes' or 'No'. It was encouraged that only the ECD teacher took on the roles to be hot seated, whilst the researcher guided the questioning in a constructive direction by posing open-ended questions which provoked the hot seated role player's imagination in order to get more information.

Much of the data for this research was gleaned from answers to hot seating questions. It was hoped that the ECD teachers' emotional engagement through this experience would enable learning to ECD learners. ECD learners were regarded as knowledgeable role players while the researcher took different roles as facilitator, catalyst, observer, participant or both during hot seating sessions.

3.3 Participant observation/Action learning

Participant observation refers to the gaining of understanding of participants through first hand observation of their activities while participating in the process as facilitator or while in role. Reeler (2005) suggests the following structure to an action learning process: action, reflection, learning, and planning. Under action, the researcher-participant carried out a pre-planned interaction which encouraged participation, during reflection he described the events and looked for significant responses or activities from ECD teachers and learners. This study will be informed by the highlighted two items.

During the course of the research project, the researcher was involved in a number of drama-based learning activities with pre-schoolers at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, such as drama, music/song, sing alongs, dance and rhymes. Thus, the researcher also became a teacher-in-role, who encouraged ECD learners to take part in role playing, whilst gaining understanding of participants through first hand observation of their activities in the drama-in-education classroom workshops as facilitator or while in role.

3.4 Freeze-frame (Tableau)

O'Toole (2012) describes freeze-frame as where the class as a group or sub-groups creates a physical image to illustrate a particularly important moment in the drama that they can look at, compare and discuss. The tableau is also known as frozen picture or frozen frame (O'Neill 1995). It involves creating an image using participants' bodies by a small group who then present it to the rest of the class. The function of the tableau is to arrest attention and demonstrate their perceptions of the drama world. O'Neill (1995) contends that the tableau helps learners at the beginning of process drama to release first animation impulses on the drama. The ECD teachers at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre used the tableau as a warm up that enabled the teacher to find a starting point or initial impulse for participants to engage with the drama.

During the ECD drama-in-education classroom workshops at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, the tableau did not have a specific meaning and did not commit ECD learners to particular meaning as it was polysemous, or had multiple meanings and

interpretations. Taylor (2000) argues that the tableau is an ideal tool in the initial stages of playmaking. For this research, the tableau was also a way of finding out how ECD learners would project themselves into the drama. The freeze-frame also had value in enabling ECD learners and teachers to reflect on their work.

However, Neelands (1984) posits that the use of tableau lacks the tension of the ongoing drama, therefore making it less effective as a focus device. During the course of this research, I would argue that, using tableau served the purpose to break out of the frame of reality and act as a point of initial entrance. It helped the ECD learners and teachers to become members of the dramatic world. The physical embodiment of the dramatic events deepens the experience of the drama.

3.5 Research journal and video camera

Taylor (2000) describes the researcher as a theory generator, critical thinker, risk taker and flexible facilitator. The research journal and video camera were very effective resources and research tools which helped the researcher to meet the above-mentioned description. For this research project, the journal documented the researcher's analytical individual response and critique to the work covered during ECD drama-in-education classroom workshops at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre. The researcher also digitally recorded observations, difficulties and individual developments in the ECD drama-in-education classroom workshop using a video camera. The journal and video camera helped with basic documentation to support future plans and actions in order to improve the processes of subsequent ECD drama-in-education classroom sessions. Based on reflections of previous ECD classroom workshops at the Centre, drama-in-education theory was consulted to support alternatives for blunders encountered during the course of the research. Description, analysis, theory and self-reflection were major components of the researcher's journal. The researcher's journal and video camera were of fundamental importance during the research period because they assisted with future referencing and data analysis after the ECD classroom lessons.

3.6 Ethical considerations

Participants for this research project were minors who were aged between 4 and 6 years. Hence, at the beginning of the research project, permission to work with minors was sought from the Ministry of Basic Education, Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre Principal, parents/guardians and other concerned teachers. Moreover, the research methodology was shared with the three participating ECD teachers through an explanation of how drama-in-education classroom research workshops were going to be conducted in the participant information sheet, and they gave their consent. The researcher obtained a human research ethical clearance from Limkokwing University of Creative Technology, Gaborone campus before embarking on the research project.

Although confidentiality cannot be guaranteed in group research processes, the researcher promised to respect principles of anonymity with the information that was gathered during the research project. No names of any respondent were published without prior permission from the pre-school authorities or parent and guardians of participants. Protection of respondents was also ensured so that participants were protected from physical discomfort, personal embarrassment, intrusion or any other form of danger.

4. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Freeze-Frame (Tableau) as a drama-in-education teaching methodology at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre

The overriding objective of the first drama-in-education classroom / lesson was to create group identity in the EDC drama-in-education classroom workshop through knowing each other and the creation of classroom rules and regulations. The second objective was to introduce the concept of dance and music which was the theme of the workshop. By the end of this workshop, ECD learners were expected to be able to introduce themselves to the class through name, song and dance/action. The name, song and action were introduced as a warm up game. Each of the 15 ECD learners was given an opportunity to get into the circle to introduce themselves by taking centre stage to sing, dance and shout out their name. This was done starting with the teacher demonstrating the game. Lepp and Zorn (2002) describe the circle as an old tradition of equality, and a democratic form of communication. In the same conviction, this first ECD drama-in-education classroom workshop used the circular formation as a symbol of unity, harmony, fellowship and connection as learners explored dance and singing through the introduction of their respective names.

Name, song and action game was the starting point for all the 5 ECD classroom drama-in-education workshops conducted at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre in order to prepare preschool learners to engage in “the dramatic elsewheres” that were about to be created (O’Neill 1995). Singing and dancing before shouting one’s name to the class was of fundamental importance during the course of this workshops because it forged a connected group from fifteen learners who attended the class together (Boal 1992). In the same vein, song and action/dance as warm up served to support ECD group members apart from building group identity. Thus, for this first ECD drama-in-education classroom workshop, song, dance/action and the name game were used as ensemble-building activities to encourage open learning and risk taking in the learning process.

Taylor (2007) argues that in order to use applied drama practices effectively as a communication tool, they must be built on an existing cultural base. This was proved by the introductory phase of this drama-in-education classroom workshop where ECD learners enjoyed singing and dancing one of the most popular dances in their community. Instead of sticking to their planned songs and dances, ECD teachers at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre also encouraged ECD learners to sing and dance freely, because Taylor (2000) argues that a teacher should be open minded, flexible and work collaboratively with the learners.

One of the three ECD teachers at the Centre who facilitated the use of free-frame during the first drama-in-education lesson remarked that;

The name and action game made ECD learners laugh and become relaxed. Such singing, playing and name exercise which also involved us as teachers and helped our pupils to develop a sense that we are all in this together and it made the learning environment democratic and welcoming (ECD Teacher 1, 2018).

It was evident during the name and action introductory game in ECD drama-in-education classroom workshops that, sing along tunes and dances are an essential teaching and learning methodology at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, because the energy and the joyous mood among ECD learners was a true testimony that it appealed to all the five senses of most learners. The researcher observed that, most ECD learners at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre could easily remember content that was taught in song and dance. Music during drama-in-education classroom workshops at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre introduces rhythm, rhyme, vocabulary and punctuation among ECD learners. Songs help children express

and regulate emotions. After engaging in dancing and singing, even some shy ECD children were motivated to join in the name and action game. According to Bandura's (1986) social cognitive theory, students' behaviors are influenced by their environment, social interactions and the ability to respond emotionally to stimuli. Bandura (1986)'s social cognitive theory is very important to this research project because it addresses the research project's first question. The three intertwining factors that influence students' behaviours in class (environment, social interactions and ability to respond emotionally to stimuli) were experienced during drama-in-education classroom research workshops with ECD learners at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre.

These remarks align with O'Neill (1995) who asserts that through freeze-frames, participants have the liberty to use their bodies to express feelings and emotions about any given subject matter. During the first ECD drama-in-education classroom lesson at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre, freeze-frame was used as a type of class introduction that promoted equality among ECD teachers, researcher and ECD learners, because they were introduced more cordially by a personal touch of identification of one's real name and less by status identifiers such as profession or place of residence (Lepp, 2003). The three ECD teachers, myself and the fifteen ECD learners had an opportunity to make a body movement and sound. Those fantastic body movements/languages and sounds were accompanied by individuals' real names. The whole class would repeat the action of the leading person and shout out his or her name, before the next participant took over. Due to the peaceful classroom environment created by free-frame, some ECD learners who were reluctant to take part in the 'Name and Action' game became confident and were given another chance later when they were more prepared. This was acknowledged by the second ECD teacher at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre who highlighted that;

For this very first classroom lesson during the first week of the term, the tableau enabled us as teachers to find the starting point or initial energy for ECD pupils to engage with any subject matter here in class. At the end of the drama-in-education lesson, we can also use freeze-frame as a way of finding out the ECD learners' understanding of things taught (ECD Teacher 2, 2018).

This concurs with O'Toole (2012) who describes freeze-frame as a drama-in-education teaching technique that can be used effectively to express information around many subjects. The researcher also noted that, use of traditional and cultural songs in class instilled moral values, identity and language development among ECD learners. Music during drama-in-education classroom workshops at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre was also used for transition between activities, helping ECD children to maintain focus and structure.

4.2 Teacher-in-role as a drama-in-education teaching methodology at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre.

Among the attributes of a researcher that Taylor (2000) puts forward is storytelling. Hence, the major objective of this workshop was to introduce the concept of storytelling to the ECD class through teacher-in-role. After a warm up exercise (name and action game) designed to energize and create focus, Mogoditshane Child Development Centre ECD teacher 3 asked the ECD learners to sit down in a big circle since it was storytelling time. She sat in the centre of the big circle, removed her hat and put on a pair of spectacles to signify that she was assuming the role of a storyteller. She did that in line with O'Toole (2012) who reminds us that when teachers are using teacher-in-role, they need to make it very clear to the group the moment they stop being teachers and start to take on a role. Putting on the pair of spectacles and the removal of her cap helped ECD teacher 3 in building the belief among ECD learners that it was now storytelling time. At this moment, most ECD learners were surprised. Their curiosity helped the ECD teacher to draw their attention, and start telling the biblical story of Noah.

After telling the story, there was reflection on what the story of Noah was all about. It was noted that the moral lesson of Noah's story was the importance of following instructions and working together as a community. Dickinson argues that; "Stories, whether they are claimed as true or not, are capable of encapsulating meaning beyond their literal content" (2009:336). Based on the few ECD learners who retold the story, ECD teacher 3 was convinced that the learners had grasped all the major events in the story. The class was divided into three groups of five learners so that each group would choose an interesting moment in the story of Noah and come up with improvised scenes which they would present to the class. Group A was facilitated by ECD teacher 1, group B ECD teacher 2 and group C was facilitated by myself as the researcher. ECD teacher 3 was the co-ordinator of the second ECD drama-in-education classroom workshop. Thus, the story of Noah's ark was used to determine the first moments of each group's action, establishing location, atmosphere, roles and situations (O'Neill 1995). In the improvisation, main roles like Noah, his wife, friends and community members were expected to be clearly shown.

4.3 Presentations and reflection

Before group improvisations, it was ensured that participants who were in the same group during the previous ECD drama-in-education classroom lessons worked with difference members for this session. This was done to encourage tolerance for others and the ability to work collaboratively in groups among ECD learners. During presentations, participants whose groups were not performing watched the other group's presentation. The improvisers were the last to reflect on their performance, describing and explaining the roles portrayed. Neelands (2004) argues that during an improvisational drama, participants turn abstract ideas into concrete representations. This was evident during reflection when ECD learners who formed part of the audience managed to associate some roles from the story of Noah with some aspects of their lives. Corroborating this, Jens (2007) notes that reflection helps participants to reflect on their participation and to formulate how the experience relates to other aspects of life.

Personal observations during the course of this ECD drama-in-education classroom lesson opened my mind to the belief that there are many building belief strategies (pre-texts) which a facilitator can use singly or in combination to ease participants into the dramatic world (Johnson and O'Neill, 1984). For this session it was possible for me to combine storytelling and teacher-in-role as part of the pre-text. However, some ECD learners in Goup C seemed confused when they saw me putting on a pair of spectacles as the teacher-in-role because they did not know the technique. Thus, I also learnt that the employment of too many strategies can overshadow the overriding theme of process drama. There is need to select one appropriate strategy and then manipulate dramatic elements such as tension, time, irony, mime and space accordingly to ease ECD learners into their respective roles. Hence, the effectiveness of a pre-text depends on its simplicity (O'Neill 1995). After the second drama-in-education classroom lesson, ECD teacher 3 asserted that;

A combination of teacher-in-role and storytelling has been an effective tool through which ECD storytelling sessions have been effectively conducted here at Mogoditshane Child Development Centre. We also use puppet shows and short skits to teach moral lessons, problem-solving and emotional expression. Dramatic activities enhance confidence, creativity and group participation (ECD teacher 3, 2018).

Concurring with this, Wortman (2008) suggests that stories are 'sticky': they stay within the minds of the participants in ways that facts often do not. As such, storytelling has potential beyond being a tool to engage ECD learners' attention, with the possibility to influence their personal behaviour. This power is recognized as a tool for social and individual change (Parkin 2004; Wortman 2008). During the course of this research project, Dorothy Heathcote (1982)'s drama-in-education theory guided the ECD teacher-in-role classroom workshop structure that was designed to help ECD

learners and teachers create a safe dramatic world to explore their own behavior and other people's behaviors and suggest possible solutions to challenges.

In the same vein, ECD teacher 2 from group B had this to say;

At Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre, we also use puppet shows and short skits to teach moral lessons, problem-solving and emotional expression. Dramatic activities enhance confidence, creativity and group participation (ECD teacher 2, 2018).

The above-mentioned idea is in line with Ahirirwe (2012) who acknowledges that teacher-in-role changes the relationship of the facilitator to the participants and allows the facilitator to control the process from within. Observation, indicated that, through educational play, most group B ECD children learned to collaborate, negotiate and develop empathy skills essential for lifelong learning during week 3, after having played dramatic roles in short dramatic skits in class.

The study noted that, through the use of its various techniques such as teacher-in-role and free-frame, drama-in-education has vast potential to be used as an effective teaching and learning tool in early childhood education as opposed to the banking concept of education. The capability of most of drama-in-education techniques such as dance, song, music, rhyme and role play to elicit empathy and allow for the exploration of situations from different perspectives has a major bearing on the enhancement of self-esteem and the development of healthy decision-making skills in early childhood education systems at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre. The democratic and inclusive atmosphere created by drama encourages communication as does the various modes of communication-verbal debate, questioning, non-verbal embodied modes, and drawing. Teacher-in-role and free-frame enhanced the ECD learners' ability to say things they could not verbalise, to express their feelings and emotions freely and do things they would feel uncomfortable doing in other contexts.

With the belief that action, as opposed to intellectual theorising is the way to effective early childhood education, this research showed how the safety of drama-in-education through the creation of "dramatic elsewhere", distancing, framing, role playing, music and dance works towards raising the level of understanding by early childhood learners.

Suspension of disbelief set early childhood learners at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre free from their real-life worries; hence learners were free to engage with the drama. Boal (1982)'s "metaxis", a state of belonging completely and simultaneously to two different autonomous worlds enabled ECD learners' engagement with process drama. Sustaining two different worlds simultaneously enabled learners to role play and watch themselves at the same time. Drama-in-education's simple role-taking was used to give pre-school learners ownership of the classroom processes and a positive attitude towards any given topic. Ownership meant the shift of power structure within the classroom so that infants were able to question and negotiate for answers without fear of violating the teacher's authority. This ownership was stimulated by drama-in-education techniques such as teacher-in-role that worked towards engaging early childhood learners at an emotional level.

This research found that music, dance and teacher-in-role are the overarching drama-in-education techniques essential for early childhood learners at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre to be able to negotiate, and make sense of what they learn in class.

5. DISCUSSION

By and large, under teacher monitored conditions, teacher-in-role could be one of the most effective teaching strategies of managing the power shift between educators and ECD pupils in the context of a fictional world like the biblical stories of Noah, Jesus and David. Teacher-in-role

improved participation among ECD teachers and learners at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre during the drama-in-education classroom workshops, because it is experiential and process-based teaching methodology where the teacher manages a class from within a drama by taking a role to deepen and extend learners' inquiry and learning (O'Neill, 1995). This is learning through playing (edutainment), and it taps from drama-in-education theory and Boal (1982)'s metaxis. The fun and joy associated with play wielded the power to absorb and move ECD participants to another state of being. Once they would have attained the sense of freedom created within play frame, ECD learners felt liberated from fears, constraints and obligations of ordinary reality (Heathcote, 1975, Bolton, 1995). The consequences of learners' actions during musical theatre workshops were camouflaged within the paradox of play (Chinyowa, 2005). It amplified participants' emotional engagement in the learning and teaching processes during the course of this research project. It enhanced ECD learners' empowerment and emotional expression around a number of subject areas.

On the other hand, Taylor (2000) argues that the freeze-frame / tableau is an ideal tool in the initial stages of play-making. For this research, the tableau was also a way of finding out how ECD participants would project themselves into different roles in the world of the play. Whilst freeze-frame helped CDE learners' to manage group dynamics, it did not stimulate all the senses of learners into the learning processes. During ECD drama-in-education classroom research workshops at Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre, freeze-frame also had value in enabling participants to reflect on their work.

5.1 Implications for Theory

The theoretical framework of this research project is underpinned by three theories; social cognitive theory (Bandura, 1986), drama-in-education theory (Heathcote, 1975) and theatre for development (Boal, 1982). Heathcote (1975)'s drama-in-education theory is the main theory for the study. This research project will be guided by three theories, because it is a participatory action-led research, which combines theory and practice (drama-in-education classroom based research workshops). Drama-in-education theory and theatre of the oppressed theory will mainly guide the practical aspect of the research project, whilst social cognitive theory theory compliment the theoretical component.

5.2 Implications for Management, Policy and Practice

Due to the complex nature of role play within process drama, the facilitator / teacher / researcher took cognizance of ethical considerations so that pre-school learners were not exposed to any physical harm or psychological embarrassment during and after the lesson. The paper concludes that the ability of the facilitator to notice the mood and energy of the group and decide on the appropriate tasks calls for high levels of attention and flexibility during a drama-in-education classroom lesson. As a result, this research noted that edutainment is essential in early childhood education, particularly at the Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre.

This research project highlight the logistical and financial constraints encountered by Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre management and ECD learners in preparing drama and role-playing activities. The process at the preschool was time consuming and Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre pre-school lacked costumes and properties.

Findings call for efforts to conduct lessons in early childhood education experientially through drama-in-education as a teaching strategy. This research recommends early childhood schools and education authorities in Botswana to explicitly consider drama-in-education as an effective early childhood teaching methodology in the 21st century. This paper concludes with a strong

plea for the inclusion of accredited drama and theatre pedagogical courses in pre-school teacher-training colleges.

5.3 Implications for Future Research

The pedagogy of drama-in-education tends to assume that a change in understanding should happen within the learning context. This might not have happened with the 2018 group of early childhood learners at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre in Gaborone. This is because there is no applied drama and theatre framework for monitoring and evaluation as yet, like those in the social and physical sciences, to gauge the effectiveness of drama-in-education as a teaching tool in early childhood education. The arts industry is ill-equipped when it comes to monitoring and evaluation. There were no indicators to point at tangible outcomes after the project, when the objective was dealing with a teaching and learning methodology used by three ECD teachers with a group of fifteen pre-school learners. Teaching and knowledge acquisition is a complex process. There is a possibility that perhaps early childhood learners at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre may have enjoyed a good time during the “edutainment” process rather than a serious and committed engagement with the learning of topics covered during the course of this research.

In addition, generalising results from a case study of one private English medium school’s early childhood programme might be misleading. The fact that this research was carried out with learners aged between five and six years from one private English medium school’s early childhood centre does not mean that its findings may be generalised to the broader early childhood education system in Botswana. Early childhood education teaching methodologies in English medium pre-schools in Gaborone, for example, may be different from those in Francistown and Setswana medium pre-schools in Botswana. The qualitative drama-in-education analysis of the focus group has the potential weakness that misinterpretation (bias) may occur.

Moreover, another limitation was that the study did not allow time for impact assessment and research project follow-up on the effectiveness drama-in-education during the ECD classroom lessons. There was limited time within which this research had to be carried out with some workshop meeting times re-scheduled owing to clashes of commitment with the preschool authorities. The drama-in-education classroom research workshops/lessons which were of fundamental importance to this study were carried out in a short space of time. Since teaching and knowledge acquisition is a process and not an event, the classroom interaction needed ample time so that new insights could take effect among early childhood learners. However, even if there is need to take cognizance of the limitations of this study, such limitations were acceptable especially, in terms of the overall aim of the research.

6. CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to explore how drama-in-education is used as an effective ECD teaching methodology at the Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre in Gaborone. This study noted that teaching methodology coupled with the choice of appropriate teaching content influenced the quality of the ECD children’s level of understanding at the Mogoditshane English Medium Child Development Centre. The findings demonstrate that drama-in-education is particular to early childhood learning and teaching, and resonates with critical pedagogy in which learning and teaching are child centred. Teacher-in-role and freeze-frame were critically analyzed to find out how they could be used as effective teaching and learning tools to enhance the level of understanding among pre-school learners between five and six years at the Mogoditshane Child Development Centre in Gaborone. The choice to work with early childhood scholars was motivated by the fact that it is during this early stage of human development that humans begin to form independent decisions towards the world they live in which is complex.

Findings indicate that teacher-in-role and freeze-frame require the presence of a facilitator(s)/teacher(s) for process drama to have a major impact in stimulating higher levels of understanding and the enhancement of positive self-esteem in early childhood learning. It was noted that the effectiveness of the drama-in-education classroom lesson resided in the skill of the facilitator(s)/teacher(s) and his/their ability to solicit participation and encourage dialogue among individual early childhood learners with different perspectives so that diverse options could be explored. Rooth (1995) warns us that, facilitation/teaching is not merely a technique for running class room lessons, but a belief that knowledge is gained through participation in the class room rather than assuming that the teacher knows everything while students know nothing.

7. REFERENCES

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