

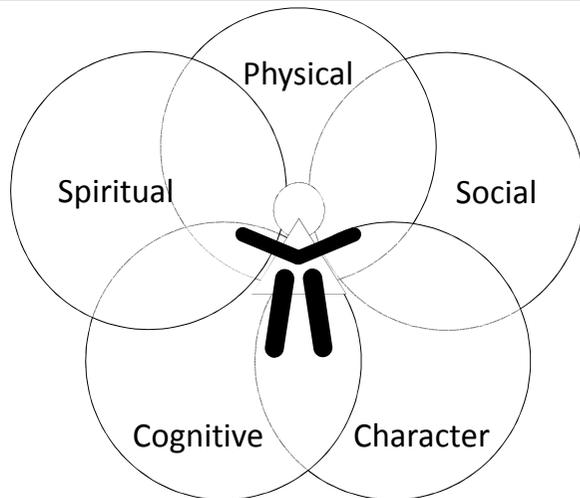
Importance of Drama in the Development and Education of the Child

Dr. K. A. Korb
With: Akolo A. James
University of Jos

Outline:

Importance of drama for...

- Physical development and health
- Social development
- Character development
- Cognitive development
- Spiritual development
- Impact of Television (as Drama) on Children's Development



Holistic Nature of Children's Development

- **Physical** movement is linked to brain development
 - "Children need to jump, run, swing, throw, and balance to become intellectually competent" (Trawick-Smith, 2014, p. 353)
- "There is a growing body of scientifically based research supporting the strong impact that enhanced **social** and emotional behaviors can have on success in school and ultimately in life" (Zins, Bloodworth, Weissberg, & Walberg, 2007, p. 208).
- "What matters most in a child's development, they say, is not how much information we can stuff into her brain in the first few years. What matters, instead, is whether we are able to help her develop a very different set of qualities, a list that includes perseverance, self-control, curiosity, conscientiousness...**character**" (Tough, 2012, p. xv)

Physical Development and Health

- Children's participation in drama can foster:
 - **Gross motor skills:** Dramatic games
 - **Fine motor skills:** Finger plays, Story drama, and Puppets
- Conventional dramas (troupe, puppets, teacher-led and child-led) can teach knowledge and skills in a) Personal hygiene, b) Nutrition, c) Health, and d) Safety by:
 - Demonstrating the negative consequences of bad practices
 - Modeling good practices

Social Development

- Conventional dramas can teach social skills
 - Importance of a specific social skill
 - Models of how to apply a specific social skill
- Participating in drama enables children to develop the following social skills:
 - Interdependence
 - Cooperation
 - Sharing
 - Mutual respect
 - Conflict resolution skills
 - Empathy
 - Patience

Social Development

- Cultural Awareness and Understanding
 - Drama and dancing can expose children to other cultural groups
 - Drama can help children learn the value and strengths of other cultural groups

Character Development

- Character skills developed by participating in drama
 - Following rules
 - Discipline
 - Obedience
 - Self-control
- **Feedback on Character Flaws and Strengths:** During dramatic plays, children express their views about other children. This can lead to conflict but also provides feedback to children on the flaws they have needing correction or adjustment

Character Development

- Conventional dramas can teach about important character traits such as honesty, social responsibility, integrity, and hard work
 - Model character traits
 - Illustrate the negative impacts of bad character
- Dramatic play allows children to act “as if” they have good or bad character, and learn the outcomes
- Story dramas can help children act out good or bad character and their outcomes

Cognitive Development

- Research has found that children ages 3-8 years who participate in drama have higher academic achievement (e.g., Barry, 2010)
- The younger children are exposed to drama, the stronger impact drama has on development
- Drama in early childhood education can ease the transition into the new school environment

Cognitive Development: Thinking Skills

- Participation in drama:
 - Improves abstract thinking and symbolism by requiring “as if” thinking
 - Symbolism is very important for formal education as the foundation for understanding sounds, letters, and numbers as the symbols for objects, words, and quantities
 - Fosters greater critical thinking and problem solving skills
 - Improves creativity

Cognitive Development: English Language

- Drama gives many opportunities to use and practice language
- Research has found:
 - Children who engaged in more dramatic play at age 3 had larger vocabularies and better oral language skills
 - Drama was more effective than textbooks in improving English language skills
- Drama improves reading, writing, and verbal skills
 - **Oral language:** All types of drama
 - **Print awareness:** Written materials in Drama Centres
 - **Vocabulary knowledge:** All types of drama
 - **Comprehension:** Story drama
 - **Phonemic awareness:** Finger plays

Cognitive Development: Social Studies and Religious Studies

- Social Studies
 - Children can dramatize historical events, principles of economics, and topics related to culture and family
 - Make abstract concepts practical and “alive”
 - Dramatic Play Centres can be used to help children understand social situations (e.g., Food-Is-Ready)
- Religious Studies
 - Drama or Puppets can be used to dramatize stories in religious studies
 - Role play can be used to help children understand how religious principles should be put into practice

Cognitive Development: Mathematics and Science

- Mathematics
 - Symbolic play develops skills in counting, classification and patterns
 - Dramatic Play Centres with economic themes fosters understanding of number (e.g., Market, Food-Is-Ready, Bank)
 - Teachers can discuss aspects of children’s play that have mathematical themes (e.g., how many customers are in the Food-Is-Ready)
- Science
 - Dramatic Play Centre can have Science Themes (e.g., Science Lab, Farming, Outer Space)

Spiritual Development

- Important stories from the holy book can be dramatized
- Drama can provide models for children to imitate and/or avoid
- Conventional dramas/puppet shows can teach children spiritual practices (e.g., prayer, worship)

Television’s Impact on Children’s Development

- **Academic: **Educational**** TV can improve knowledge of numbers and letters
 - Non-educational TV viewing in early childhood leads to lower grades in secondary school
- **Cognitive:** TV viewing can lead to delays in cognitive development, and poor executive functioning
- **Language: **Educational**** TV can improve vocabulary
 - There are no other language advantages of television, and non-educational TV can harm language development
- **Physical:** TV increases body mass index (BMI), leads to obesity, and leads to delays in gross and fine motor skills
- **Social:** Higher TV viewing leads to higher aggression and lower social skills

Television's (as Drama) Impact on Development

Media and Young Minds
American Academy of Pediatrics
<http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/138/5/e20162591>

- Well-designed television programs, such as Sesame Street, can improve cognitive, literacy, and social outcomes for children 3 to 5 years of age
- Unfortunately, most “educational” media (on television and apps on computers and phones):
 - Have no evidence of improving children's development
 - Target only rote academic skills
 - Use little or no input from developmental specialists or educators.
- **NOTE: Cartoons are NOT educational media**

Reducing the Harmful Effect of Screen Media on Children's Development (Canadian Paediatric Society, 2017)

<https://www.cps.ca/en/documents/position/screen-time-and-young-children>

• 3 M's

- **Minimize:** Digital media (TV, computers, handsets, etc.) should be minimized
 - Children under 2 years should not be exposed to media (except for video chats)
 - Children 3-5 years should consume less than 1 hour of ****educational**** media each day
 - Non-educational media should be avoided by all children
- **Mitigate:** Adult or older responsible child co-views digital media to mitigate the risks of digital media usage
 - Ensure the child watches educational programming
 - Explain the difference between fact and fantasy
 - Explain right and wrong behavior
- **Model:** Adults should model healthy use of media
 - Turn off screens that are not being used
 - Schedule media-free family time