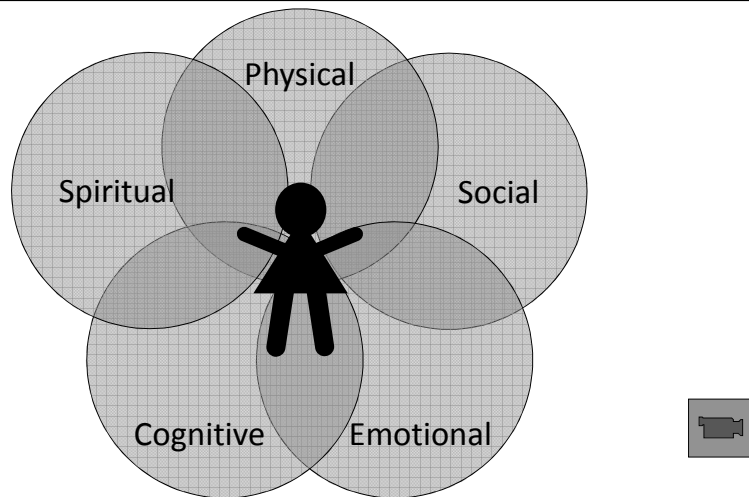


Importance of Drama in the Development and Education of the Child

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Outline: Importance of drama for...

- Physical development and health
- Social/emotional development
- Cognitive development
- Spiritual development
- Children with special needs
- Impact of Television (as Drama) on Children's Development



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
- 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

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Communication skills:** it helps children develop communication skills:
 - **Listening:**
 - In dramatic plays, it is important to note that children argue a lot of the times, but not to the extent that they don't listen to each other.
 - In conventional Theatre and puppetry, one skill actors and audience learn is to truly listen. When children are either actors or members of the audience, they are trained to listen.
 - **Speaking:** Speaking up (and with the right intonation, inflections stress for emphasis etc) is an essential aspect in the social development of children. Through the use of dialogue both scripted and improvised, children can learn to speak and appropriately for that matter.

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Interdependence:** Drama in education promotes a situation where children learn to allow other children contribute to them as well they contribute to them. This entails
 - Sharing whereby they give of their time, abilities and some other material possessions.
 - Mutual Respect: of opinions and personhood.
- *** Note: the word used here is interdependent which discourages isolation in the guise of independence or being a liability in the guise of "no man is an island". Children must be brought to truly understand these concepts.

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Conflict resolution skills:** Most often, children disagree in their dramatic plays. And most often, they reconcile themselves. Also, conflict resolution themes can be scripted in conventional Theatre or puppet shows.
- **Feedback on Character Flaws and Strengths:** During dramatic plays, children express their opinions about other children as honestly as possible. Sometimes, this leads to conflicts but it does provide a feedback to children on the flaws they have needing correction or adjustments.
- **Law and order:** By setting rules for their plays and by being encouraged to follow rules of conventional theatre and puppetry show, children learn to be law abiding citizens which is pro-social.
- **Empathy:** The child can genuinely feel what other children feel and hence, understand with them.

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Expression and Catharsis**(the process of releasing, and thereby providing relief from, strong or repressed emotions) of Inner Desires:
 - a mechanism whereby children can cope with specific sources of real life tension (Peller, 1952).
 - The child is able to resolve inner conflict and anxiety.
 - Example The child frequently finds it easier to express his/her inner and half-understood experiences when wearing a disguise like an animal costume or sometimes just a hat (McCaslin, 1981).

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- Development of self Concept: By playing some roles and doing well in them, a positive self concept is developed especially, in an atmosphere of a conducive and free environment.
- It helps a Child to distinguishing Between Reality and Fantasy, an imaginative predisposition which helps children to integrate the two states of mind more effectively, enabling them to think more clearly, building up a more realistic view of themselves and the world.
- Helps Children to accept Negative emotions such as anger, fear and doubts as real and then, to be able to deal with them. An Example is "The Bear Hunt Story."

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)
- Block play is powerful in developing foundational mathematics and science principles

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

- Understanding the concepts of virtue and vice, good and evil and with proper guidance, they can learn to embrace the good and virtue, while they strive to avoid evil and vice.
- By learning of characters in spiritual books through drama, children can be provided appropriate role models for their spiritual development.
- The concept of prayer which edifies can be taught through drama in education.

IMPORTANCE OF DRAMA IN ECE TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

- Pantomime, a dramatic entertainment in which performers express meaning through gestures accompanied by music can be used to teach the hearing impaired;
- Drama in early childhood can sustain the attention of children with ADHD to be engaged in learning.
- Speech therapy for those who are deficient in it.
- Movement (psychomotor) therapy for the physically challenged
- Drama in ECE helps children with special need channel areas of abilities to positive use instead of focusing on areas of disabilities
 - TED talk anecdote of Cobhams Asuquo (a visually impaired singer, instrumentalist and music producer) Ted Talk on how “dramatic play” (although he did not use the term) helped him to:
 - Not to wallow in self pity
 - Trust

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, and use little or no input from developmental specialists or educators.

Television's Impact on Development

Media and Young Minds
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- Many research studies show associations between excessive television viewing in early childhood and cognitive, language, and social/emotional delays.
 - This may be due to decreased parent–child interactions when the television is on and poorer family functioning in households with high media use.
- The following predict poor executive functioning in preschoolers:
 - The earlier children begin to use media
 - Greater cumulative hours of media use
- For children younger than 2 years, there continues to be evidence of harm from excessive digital media use

Television's Impact on Development

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- Heavy media use during preschool years is associated with small but significant increases in Body Mass Index (BMI), and sets the stage for weight gain later in childhood.
- Increased duration of media exposure and the presence of a television, computer, or mobile device in the bedroom in early childhood has been associated with fewer minutes of sleep per night.

Television's Impact on Development

- Actors on television are role models for young children
 - This can be a positive or negative role model
 - Therefore, parents and teachers must monitor what children are watching on television
- Young children do not generally understand what is happening on television
 - Young children need to interact with an older individual through discussion to understand what they are watching on television, including:
 - What is real and what is imaginary
 - What is right and what is wrong

Recommendations for Children's Media Use

American Academy of Pediatrics

<https://www.aap.org/en-us/about-the-aap/aap-press-room/Pages/American-Academy-of-Pediatrics-Announces-New-Recommendations-for-Childrens-Media-Use.aspx>

- **Younger than 18 months:** Avoid use of screen media other than video-chatting.
- **18 to 24 months:** Only high-quality programming. Parents should watch it with their children to help them understand what they are seeing.
- **2 to 5 years:** 1 hour per day of high-quality programs. Parents should watch television with children to help them understand what they are seeing and apply it to the world around them.

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- **6 and older:** Place consistent limits on the time spent using media, and the types of media, and make sure media does not take the place of adequate sleep, physical activity and other behaviors essential to health.
- Designate media-free times together
- Have ongoing communication about online citizenship and safety, including treating others with respect online and offline.