



## Approaches to Educational Drama as a Creative Field of Learning for Young Learners in Uyo, Akwa Ibom State

### Abstract

This paper examined the three different approaches to educational drama which are: Creative Drama and Play-making, Drama-in-Education and the integrated approach. These combined approaches provide creative learning avenues or sources for young learners. The objective of Creative Drama and Playmaking is to give each child an avenue for self-expression, creative imagination and the aptitude for a controlled emotional outlet. This paper employed a qualitative methodology using a practice-led experiments with selected pupils in selected schools in Akwa Ibom State as a means of applying this knowledge. The findings from this research revealed the relevance of using educational drama in educating Akwa Ibom children on the values of Ibibio Indigenous materials/culture as a viable learning process for children in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

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### Introduction

Existing literature on drama suggest that as a medium of learning and as a powerful transformational tool, Drama has been discovered to be a useful tool of learning especially with children in early childhood because it engages learners using their personal thoughts, feelings, and ideas in the learning processes, either curriculum wise or in informal processes (Cecily O'Neill, 2006; Dragović & Balić, 2013; Lin, 2010; McCaslin, 2006; Victoria Brown, 2017). The creative processes identified with using drama touches not only on the physical aspect of the

learners but also the cognitive, social, and psychological aspects and brings transformation in various ways (Dawson & Lee, 2018; Goldbogen, 2020; Johnson, 2019; Lorenzetti & Kruger, 2020).

Carrol as cited in Henry, 2000:50, opines that "drama expands the 'parameters of what can be seen as legitimate knowledge', giving freedom to experience and explore the issues of human concern and intellectual inquiry." Using drama as an approach to knowledge sharing especially with young learners involves actions in the form of play, which is the language that

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children understand. It allows a space for making inquiries, exploring, and engaging at personal levels (Ozbek, 2014). Drama could be described as an activity that has already been a natural part of most young children's lives before formal education begins. Drama gives children the opportunity to step into a make-believe and fictional space to understand their environment. Farmer (2011:1), posits that drama:

Gives children the opportunity to explore, discuss and deal with difficult issues and to express their emotions in a supportive environment. It enables them to explore their own cultural values and those of others, past and present. Drama allows learners to think and act creatively thus developing critical thinking and problem-solving skills that can be applied in all areas of learning.

There are numerous practitioners in the field of creative drama and educational drama, but it is expedient to consider the praxis of the three pioneers (Ward, Slade, and Heathcote). I will look at their creative approaches from a constructivist point of view that is adaptable for the use of drama in the context of this paper.

### **Educational Drama as a field of study**

Educational drama as a field of study and practice is said to have arisen from and depends upon several underlying and interwoven constructions of children, women, and theatre arts established during the Victorian and Progressive Era (Woodson, 1999:1). The eighteenth-century enlightenment according to Woodson brought a change in the way society constructed both childhood and the child. Alice Minnie Herts-Heniger is

reported to be the early founder of the field of study, and she wrote a book on child drama, *The Kingdom of the Child* with connections to Christian religion. Thus, the field of child drama was founded as a spiritual, socializing, democratic, and educational force, endorsed and adopted the construct of the child as holy and sacred (Woodson, 1998:2).

Educational drama became characterized as a "new" discipline that related more to education than to classic theatre practices. Child drama practitioners, teachers, and advocates were highly influenced by the prevailing construction of theatre as a democratic, patriotic, and positive social influence in this era (Clark, 2020; Lloyd, 2014; Pañares & Cabangon, 2016).

Educational drama grew in a complex climate of gendered and classist practices, patriotism, and progressive social reforms. That is why the women (Emma Sheridan Fry, Alice Minnie Herts, and Constance D'Arcy Mackay) who founded the child drama movement gave democratic and educative principles primacy over artistic principles of theatre. Woodson (1998:6) notes that Herts had characterized child drama as a "new" educational discipline as early as 1911. In 1930 Winifred Ward wrote that improvisational theatre with children was the "new subject-one that has a valuable contribution to give to education".

Educational drama is different from adult drama because it is purely used as a creative activity for children to learn (Nda, 2012). It is through the creative process of engagement that consciousness is impacted, understood, and experienced. Educational drama is a

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participatory activity because participants are given the free space to create, express ideas and explore situations that are imaginary but impactful. Children's learning is already full of discovery because it is natural for them to be inquisitive, inventive, and explorative. Discovery is an important aspect of child drama because through imaginary situations learning occurs by role-play, dramatizing and improvising situations.

The interest in using drama as an educational and learning medium began in early 1900 in Britain and spread across the world. The person to first experiment with drama by encouraging pupils to write and perform their own plays was Harriet Finlay-Johnson. Johnson felt that the value placed on the product, which was the result, should not be by adults' standards, but should be valued in terms of the pupils' experience and needs. Henry Caldwell Cook (1886-1937) also adopted this approach and termed it The Play Way (1919). Cook saw dramatic activity as a method of teaching. To him, play was a natural way of learning for the young child.

Though drama was first recognized in 1921 in Britain, its existence in different parts of the world, including Africa, cannot be denied. The child-centered drama approach to education became prominent in the 1960s. It became a norm in education and Peter Slade came into prominence with what he called child drama. He saw this art form to be different from adult performance in the theatre. It was a state of being (Online Drama, 2020). In this way child drama becomes a form of expression of the self, realization and actualization.

Urian (2011:143) notes that "recognition of drama as an active educational field, distinct and unique, only began in the 1940s with Peter Slade and "child drama", aimed at an educational concept with the child at its center.

"Development through drama" was the next step, in which a dramatic program began to coalesce, aimed at assisting and supporting the development of the child. This approach structured dramatic creativity as an organized process, beginning with relaxation techniques and ending in improvisation of dramatic situations (David & Way, 1981). In the 1970s attention was diverted by Gavin Bolton and Dorothy Heathcote, from the "child at the center" concept back to the 1920s approach of Harriet Finlay-Johnson, who had attempted to teach many subjects by means of dramatic activity (Bolton, cited in Urian 2011:142).

The new practice was labeled with different terms based on different arts or practice. 'Dramatic approach', 'creative learning', 'creative drama', 'creative dramatics', 'developmental drama', 'curricular drama', 'improvisational drama', 'education drama', 'informal drama', 'drama in education' or simply 'drama' are terms that have been used or are still in use (Woodson, 1999). "Existing literature suggests that drama offers several opportunities for educators to promote learning and development such as engaging, motivating and empowering learners to be active agents in educational settings" (Yule, 2017:278). Research in Educational drama evolved with the work of Ward (1930), Peter Slade (1954), Brian Way (1967), Gavin Bolton (1986), and Dorothy Heathcote

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(1995). Ward sees child drama as a playmaking and a learning process. Slade sees child drama as play and Heathcote regards child drama as a creative and educational group activity. The work of these practitioners has been, and continues to be, instrumental and influential around the world in how drama can be used as a cross-curricular approach and in an informal context (Ewing, Hristofski, Gibson, Campbell & Robertson, 2011; Faux, 2017).

### Different Approaches to Educational Drama

Educational drama is an umbrella term for a wide range of strategies and approaches to the use of dramatic activities as a learning tool. The application of different approaches, according to subjects, discipline and context could result in different purposes and outcomes of creativity (Pinciotti, 1993; Tam, 2016). Drama has been valued as a learning medium since 1930 with its emphasis on development and learning according to Lin (2010:109).

There are three different approaches to education drama. Creative drama proposes the development and support of self-actualization of learners. Drama-in-education uses drama as learning medium that involves the creation of a dramatic environment where children learn by playing roles and using dramatic techniques. The integrative approach is an integration of the first and second approach to educational drama.

Practitioners of creative drama focus on the development of the whole person through drama. Winifred Ward, Peter Slade, Brian Way, Nellie McCaslin, and Blatner are the prominent

practitioners of this approach (Collins & Maxwell, 2017; Ozbek, 2014). Ozbek (2014:51) identifies the objective of this approach as “to give each child an avenue of self-expression, guide his creative imagination, provide for controlled emotional outlet, help him in the building of fine attitudes and appreciations and give him opportunities to grow in social cooperation.”

The second approach, Drama-in-education, uses drama as a teaching and learning medium. Nda (2012) states that “the formulation of the basic idea of employing dramatic activity as an effective method can also be attributed to Cook’s approach as stated in *The Play way dramatic Method*”. Others prominent practitioners of this approach include David Farmer, Joe Norris, Cecilia O’Neill and Dorothy Heathcote. Heathcote for example used the concept of drama as a means of exploring and learning for young learners. Drama-in-education seeks to deepen children’s understanding of themselves, others, and the world they live in as they build an improvised drama through a process of group interactions and self-explorations (Kukla, 1987:73). Dorothy Heathcote is observed to be the pioneer because her practices and theory distinguishes her from using drama as an art form.

The third approach, the integrative method combines both the first and second approaches as a method of engagement. Bolton has been identified as a forerunner in this field. This approach has two goals:

The first one, as in drama in education, is that the objectives of chosen curricular subject are the centre, the goal becomes the outcome at the end of

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the lesson while the second kind of goal is related to personal development, such as improving empathetic understanding and critical skills, reinforcing positive self-concept, increasing self-awareness and awareness towards others and promoting communication skills and the ability to work cooperatively. (Ozbek, 2014:53)

### Prominent Practitioners and Approaches

#### Creative Drama and Playmaking: Winifred Ward

Winifred Louise Ward began her career by directing plays, teaching, reading, drama and literature and physical education in the public school of Adrian, Michigan from 1908-1916. She received her Ph.D. in Education from the University of Chicago in 1918 and accepted an appointment in the Faculty of North-western School of Oratory (Communication) where she settled and built the rest of her career (Collins, and Maxwell 2017, Ozbek 2014, Johnson 2019).

Collins & Maxwell, (2017:23) categorize Ward as one of the progressive education movement writers who had been influenced by the writings of John Dewey, Kilpatrick, Rugg, Shumaker and Hughes Mearns who promoted the education of the whole child. This influenced her to seek for more engaging ways of reaching young learners. Being surrounded by stories from a young age would prove to have an effect on Ward's own teaching philosophies.

She is known as one of the pioneers of Creative Drama, a teaching and learning approach that encourages creativity, speechmaking, dramatic activities, and literary appreciation. In

1924, she was appointed as supervisor of the creative dramatic curricula of the Evanston public schools. She later founded the Children's Theatre of Evanston and the National children's theatre conference in 1944. Ward retired as an assistant professor from North-western University in 1950. Her outstanding publications including *Creative Dramatics* (1930) and *Playmaking* (1947) and has attended and presented at many conferences both locally and internationally. She anchored two programmes; creative drama in schools for the purpose of encouraging creativity and speech and literature appreciation, and the Children's theatre of Evanston for the purpose of entertainment and appreciation of theatrical arts.

Her theories and philosophy are rooted in the progressive education movement of the 1930s. She believed in the education of a whole child; understanding himself/herself as well as the society to which they belong. Ward's method emphasized storytelling with dramatic elements that grow from non-verbal movement, pantomime, and tableaux into reflective activities. She told stories from poems, literature, fairy tales and folklore, myths and epic sources from American India and Irish stock. She guided the children to develop plays out of their own thoughts, imagination and emotions for personal experiences and reflective learning. After sharing a story first, the students would take on roles from the story to portray the characters. She focused on reflections through play as an approach for learning (Online 2012, Wiginton 2012). Ward trusted that story dramatization offered plentiful opportunities for creative expression

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through analysis, interpretation, and structuring of the story into a dramatic form. Creating a drama based on a work that contained literary merit and important moral values held greater educational potential. Analyzing and dramatizing stories that featured characters whose experience and perception differed from their own fostered empathy in her learners (Collins & Maxwell, 2017:26).

Ward's method relies heavily on the dramatization of linear stories, fables, and legend with an emphasis on both process and product. The importance of "playmaking in education" is seen as a progressive manifesto for modern education, the call to encourage playmaking in any progressive classroom (Wiginton, 2012:154). Her crusade was for an educational theory that promoted freethinking and creativity in children are fostered by the progressive educational goal to educate the whole child. Ward described the process of playmaking as having both personal and social values. It unites intellect and emotions, and it has curative opportunities and values.

To Winifred Ward, allowing children to express themselves is an important factor in their everyday life. Hence, in her book, *Playmaking with Children from Kindergarten through Junior High School* (Ward, 1957:1), she begins Chapter One, The Art of Playmaking with this sentence: "What children do is more significant to them than what they see and hear". She uses 'playmaking' as a term interchangeably with creative dramatics, which she defines as an inclusive expression designating all forms - story dramatization, impromptu work in pantomime, shadow and

puppet plays, and all other extemporaneous drama (Ward 1957:3).

Playmaking is an informal drama created by the learners themselves. She further shares that "playmaking has dynamic potentials for use in education for children" (Ward 1947:26). To Winifred Ward the following processes are considered as the principles of working with children: Children should work under guidance, not dictation of the teacher, the children democratically choose the play, develop the scenes, and improvise dialogues. Through drama, children learn by what John Dewey calls "meaningful experience". Children are encouraged to think independently and creatively. Children are educated for social living through their submergence in, and sympathy for the characters in the play. Drama helps children to grow in emotional control, as well as in intellectual and physical efficiency.

She clearly listed the objectives of playmaking as avenues of the child's personal experiences in the process as follows:

- i. To provide for a controlled emotional outlet,
- ii. To provide each child with an avenue of self-expression in one of the arts,
- iii. To encourage and guide the child's creative imagination,
- iv. To give young people opportunities to grow in social understanding and co-operation,
- v. To give children experience in thinking on their feet and expressing ideas fearlessly (Ward (1957:3).

According to Wiginton, (2012:153), Ward posited "playmaking

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as a distinct art form, different in both theory and practice from conventional theatre training and dramatic appreciation". Ward saw drama as a tool to create knowledge and through her work with children shared her experiences and dedicated her life to children and learning. She was convinced of the power of drama to create new ideas and knowledge.

### **Child Drama: Peter Slade**

Peter Slade's (1912-2004) motivation for child drama and play was driven by observing children on the street with keen interest, concentration, and fulfilment as they played in their spaces with different objects. This formed the foundation for his philosophy on child drama (Casson, Online 2020). He is one of the early practitioners in the field of child drama and has been one of the leading pioneers of educational drama and drama therapy (Dodds, 2004; Jackson, 2012; Lloyd, 2014; Pitruzzella, 2017; Slade, 1999). He has been recognized for his book, *Child Drama*, published in 1971. He played a significant role in championing the cause of child-centered learning and is seen as one of educational drama's pioneers.

Jackson (1988:153) describes Slade as a tireless practitioner and campaigner on behalf of educational drama, children's theatre, and drama therapy. According to Jackson, Slade is recognized as one of the first to recognize that a child's instinct for dramatic play is a vital part of the process of "becoming a person" and for that reason to be nurtured and not patronized.

Slade further began using drama as a therapy to build confidence in

adults as well as in children and young people. He took drama to schools and developed drama training in colleges for teachers. From his observation of children playing freely, he developed his approach on projected play that involves children playing with objects as a way of helping to develop concentration in a child while playing. He also observed personal play that involved children playing with their whole body, which helps to develop confidence in what they are doing.

Slade believed that it is through play that each child's social awareness begins to develop. He further noted that the two early forms of play have an important part in building the personality of a child, and his ability to fit within the society. (Slade, 1971:35). The early forms of play develop into what he calls dramatic play, as the children develop when schooling begins. From his analysis and observations, he argues that "play is an inborn and vital part of a young life" (Slade, 1971:41). To him, play is the child's way of thinking, proving, relaxing, working, remembering, daring, testing, creating and observing (Slade, 1971:41)." He emphasizes that "it may well prove in future years that if play is the actual manner of a child's way of life, then play may be the correct approach to all forms of education." (Slade, 1971:42). This is the case currently as researchers in the field of drama, psychology and education are placing emphasis on incorporating play into learning methods for young learners (Connors, 2016; Nicolopoulou, McDowell & Brockmeyer, 2006; Singer, 2006; Water *et al.*, 2015).

Slade's main ideas about play learning and drama are "The full

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understanding of the difference between personal and projected play. Consideration that drama, properly regulated and understood, should be the basis of all education for the balance of a confident, expressive and healthy personality" (Slade 1999:254). He had much influence in setting up activities and programs that encouraged the use of drama as an educational medium. His focus was on allowing children to have the experiences of learning through a familiar way which is play, in play and through play. Emotional and expressive child's play is central to the new perspective on progressive education that focusses on child-centered learning. His influence is still felt in drama-in-education even in the 21<sup>st</sup> century because his theories are still relevant.

**Drama-in-Education: Dorothy Heathcote**

Dorothy grew up within a loving and supportive environment – one populated mainly by older women, who influenced her childhood (Davis, 2013; Johnson, 2019; NJ: Drama Australia Journal, 2011; Saxton & Miller, 2012). Heathcote is described as an ardent and avid learner who loved to read books because she was inquisitive about the world. Her interest areas were English, Geography and History including literature which became her dramatic source later in her career (Davis, 2013; Kipling, 2018; Klein, 2016). In 1945 at the age of 19, Heathcote began her actor-training and met Rudolf Laban and Esme Church who became an influence in her life. She studied Drama under the mentorship of Esme Church. She was a world-renowned teacher who revolutionized the use of Drama in Education through a variety of pioneering techniques. By the age of 24

she had become a lecturer at the Newcastle-upon-Tyne campus of Durham University, beginning a career that was to span 60 years. In that time, she became the inspiration and role model for generations of teachers across the world who recognised in her unique approach how to profoundly engage students and young people with their learning (NJ Drama Australia Journal, 2011:6).

Her approach include drama for learning, process drama and teacher-in-role which is an approach to teaching across curriculum in schools and other settings. This all began with her co-construction drama experience of working with a variety of students when she began her career as a teacher. In 1960s, Dorothy and Gavin Bolton developed the Mantle of Expert (MoE) approach that treated children as responsible experts to build their engagement and confidence in the learning process. They trained teachers who did not understand the concept of using drama in a learning process. She is said to be the pioneer of drama-in-education, an approach which was unorthodox yet an empowering approach to educational drama that inspires the use of the imagination by children and teachers working with children and young audiences. The NJ: Drama Australia Journal (2011:7) summarizes Dorothy Heathcote's strategies:

Dorothy created a whole school of drama practice based around the teacher shifting her pedagogy from that of an instructor to inductor, coach, facilitator, and fellow artist, recognising the potency for learning of a co-creative process in which learners are empowered. She created a vocabulary of

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terminology such as drama for learning, drama conventions, teacher in and out of role, secondary role, Rolling Role, Chamber Theatre, Frame, Signing, Mantle of the Expert and Commissioning that is now in the canon of world-wide dramatic teaching expertise and curriculum models pioneered by her deeply held mission to bring joy and challenge into learning.

Davis (2013:28) describes Dorothy Heathcote “an inspirational teacher who developed ways of working dramatically and collaboratively that demonstrated the ideals of many educational theories in practice. Her influence and legacy are particularly impressive when you consider her humble beginnings”.

She has been recognized as a central figure in international drama-in-education since 1970 and she is acknowledged by many as one of the great pedagogical innovators of the twentieth century. Heathcote has been a pioneer in developing ways to encourage learning through drama. Fulton, (2015:1) describes her as “a remarkable educator whose theory and practice have had a vital influence on the development of drama in education”. She has influenced many practitioners and theorists such as Gavin Bolton and Cecily O’Neill in the field of drama-in-education (Saxton & Miller, 2012:7). In the last thirty years, she has centered her practice on using drama as a learning process for learners of different categories. In her practice, drama became a context in which children were able to express themselves, but also gain knowledge to help find solutions.

Fulton (2015:3) categorizes Heathcote’s work in the field into three overlapping phases. She states that Heathcote believed that

Experience without reflection was unlikely to lead to learning and students are most engaged when they have a real voice in the work and when they co-construct the content. Her aim according to O’Neill was to build on the students’ knowledge and experience and to bring their existing understandings into awareness so that they became engaged in real learning.

Fulton (2015) describes the phases of her work as follows: In phase one, her practice was described as ‘living-through’ focused more on a double consciousness of immersion in the experience and self-spectatorship, combining engagement and distancing within the same context. Phase two was more curriculum focused which showed the use of depiction. It also includes the most important of her writing on the use of conventions. Phase three focused on the Mantle of the Expert, an integrative approach to the materials of the curriculum which is to prove the most innovative and influential of her contributions to drama and to education.

Over the years she has designed drama strategies and conventions called *Teacher in role* and *Mantle of the Expert* (Allern, 2008:321). Heathcote defines her Expert of Mantle (cited in Miller 1995:36) as, “sociological and anthropological systems of education (that) enables teaching and learning at all levels of the curriculum and integrates all areas through the contextual use of a dramatic metaphor. These elaborate systems of learning were developed based on

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artistic structures and conventions of the theatre. She introduced an important theory in the field of drama-in-education, known as *Teacher in role*, an important factor during process drama who guides the whole creative process by taking a role in an improvised world. Her use of “frame” and “mantle of the expert” are both strategies to bring about new perspectives (O’Neill, 1989:538).

Heathcote’s work is described by Bolton (1985:5), as “prismatic.” Her approach challenges the simplicity of context and allows for a state of mind which is both reflective and engaged in a dramatic process. Bolton (cited in Fulton, 2015:6) further says that Heathcote’s practice was:

Deeply drawn from her own philosophy of life, her intuitive understanding of the meaning of people’s behaviour, her astonishing skill in ‘reading’ other people’s behaviour, the meaning of their beliefs and the rules of their culture. Her creativity was drawn from the meaning of arts, literature and of education and indeed, of life.

Furthermore, O’Neill (1989:538) observes that the use of drama and teaching in role transforms the creative space into a space where something happens. As Heathcote puts it “the child enters the zone of circumstance permitted by the drama situation, and in shaping the circumstance’s future, the child’s future is shaped, ready to be available in the real society” (O’Neill 1989:538).

Cotton & Toft (2018:18) say that “Mantle of the expert was developed by Dorothy Heathcote and is described as a dramatic-inquiry based approach to teaching and learning”. This becomes a

creative approach in engaging learners in the curriculum using fiction roles to handle the subjects. When engaging in this process developed by Heathcote, learners take on fictional roles to engage in activities with the teacher. They interact among themselves while playing expert roles, imagining they are interacting with the fictional roles. Here learners are positioned by teachers as being knowledgeable and competent colleagues in the process of learning which allows them to inquire, wonder, explore and think about the subject of a lesson.

Allern (2008: 331) states, “Heathcote makes a decisive break in her ‘living through drama’, from Man-in-a-Mess to Mantle of the Expert which combines theoretical and scientific investigation with a performance”. She describes this as a type of role play where the entire class has collective roles. Booth (in Saxton and Miller, 2011:14) reports that Heathcote’s custom was to involve all the participants all the time in the creative process of roleplaying, reflecting, observing, listening, and building the drama together. It was her way of building the learning process around what created interest on the level of the learners and something that would challenge their young minds (Eriksson in Saxton and Miller 2011:25).

For Heathcote authenticity is the key to learning as the variance in her theory was that she believed that the experience should be a collective one and that an end performance was not necessary with drama but that using drama as a tool would promote holistic learning (Heston 2013). She acknowledged drama as a foundation of human knowledge that is personal,

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cultural, and universal. She sees the involvement of the participants in the making of the activity as more important than the result which is the product of the creative process. Her work still presides as a great influence in the world of drama- in-education because although some details of her practice may have been modified over the years, but what has not changed according to O’Neil (1989:539) is her commitment to drama as a medium of learning. The key purposes and essential characteristics of her approach to education have remained constant throughout her remarkable career (O’Neill 2015:6). Nonetheless, the pedagogy that Heathcote had been promoting since the middle of twentieth century resonates with the vision of twenty-first-century education in which critical thinking, collaboration, and cross-curriculum problem-solving are essential skills for future citizens (O’Neill 2015:5).

Furthermore, Heston (2013:79) says that Heathcote used drama as a tool to promote holistic learning in schools. Her approach provides children with ‘keys’ for learning, life and decision making.

**Process Drama (Heathcote, Slade, Bolton, Way and O’Neill)**

Process drama has its foundation on social-constructivist theories of learning. It developed under the influence of a number of practitioners in the field of educational drama. It emerged strongly in the United Kingdom through Dorothy Heathcote’s innovative teaching and was further developed by Peter Slade, Brian Way, Gavin Bolton, and Cecily O’Neill among others (Dias, 2013:31).

Bolton (cited in Dias, 2013:31) defines process drama as “engaging with something outside oneself using ‘as if’ mental set-in order to activate, sustain, or intensify that engagement.”

Process drama is a method of teaching and learning that involves students in imaginary, unscripted, and spontaneous scenes (Schneider and Jackson 2000: 38). Learners from the process of discussion and engagement create ideas during the creative process based on a topic or issue. It is an experience that allows the learners to use language, movement and role-play to create pictures from the ideas they have created via the creative space or drama. “A process drama is primarily based on improvisation, where participants take on roles within the fictional world that has been created out of issues and themes generated by the group” (Weltsek, 2005:76). The characteristics or features of process drama are:

- i. Emphasis is on students or learners experiencing new ideas through using different strategies within the dramatic or creative experience.
- ii. The themes or topics are explored through improvisation.
- iii. Participants and facilitator together develop, share and analyse the drama process.

Dias (2013:31) says:

Process drama is distinct from the theatre where students are cast in roles, often with a pre-existing script, and taught the craft of acting, script analysis, and play production. In process drama, by contrast, students co-create and collaborate through improvisation both in and

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out of role to explore problems, situations, or ideas.

Process drama is guided by four principles as outlined by Dias (2013:31), namely:

- i. Collaboration and co-creation; Collaboration involves working together, while co-creation elevates this by jointly developing something new, deeply involving diverse learners sharing the same learning process from concept to creation, shifting power, and focusing on shared value and the importance of networking.
- ii. Role-playing and positioning; Role-playing is a learning or training techniques where participants act out scenarios in a safe, simulated environment to develop skills, gain experience, and understand different perspectives. Role-playing and positioning refers to two related concepts primarily used in training, education, psychology, and sports to describe how individuals assume and operate within specific characters or physical/social locations.
- iii. Improvisation and emergence; Improvisation is a spontaneous creation, while emergence is the process where complex patterns or structures arise from simple interactions with activities at hand. They are deeply related; improvisation *generates* emergence, especially in dynamic settings like music, art, drama or business, as unplanned actions

build into novel outcomes, revealing new strategies or collaborative possibilities not set by a master plan, moving beyond traditional rigid models.

- iv. Feedback and reflection; Feedback and reflection are crucial, interconnected processes for learning where feedback provides external insights and reflection is the internal analysis of experiences to understand learning, change understanding, and plan improvements, turning information into actionable steps for development.

The teacher co-creates dramatic situations with learners using improvisation and a reflective process to explore and construct ideas. "Process drama advocates learning about life through dramatic methods and it is participant -oriented with the group being co-collaborators with the facilitator to help shape the drama" as described by Water, McAvoy, and Hunt (2015:50). Process drama focuses on participant learning as its cores process of co-constructing and collaborating new life skills and lessons in the process of exchange.

In process drama, the learners or participants learn via the fictional or creative process and it is a participatory process that involves individual learner's contribution to the process. It is described by Yule (2017:278) "as a tool that explores a problem, a situation, theme or series of related ideas or themes using the artistic medium of unscripted drama." Process drama is seen to have its roots in dramatic play, which is a dynamic way of learning for

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developing children in every culture in the world (Allern, 2008). This creates an environment for learning new knowledge and skill based on the experience of the learners via the creative process and environment created (Yule 2017).

Burke (cited in Yule 2013:278) observes that process drama's distinguishing factors (from theatre) are its use of role-play to include participants/ learners in the educational environment by having them act as if they are someone else in a given situation with a "particular focus and purpose. Process drama opens the possibilities of learning through imagined experience according to Neelands (cited in Hulse & Owens, 2019:19). It offers a rich opportunity for dramatic creations between the learners and the teacher or facilitator of the process.

### **Creative and dramatic tools applied in the Experiment**

My practice-led sessions incorporated storytelling, improvisation, role-playing and process drama as part of its creative tools in the process of play-crafting from Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials with participants in this paper for a period of three months with children aged 9-12 years old. I will classify it under the integrated approach because it was a combination of both formal and informal streams as described in the third approach to drama engagement. The focus of the practice-led sessions was not the end-product but rather the process itself.

Lin (2010:109) says that drama offers a dynamic and safe learning context that nurtures possibility of thinking qualities such as innovation,

play, depth, development, and self-determination. The learning process is dynamic in three ways: physically, consciously, and interpersonally. In contrast to traditional learning, involving sitting, listening, and copying, for example, the drama process requires frequent body movement.

Being an observer participating in the creative process along with the participants guided me to agree with the assertion by Lin (2010). It became a personal experience of observing the children in an informal creative learning context that differed from their formal learning, and enabled them to express their hidden talents, thoughts and idea during the practice-led sessions. Taking participants through the processes of working with other participants, sharing ideas, and creating new knowledge in a playful atmosphere while learning about indigenous knowledge of their social context was imperative. The opportunity for participants to exercise their talents within an informal setting and drawing from their experiences provided the opportunity to interact with their social circumstance and indigenous language.

Applying Ward's theories of using warm up exercises, and planning and playing out scenes gave learners the opportunity for self-expression and helped to guide their creative imagination. Through play-crafting the participants could express their ideas and emotions. Slade proposes that children can create new ideas through play which is natural to a child. This allowed participants the free space to create new ideas of stories and role-play the characters from the stories. Participants were guided to create dramatic activities from Ibibio

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indigenous materials. Heathcote's theories and praxis of asking questions, solving problems, and sharing ideas using their own imagination came in handy during the role-play and improvisational sessions. By practically applying dramatic activities using indigenous materials offered an opportunity of reflecting about real life situations as guided by the facilitator. Using creative and dramatic activities in engaging young learners allows for the exercise of cognitive, physical, and emotional being of participants because drama gives an opportunity of using the whole being in a practical context for expression and learning.

This paper identifies the following outstanding dramatic tools: storytelling, role-play, improvisation, teacher-in-role, warm-up exercises and dramatic activities, which allow participants to construct new ideas and knowledge from Ibibio indigenous materials. Participants can create with confidence, express themselves, socially interact and problem solve in a creative way in a dramatic environment.

### Storytelling

Storytelling is an old art form that has been used for centuries (Hasey, 2016; Marunda-Piki, 2018). This allows for learning in a constructivist way because it involves cooperation and collaboration of all involved in the process (Barton & Baguley, 2014; Law, Lam, Law & Tam, 2017; Stinson & Freebody, 2006; Tam, 2016). Story telling serves as a powerful communicative medium that reflects the history, culture, origin, social, beliefs, religion, and ancestral wisdom of a people. It provides an interactive forum between the young and old and should be encouraged to continue as Nsereka

and Iyall (2018:520) recognizes that "folktales are a medium of instruction in Nigeria". Stories specific to child audiences have always been used as character molding lessons to promote the social, moral, and cultural values of a society. Stories have been told to children in various ways and it helps them to learn about different themes, social issues, and the world (Walan & Enochsson, 2019) its roots in oral culture and is common to every culture, including that of the Ibibio people of Akwa Ibom State, Nigeria. McNaughton (2006:56) states that different cultures engage in storytelling as a form of teaching, learning, and understanding important happenings in society. Storytelling is a collaborative art in the social context which is constructivist in nature because it involves the storyteller, the listeners, and the social context in which it takes place (Halliss).

Storytelling allows participants to personally experience the creative process, constructing the experience and is shaped by the social and shared context with other participants. During the story telling sessions participants in this study were able to personally engage with the whole creative process of learning for three months. Participants could identify the moral lessons in the folktales. They demonstrated their understanding of the themes by creating new stories with the same themes. They also role-played the characters from their own stories using Ibibio language (though not fluent). This brought a new dimension of interpretation and interaction between the participants and I.

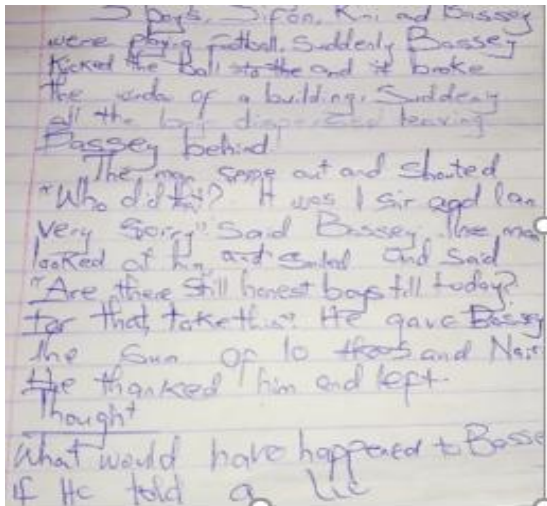
Participants were able to use Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials to construct new knowledge. They

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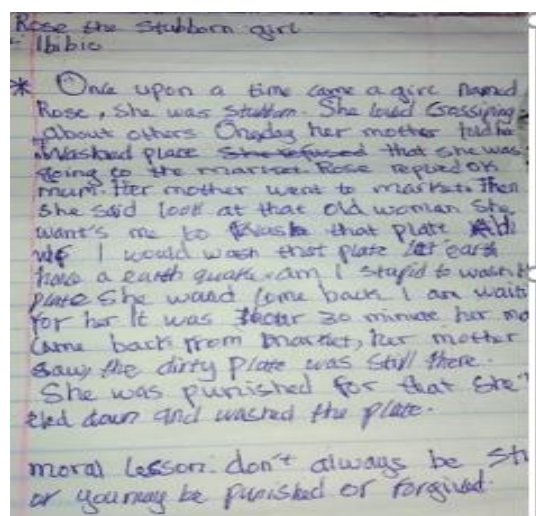
could recall themes, re-imagine the scenes from the old folktales and retell a new story, using their own words, experiences, knowledge, interest, language, and cultural contents. This indicates the importance of symbols and cultural experiences extracted from their own experience.

These are samples of stories written by participants in three groups as divided by the facilitator during the practice-led session on story writing:

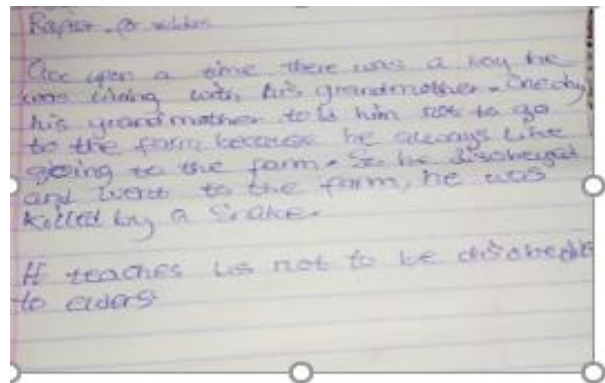
**Sample 1 for group: Reward for honesty**



**Sample 2 from group 2: Title: Rose the stubborn girl**



**Sample 3 for group 3: Title: Respect for elders**



Social constructivism views learning as an interactive activity where learning and meaning comes from interacting with other people and your social environment. Social constructivism assumes children as active and able to construct subjective meaning through interaction with others and engagement with their social and cultural context (Tam 2016:31). Storytelling allowed for this interaction between the participants in the same social context, to learn and understand from Ibibio indigenous knowledge materials or resources for the period of the research. They could identify and pick-up cultural symbols and words that speaks of Ibibio cultural values in the society.

**Improvisation**

Improvisation is often associated with "liveness or the experience and aesthetic of 'being in the moment'" (Sajnani, 2012:79). Sajnani (2012:80) further explains that:

Popular definitions of improvisation associate it with extemporaneous creation: an invention, performance or composition that is distinguished by the fact that it emerges without premeditation or rehearsals. It is in

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this way seen as a primary skill often used by an artist to push against boundaries of their own knowledge to generate insight and to create new works.

The play-crafting scenes brought out new ideas and actions from the participants which I found creative for 9-12-year-old. They took the risk of attempting to create beyond their imagination and everyday experiences. Improvisation means taking risks and pushing the boundaries to discover new capabilities and knowledge you never knew could exist. It is a highly creative process that delivers new ideas and knowledge for different purposes, especially in a creative space. (Holdhus, *et al* (2016:7) reiterates the definition of improvisation as “a process that unfolds while being invented”. It is a creative process focused not on the product but on the process as it unfolds. Most of such creations are unrepeatable or irreversible. It is a process that cannot be repeated in exactly the same way because it a created in the spur of the moment.

Improvisation is a collaborative effort in which participants create dialogue, action, and a story based on a concept or topic of interest or focus using movement and gestures as forms of communication in a fictional way. The description of the process of improvisation aligns with the result of the practice-led sessions on improvisations. Bertinetto (2011:95) describes improvisation as:

A process in which the invention is performed while the performance is invented. He identifies the following characteristics of improvisation as follows:  
Irreversibility: The creation process

cannot be corrected. Singularity: It occurs here and now and vanishes while it is occurring. Self-construction and self-reference: The subsequent actions affect and implement the significance of current actions. It leads to a process of feedback and reflection for the interpretation of already taken actions which creates a context of meaning.

It is propelled by reactions from previous actions to create meaning. Play-crafting produces spur of the moment scenes by participants during the improvisation session. Replaying the scenes brought out new ideas.

Participants had the opportunity of creating and co-creating improvisations from some Ibibio proverbs, games, and folksongs. They took turns to play the characters in the folksongs and proverbs. They could identify the symbols relating to Ibibio culture in the folksongs and enact the roles as guided by the facilitator. For instance, one of the folksongs meaning cockroaches do not dance before chicken because they become their meal if they fall into their trap, illustrating the theme of not being careless:

*Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro,  
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro  
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro  
Mfem oyoro oyoro oyoro  
mfim isiyoroke ke obio unen*

The lesson decoded from the song is always being on guard to avoid being abused or getting into trouble. Participants shared the knowledge of why it was dangerous for cockroaches (*mfem*) to be around chickens (*unen*). Applied to our daily lives it stresses the need to be careful and to avoid falling

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into wrong traps or company. They could relate with the cultural symbol of Ibibio and the need for safety in their own ways.

We also used the traditional game “*Nkpok Eto*”. This game illustrates the need for teamwork and cooperation among peers. They observed that each time one participant missed the opportunity of passing his stick used in the game the whole process was delayed. Participants were able to share the need to work together for progress in school, at home or wherever they work with others.

*Ase owo inua okop se etang* is one of the proverbs that we used. It is a proverb saying that when one pays rapt attention to a speaker you can hear clearly and obey instructions given. This proverb advocates the need to be attentive and focused.

### Role-playing

Role-play allowed participants to experience the story. They personally experience the characters they played. By role-playing the characters from their story, participants had the opportunity to express their views and ideas about what happens around them using Ibibio as a language. Speaking Ibibio was a challenge but they could identify and understand the importance of expressing themselves in their own cultural context. While creating the scenes from the songs, games, proverbs, and stories they also learned to work with, tolerate and accommodate other participants by working together. As Way (cited in David & Way, 1981:358) states:

Drama is about being articulate, developing our senses, drama is about feelings, one’s and those of

others. Drama is about learning about oneself and others so that one can respect oneself and others. Drama, linked with other forms of creative expression, allows youngsters to use the whole of themselves; senses, imagination, language, emotions, intellect to deal with those things which are necessary and mandatory in school.

Being able to create dialogue and movement from their experience was a way of co-constructing new knowledge. These improvisations from indigenous materials (proverbs, folktales and folksongs) were not scripted and there were no rehearsals, and they were able to create spontaneous actions and dialogues. They had a theme and had to invent stories from the themes through imagination and fantasy. The improvisation and role-play helped the participants to discover what they could do, imagine and create. It was done in a place where they were free to express themselves without fear because improvisation is about making discoveries spontaneously.

The play-crafting sessions became an experience that was rich and impactful because participants independently contributed by applying their imagination and reflecting on some values (teamwork, respect, hard work, honesty) identified in Ibibio society to create a story that reflected their concept of these values.

### Feedback and Reflection

By giving participants the opportunity to co-construct new knowledge from Ibibio indigenous knowledge means giving children the space to express themselves freely and make contributions to their society.

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Weltsek (2005: 81) calls this action, "Freeing students' voices". The process of co-constructing, improvisation, and role-play in a collaborative way was central to the practice-led sessions. The feedback session was also a moment of allowing participants to express their opinion and it was a learning process for both the facilitator and participants.

The following lessons stood out for them:

**Participant A:** *Ku usung iwot* (Do not be stubborn).

**Participant B:** *Ekpu kpan nke nkpo ku unam aba* (If you are corrected for being wrong, learn the lesson).

**Participant C:** *Ekpu dung utom ka* (If you are sent on an errand, obey).

**Participant D:** *Wana se anie ye owo mfem* (Share what you have with others).

**Participant E:** *Afid nnyin iminie se n ante inam ke idung nnyin* (Everyone is important in society).

**Participant F:** *Wam mme owo ke ini nfan.* *Kpono yong nie ime ye mme owo nko* (Help people when they are in trouble and always cooperate with and tolerate others).

Hornbrook (1991:9) posits that:

Drama is one of the keyways in which children can gain an understanding of themselves and of others, can gain confidence in themselves as decision-makers and problem-solvers, can learn to function collaboratively, and can explore- within supportive framework- not only a range of human feelings, but also a whole

spectrum of social situations and/or moral dilemmas.

Listening to the feedback and discussions of participants during the practice-led sessions agrees with the assertion above because they expressed how working in groups during the games, role-play and improvisation taught them the importance of sharing ideas and learning from one another. There is an Ibibio proverb *Eto kiet idaha ikpong ikapa akai*, meaning one tree cannot make a forest. We need collaboration, tolerance to learn from others.

### Conclusion

This paper considered the dramatic approaches to drama as an educational method. It also examined key practitioners in the field of educational drama who are viewed as pioneers of using creative approaches in engaging learners in both a formal and informal context. Drama has been found to be a powerful engaging tool that allows for learning as reflected in the theories and practices of leading practitioners. These theories are relevant to this study as they are basic, core and foundational theories in the field of child drama and drama for young learners. Through drama, we learn what it is to be a human being in a specific social and cultural context (Fulton, 2015).

In using drama as a learning medium, the focus and objective is allowing learners or participants to be completely engaged in the creative process. The creative process is based on dramatic activities that apply the learners' physical and mental involvement through role-play, games, and improvisation that allow for

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personal experiences in lessons they co-construct around issues identified for the learning process. Allowing them take ownership of what they are learning enhances their commitment to the process. "Through drama learners are encouraged to take responsible roles and make choices to participate in and guide their own learning" (Farmer 2011:1).

Drama as a medium of learning helps to develop some capacities and skills in the learners. It gives learners the opportunity to create or co-construct with the facilitator meaningful situations. They make use of their inner talents and it is a positive, joyful, and fulfilling learning process. Water, McAvoy and Hunts (2015:3) note that "drama is active learning. We learn through doing, exploring, and trying out, and by interacting with peers and our environment. The act of doing is what makes us lifelong learners."

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## African Union's Role in the Promotion of Good Governance and Political Development in Nigeria

### Abstract

The African Union (AU) has been pursuing one of its primary objectives of promoting democratic principles and institutions by ensuring good governance through the curbing of corruption, ensuring free and fair elections through monitoring of elections in order to ensure sustainable political development. It is uncertain whether the democratic approach has rubbed off on its anti-corruption initiatives, given the recent performance of most AU member states especially Nigeria on many global surveys of corruption, development and governance evaluation indexes. The paper, therefore, examined the extent to which the AU's stance on democratic promotion has impacted on political development in Nigeria. The integration theory was adopted as the framework of analysis for the paper. The paper is both qualitative and quantitative which relied on data sourced from questionnaires and interviews as well as secondary sources, while content analysis was adopted for data analysis. The findings acknowledged AU's efforts in promoting political development in Nigeria through its different anti-corruption and election monitoring frameworks. But in spite of the slight improvements of Nigeria on different corruption perception indexes, and fragile democratic system, corruption and electoral fraud still persists in the governance of Nigeria and many AU member states. The paper further shows inter alia that the AU's anti-corruption initiatives have not effectively reflected the adopted measures due to uncommon democratic practices in Nigeria. The paper contended that Nigerian government in collaboration with African Union should endeavour to uphold democracy in its purest form in order to ensure and sustain political development in the country

**Keywords:** Politics, Development, Governance, African Union, Nigeria.

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### Introduction

The trajectory of African development since its decade of independence tends to be a contradictory admixture of hope and despair. Undoubtedly, political

independence came with great expectations which were hinged on the dialectical permutation that the collapse of colonialism would usher in an epoch of unhindered national development. But that hope was quickly transformed into despair as African states became