

# **THE ROLE OF DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION IN THE ENGLISH SECOND LANGUAGE CLASSROOM**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*This paper focuses on a small scale action research project aimed at improving the oral communication skills of students registered for an English language proficiency course at the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University in Port Elizabeth (S.A), by exposing them to drama-in-education techniques.*

*The paper firstly provides a brief background to the students and their linguistic needs, explains how they were introduced to drama-in-education techniques such as role play, improvisation and frozen image building and presents an outline of the theatre-in-education production that resulted from their novel learning experiences.*

*Finally, the paper aims to highlight how the use of drama-in-education led to an overall improvement in the students' confidence, self-esteem and oral communication skills, thereby ensuring that they became active participants rather than passive recipients in the classroom.*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Students in the English second language class may not be active participants in the classroom, either because most of them have not acquired sufficient confidence to make contributions or the lecturer may not have created meaningful opportunities for them to use the target language in authentic situations.

If they lack the confidence to make contributions in the class, it is imperative that the lecturers strive to improve their confidence by creating opportunities, which will enable them to tap into their creative faculties so that they can use the language within authentic contexts. However, since this necessarily entails a paradigm shift on the part of many lecturers, they prefer the traditional approach as it enables them to be in complete control and furthermore minimises any disruptions that may otherwise occur in their classes. Consequently, the lecturer does all the talking whilst the students are expected to listen attentively.

The traditional lecture method or narrative approach is flawed, as it prevents students from using the target language (in this case English), thereby minimising their opportunities to speak the language, which is hardly ever used in their own authentic settings. If lecturers are, however, prepared to change their approaches to teaching and learning by experimenting with alternative methods such as co-operative learning, group work and drama-in-education activities, amongst others, they could effect meaningful changes and thereby ensure that their students become active participants rather than passive recipients.

It is with this background in mind that this paper aims to provide an outline of how the implementation of a drama-in-education project led to the overall improvement of the students' oral communication skills in an English language proficiency module at a university in Port Elizabeth (South Africa).

## **2. BACKGROUND TO THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PROFICIENCY MODULE**

The English language proficiency module is a compulsory module for all English second language speakers in the 4<sup>th</sup> year of their B.Ed (teacher education), PGCE (Post Graduate Certificate in Education) students and those students registered for the Diploma in Music.

Before the commencement of the lectures, all registered students are provided with an opportunity to firstly present themselves for an oral interview of about 20 minutes and thereafter to write an exemption exam to evaluate their English language proficiency. The written exam focuses on an evaluation of the students' reading comprehension, essay, transactional writing and summarising skills and the use of language within the context of authentic situations.

If a student obtains an average of 70%+ in the combined oral and written examination, he/she receives full exemption and obtains an H1 (Home Language Level) endorsement on his/her qualification which enables him/her to teach through the medium of English at an English medium school. Alternatively, students who achieve less than the stipulated percentage pass for exemption purposes, could either exit from the course if they obtain a pass mark of 50% or attend the classes from March to October so that they could obtain the necessary accreditation. Those students, who obtain less than 70% and opt to exit from the module, will experience problems with their endorsement, as they will receive an H2 (Second Language Level), which may be to their disadvantage if they hoped to teach at an English medium school. All those students who, however, obtain less than 50% have to attend the classes.

### **3. STUDENTS' BACKGROUNDS**

The students who presented themselves for the examination were from Afrikaans and Xhosa speaking backgrounds. Whilst most Afrikaans speaking students are relatively proficient in English as they tend to mix with English first language students, the Xhosa speaking students are less so, because they prefer to use the vernacular and tend to socialize and interact with students of their own linguistic group. Many of the Xhosa speaking students are also from rural backgrounds where English is hardly ever spoken.

A total of 70 students comprising 57 Afrikaans and 13 Xhosa speaking students presented themselves for both the oral and written components of the language proficiency exam. Whilst all the Afrikaans speaking students were able to meet the requirements for home language competency (H1), only three of the Xhosa speaking students were able to reach this level. The results indicated that of the Xhosa speaking group, seven obtained a mark of 45%, whilst the remaining three obtained a mark of 50%.

I thus commenced my English language proficiency class (PLCE 101) with a total of ten Xhosa speaking students, as the three who obtained the minimum pass mark also opted to join the class to upgrade their level to English home language status. During my first lecture with the students I discovered that eight of the ten were from the Transkei (Eastern Cape) area where Xhosa is the predominant language of communication in both schools and in their community at large. I could gather from my initial contact with the students that they encountered problems expressing themselves through the medium of English. It also emerged that eight of the students were registered for the Diploma in music and were thus competent in playing one or other musical instrument. I decided to use this to their advantage at a later stage.

## **4. THE TEACHING AND LEARNING PROCESSES**

Initially I used the traditional approach or lecture method as they tended to be very passive in class and expected me to do all the talking. However, after much soul searching I contemplated changing my approach, as I was unable to provide meaningful opportunities for them to be active participants rather than passive recipients.

### **THE TRADITIONAL METHOD**

During the first two weeks with my class, I opted to establish what their shortcomings in, reading, writing, comprehension and summarising were. I explained the techniques involved in analysing passages to them and taught them skills in essay writing and summarising. However, I tended to do most of the talking and even when I asked questions, they were hesitant to respond and rarely made any meaningful contributions to the lessons. I discovered, however, that they were eager to learn and to improve their use of English in authentic situations. Consequently, I resolved to devote at least one hour of my allotted two hours per week to the development of their oral communication skills, as I realised that this approach would ultimately be more beneficial to them in the world of work where English still tended to be the lingua franca in the South African context, as it served as a linking language in a country with 11 official languages.

### **CHANGING THE TEACHING APPROACH**

As I had experimented with the use of drama-in-education previously to improve the oral communication skills of students, I resolved to use this approach, since my experience in the field had taught me that its implementation could lead to an improvement in the students' self concepts with a concomitant improvement in their oral communication skills.

Thus, when I discovered that the students, in general, were reluctant to speak in class as they lacked the self-confidence, I decided to implement a drama-in-education approach to improve their oral communication skills. The drama process, according to McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977) revolves around individuals making decisions together, forming judgements and opinions and making statements. These constituted the key components of the changed approach to teaching and learning in my class. The process unfolded subtly as the symbolic roles, which individuals assumed, mingled with their real established relationships.

### **4.3 INTRODUCTION TO DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION TECHNIQUES**

The students were introduced to a variety of drama-in-education techniques such as improvisation, role-play and frozen image building and were actively engaged in a range of practical activities, which enabled them to be active participants in the classroom. According to McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977), drama-in-education is based on the use of drama as an active, social process which draws on the learner's capacity for role play, for projecting into imagined roles characters and situations and as a way of exploring and expressing ideas through the body and the voice.

The drama-in-education sessions also aimed to, as so succinctly summed up by Malan (1973), teach the learners "observation, encourage group work and consideration for others and to widen the learners' perception of things outside himself" (pp. 21). It furthermore also aimed to develop them into confident and expressive speakers.

After each of the drama-in-education sessions, I made provision for a reflection session, which afforded the students the opportunity to evaluate their learning experiences in a critical and constructive manner.

### **4.3.1 IMPROVISATION**

According to Malan (1973: 40) improvisation may be described as the acting out of a given situation on the spur of the moment. It is an effective technique to introduce drama-in-education to the class as it enables all the students to act out situations simultaneously without confining them to a script. Since the entire class acts out the scenes simultaneously, students tend to forget about their inhibitions and concentrate on executing their tasks as dramatically as possible.

Initially, in an attempt to introduce the students to improvisation, I asked them to walk slowly around the room, to freeze and to act out various emotions. The emotions that they were required to act out included, amongst others, the following: *hate, love, anger, fear, courage, joy and sadness*. They were presented with various scenarios based on the emotions to enable them to provide a more realistic portrayal of their feelings. The following are examples of scenarios presented to them:

- You have just heard that one of the members of your family was involved in an accident and has died. Act out your sadness.
- It is late at night and you are returning from a friend's house. Suddenly you hear footsteps behind you. Act out your fear
- You have just discovered that your best friend is having an affair with your boyfriend/ girlfriend. Act out your anger.

Thereafter, the students had to work in pairs and expand on some of the scenarios in the following ways:

- The person who is following you catches up with you. Act out the scene
- Confront your friend who is having an affair with your boyfriend.

The students were also required to alternate their roles with their partners so that they could practice taking on different roles. Each pair presented their dramatised scenarios to the class, who were encouraged to critically discuss the issues and themes that emerged from the presentation.

Class improvisations included, amongst others, *people involved in a political rally, a natural disaster (tsunami), people at the station, buyers and sellers at the fish market, a group of partygoers at a discotheque* etc. The aim of the improvisation session was to, as so aptly summed up by Malan (1973), enable the learner to “use his own thoughts and own feelings and express them in his own language” (p.21).

It emerged from the reflection session with the participants that their involvement in the drama-in-education activities had inspired them tremendously and served to minimise their initial shyness and fear. In reflecting on his experiences during the improvisation session one of the students had the following to say: “This was really one of the best lectures I ever attended. I really feel good about myself as I realise that I can act and speak English fluently if I am given the chance to do so. The lecturer has taught me that I can do anything or be anyone I want to be.”

#### **4.3.2 FROZEN IMAGE BUILDING**

According to Toye and Prendiville (2000: 117) a frozen image, also known as a tableau, may be described as “a still picture of a key moment frozen in time”.

The students were introduced to the basics in frozen image building to enable them to work on a concept, which they could develop further. I discovered that it was a very effective technique in drawing the class together. Group frozen image building involved, amongst others, the following:

- You are at a discotheque. Think about who you are. Take up your position and freeze. This was an individual task.

The lecturer then moved around from one frozen statue to another asking them, amongst others, the following questions: *Who are you? What are you doing here? How old are you?* The responses that the participants gave led to other questions such as: *Do your parents know that you are here? I notice that you are holding a glass in your hand. What are you drinking?* etc.

After the students presented their frozen images, they were divided into two groups and provided with the following scenario:

- A fight breaks out at the discotheque and something terrible happens. Decide who you are and what happens. Discuss your biographies with the other members of your group and create a frozen image of the scene (tableau).

After the group created their frozen image scenes, I gently touched each member of the group on his/her shoulder and asked each one a series of questions relating to the characters they were representing. The questions included, amongst others, the following: *Who are you? Why are you here? What are you doing* etc. This exercise, as pointed out by Toye and Prendiville (2000), enabled me to assess the student's confidence in speaking in front of the class.

Once their presentations were completed, the group had to create a series of 5 still images to illustrate what happened at the discotheque. I served as the facilitator throughout their group discussions. Each of the two groups had to eventually present a dramatised version of the frozen images incorporating language, movement and gestures.

The session thus progressed from freezes to questioning, to the writing of biographies, the creation of a series of slides to depict the events and eventually to the dramatisation of the scene.

The group reflection session indicated explicitly that the students' oral communication skills were improving tremendously and they were definitely becoming more confident in their use of English. It was apparent that since the students were communicating through the medium of English to execute the series of assigned tasks, and were afforded ample opportunities in the class to use English in relevant contexts, they were developing into confident speakers of English.

The students also indicated during their reflection session that the drama-in-education sessions were far more effective and meaningful than the usual lecture approach as it enabled them to practice the use of language within authentic contexts.

### **4.3.3          ROLE PLAY**

The frozen image scenes eventually led to role-play as the participants had to portray various roles in the context of the playlets, which they created. Each member of the group had to think about his/her role carefully and to write his/her biography in order to portray his/her character in a realistic and meaningful manner.

Some of the roles that they played relating to the theme of the discotheque, highlighted above included, amongst others, drunkards, prostitutes, drug addicts, gangsters and disc jockeys. It was evident that the students were acquiring invaluable oral communication skills and their ability to empathise with characters was developing in a meaningful and dynamic manner.

Later, as they gained more confidence, they were able to switch from one role to another with general ease. An interesting exercise that I devised was to first introduce a scenario to the class, which two students had to dramatise, and thereafter to expand on the scene by creating roles, which other students in the class had to enact. The two students had to, for example act out the following scene:

- The scene starts off with two volunteers (one male and one female) visiting a jewellery store to purchase a ring. The couple seems to be very happy and in love and the man helps his girlfriend/fiancé to select a ring.

The scene was then expanded on as follows:

- You are passing the jewellery store when you notice your girlfriend with another man. Enter the jewellery store and confront both of them.

We then needed to introduce a security guard, as the girl and her boyfriend were involved in an altercation and he was also becoming violent, and threatened to beat up her new boyfriend.

The security guard was introduced as follows:

- You are the security guard. Try to establish some order in the store.

This exercise was based on Augusto Boal's Forum Theatre. According to Boal (1979) a short scene involving a problem is played out by a group of people and the audience has the opportunity to intervene, stop the action and take over the key role in order to attempt to solve the problem. This forms the basis for discussion and debate.

The role-play exercise, highlighted above, proved to be an incredibly empowering experience for the students as it required them to literally “think on their feet” and to concentrate carefully on the scene portrayed so that the play could continue in a meaningful manner.

#### **4.4 LINKING READING COMPREHENSION TO DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION**

During a reading comprehension lesson with my class, we read and discussed an interesting newspaper article on the impact of drugs on a young boy’s life (see appendix A). The students were actively involved in the lesson and discussed how drugs were destroying the very fabric of society and affecting the youth in a negative manner. Their active participation in the lesson illustrated that the drama-in-education sessions had made a significant contribution to the improvement in their confidence and their oral communication skills.

We then used the passage as the starting point for the creation of drama-in-education exercises. Students initially created frozen images of scenes from the reading comprehension passage. Thereafter, they created a series of frozen images (slide show) focusing on various phases of the drug addict’s life. It was evident that the drama-in-education exercises brought the participants to a closer understanding of the topic, issues and theme thereby enabling them to explore these aspects “from the perspectives of interpersonal behaviour” as asserted by McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977).

These series of drama-in-education activities eventually led to the creation of a theatre-in-education production that was staged at the university, presented to a wider audience and videotaped.

## **4.5 DESIGNING A PLAY ON THE THEME**

During my reflection session with the students to establish their views on the preceding lesson when I used the reading comprehension passage as a stimulus for drama-in-education activities, it emerged that they were very stimulated and enriched by the invaluable classroom experiences.

There appeared to be general consensus amongst the students that since the theme of drugs was a very topical and relevant theme, they should explore the theme further and aim to workshop a play, which they could show to a wider audience.

The enthusiasm and excitement amongst the students was overwhelming and I was amazed at how eager they were to make contributions and to participate in the formulation of the scenes for the play. It was apparent that the drama-in-education activities and the students' active participation in the range of improvisation and role play exercises was having a positive effect on their self concepts and, as their self esteem improved, they became more confident and eager to express their views freely in a relaxed and non-threatening environment.

### **4.5.1 DIVISION OF PLAY INTO SCENES**

We commenced with a very exciting and stimulating brainstorming session with a view to providing an outline of each of the scenes for the play. All the relevant and pertinent ideas relating to the theme were written on the chalkboard. Eventually after an hour of discussion we reached consensus and agreed on the following structure for the play:

- Scene 1: Husband and wife talking about their hardworking/ diligent son
- Scene 2: Boy greets parents and leaves for school
- Scene 3: Two of the boy's classmates meet him on the playground and

influence him to join them for a party at the club

Scene 4: Boy's father returns from work and talks to his mother

Boy tries to convince his parents to allow him to go to the party

Scene 5: Night at the club –The boy is influenced to drink and smoke  
and introduced to the drug peddler

Scene 6: He speaks to his friends about his drug addiction but is rejected by them

Scene 7: He meets the drug peddler to whom he owes money

Scene 8: His confrontation with his parents and his acknowledgement that he is a  
drug addict

#### **4.5.2 USING THE FROZEN-IMAGE TECHNIQUE**

I decided to use the framework of the scenes as a starting point for an exploration of the various characters, their feelings and emotions. Commencing with scene one that focused on the parents, I asked each pair (5 pairs) to briefly talk about their roles as mother and father and to create a frozen image. Each pair then created their frozen image to the rest of the class, whilst the teacher- in- role (as the interviewer) asked each member of the pair questions relating to their biographies such as: *Who are you? What are you doing here? How old are you? What are you talking about? How many children do you have?* etc. The observers were also allowed to question the participants on the respective roles that they were portraying.

Subsequently, frozen images were created of each of the scenes involving the entire class portraying various roles and responding to questions relating to who they were, what they were doing, what was happening and why they were there. Thereafter, the entire group, working as a team, decided on their roles and created a series of frozen images depicting each of the scenes highlighted above, like a slide show, with the teacher- in- role (as the interviewer) asking them questions relating to their respective roles. Through the technique of teacher-in-role, the students' improvisational skills were

definitely enhanced. In this regard Nicholson (2000) asserts that students are assisted to develop their roles when the teacher is inside the drama with them, modeling what it means to sustain belief and judiciously using questions, which inform the drama. The process thus enabled me to suggest possible actions, make offers and challenge thinking.

### **4.5.3 IMPROVISING AND ALTERNATING ROLES**

During the next session the students had to firstly create frozen images and thereafter animate their characters by using language, facial expressions and gestures. For the enactment of the first scene, for example, the class was divided into 5 pairs. Each member of the pair decided on the role that he/she intended to portray (either mother /father). Since this was a small class, improvisation was possible and all the groups were afforded the opportunity of acting out their roles simultaneously. After a few minutes the members of each pair had to alternate roles. Volunteers were requested to present their scenes to the rest of the class.

Alternating the roles eventually enabled all the participants to portray a range of characters and to empathise with these characters. During the self- reflection session with the students it emerged that the diverse experiences to which they were exposed enabled them to empathise with the range of characters in the play as a whole, since they had to slip in and out of various roles. These experiences enabled them to identify with the needs of a variety of characters and to be sympathetic to their respective needs.

### **4.5.4 ROLE DIVISION AND WRITING BIOGRAPHIES**

After the improvisation sessions were successfully concluded and the students acquired a better understanding of the characters in the play, the class jointly discussed the role

division for the purposes of the envisaged theatre-in-education production to be staged at the university to a wider audience.

As a result of the drama- in- education exercises and activities, which they had already been exposed to, there was a relative degree of consensus amongst the group in terms of the division of the roles amongst the participants. After the role division was successfully completed, the participants commenced with the discussion and writing of their biographies. These biographies had to respond to such questions as: *Who are you? How old are you? Where do you live? What do you do for a living?* Etc. The participants had to, in effect, create their own characters.

For the purposes of this theatre-in-education production a script was not necessary, but the participants had to have a vivid idea of the characters they were to portray. As asserted by Malan (1973:35), the rhythm of such a production is not imposed from the outside, but reflects the personal, private inner rhythm of the individual combining with that of other individuals to produce a real experience for actors and audience alike.

#### **4.5.5 PRESENTATION OF BIOGRAPHIES TO THE CLASS**

After the participants' biographies had been finalised, they presented them to the class in role. For example "My name is Justice. I am a grade ten learner at a school in Motherwell. I am a hardworking student, who takes my studies seriously and I respect my parents and obey my teachers. My friends have invited me to a party ...."

The students had to ensure that certain aspects of the biography were linked to the outline of the plot. There also had to be consistency in terms of their relationships to each other, where they lived and how they were influenced by their experiences. This was discussed during the process of writing the biographies.

#### **4.5.6 PRESENTING AND LINKING SCENES**

Once the participants had finalised their biographies they expanded on each of the scenes that constituted the framework of the play. It was evident that they were very comfortable in their roles and, because they had a good understanding of them, were able to portray them realistically. There was a large degree of consistency in the portrayal of their roles as they were able to internalize them in a meaningful and dynamic manner.

Although they appeared to be uncertain about their movements and gestures during their rehearsal session, I facilitated the process by guiding them. Eventually they acquired a good understanding of the roles they had to portray, the language they had to use for the development of their characters and their interpersonal relationships with other characters in the play as a whole. Although they varied their words during each presentation, the portrayal of their characters remained consistent and convincing.

I decided that it would be a good idea to tap into their musical talents and to incorporate these into the play as a whole. One of the students composed a song and presented it to the class with guitar accompaniment, whilst another agreed to play the trumpet in one of the scenes. The song was slotted in right at the end of the play as it provided a succinct summary of the play as a whole, whilst the solo performance of the leading actor was appropriately slotted in during the scene at the club.

#### **4.5.7 FINAL PRODUCTION AND VIDEOTAPING OF PLAY**

The play was presented to a group of interested students and members of the Faculty of Education and videotaped. All those present were impressed with the realistic and dynamic performance of the participants. The latter were congratulated on their sterling efforts and received words of praise from all those present. One of the group's friends, who attended music classes with them, was completely astounded by their acting ability and when I asked her what she thought about the play she had this to say: "They are my

friends and I know them for three years now. But, seriously I never knew that they could act. Most of them are always very quiet in the classes and they don't speak much English either. I can't believe that their English has improved so much."

The play was undoubtedly a great success and my views were summed up as follows in my reflection journal: "I can't believe how much success I have achieved with this group of learners who were initially so passive and unresponsive. Their play was astounding and their improvisations were realistic. All my efforts to get them to improve their self-concepts and communication skills have been rewarded with this excellent production. It is evident that a number of them are really very talented and definitely have a future in the dramatic arts field. Their contribution has enabled me to realise that drama-in-education can make a difference to the oral communication skills of students."

#### **4.5.8 COMMENTARY BY EXTERNAL ADJUDICATOR**

One of the lecturers in the faculty, who is very skilled in the dramatic arts and who has acted in a number of productions in theatres in the city, agreed to serve as an adjudicator for the play. His comments were exceptionally positive and he congratulated the students on their excellent performances. He also had words of praise for the scriptwriter and when they explained to him that the play was an improvisation as there was no written script, he appeared to be completely overwhelmed. He expressed his admiration at their ability to produce a play of such a high standard and commented that their performance was far superior to that of his English first language group.

In his final analysis of their performance he congratulated them on their amazing talents and indicated that all of them had the potential for success in the performing arts field.

#### **4.5.9 STUDENT FEEDBACK**

In my focused group interviews with the students on their exposure to drama-in-education and the benefits that they had acquired, it emerged that they were far more confident than when they commenced with the module in March. The majority of them indicated that the confidence, which they developed, would enable them to be more positive in life, which would have a ripple effect on their performance both in and outside university.

They indicated that their learning experiences, during the course of the year, had motivated them to be more creative, critical and imaginative as the drama-in-education exercises demanded originality and creativity. This would hold them in good stead in their future lives, as they would need to be creative in their future work environment if they hoped to achieve success.

Some of the students indicated that they were initially very hesitant to have their play presented to an audience and videotaped as they were scared of failure and did not want to as one of the students contended, “make fools of ourselves.” However, all the students admitted during their reflection session that the drama-in-education experiences were invaluable to the development of all aspects of their personality and their oral communication skills.

What seemed to have impressed all of them the most, however, was their ability to produce a play without a script and to be praised for their outstanding performance. They realised that the success of their play hinged on their ability to galvanise together as a team as they were completely dependent on each other for cues especially in view of the fact that they did not have a script. Personally, I think the absence of a script provided them with greater leeway to adapt the play as they went along thereby enabling them to tap into their creative faculties.

#### **4.5.10**

### **USING THE DVD FOR THE LIFE ORIENTATION MODULE**

One of the lecturers from the Faculty of Education, who attended the production, requested to use the DVD of the play for one of her modules in life orientation as drug addiction was included as an important theme in the curriculum of this module. She decided to use the play to initiate a discussion on drug abuse amongst learners at schools, since most of the students in her class were practicing teachers who had to contend with this problem on a daily basis.

It thus emerged that the entire process served a dual purpose, since what initially started out as a project to improve the students' oral communication skills, served as the content for a module in life orientation.

## **5. ADVANTAGES OF DRAMA-IN-EDUCATION**

It is evident from the foregoing research into drama-in-education that there are many advantages associated with this approach to teaching and learning.

The following were some of the advantages gleaned from the students' reflection sessions and my observation of the students during the entire process:

- The participants developed confidence and were able to express themselves fluently.
- Through social interaction the students explored aspects of meaning together which enabled them to increase their understanding, not only of the particular content they were exploring, but also their individual interpretations.
- They learnt to offer, accept and modify ideas and to build upon the ideas presented by members of the group.

- They learnt how to write biographies and to empathise with characters
- As they became more motivated their self- esteem improved.
- They acquired better habits of speech
- They were able to develop their imagination

In his analysis of the significance of drama-in-education Brian Way (1967) asserts that this method of teaching has the potential to improve all aspects of the individual's personality, which includes concentration, the senses, imagination, physical self, speech, emotion and intellect. In this regard McGregor, Tate and Robinson (1977:24) furthermore contend that through drama, the learners gain greater experience in the use of media themselves such as voice, language and body as prime means of expression and the associated media of light, sound and space. It is evident from an analysis of the aspects identified by Way and McGregor, Tate and Robinson that the drama-in-education activities designed for the students in my class succeeded in developing most of the aspects identified by prominent researchers in the field. In addition to this the acting out of events enabled the participants to acquire new understandings and insights.

## **6. CONCLUSION**

In conclusion it is thus evident that drama-in-education can play a significant and meaningful role in the development of the students' oral communication skills whilst simultaneously developing their personality, self- expression, self awareness and self confidence.

It thus emerged from this study that as the students became more confident their self-esteem improved dramatically, thereby leading to a concomitant improvement in their oral communication skills.

It is thus apparent that if educators hope to effect any meaningful changes in their students' abilities to improve their skills in the spoken language, it is imperative that they change their approaches to teaching and learning and provide more appropriate opportunities for their students to be active participants rather than passive recipients. In this regard drama-in-education has a significant and dynamic role to play as it could definitely lead to the holistic development of the students in their classes.

Nicholson (2000: 18) summarises this viewpoint on drama-in-education very succinctly as follows:

At the centre of drama education lies the premise that students are not passive recipients of a culture, but active meaning makers.

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## **APPENDIX A:      NEWSPAPER REPORT**

### **“I dealt drugs at school to pay for my habit”**

**Oliver Christensen is 19 years old. At 17 he was a hardened crack addict, a dealer and a thief. He was caught dealing drugs at school. Faced with a heavy jail sentence, he found his way out of a mire of darkness. This is his story:**

“I always wanted to do forbidden things. In Grade Six I smoked my first joint. After that I started taking beers and drinks to school. I was 11 years old; getting pissed and smoking cigarettes. Dope started off as a happy drug – you smoke, you laugh. Then I started smoking alone and stopped laughing. I tried Mandrax. It became a mission to find something better than the last experience.

In Grade Eight I started getting into trouble, sniffing glue and bunking. In Grade ten I was expelled for possession of dagga (marijuana/ganja). My parents didn't want to believe I had a problem. They thought it was just a stage I was going through.

I then attended a private school and carried on messing around; staying out all night, getting out of it. It was then that the rave scene really hit Jo'burg.

I was 15 when I was sent to a rehabilitation centre for chronic dagga and alcohol abuse. I came out six weeks later; worse than ever. I had been exposed to 15 crack addicts and, being so young, I took on what other people told me. I made a friend there and when we came out we said: "We've got to try this stuff!"

I started dealing drugs at school to pay for my crack habit. Crack is a drug than once you experience the rush, you forfeit big in your life. You don't think of anything or anybody, just the rock and where the money will come from. I stole anything that was moveable.

Crack becomes your God, the reason why you wake up in the morning.

I went into Hillbrow to smoke crack. It was Thursday afternoon. I came out seven days later, I'd run up a bill with a Nigerian of R6000. I came out of a hotel, it was a Wednesday night. I hadn't eaten in a week. It was the middle of winter: I had a pair of jeans on, no shoes, no shirt, running around the middle of Hillbrow, 17 years old.

The high of crack is followed by such a downer; such an anxiety, that killing myself came to my mind plenty times.

My mom nearly had a nervous breakdown; I caused a lot of conflict between my parents. I knew what I was doing, but the power of the drug exceeds any ability to feel remorse.

Finally I got caught dealing at school and was sent to Krugersdorp Place of Safety and refused bail. The judge was lenient with me. I was facing a heavy jail sentence. Instead I was sent to a rehab in the Karoo.

Noupoort wasn't a comfortable place. It's in the middle of the desert. I found myself digging 2m-by-2m pits with a stick. It's called attitude adjustments.

I was in a pit from morning to evening. I had time to think about my life and what I'd done. It wasn't an easy race to run. It was really painful without the drugs.

I bawled my eyes out a lot. My only option was to climb out or die. Giving up my old way of life had to be an active decision on my part.

I've been clean for a year-and-a-half now. Drugs don't discriminate. I haven't come from a poor family. I haven't been abused. You can be wealthy, in the slum or poor, educated, uneducated. Drugs will take you."