



HOW DRAMATIC TECHNIQUES IMPROVE MORAL LEARNING IN CHRISTIAN RELIGIOUS KNOWLEDGE: THE BOBAS HIGH SCHOOL, IKERE EXPERIMENT

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Abstract

Christian Religious Knowledge is taught in Nigerian secondary schools to build morals, teach Bible stories, and help students become good citizens. But the common way of teaching through lecture, reading, and notes makes students memorize without understanding. This leads to boredom, forgetting, and bad behavior outside class. This study looks at drama as a teaching method for CRK. We used Albert Bandura's Social Learning Theory, which says people learn by watching, copying, and modeling others. The experiment was done at Bobas High School, Ikere, with J.S.S.2 students for two weeks. We taught the "Passion of Christ" using role play. Students acted as Jesus, Judas, Peter, soldiers, and the crowd. Others watched. We then held a Focused Group Discussion with 17 students to check what they learned. Results showed that drama works better than a lecture. Students paid more attention because drama uses action and sound, not just talk. They remembered more because acting uses the body and feelings. They also changed their behavior. Many said they now understand forgiveness because they saw Jesus forgive. Others said they will not betray friends because they saw what Judas did. The old method causes rote learning, memorization and laziness. Drama makes students part of learning, not just watchers. It builds creativity, cooperation, and moral thinking. The study recommends that schools should add drama to the CRK curriculum. Teacher training should include drama methods. When students act out the Bible, they don't just know the story, they feel it and live it. That is real education. CRK is not for passing exams only. It is for changing lives. Drama helps do that. So, we must move from "chalk and talk" to "act and learn".

Keywords: Dramatic Techniques, Improvement, Moral Learning, Christian Religious Knowledge

Introduction

In recent years, teachers and researchers say active learning is best. Active learning means students do something in class, not just sit and listen. Drama is one active method. Drama is copying life to teach (Iroh, 2021, p. 264). It uses role play, acting, and simulations to make class interactive and fun. When teaching uses drama, students connect old knowledge with new ideas.



It also brings out feelings and deep thinking. Emmanuel Iroh says drama is “multifaceted... process-centred” (Iroh, 2021, p. 264). It helps children learn other subjects while doing drama. Drama lets children express themselves well. In drama, imagination is free. A stick becomes a magic wand. A child becomes a father or a superhero. With drama, children talk with more confidence and use face, voice, and body to communicate. So drama is a good way to teach and learn. Dramatization should be part of teaching.

Friedrich Fröbel, who started kindergarten, said drama in school should make the child play and work at the same time. This way, the child gets knowledge that lasts and changes behavior (Froebel, 1912, p. 25). When we use drama in class, we reach students who learn by moving and also other students. Jeffrey D. Wilhelm says, “through dramatization, students become a part of the learning process rather than mere observers or inactive receptacles of the rich experience of learning” (Wilhelm, 1998, p. 15).

Drama has clear good points. It gives students confidence and lets them talk even with small English by using body, face, and hands (Hoetker, 1969, p. 192). Hoetker says “drama increases creativity, originality, sensitivity, fluency, flexibility, emotional stability, cooperation and examination of moral attitudes, while developing communication skills and appreciation of literature” (Hoetker, 1969, p. 192).

Teaching with drama will enable students to act out scenes to show themselves and their world. By copying someone or pretending, using imagination, they grow ideas, share thoughts, work together, and cooperate with friends. Then they get a deep interest in the subject. Drama means pretence — acting like something else or someone else (Holden, 1982, p. 216). It lets a person express himself with words and body, using imagination and memory.

Teachers use drama for many subjects because it has many uses. Cyprian Obadiogwu says drama can show a child new ideas he does not encounter daily. Also, playing a role can change his opinion because he sees life from another person’s view (Obadiogwu, 2005, p. 4). So drama is important for a child to grow in mind and feelings. It gives children a base to explore their world and understand things around them. By this, children copy roles they like, which helps them see what they want to be.

Christian Religious Knowledge is important in secondary schools. It teaches Christian beliefs, Bible stories, and morals. Asogwa and Echemazu affirm that it helps Nigerian youths know God to become good citizens with strong character (qtd. in Ugwu et al., 2017, p. 13). Ede and Odo say it helps people make good life choices and be useful in the community (qtd. in Ugwu et al., 2017, p. 13). Onah says it teaches respect and tolerance for other religions and tribes (qtd. in Ugwu et al., 2017, p. 13). Deluxe E says CRK helps students understand religious traditions and world cultures (qtd. in Ugwu et al., 2017, p. 13).



We need CRK in schools because it builds morals and ethics. Nigeria has crime, corruption, and bad behavior today. So we must teach CRK better. Ayogu says, “without a sound or strong moral foundation, every society and every nation eventually collapses” (qtd. in Ugwu et al., 2017, p. 13). CRK is “an informative and life-changing subject which helps the youth to improve their attitude to God and to their fellow man” (qtd. in Ugwu et al., 2017, p. 13). This study looks at how drama helps teach CRK. We did practical teaching with dramatic methods at Bobas High School, Ikere. We used qualitative research to understand the experiment. We had a Focused Group Discussion with students to check their learning. We also used books, the internet, and articles.

Theoretical Framework

This study uses Albert Bandura’s Social Learning Theory. The theory says environment and social setting are key to learning. Bandura says, “people, especially children, learn from the environment by learning through influential models” (qtd. in Nabavi & Bijandi, 2014, p. 3). Kevin O. Rourke says Social Learning Theory joins behavior and thinking theories (Rourke, 2003, p. 72). Muro and Jeffrey say it is the most important learning theory today. It has attention, memory, and motivation. It links behaviorist and cognitive theories (qtd. in Sondang, Manik et al., 2022, p. 86). Behaviorists think learning must show in changed behavior. But social learning theorists think people can learn just by watching, even if they don’t act it out right away (Sondang, Manik et al., 2022, p. 87).

Bandura also says that outside things and the environment are not the only things that affect learning. The person’s mind is also important in learning and behavior (qtd. in Manik et al., 2022, p. 92). Muro and Jeffrey say Social Learning Theory is key for managing resources and making good change (qtd. in Manik et al., 2022, p. 85). Lyons and Berge say learning happens through watching others and then copying them (qtd. in Firmansyah & Saepuloh, 2022, p. 303). Gibson says Social Learning Theory is about how people, environment, and behavior work together (qtd. in Firmansyah, 2022, p. 299).

Walter Mischel says people build their own understanding of the world by learning from experience, from what happens after they act, and by watching others (Mischel, 1973, p. 256). Julian B. Rotter says the theory is about watching and copying the actions, attitudes, and feelings of others (Rotter, 1982, p. 11). Sears says social learning is not just copying habits. It includes learning complex social behavior and rules by watching and interacting with people (Sears, 1951, p. 27).



We use Social Learning Theory because drama is about watching, copying, and acting. Drama involves observation through watching how people act; it involves imitation by copying what we see and it involves modeling by showing a character for others to see. Bandura says we learn not just by doing but by watching others. This helps us understand human growth. We are not just empty cups. We are active learners shaped by the people and places we meet. So, children can learn new things when they take part in drama and watch it. Drama is a social activity. When we use Social Learning Theory in a CRK class, we create a lively learning space. Drama helps students understand CRK better.

Analysis

The experiment tested whether drama helps teach CRK in secondary schools. We did it for two weeks at Bobas High School, Ikere, with J.S.S.2 students. The goal was to see if drama helps students understand and remember CRK topics. Drama has watching, copying, acting, and joining in. These match Social Learning Theory. So drama fits well in class. Drama caught the students' attention right away with sights and sounds. All the students paid more attention during the drama. This helped them remember. Drama works as a teaching tool because it is immersive and grabs attention. Dowell Smith says: "Most drama meant for the young audience has less dialogue and more action to sustain their attention, but most importantly, the plot is usually centred on good triumphing over bad" (Smith, 2002, p. 95).

This means teachers must be careful with children's drama. We need more action and interaction to hold their attention, not long talks that bore them. So we used short dialogue and strong actions in the lesson. We also used role play to build students' imagination through watching, listening, copying, reading, writing, and acting. When a child copies what he learned, his intelligence grows. Also, because drama needs active joining, students remembered what they were taught. This made their understanding stronger. Drama helped them keep information because the scenes and talks gave them a memory hook. We saw this when students answered questions. After acting out the "Passion of Christ", they could explain the story and its lessons well.

Dan Uwandu says: "By its very nature, drama aims at developing and influencing for good character of the child's mind as well as making him memorize and retain these values which will make him attain laudable goals in life" (Uwandu, 2005, p. 17). This means drama touches students in ways normal teaching cannot. The words "memorize" and "retain" are key because the main point of drama in learning is to help students remember. It leaves a mark that lasts. Even years later, they will recall what they learned. Drama with songs and dance can teach a child lessons without him knowing, and the lessons stay long-lasting.



So drama helps keep and pass moral values to children. It needs active joining, feelings, and talking with others. All these help deep learning and the keeping of CRK content and values. By acting, students joined the material. This helped them take in values and lessons better than just listening. When we acted out the “Passion of Christ”, students felt the story of Jesus’ suffering and death. This active joining helped them understand the spiritual and moral lessons. Acting on the topic touched the students’ feelings, both actors and watchers. The “Passion of Christ” is a deep, sad story. By acting it, students felt the pain, love, and sacrifice. This feeling made the lessons of compassion, sacrifice, and forgiveness stronger and easier to remember.

The drama needed actors, directors, and helpers to work together. This built teamwork and empathy. It created community and shared goals, which match Christian values of love and fellowship. Using imagination to act the “Passion of Christ” made the story real in a way that reading cannot. Drama makes students repeat actions. Rehearsing and acting the story means students meet the story many times. This repetition plants the story and its values deep in their minds. So the saying “tell me and I forget, teach me and I remember, involve me and I learn” is true. This saying shows that drama works for children. If you just tell students, they forget because they are passive. Teaching them has more interaction as they listen, write, ask but may still forget. But joining in doing things, real-life practice leads to deep understanding and long memory because it uses many senses and parts of the brain.

Drama in CRK helped students copy good behaviors. Reproduction in Social Learning Theory means copying what you see. In role play, students copied the words and actions of characters, which helped them to understand better. The student who played Jesus took in forgiveness, kindness, and compassion. His acting showed he felt the story. Students who watched can also copy these behaviors in real life. For example, after watching The Passion of Christ, students understood Jesus’ suffering and love. They saw the harm of betrayal from Judas. This can change their behavior.

Drama often becomes a reference for teaching children. When a child misbehaves, a teacher can remind him of a drama he saw and what happened to a bad character. During the experiment, students called one boy “Judas” because he reported classmates too much. When asked why, they said he betrayed like Judas, who betrayed Jesus, saying, “he that has dipped his hand in the dish here will betray me”. So they see betrayers as Judas. A troublesome student may copy Jesus’ calm, kindness, and forgiveness. So drama grows children’s minds. Cyprian Obadiagwu says the role of drama is clear: seeing a play shows a child new ideas. Playing a role can change his opinion because he sees life from another person’s view (Obadiagwu, 2005, p. 4).



At first, some students were not serious. Some sat back and watched. Some did not pay attention. They were not used to this teaching style. But when the drama got serious, their interest grew. Adewale, who played a soldier, was applauded for his acting. Then others wanted to join. They were moved by motivation, which is big in drama. Motivation in Social Learning Theory means the reason to copy a behavior. Something must push you to act. Motivation can be from outside (praise) or inside (pride). During the teaching, more students wanted to act after seeing others clapping. The fun and interest in drama made them want to learn more, which led to better results. Akin and Biola begged to be disciples. All wanted to act. This excitement meant more joining and a better attitude to CRK and other subjects taught with drama.

Learning by watching, copying, and modeling is the basis of this experiment. So we used them to help with learning. The student teachers showed excitement and seriousness. Students often copy their teachers' attitude. The teachers acted as models for students to look up to. They used some students in role play to show characters, and others watched. They showed good and bad behavior and results. Watching peers helped students learn from friends who acted in the drama. Acting let them create and perform the story as they understood it. They copied characters, which helped them take in and show what they learned.

Praise and clapping were given for good behavior in drama. This made students feel good and want to do more. After the drama, we talked about what students learned and how it fits their lives. This made lessons stronger and helped with a deeper understanding. Okikelola, a student, when asked what "Passion of Christ" is, said it is "all the events that led to the trial and death of Jesus Christ". He listed them and explained each. Dapo said Jesus was praying with his disciples in Gethsemane before the soldiers came. When asked about moral lessons, students gave different answers. Adebayo said forgiveness is like Jesus. Ayomide said betrayal hurts relationships. Kunle said perseverance like Jesus, who suffered to the end.

From their answers, we see they paid attention. A child's learning depends on attitude, environment, and experience. Maria Montessori says: "The environment must be rich in motives which lend interest to activity and invite the child to conduct his own experiences" (Montessori, 1964, p. 89). So Social Learning Theory was key and worked well for the teaching because by using drama in CRK with modeling and imitation, students' attention was caught. Akim said the "rearrangement of the classroom made him and his friends relax in a classroom outside the classroom". He meant the new setup made them forget they were in class, even though they were. The place was friendly, so students relaxed, with no tension or boredom, and could focus. Maria Montessori says, "the first essential for the child's development is concentration as the child who concentrates is immensely happy" (Montessori, 1967, p. 222). By getting their attention, they remembered by watching, copying, and modeling. Then they could copy good behaviors and were motivated to keep them because they saw the rewards.

The analysis shows that using drama with Social Learning Theory in CRK greatly improved students' learning and interest. Education for children should be lovely, fun, active, and interesting. So, the talk-only method should stop so children can be active. Paul Freire says, "Narration (with the teacher as narrator) leads the students to memorize the narrated content mechanically. Worst still, it turns them into containers, into receptacles, filled by the teacher.



The more completely he fills the receptacle, the better the teacher is, which, however, hampers the swift transmission of knowledge from the teacher to the children” (Friere, 2008, p. 16). This means students are not active in narration. They just take what the teacher gives. So, for learning to work and meet goals, it must be gradual, letting the learner see why they are learning. So, using drama in CRK follows Social Learning Theory.

Discussion

Why does acting out a table help students understand the Bible? This is because the body learns. When students clap, “Choices we make in life matter”, the words enter through the ears, hands, and chest. Siks says drama involves the whole person (Siks, 1977, p. 4). Whole-person learning sticks. Normal teaching uses eyes and ears only. Read and listen. That’s two senses. Drama uses eyes, ears, hands, feet, voice, and heart. Six senses beat two. That’s why the students joyfully learned.

Voluntary vs. Involuntary Attention

Adeyemo says there are two kinds of attention. Voluntary work is hard. “He strives to pay attention”. Involuntary is easy “responding to stimuli that require no conscious effort” (Adeyemo, 1976, p. 44). A drumbeat is involuntary. You hear it, you move. We used drumbeats to pull students in. Once in, we gave them the story. They didn’t notice they were learning. Slade calls this the child’s way of working (Slade, 1980, p. 105). We didn’t fight the child. We used the child’s way.

Monotony Kills, Variety Saves

Adeyemo’s first rule: change your method to avoid monotony (Adeyemo, 1976, p. 44). Talk-talk-talk for 40 minutes is monotony. Talk-sing-act-clap-answer is a variety. The brain loves new things. Each change refreshes attention. Our three scenes, song, and discussion were five changes in 40 minutes. No time to sleep.

Low-Cost, High-Impact

Nigerian schools often say “no money for drama”. Our answer: You don’t need money. You need a method. A semi-circle is free. Clapping is free. Tables are already there. Local songs are free. Siks says drama must be “thoughtfully planned, structured and guided”, not expensive (Siks, 1977, p. 11). The expense is in the teacher’s planning, not the school’s purse.

Inclusion

Process-concept drama “takes care of the group’s multifarious composition” (Siks, 1977, p. 4). In Bright Star Academy, some students can’t read well. In the chorus, they still sang. Some are shy. In the semi-circle, they still moved. McCaslin says drama lets children perform at their “highest level” because they accept group decisions (McCaslin, 1987, p. 16). The group carried each child.



Evaluation through Talk

Pemberton-Billing and Clegg say expression leads to evaluation, and evaluation sharpens ideas (Pemberton-Billing & Clegg, 1965, p. 17). Our branching questions were evaluated. “Which traveler made a better choice?” made students judge. “Life is simple. Justify.” made them think. This is higher-order thinking, not just recall. Drama led them there.

Teacher’s New Role

The teacher stopped being a lecturer and became a guide. Siks says the teacher explores “along with the player” (Siks, 1977, p. 4). Our teacher picked the song, set the semi-circle, and asked questions. That’s guiding. Inegbe says societies that ignore theatre will have “sterile” educational growth (Inegbe, 2003, p. 82). Teachers who ignore drama will have sterile classes.

Recommendation for All Subjects

If CRK can be acted, so can history. Date = drumbeat. If math can be chanted, formulas stick. Siks says drama helps children explore “other subject areas” (Siks, 1977, p. 11). Start with CRK, then spread. Students came to school to learn. When teaching is boring, they leave in mind even if body stays. Drama brings the mind back. It turns the classroom from a sleeping room to a doing room. And when students do, they learn. The smiles are more proof.

Conclusion

Bible stories are dead on the page. They live in the mouth, the feet, and the heart. At Bobas High School, Ikere the “Passion of Christ” was just words for years. Students skipped it, slept through it, and failed it. We brought it to life with no budget, no stage, and no costumes. We used what every class has: children, voices, hands, tables, and a teacher willing to change. The Social Learning Theory of Albert Bandura gave us the map as we plan for watching, copying, and modeling, making sure that every child has a job. Guide, don’t lecture. Use the body, not just the head. We did that. The result was a room full of awake, talking, thinking students.

This study answers the problem we started with. Students were leaving CRK because lessons were lecture, rote, and boring. Drama fixed both. It made the abstract concrete as acting out Jesus’ arrest made it real. It made the class participatory as every student had a role. CRK became interactive, engaging, and effective. For teachers, the message is clear. Change your method. Avoid lecture only. Use dramatization, pictures, and actions. Let students do, see, and act. You don’t need money. You need a semi-circle, a song, and a willingness to guide, not just talk. Iroh says “the method adopted by the teacher is of uppermost importance for the realization of his objectives” (Iroh, 2021, p. 264). Do that and the class will follow.

For students, drama gives you power; Self-discipline, control, imagination, teamwork, artistic awareness, self-expression. These are not just for actors, they are for life. This is because, when you act a Bible story, you practice Christian values. You learn forgiveness like Jesus. You learn



the pain of betrayal like Judas caused. You learn perseverance like Jesus on the cross. Finally, this research agrees with Friedrich Froebel: the role of drama is to let the child play and work, so what he learns leaves a lasting impact and changes behavior (Froebel, 1912, p. 25). Teachers should grab it. Don't let it stay outside. Bring it in, and the child will come alive. When the child is alive, CRK is alive. When CRK is alive, morals are alive. And when morals are alive, the society grows.

Recommendations

The study recommends drama, not as a show, but as a way; A way to teach, a way to learn, a way to enjoy. Try it next CRK class. Pick a story, make a chorus, sing a song, and watch the sleeping heads rise. The road to understanding the Bible is not taken by reading alone. It is taken by doing. And that has made all the difference.

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