



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Teaching Through Creative Process: Drama in Education Practice in Ghana

Margaret Ismaila¹ , Samuel Bewiadzi Akakpo² 

¹ Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, ² Department of General and Liberal Studies, University of Health and Allied Sciences, Ho, Volta Region

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The pedagogical approaches selected and employed by educators can make or mar a learner's potential. This realisation has informed a diversity of approaches to teaching over the years. One such set of approaches are sometimes grouped under the overarching notion of creative teaching. Within the nation of Ghana, creative teaching is not a new phenomenon, where the storytelling tradition has always been used as a primary source of education in social orientation and was in use long before the introduction of formal education. Nonetheless, formal, teacher-centred approaches have dominated education there since colonial times. However, in 1964, in response to the worldwide evolution of instructional methods in formal institutions, the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon, introduced Theatre in Education, which was later changed to Drama in Education. Efua Sutherland later introduced the Children's Drama Development Project to rejuvenate creative learning among children. Since then, a range of Drama in Education forms have been employed as pedagogies in Ghana. This paper traces the history of Drama in Education in Ghana, outlines its successes and describes the challenges it continues to face, particularly within formal schooling contexts.

Introduction

This paper details the history and practice of Drama in Education in Ghana, the challenges it has faced, as well as its prospects within the Ghanaian education setting. It is informed by a qualitative research study which focused on three research questions: What is the nature of the study and practice of Drama in Education in Ghana? What are the challenges confronting Drama in Education practice in Ghana? What are the prospects for Drama in Education practice in Ghana?

Importantly, this paper is also informed by the view that creative approaches, such as Drama in Education, are not a new phenomenon in Ghana, with scholars such as Ebeli (2015), Amlor (2016), Ampene (2005) and Acheampong (1996) all indicating that creative teaching, manifested through storytelling, play games, songs, dance, the use of symbols, and folktales have for generations served as platforms for social orientations and to transfer knowledge and skills from generation to generation. These performances and actions have been employed, not only to enhance the creative abilities of children, but also to support them in: acquiring societal

values, morals, ethics and virtues and in helping to make them productive members of the society. However, with the introduction of formal education which commenced as a result of colonisation, these indigenous performances were relegated to the background, thereby negatively impacting the creative abilities of the young ones in society.

As a response mechanism, in 1964 the Department of Theatre Arts introduced Drama in Education as an academic program at the University of Ghana, Legon. The program was aimed at equipping teachers with creative teaching skills required to make theatre arts functional in the classroom and to complement existing teacher-centred approaches. However, the introduction of Drama in Education has not been a simple process – instead it has been bedeviled with challenges including, among others, bureaucratic bottlenecks in obtaining permission, rigid curriculum, tight contact hours and schedules, problems with parallel academic calendars, and an inability to do follow ups. Nonetheless, there have also been success stories, with capacity building for undergraduate students and the use of drama in politics, governance and health issues, including responding to the needs of children with special needs, being some of these. Together they represent the future prospects for Drama in Education in Ghana.

In order to address the history, challenges and future of Drama in Education in Ghana, this paper has been organised into a series of sections. The first provides context and background. Next, literature reviews focused on creative teaching, within Africa and beyond are offered, including a section which argues the case for Drama in Education as creative teaching. The paper then moves on to interrogate the historical foundations of Drama in Education in Ghana, before concluding by discussing both the challenges Drama in Education continues to face and celebrating its success stories.

Context and Background

Within the context of Ghana, colonial and post-colonial education were centralised, with the government controlling education to achieve rapid socio-economic development (Atuahene, 2009, p. 33). As a result, teaching and learning have increasingly been based on rigorous curriculum, right from the Middle School era through to Ordinary Level Certificate and on to the Advanced Level Certificate. From the 1950s onwards, teaching and learning in Ghana has been teacher-centred, with minimal input from learners. This approach continued with the introduction of the Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (SSSCE) in the mid-1990s, with the inherited colonial teacher-centred approaches continuing. In addition, the West African Senior Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSSCE), which replaced the SSSCE, also followed the same principle of teacher-centred approaches to teaching and learning.

In the quest to achieve positive educational outcomes, numerous reforms such as the Accelerated Development Plan of 1951 and Education Act 1961, the Reforms of the National Liberation Council (1966), the Educational

Reforms of 1987, the Educational Reforms of 2007 and the recent Free Senior High School Policy (2017) were developed. These have all been implemented by the various Ghanaian governments (Ismaila et al., 2022, pp. 82–83). However, all these reforms were tailored to a unified, harmonised, and centralised curriculum which again was focused on the application of teacher-centered approaches at the expense of traditional ones which were more creative and learner-centred.

This is in spite of the fact that across this period, as Schugurensky and Aguirre (2002) argue, the Progressive Education Movement was born. They point out that this move towards progressive education was influenced by John Dewey's *My Pedagogic Creed* (1897) and *The School and Society* (1899). In these books, Dewey contended that progress and reform in society should be products of education, that is, a change based on a process in which an individual has understood and participated. Dewey believed that the school should be representative of a social environment and that students learn best in natural social settings (Flinders & Thornton, 2013). Dewey's philosophy was influenced by the fact that students were all unique learners and thus, teachers must promote student interest as a driver of instruction (Dewey, 1938). He further argued that if learning is influenced by coercion, then education has not taken place because the individuals will go back to their former state once the agent of coercion or intimidation is removed. To avert this, the Progressive Education Movement called for a shift in how teaching was done to make the learner a partner and participant rather than a recipient of the teaching process. Paulo Freire (1968), in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, also challenged the traditional system of education as 'banking', where an instructor (a depositor) deposits information into a learner (the account) – meaning that an account remains dormant and inactive unless a depositor deposits.

However, whilst these arguments and viewpoints gained traction elsewhere, within the context of Ghana, and Africa more broadly, only limited change occurred, with more creative, democratic and dialogic approaches generally being sidelined within formal education contexts. An overview of creative teaching more broadly, and in the African context, follows.

Creative Teaching and the African Context

Teaching comes with a set of instructional methods or strategies that are aimed at aiding the teaching and learning process. Instructional methods are step by step approaches implemented to make learners experience and benefit from a process with the ultimate aim of adding knowledge to improve the learner's attitude and behaviour. Gutek (1989, p. 7) has explained the meaning of teaching as "the means or procedures that teachers use to aid students in having an experience, mastering a skill or process, or in acquiring an area of knowledge." It is therefore the responsibility of the teacher to select or merge instructional methods to achieve the objectives of a learning process. Creative teaching then, is an approach which allows learners to actively

engage within the teaching and learning process (Rinkevich, 2011). This approach, as observed by Cremin (2015), involves teachers and facilitators making learning interesting and effective by employing diverse imaginative approaches within the learning environment. While much literature exists on the benefits of illustrations and other visual formats to support teaching and learning; less attention has been focused on incorporating drama and other creative teaching forms to support the education of the young learner. Rinkevich (2011, p. 219) decries this situation, adding that “the current emphasis on standardised testing and accountability has undoubtedly played a part in diminishing teacher and learner creativity.”

In her studies in Ghana, Kuusangyele (2013) found that teachers acknowledged the absence of creative teaching in their classrooms. Studies have shown that several factors have contributed to this situation: there are a lack of skills in creative teaching; there are time constraints in using these approaches; there is a fear of disrupting the established norm; and the general outline of the approach adds extra tasks to the teacher (Arieli, 2007; Beghetto, 2007; Fleith, 2000). In spite of these challenges, some strong examples exist. For example, Schiro (2004), cited in Ismaila (2018) gives an account of a fourth-grade teacher who used nine (9) days to complete a topic on algorithms using the story *The Wizard Tale*. The teacher had employed storytelling as a mode of instruction for her pupils to understand Mathematics. Similarly, Mastin (2007) developed the *Storigamy*, a concept that combines the Japanese game origami and storytelling in the teaching of Mathematics. This concept was developed to make teaching and learning of Mathematics more interactive, participatory and exciting. Mastin’s innovation is a confirmation of how a passionate educator can make a tremendous impact on learners.

While these studies are significant in relation to creative teaching, it is important to remember that within the context of Africa, creative approaches have always been employed to develop indigenous knowledges. Amlor (2016, p. 63) asserts that indigenous knowledge, perceived as cultural norms and values that collectively inform, educate, and give identity to people in society, remains an African cultural legacy, while Holmes (2011) maintains that the connection between play and culture has an illustrious past. For example, Garvey (1990) observed that play is not just a past-time activity, but a useful cultural tool that satisfies certain needs and purposes of adults, adolescents, and children and was evident prior to the emergence of colonial forms of education. Kenyatta (2004) stated that the cultural traditions of Africans were transmitted from one generation to the other through the use of memory, verbal communication and other specific activities. Similarly, Cheska (1987) noted that in referring to socio-cultural games, the use of songs and dance together with other related art forms like ornamentation, drama and literature are elements that enforce the beliefs and satisfy the needs of the society in which the performers are located. Wanderi (2009) added that these cultural elements such as games, stories, songs, drama, and dances facilitated cognitive

development to enhance recall, communication of facts, teach, bear meaning and understanding within the African cultural context and also project the identity of the African people (Amlor, 2016). The above scholarly views point to the fact that within the African context, teaching and learning is informed by numerous cultural activities such as stories, play games, dances, songs and drama is no exception. These activities allow participants to be deeply involved in the learning process.

In spite of this, research has also shown that most formal institutions in most African countries are yet to fully embrace creative teaching in state-run schools (Duveskog et al., 2012; Abatan, 2011, cited in Ismaila, 2018). This reluctance is not necessarily a rejection of the approach, but in part, is informed by the view that the African is born into a performative environment and thus creativity develops more naturally through participation in activities including music, dance, drama, dance-drama, games, and story-telling. These are all viewed as platforms for creative social orientation. For this reason, it is possible that state-owned formal institutions see creative teaching as a repetition of what has already been experienced in homes and communities.

Nonetheless, some attempts have been made in Ghana to widen the scope for creative teaching in general, and Drama in Education in particular. These will be outlined later in this paper, with a particular focus on tracing the individual efforts of Efua Sutherland, the renowned Ghanaian dramatist and the subsequent development of the Drama in Education programme at the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, Legon. Before this however, the notion of Drama in Education as a form of creative teaching is discussed.

Drama in Education as Creative Teaching

Drama in Education constitutes an important approach which allows learners to be fully integrated into the learning process and environment and enables them to be active participants by deeply immersing learners in the learning activities. This approach “involves teachers making learning more interesting and effective and using imaginative approaches in the classroom” (Cremin, 2015, p. 36), a phenomenon which constitutes one form (aspect) of creative teaching. Rinkevich (2011, p. 219) has defined creative teaching as “a unique, customized, and meaningful exchange of knowledge among all individuals in a learning context.”

While various approaches and a range of terms have been used to describe work that sits under the broad umbrella of Drama in Education, including educational drama, process drama and even applied theatre, irrespective of the differences, what they share is a concern with the development of a dramatic world created by both the teacher and the students working together (Huda, 2017, p. 577). A further characteristic, according to Di Pietro (1987), is an emphasis on strategic interaction. This interaction recognises that learning is both a personal and a social behaviour. In addition, O’Neill (1995) has

argued that drama provides a sustained, intensive, and profoundly satisfying encounter with the dramatic medium which allows for participants to apprehend the world in a different way.

Karavoltsov and Sullivan (2011) note that Drama in Education, as an artistic and educational experience, is evidenced in the literature as a dialogical, liberating practice of education, while Bolton (1993, p. 39), argued that drama has a great deal to do with pedagogy because it is an art which involves the practice and use of drama in the classroom, as both subject and method. He later observed that drama may be enacted in a variety of forms, ranging from theatrical performances at one end of the continuum, to process drama at the other end, with Valverde (n.d., p. 7) suggesting that it encompasses a wide range of devices and practices based on particular learning contexts to achieve the desired outcomes.

Wessels (1978, p. 8) has pointed out that Drama in Education allows students to explore the foundations of surface reality, asserting that process-oriented drama focuses on participants actively working within the art form, using the same instruments that actors use, mind, body, heart, but to different ends (Walter, 2021, p. 2). Finally, Walter (2021) observes that Drama in Education offers a balanced perspective which emphasizes both content and form – providing opportunities for learning in and through drama.

Methodology

To support aspects of this paper, data and findings from a qualitative study were utilised. Qualitative research focuses on the use of interviews, observations, and documents to study a phenomenon in a natural setting (Owu-Ewie, 2008, p. 111). Denzin and Lincoln (1994) argue that qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretive and naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative research uses multiplicity of data sources such as visual texts, empirical materials, personal experiences, interactions, interviews, life stories, and case studies, as well as observations to study a phenomenon in a natural setting. This approach aims at seeking answers to pertinent questions and issues within a social setting. Punch (2013) notes that the qualitative approach uses non-numeric data, focusing on the lived experiences of people in their natural setting. Hlover and Botchway (2021, p. 75) hold the view that qualitative research is embedded in the constructivist ontology and interpretivist epistemology, where the production and acquisition of knowledge is socially immersed and constructed. Hence, emphasis is placed on the production of meanings obtained from a phenomenon; making it inductive in nature. This current study applied this approach to interrogate the phenomenon of Drama in Education in Ghana, focusing on its historical foundations, its practice, challenges and success stories within the Ghanaian educational landscape.

Participants were selected from institutions such as Ghana Education Service, the Ministry of Education, Basic Schools, Senior High Schools and the University of Ghana. Using a purposive sampling technique, the researchers recruited participants such as teachers, pupils, directors of

education, lecturers, headmistresses, and undergraduate students of the University of Ghana. In all, forty (40) participants were recruited to participate in this study. They included teachers (n=6), pupils (n=20), lecturers (n=2), headmistresses (n=2), officials of Ghana Education Service, GES (n=2), retired lecturers (n=2), directors of education (n=2) and undergraduate students (n=4). In addition, student (undergraduate) case studies were conducted in two basic schools in the Greater Accra Region. As part of the requirements for the award of a degree, four undergraduate students identified certain communities which had peculiar challenges regarding school enrollment and attendance.

Two major schools stood out in the project; they were Madina No. 1 Cluster of Schools in the La-Nkwantanang Municipality of Greater Accra Region and Sowa Din Memorial School located at Mmai Djorn in the Adentan Municipality of Greater Accra Region. In-depth and face-to-face interviews were conducted with participants in these schools. In addition, interviews were conducted with some retired lecturers who taught Drama in Education at the University of Ghana. The interviews were conducted in Twi and English languages, translated and transcribed and subsequently analysed thematically in line with the research objectives. Data analysis was done using the thematic analysis method. Ethically, the study observed principles of informed consent, confidentiality, duty to respect, and anonymity among others.

Findings and Discussions

Drama in Education in Ghana: The Historical Foundations

Informally, Drama in Education as an approach to teaching and learning has been in existence in Ghanaian societies since time immemorial. Generally, the Ghanaian is exposed to creativity from various activities at home. Most social orientations in traditional Ghanaian societies were done through 'learning by doing', what the Progressive Education Movement advocated for in teaching. These creative activities manifested in weaving, blacksmithing, brick-laying, cooking, dance, and the playing of musical instruments. These activities were transferred to the younger ones through direct transmission and observations. However, the most classic of these learning methods in traditional societies was through storytelling sessions. Storytelling sessions in traditional societies were moments where knowledge and skills were passed onto the younger ones through narrations, enactments and songs. There was a participatory process where knowledge and skills such as drumming, dancing, singing, language and communication skills, and knowledge of the environment were transferred through creative teaching, particularly through the use of narration. Amlor (2016) notes that these forms of local knowledge production and entertainment among the young ones were perceived as miniature windows through which values, behaviour and societal ethics of the people could be observed. Interestingly, these activity-based, learner-centred, problem solving ways of teaching and learning were in existence in

Ghana and the rest of Africa before formal institutions were established and before the 'revolution' by the Progressive Education Movement. Thus, Ghana and the rest of Africa were practicing learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning, before formal education was introduced.

An example of this is offered by Ebeli (2015, p. 19) who has argued that among the Avatime people of the Volta Region of Ghana, children have long engaged in the performance of dances such as *Afeti*, *Govu* and *Totoeme*. These are performed on special occasions in the society such as within funerals or the enstoolment of chiefs. Further, among the Asante of Ghana, Acheampong (1996, p. 35) identified women and children's performances associated with *bragoro* (puberty), while Ampene (2005) highlights the role of children in performances of *nwomkorɔ* (folk songs) in the Brong Ahafo region of Ghana. Similarly, Amlor (2016) identified the playing of games among the Ewe society of Ghana such as *Ka asi ati asimake* (touch the untouchable tree), *Amesi wodzi dzoda* (whoever is born on Monday), *Devimetsitsiwo* (Children as adults), *Gbotoklolo* (puberty initiates' singing game), and *Sibesibe* (run and hide) as some indigenous games that allowed children to develop their creative talents and abilities. Frimpong-Nnuroh (2010), in his study of the Nzema people of the Western Region of Ghana, asserted that these performances constitute indigenous knowledge and are directed at satisfying the specific needs of traditional societies through agents of socialisation such as learning from the elders and peers. This is especially the case when children and young people take part in communal activities such as listening to folktales and participating in music and dance activities on moonlit nights. Frimpong-Nnuroh further argued that all these activities are ways of imparting education to children in order to shape and mold their formative stages of life. As such, the involvement of children in various indigenous performances has provided a platform for them to develop their creative abilities within Ghanaian society. This participation began long before the advent of formal education by the colonialists.

In terms of formal education, Drama in Education has manifested in two ways in Ghana; individual and institutional practice. One individual who spearheaded the formal development and growth of Drama in Education in Ghana was the late Efua Sutherland, a renowned dramatist. In an interview on his experience in the teaching and practice of Drama in Education in Ghana, the late Sandy Arkhurst, a former Drama in Education lecturer, Arkhurst relished in the contribution of Efua Sutherland, describing it in this way:

Efua Sutherland established the Children Drama Development Project in 1967, similar to what Winifred Ward did in the United States of America with the Evanston Programme which brought about Creative Dramatics. The Children Drama Development Project was an attempt to create an awareness and acceptance of drama as a viable instructional method in formal institutions. Efua Sutherland wanted the traditional way of

instruction to be merged with the formalized instruction within the Ghanaian educational sector. (Source: field interview, July, 2021, Accra)

Sandy Arkhurst further explained that Efua Sutherland carried out this initiative for several reasons. First, there was concern that Ghanaian children might be losing touch with their roots, as exhibited in *The Blinkards* (Kobina Sekyi, 1974) and *The Dilemma of a Ghost* (Ama Ata Aidoo, 1965). In *The Blinkards*, Sekyi satirises Ghanaians, represented by the character Mrs. Brofosem, who abandoned their way of living, their customs and values to behave like the English. This abandonment was intended as a mark of their civilisation or elevation in society. Though there were characters like Mr. Onyimdze who was a foil of Mrs. Brofosem, the latter's lifestyle and mannerism had won the hearts of some ignorant characters like Mr. Tsiba, Ms. Tsiba and Okadu, causing them to deviate from the norms of their society. Through this satire, one gets to understand the challenges faced by Ghanaians during the colonial era, especially when Africans had been made to understand that their ways of life were uncivilised. Aidoo also presents in *The Dilemma of a Ghost* how Ato Yawson's worldview as a Fante changed drastically on his return from America where he had gone for further studies. With these manifestations of change in culture and social orientation, pioneer African dramatists like Sutherland were justified in being apprehensive about how the mode of instruction in formal education could alter and affect social orientation, a phenomenon which could create a loss of identity.

Sutherland was thus looking for a space or platform where both the new and old ways of knowledge acquisition could be merged so that Ghanaian school children would not lose out on what makes them Ghanaian. Sutherland also wanted the Ghanaian child to develop confidence in their self-expression and to grow their creative minds. Thus, Sutherland's intention was to get the Ministry of Education to incorporate drama in the school's curriculum to continue with the type of creative teaching and learning which had existed before formal education. Though her proposal was not put into use, because the curriculum did not feature creative teaching until 2007 (Curriculum Research and Development Division, 2007), the Children's Drama Project, which ran from the late 1960s till her demise, was nevertheless key in nurturing young ones to develop their talent in the arts, language and communication skills, and confidence in Ghana. One interviewee described her work in this way:

Though Efua Sutherland's trip to the Ministry of Education did not receive an immediate response till her death, what she can be remembered for in Ghanaian history of creative teaching, is her successful transfer from orality to text, the Akan version of storytelling, which she named *Anansegoro*. Sutherland's

Ananse is a concept of a total theatre that uses the form and style of Ghanaian *Ananse* (spider) storytelling. (Source: field interview, July 2021, Accra)

Sutherland re-organised and re-shaped an oral folk story performed within a communal setting for a conventional stage. With this concept, she succeeded in restoring what would have been lost due to the abandonment of the oral tradition. Instead, the *Ananse* concept has preserved the formula of traditional Akan storytelling. Sutherland's children, Esi Sutherland-Addy, Amowi Phillips and Ralph Sutherland have continued from where their mother left through the *Mmofra Foundation*, a foundation that has created a child-centred space for children to learn through playing at Dzorwulu, a suburb of Accra, Ghana.

Institutionally, the Department of Theatre Arts (formally Department of Drama and Theatre Studies) introduced *The Theatre Arts in Education* (University of Ghana, 1964, p. 40) in 1964, to provide hands-on creative teaching techniques to students, the majority of whom were teachers, to incorporate it into their teaching upon completion of the Certificate in Drama and Theatre Studies program. This was foremost, an attempt to make the course functional to the teachers because the Certificate in Drama and Theatre Studies program was primarily designed to train professional theatre artists to feed and grow the Ghanaian conventional theatre. Since the teachers returned to the classroom to continue with teaching, it was prudent to equip them with equal skills that would make them as functional as their counterparts going to practise professional theatre. *The Theatre Arts in Education* program exposed teachers to creative teaching skills, which gave such teachers an added value to return to the classroom with.

In an interview with a former Head of Department, the late Asiedu Yirenkyi argued:

The Theatre Arts in Education was later changed to Drama in Education possibly to give it more focus on the use of drama in teaching rather than the rather broad Theatre Arts in Education title. Secondly, it can be inferred that the overwhelming worldwide call for modification in instructional methods from teacher-centred to learner-centred approaches in teaching, might have influenced the creation of this course which answered the call. (Source: field interview, May 2017, Accra)

The introduction of *The Theatre Arts in Education* programme in the Department of Drama and Theatre Studies, University of Ghana added to the formal study and practice of Drama in Education in Ghana. Presently Drama in Education is taught in almost all the public universities in Ghana, and these lecturers are products of the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana. These graduates are also making significant impacts in the broader society.

Study and Practice of Drama Education in Ghana

Following its establishment, undergraduate students who enrolled in the Theatre Arts program had the option to study Drama in Education. The focus of this program was to enhance the knowledge and skills of professional teachers. Drama in Education was presented as a toolbox of strategies, with the teacher being like the technician who decides on the appropriate tool to use depending on the nature of work. The lecturer within this program therefore guided students through the process of understanding the various tools, in order to equip them on the methods and skills of working with learners in a classroom situation. Thus, student teachers were trained to imbibe artistic skills in their teaching to make teaching and learning participatory and learner-centred.

To achieve this, the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana adopted the University Staff Basic School, University Basic School and Aلسyd Academy as schools where demonstration lessons were conducted. Student teachers were assigned to these schools to work under the supervision of lecturers. However, beyond these schools, students are at liberty to identify and select schools of their own choice. Once a school is selected, the student teacher uses recommended textbooks of the Ministry of Education, to implement the project using creative teaching. The student teacher employs skills from Creative Dramatics or Children’s Theatre where role-play and teacher-in-role are used as instructional methods on the subject. With this demonstration teaching, games, stories, symbols, and songs are source materials in the use of either Creative Dramatics or Children’s Theatre. Subjects that have been taught using Drama in Education are Science, Mathematics and English. In addition to the subjects, there have been dramatisations on subject matter which pupils have identified in their learning spaces as needing to be addressed such as parental neglect, domestic abuse, and tribalism. With such subject matter, the target widens to include parents and stakeholders in education who are often invited to the programme to watch and hear what the pupils have to say for redress. Though Creative Dramatics and Children’s Theatre are the traditional approaches to the use of Drama in Education, there is no fuss to its implementation. A lecturer argued:

An instructor or practitioner has the liberty to explore creative modules as much as possible to ensure that teaching and learning takes place appropriately. For this reason, most instructors in the University of Ghana presently allow students to explore and use indigenous knowledge systems such as the Adinkra symbols, games, songs and dance movements. A game such as the ɔware, apart from its primary function in teaching military tactics (as was the days of wars where knowledge in military tactics was paramount) helped players to learn how

to perfect their abilities in calculation. Thus, using the game, learners are taught about History, indigenous knowledge and Mathematics. (Source: field interview, August 2021, Accra)

The extract above shows the attempts made by the instructors to get students to study and understand the functions of these indigenous knowledge systems, as well as ensuring preservation of forgotten and less used indigenous knowledge. This initiative from the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana is therefore a response mechanism towards preserving the indigenous knowledge systems such as games, songs, dance, folktales and symbols that were relinquished to the background as a result of formal education.

It is reassuring to note that Drama in Education, since it attained a formal status in Ghana, has not remained a course of study only for teachers. Due to the recognition of its effectiveness to educate, it is now also used beyond the classroom. For instance, when the people of Ghana go to the polls to elect a president and members of parliament, Drama in Education is used to educate electorates on politics and governance. In fact, the use of drama in this regard becomes very handy since the dramatisation of issues ensures that even electorates that are cut off from the print and electronic media can be reached. Drama is also used to create awareness on health issues. This was especially the case during the era of Covid-19 pandemic. At that time there was a high level of ignorance with regards to the COVID-19 and how one could be infected. All kinds of unsubstantiated information were peddled by unscrupulous individuals and groups of people who were taking advantage of the unfortunate situation to either gain fame or amass wealth. The Public Health Directorate of the Ministry of Health in Ghana, as is in the case of most public health concerns, relied on demonstrations and illustrations through creative arts to reach out to the public to curb the spread of the virus.

Drama has further moved from the auditorium to be used in non-traditional advertisements. With the influx of products and services, service providers, in their quest to beat competition rely on performers who dramatise to prospective buyers and patrons of services for clearer understanding of what the product and service can offer them. Drama in Education has therefore moved from being “a teacher’s course” to a course that non-teachers’ study, with the aim of getting a career in agencies in development, public health, broadcasting, advertising, and marketing.

Challenges with Drama in Education Practice in Ghana

In spite of these successes, Drama in Education in Ghana is still bedevilled with challenges. Nonetheless, the challenges associated with the practice of creative teaching resonate historical occurrence. It is the position of this paper that the slow acceptance of creative teaching in formal institutions, though worrisome, is not strange to theatre history. Rejection of and hesitance to accept the arts are founded in history. Historically, attempts of persecution

and rejection have often been made on the arts and practitioners to curtail its growth and development. Brockett and Hildy (2014) in their work *History of the Theatre* give accounts of how the church prevented Christians from attending performances, prevented Christians from marrying actors and withdrew privileges and entitlements enjoyed by members if they failed to adhere to such directives. Ghana, as a country, has its own peculiar challenges regarding creating teaching.

One challenge is a requirement for students undertaking Drama in Education in the Department of Theatre Arts, University of Ghana, to do a practical project consisting of a demonstration of the tenets of Drama in Education, which is, the use of drama to enhance teaching and learning. This project is for the students to demonstrate their understanding of the theories and how ready they are to practise on completion of their studies. Since Drama in Education focuses on schools, the major challenge for students has always been how to get either first or second cycle schools within the accepted distance from the university that will embrace the project. It has already been established that educational institutions have often exhibited reservations with regards to creative teaching. As has been discussed earlier, the usefulness of creative teaching in the classroom has never been in doubt, the issue is how teachers can successfully reconcile demands of institutional structures, and regulations with creative teaching. Often students get stuck between schools and educational authorities, whereas a teacher is willing for his pupils to be participants in a project, but structures nullify the enthusiasm and acceptance for the project.

Also, in order not to flout protocols, a Drama in Education student is required to get permission from the District Director of Education through the head-teacher and circuit supervisor. Though the demonstration does not involve these personnel directly, no matter how receptive a teacher is to creative teaching, if the protocol requirements are not met, the student cannot go to the classroom to execute a project. Most often, administrative bottlenecks are the major barrier to getting permission from educational authorities. An application for permission may be stuck with administrative personnel whose duty is to move the letter through the channel of communication for the officer in charge to endorse. If a said letter stays on someone's desk for too long, it adds to the challenges that have to be overcome in order to execute a project.

In addition to the protocol, there are regulations regarding teaching that has to be met such as sticking to schedules and contact hours. Scheduling on the time table also has to be adhered to religiously so as not to destabilise contact hours designed by the Ghana Education Service. Due to the challenges with requirements and institutional structures and regulations, Drama in Education students are usually not able to go beyond the demonstration to assess the success or otherwise of the project.

The existence of an impact assessment tool is key to evaluating the success or otherwise of an activity to validate it. It would have been ideal, as part of the study underpinning this paper, for Drama in Education students to do a follow-up on demonstrations done with teachers and pupils in order to find out the impact of the project on teaching and learning. However, Drama in Education projects conducted by students do not have the luxury of a follow-up for assessment. As an academic exercise, students have a limited time of three (3) months to get permission from authorities and design a project to work with teachers and pupils on a selected topic, subject or subject matter. These have to be completed within the stipulated time for students to be graded to satisfy the requirements for graduation. One student commented on this challenge:

One major problem that we face on this Drama in Education project is time constraints. The duration of the semester coupled with requirements make it challenging for us to do follow-ups for evaluation. The various bottlenecks and hurdles that we have to deal with in order to get approval for the project make it impossible for us to do follow-ups and evaluation assessments on the project. (Source: field interview, September 2021, Accra)

The extract above bears eloquent testimony to the problem of administrative bureaucracy in achieving desired goals regarding Drama in Education practice in Ghana.

Another challenge that students have to surmount is the different academic calendars that tertiary institutions and first and second cycle schools have. The parallel academic calendar of the University of Ghana, (the donor) and the First and Second Cycle schools (the recipient) makes it challenging for Drama in Education projects to be done smoothly. The difference in the calendar makes it difficult for students to adequately design and develop projects for target groups. Drama in Education projects are usually done in the second and final semester of the academic year. The first and second cycle schools on the other hand do not use a semester system, they run a three-term academic calendar, and the second term in the first and second cycle schools is when most extra-curricular activities are fixed. During an interview with a director of education, he revealed the following concerns:

These extra-curricular activities which are endorsed by the Ministry of Education as part of the educational system, make it challenging for heads of institutions to accept additional activities since the calendar is already packed. The parallel nature of the academic calendars from these institutions is the main source of the several challenges that Drama in Education students are usually confronted with. Some heads of institutions and teachers are open to new ideas in teaching and

learning, but have to go strictly according to regulations by supervising bodies, and therefore are sometimes compelled to decline Drama in Education projects in their schools. (Source: field interview, September 2021, Accra)

In summary then, although some teachers in Ghana recognise the effectiveness of the Drama in Education approach, they are saddled with a rigid curriculum that does not give room for creative teaching and learning as well as standardised testing and regulations. In Ghana, teachers are generally tasked to prepare students for examinations and thus must stay focused on that agenda to be able to complete the syllabi, since questions would be set to cover the syllabus. Any teaching and learning approach that will “waste time” is not welcome. Creative teaching is generally seen as time consuming, hence will delay a teacher in completing the syllabus. Closely related to the above problem is the rigid nature of the school timetable. This rigid timetable is regulated using the ringing of a bell to initiate a change of lesson. Teachers therefore strictly adhere to the contact hours, and there is no space for overtime in teaching and learning activities. This situation does not encourage creative teaching in Ghanaian teaching and learning environments. Having identified these challenges, the Department of Theatre Arts has resorted to negotiation to ensure that students who sign up for the course get locations to do their ‘demonstrations’.

Success Stories

Though Drama in Education has experienced challenges in Ghana, it nevertheless has also had success stories. For example, a research study by Deh (2016), focused on drama therapy revealed how drama could be used as a tool to engage and unearth creative talents for children with special needs. Using drama pedagogies, Deh engaged pupils with special needs at three locations: Dzorwulu; Echoing Hills; and Battor in the Volta Region of Ghana. The study found that pupils in Dzorwulu loved to act and dance while those at Echoing Hills loved to paint. In addition, pupils at Battor, dramatised how they felt about the public’s perception of children with special needs.

In Ghana, there are varied myths surrounding children with special needs, with some believing that their disabilities were created by a river god; while others believe that parents of children with special needs might have offended the gods and are therefore being punished. There are even instances where community members have urged parents of children with special needs to send them into the so-called evil forests to die. The Battor students used Drama in Education to demystify the public’s perception about children with special needs. This work afforded the pupils the opportunity to be heard, demonstrate the capacity they have in creative arts, boost their confidence and build their self-esteem.

Drama in Education has also been used in Ghana to improve the overall lives of people within communities. For example, a Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) Impact Development project, which was a

collaboration between the University of York (UK) and the University of Ghana, was completed. Entitled “Participatory Theatre and the Mitigation of Social and Environmental Harm: A case study from Artisanal and Small-Scale Mining in Ghana”, the project was undertaken in Akyem-Asunafo in the Eastern Region of Ghana. The project, which looked at the challenges of illegal mining, has been uploaded on YouTube¹ for the benefit of the general public.

A further project was completed in 2016 in Jamestown, a fishing community in the Greater Accra Region. In this fishing community, enrollment in education is very low. The study observed that though there were numerous schools in and around the community, the majority of the children preferred to engage in fishing activities to attending school. A key issue was that the parents and guardians did not put in much effort to dissuade the children, since they were getting payment for assisting the fishermen. While these payments were a mere pittance, these little monies, according to some parents, solved their financial needs. However, apart from the children missing out on education, they were also being exposed to danger and criminal activities as there was a lack of supervision. The goal of the project was to stimulate action in sending children in the town to school. Through Drama in Education, a durbar was organised for stakeholders in the town involving chiefs, parents and guardians, educationists and children. Accordingly, undergraduate students used drama to demonstrate the importance of early childhood education, the prospects of education, the roles of parents in educating their children and the dangers associated with children who abstain from school. Through drama, criminal activities that children are exposed to as a result of their failure to attend school were demonstrated; these include petty theft, robbery, streetism, drug and substance abuse, accidents, and teenage pregnancy among others. Through this project, parents understood the importance of early childhood education and how it can contribute to community development, hence the need for every child to be enrolled in school. This project was necessary in the community because the government of Ghana had implemented the Free Compulsory Universal Basic Education (FCUBE), making basic education free. Similarly, in 2017, the New Patriotic Party government in assumption of power made education in Ghana from basic to secondary school free as part of its 2016 campaign promises and the expectation was that children in Jamestown will benefit from this national education programme to make them useful and productive in the future.

¹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AJFCgN-ODYS>

Conclusion

This paper has argued that creative teaching approaches are not a new phenomenon in Ghana, having traditionally been used to develop a range of abilities in children. However, with the introduction of formal education, these approaches were relegated to the background, impacting in particular on children and young people's creative skills. One response to this situation was the introduction of Drama in Education. While its implementation has faced many challenges, Ghana has nevertheless benefitted from its introduction, particularly in applied contexts such as politics, governance and to support health issues and the needs of children with special needs, with various examples being provided within this paper of its successful use. While obstacles to its application within school settings remain, including a focus on teacher-centred pedagogies and exam-based assessments, there is a growing awareness of its value for children, young people and their teachers.

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