



Drama Communication as an Instrument for addressing Out-of-School Girls' Phenomenon in Nigeria

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Abstract. United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2022 stated that: “Nigeria has about 20 million out-of-school children. Globally, the organization submitted that there are 244 million children and youth between the ages of 6 and 18 worldwide (who) are still out of school (Ogunode and Adanna, 2022). A survey conducted by the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF) indicates that the population of out-of-school children in Nigeria has risen from 10.5 million to 18.5 million, making it the world's third highest of which sixty percent are girls. For this challenge to be effectively addressed, it is essential to seek a strategic communication intervention such as drama communication to disseminate the issues of out-of-school phenomenon, especially in areas where it is prevalent. Drama enacts vivid situations that will be explored by the participants, inviting them to find out more about the process of how a situation like girl-child dropout exists. It will lead them into comparing perspectives in the here and now, thereby working towards identifying the inherent problems with a deeper understanding of the challenge thereby proffering solutions. Anchoring this discourse on the Constructivist Learning Theory and Experiential Learning Theory, this paper explores the potentials of drama communication towards addressing the issue of out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria. The paper provides an overview of drama and its capacity for encouraging dialogue for social progress, as well as transforming the mindset of the population towards reducing the incidence of girl-child drop-out. The paper concludes that there is power in drama communication towards promoting and sensitizing the populace and it a potential effective instrument and tool for addressing the problem of out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria. This paper recommends that there is a need to make the

education of the girl-child a media agenda through the use of drama communication in order to reduce the rate of out-of-school girls in Nigeria.

Keywords: Drama Communication; Tool; Out-of-school Girls; Girl-Child Dropout; Out-of-school Girls' Phenomenon; Nigeria.

1. Introduction

Nigeria is one of the most populous nations of the world with over 200 million in population. Education as a development tool is essential for progress in every society especially developing nations. Without access to quality education in a nation, development in any form becomes very limiting for both boys and girls. According to Ogunode and Adanna (2022), a report from UNICEF (2022) observed that about 18.5 million children, the majority (60%) of whom are girls, do not have access to education in Nigeria. Article 26 of the UN Charter asserts that, everyone has the right to education and that education should be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages of schooling (Human Rights Charter, 1948).

Nigeria, a nation full of socio-economic potentials has for several decades faced multiple challenges in the area of development especially in the education sector. While several interventions at various times have been deployed towards reducing or eradicating the phenomenon of out-of-school girls, the challenge persists with Nigeria having the highest out-of-school children in the world. This invariably creates a barrier to efforts aimed at attaining Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG4) in Nigeria.

This thereby indicates that there is an urgent need for a strategic intervention in the area of girl-child dropping out-of-school. One strategic intervention

that would prove invaluable in this issue of girl-child dropout in Nigeria is the use of drama communication. The essence of drama communication is to allow social problems to be portrayed in their most simple forms which would help the audience to connect with the story as well as see the situation in another perspective. This will eventually lead to the making of informed decisions on issues presented. It is against this backdrop that this paper explored through an opinion perspective, the use of drama communication as an instrument for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

The issue of the girl-child dropping out of school is a global one. It is most prevalent however, among the developing nations. Within this context, Nigeria has one of the highest incidents of out-of-school girls in the world. Nigeria has the highest number of children not attending formal education in the world with a figure of 18.5 million out-of-school children, 60% of who are girls who have little or no access to education (UNICEF, 2022). There is a very serious implication to the society if the girl-child is not educated, especially on sustainable human development. Education has the potential of improving the lives of girls and women directly and indirectly. It allows them to have greater control of their lives and provides them with skills that will enable them to contribute to the development of their societies.

Very high level of out-of-school girls in Nigeria is due to many reasons ranging from social, environmental, to economic, thereby making it impossible for them to effectively contribute to the growth and development of the society. This is quite challenging in a nation like Nigeria. For any nation to grow and develop, there is an urgent need to address or stop this phenomenon. Madu and Obi (2021) acknowledge previous efforts that Nigeria has made in this regard. They however are of the view that much more need to be done in this critical area especially as it affects the north and south of the country:

It is true that some efforts have been made by successive governments to improve the girl child education in Nigeria. Much still needs to be done if women must fully contribute to the development of the nation. Recent statistics still showed that despite marked improvement in female enrolment in the country, girls still lack behind in the formal education system particularly in the North and South-South region of Nigeria.

It is in this light that this study explored the use of drama communication as an instrument for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are to:

- provide valuable insight on drama as an effective communication tool.
- explore the potential impact of drama communication tool as an instrument and veritable strategy for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria.

2. Understanding the Concepts: Drama Communication and Out-of-school Girls' Phenomenon

2.1 Drama Communication

Drama is the form or genre of literature which is intended to be performed usually in some sort of theatre. Drama is both similar to and different from the other forms of literature. It is just like fiction and poetry in being a text which aims at communicating ideas about certain issues. However, it differs from both fiction and poetry in several aspects. Drama has one characteristic peculiar to itself; it is written mainly to be performed, not to be read. Moreover, drama presents ideas and transforms those ideas into some form of performance. Drama can be translated or communicated in different forms hence radio drama. Drama communication grabs the attention of the audience and varies in pace and length of scene; it's intended to keep the listener's attention as well as express the characters in dialogue and interaction.

According to Costa, Faccio, Belloni, and Ludici (2014), drama techniques have been widely implemented in many different areas of education and in clinical settings. They further emphasized the effectiveness of using theatre as a means of promoting change by pointing out its strong emotional component is attributed to two main functions: a cathartic function and a performative one. Drama, they maintained, is, first of all, entertainment and could be useful for implementing educational interventions based on its techniques- especially with children and adolescents. In this regard, drama can serve as a communication strategy that could be tailored to the target population.

Kalidas (2014) confirms that:

The use of drama as an effective and valuable teaching strategy is becoming increasingly common in educational contexts. The use of drama promotes

meaningful, active and reflective thinking processes as well as enhancing communication skills development. Further adding that one of the reasons drama is able to enhance students' learning experience is because of its unique ability to accommodate many different learning styles and thereby able to motivate the learners.

Drama is more concerned with providing people with lived-in experience, with the enactive moment, rather than with performing the rehearsed moment. Drama communication can be used as a tool for social change and development including reducing the incidence of girl-children dropping out of school. Nigeria is a nation that thrives on the performance of drama as seen in the Nigerian Nollywood and Kannywood. Most Nigerians are galvanized towards drama performances as it helps one to see in real life the social challenges and possible ways to resolve them as well as showing the connection inherent in socio-economic scenarios.

2.2 Out-of-school Girls' Phenomenon

Out-of-school girls refer to girls that are meant to be in school but are not due to both external and internal factors. For the purpose of this study, the out-of-school girls in focus are girls that are of primary school age; that is, those between the ages of six and eleven. The term, 'out-of-school girls' therefore refers to the girls that have no access to full primary school education over a period of time. It also includes the girl-children that have left school. In most cases, the families of these girls do not give them the opportunity of being enrolled in school. At other times, even those that are enrolled are not given the opportunity of completing the programme; they abandon the educational system without completing the academic year especially primary school due to one factor or the other.

Gisore, (2004) proposes four groups of factors that could account for the girl child dropping out of school. These are socio-economic background, socio-cultural level, the pedagogical conditions and psychological development of the child.

3. Exploring the Use of Drama Communication

Nigeria as a nation has a cultural heritage that is steamed from drama and this is evident in the Nollywood and Kannywood films produced and distributed all over the world. Drama is basically a form of literature which is intended to be performed in different formats. Drama aims to communicate ideas about certain issues. Drama Communication

can be performed in theatres, film, radio and other outlets towards expressing information on ideas meant to transform and change perspective. It involves acting and presenting ideas and transforming those ideas into some form of performance.

With out-of-school girls in mind, drama communication can be used as a tool for projecting the thoughts inherent in the importance of the girl-child remaining in school. This can be done first through the production of a script that has the ideas needed or relevant to be translated into drama. To do this, effort has to be put in researching on possible ideas for performance and deciding in what format the presentation will be rendered as well as the delivery pattern. The intention is to express the characters in dialogue, using music and sound effects to help the listener imagine the characters being portrayed in the story. An example is having the idea that remaining in school is vital to socio-economic development and then producing a drama script that speaks to this effect. The script would then be performed in a theatre setting that is accessible to the target audience.

The drama presentation has the capacity of providing the audience with a new experience thereby leading them to a change of mind and transformation by accepting this new reality and information. The message needed to be communicated in the drama should be clearly presented. For the purpose of this study, the message that will be produced to the audience will focus on the eradication, or reduction of the incident of out-of-school girls. This means that using the instrument of drama communication will communicate the need for the girl-child to go to school or remain in school and reduce the rate of dropping out.

4. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this paper is anchored on two leaning theories, namely, the constructivist learning theory and experiential learning theory.

4.1 The Constructivist Learning Theory

The general understanding of constructivism is that it is a theory of learning or meaning making. It postulates that individuals create their own new understandings on the basis of an interaction between what they already know and believe and ideas and knowledge with which they come into contact (Resnick, 1989). The constructivist learning theory explains that we learn by 'constructing' knowledge in

our minds. Constructivism argues that learners have an active role in thinking things through, mulling them over, and coming to conclusions based on logic and critical thinking. The constructivist theory is based on the idea that learners are active participants in their learning journey and that knowledge is constructed based on experiences. In the same vein, parents of out-of-school girls will imbibe knowledge through the introduction of drama communication which will help them to make decisions of allowing their girl-children to go to school.

The main point in constructivist learning theory is that Knowledge is constructed. Every learner begins the learning journey with some pre-existing knowledge and then continues to build their understanding upon that. The shaping of further understanding could be through drama communication where the information that would be performed in the drama would be a social issue like reducing or eradicating the dropout rate of the girl-child in Nigeria. This would lead to discussions, conversations, interactions and then understanding which would ultimately lead to a positive action.

Constructivist learning theory therefore, elicits prior knowledge and this is built when new ideas are presented. The power inherent in drama communication is enough to encourage the audience to provide feedback, thereby causing reflection on learning. The resultant effect would be action which could be in the form of mindset change towards allowing the girl-child to go to school.

4.2 Experiential Learning Theory

David Kolb is best known for his work on the experiential learning theory. Kolb published this model in 1984, getting his influence from other great theorists including John Dewey, Kurt Lewin, and Jean Piaget. Experiential learning theory recognizes that learning problem is not just for children anymore; there are learning challenges for all adults, as well. There are learning challenges at every level of the society whether it is at the level of the individual, family, community, organization, institution, or even the nation. Experiential learning theory (ELT) is a dynamic, holistic theory of the process of learning from experience and a multi-dimensional model of adult development. It is a holistic theory that defines learning as the major process of human adaptation involving the whole person. As such, ELT is applicable not only in the formal education classroom but in all arenas of life. The holistic nature of the learning process means that it operates at all levels of human society from the

individual, to the group, to organizations, and to the society as a whole.

The basis for the experiential learning theory is learning by doing. Experiential learning focuses on the idea that the best way to learn things is by actually having experiences. Those experiences then stick out in one's mind and help you retain information and remember facts. This is in tandem with the purpose of this study and justifies its adoption in the study. Drama communication creates an experience that will foster remembrance especially with information about keeping girls in school and how the mindset of parents or guardians of out-of-school girls can evolve based on communication in drama through performance. When comparing the experiential learning theory with other traditional theories, a prominent difference in the overall approach is formed. A very different outlook has arisen in education that entails the proper relationship between learning, work and other life activities and the creation of knowledge itself (Kolb & Kolb, 2005).

5. Research Methodology

The major objective of this paper is to provide valuable insight on the use of drama as a communication strategy for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria. This is an opinion paper where valuable insight is explored on the strategic use of drama communication as an instrument for reducing the incident of out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria. To build this argument, this paper therefore used secondary data from journal articles, books, reports and such other sources. Through on-line and desk research, the researchers organized and analyzed data from all the secondary sources used.

The scope of the findings was limited to factors that contributed to the girl-child dropping out of school as well as challenges faced by the girl-child. The literature review allowed the progressive exploration of factors that contribute to girl-child dropping out of school. This paper used the opinion of the researchers as its core methodological approach. The concluding statement is that communication strategy in the form of drama communication approach is an effective instrument for reducing or ending out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria.

6. Review of Empirical Studies

This section describes the literature related to the subject of out-of-school girls' phenomenon and the

factors responsible for contributing to this. Generally, the aim of this review is to broaden understanding of what has been done in-relation to this study. This review is on a combination of sources derived from textbooks, journal articles both online and offline and several other publications and other official reports that are related to girl-children dropping out of school in Nigeria.

6.1 Reasons for Out-of-School Girls' Phenomenon

There are several reasons why the phenomenon of out-of-school girls exists. They range, from social, to cultural, to economic, to environmental and to even structural. Uwaezuoke (2019) is of the view that several factors contribute to the phenomenon of out-of-school children in Nigeria. According to him, they include gender inequality, insurgency, child marriage, natural disasters and child labor and other negative socio-cultural norms. His study went on to indicate that despite the presence of the legislative arm of the government in the country, it does not appear that the phenomenon of out-of-school children is decreasing. The link between the decrease of out-of-school children and national development is apparent even as there are several models brought forth to explain this relationship.

In addition, he proposes the provision of attendance and completion of junior secondary school education as a pre-qualification for statutory marriages in Nigeria. This should be accompanied by sanctions which should serve as deterrent and reward which should serve as encouragement. This simply means that one has to have some sort of academic certification before embarking on marriage. The researcher stressed however that it is the reward approach rather than the sanction approach that has the potential of attracting persons to the legislation. He is of the view that this approach has the capacity to hasten the achievement of the desired goal of enacting any legislation through its "friendly-mien" which allows persons to feel that they are part of that legislation. This strategy of possible reward could prove to be another way of reducing the phenomenon and creating incentive for parents or guardians to allow their children to attend school. What this researcher failed to see is that this approach may not work in all the states taking into consideration how dynamic a nation like Nigeria is and that one thought process may not work for a country as economically and culturally diverse and sensitive as Nigeria.

Similarly, Nabugoomu (2019) working from the Ugandan experience, confirmed that some factors responsible for out-of-school phenomenon include,

poor academic performance, failure to cope with school, lack of social skills to cope with life's challenges. Other factors include early employment, early pregnancy, lack of parental care and role models, child-headed families, media influence, and drug abuse, poor payment of teachers, poverty among parents, child labor, long distances to school, family gardening, and lack of school/personal effects.

In like mind but with a broader perspective, Mikisa (2019) argues that other factors responsible for girl-child drop-out especially in a country like Uganda include internal factors (perceived self-efficacy motivation to go to school, and perception of gender equality), family environment (household chores, perceived parental attitude toward education, and adolescents' perceptions of parents' ability to meet family needs), and school environment (school infrastructure, and perceived teacher support, and safety at school). These points provide some level of clarity towards solving a continental problem of girl-child dropping out of school.

Another researcher, Banura (2019), who worked on the same subject of girls dropping out of school, identified environmental factors as a major influence for girl-child dropout. The study found out that that school and family related factors were responsible for the girl-child dropping out of school. It specifically identified such school related factors like long distance to school, inadequate and inappropriate water and sanitation facilities, lack of provision of scholastic materials, lack of guidance and counselling. Specific family related factors include early and forced girl-child marriages.

7. Strategic Insight into the use of Drama for Development Communication

The use of drama as an effective and valuable teaching strategy is becoming increasingly common in educational contexts especially in the area of development communication. It promotes meaningful, active and reflective thinking processes as well as enhancing the development of communication skills. Drama communication provides a unique and irreplaceable education experience involving both feelings and emotions in a way that results in a more effective form of education (Best, 1996). This is explored through the process of role-playing with provided information and the act of exploring and discovering oneself and the wider world in a way that protects them from the consequences that would normally follow in the situations they recreate (Edmiston, 2000).

According to Joronen, Konu, Rankin and Åstedt-Kurki (2011), educational drama can be very effective in improving pupils' interpersonal relations in the cultivation of cooperation and in improving the general climate in the classroom. In light of this, drama communication can therefore serve as a tool for improving and encouraging reduction in girl-child dropout from school. Drama communication involves role-playing and performance. Its utilization as a communication strategy requires some level of research that will enable the effective delivery of the information to the target audience. In this case, the communication of drama on the issue of eradicating girl-child dropping out of school to parents or guardians involves the reflection on values and beliefs.

Drama as a valuable form of communication creates dramatic situations to be explored by the participants, inviting them to find out more about the process of how a situation like girl-child came into being, to shift perspectives in the here and now. It also identifies and sometimes solves inherent problems and deepens further understanding of the challenge. It further gives learners the chance to express themselves more effectively in everyday situations. In other words, drama communication encourages learners to learn how to influence others and how to put themselves in other people's shoes.

Drama Communication represents what life is all about in Nigeria where so many people see more clearly when their situation is dramatized or depicted visually before them. The challenge of out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria is a huge issue with complications in the socio-economic area. Drama communication would serve as a language that most people may understand and respond to as well as react to thereby creating a situation of change where the incidence of girl-child dropout is a thing of the past. Drama communication when properly applied will certainly serve as an instrument for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria.

8. Conclusion

This paper concludes that Nigeria as a nation has the highest incidence of out-of-school girls' dropout and this has had socio-economic impact on the nation especially in terms of development and growth. Over the years various strategies have been deployed in the attempt to address this challenge yet the percentage remains high in Nigeria. This paper is an opinion paper that explored the use of drama communication strategy for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria. This paper has also brought

forth valuable insight in the use of drama communication towards this phenomenon with the hope that this strategic instrument will be used for socio-economic development in Nigeria.

Educating the girl child is an investment because everyone, whether male or female has the right to make meaningful contribution to the society. This can only be achieved when people are properly equipped with the right tools or instrument. In this case, education is an apt tool needed for individual progress in life. Drama communication can be a very important tool for prompting development in a nation like Nigeria. This therefore justifies its use as a strategic intervention tool for ending the phenomenon of out-of-school girls in Nigeria.

9. Recommendations

This paper recommends the strategic use of drama communication as an instrument for addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria. It could be achieved in the following ways:

There should be a media agenda communicated through the use of drama to the general public with the sole aim of promoting and encouraging the girl-child to remain in school and not to drop out of school.

The content of the media agenda communicated in the drama should include the adjustment of policies, rules and regulations that would encourage the importance of education in Nigeria thereby improving the retention of girl-children in schools.

The media agenda communicated in the drama should include all the stakeholders in the public and private sectors who must be involved in the advocacy of making education a priority as a way of reducing the incidence of girl-child dropout from schools in Nigeria.

There should be the creation of theatre sites, town hall presentations, development film presentation and general publicity on the issue of promoting the importance of the girl-child remaining in school.

Nigeria has great potentials in every front and this can be further actualized through the promotion of education in the life of the girl-child. The possibilities of other communication strategies that can be used are endless. This paper provides a path towards a real solution for the out-of-school girls phenomenon or girls dropping out of school. This research brings to light the confidence that drama communication

stands as an effective instrument towards addressing out-of-school girls' phenomenon in Nigeria.

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