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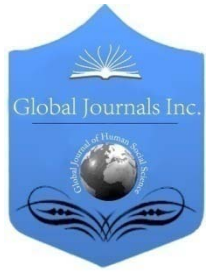

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Dance Play Method: A Strategy for Teaching Emotionally Challenged Primary Schools Children in Cross River State, Nigeria

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Abstract- Most school children who are emotionally challenged are often stigmatized and left abandoned by their teachers and classmates. Although Federal Legislation (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) protects the inherent rights of individuals with emotional challenges and disabilities, that legislation cannot always protect them from subtle forms of discrimination and prejudice. This paper clearly point out the undisputable place of dance play method as a strategy for helping children who are emotionally challenged. School counselors, administrators, and teachers have a unique opportunity to directly address emotionally challenged children by providing organized, enjoyable dance and movement activities in a supportive environment and helping students gain better body control and develop nonverbal and social skills. This paper examined the place of the teacher as dance educator to have insights into these learner's abilities and effectively guide the children overcomes their emotional challenges in the school.

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Dance Play Method: A Strategy for Teaching Emotionally Challenged Primary Schools Children in Cross River State, Nigeria

Egaga Patrick I. [α] & Arikpo Ikpi A. [σ]

Abstract- Most school children who are emotionally challenged are often stigmatized and left abandoned by their teachers and classmates. Although Federal Legislation (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990) protects the inherent rights of individuals with emotional challenges and disabilities, that legislation cannot always protect them from subtle forms of discrimination and prejudice. This paper clearly point out the undisputable place of dance play method as a strategy for helping children who are emotionally challenged. School counselors, administrators, and teachers have a unique opportunity to directly address emotionally challenged children by providing organized, enjoyable dance and movement activities in a supportive environment and helping students gain better body control and develop nonverbal and social skills. This paper examined the place of the teacher as dance educator to have insights into these learner's abilities and effectively guide the children overcomes their emotional challenges in the school.

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I. Introduction

Teaching method is an eclectic method comprising and combining all the principles and methods used for instructing school children. It is implemented by teachers to achieve the desired learning in students. These strategies are determined partly on subject matter to be taught and partly by the nature and peculiarity of the learner. For a particular teaching method to be appropriate and efficient it has to be in relation to the characteristic of the learner and the type of learning it is supposed to bring about. The design and selection of teaching methods must take into account not only the nature of the subject matter but also how students learn (Petrina, 2007). Dance play teaching methods presents a conceptual model of dance education that embraces dance as an art form and disseminates it through learning experiences in dancing, dance making, and dance appreciation. Throughout the world children play is such an important part of teaching, this is because it conditions the harmonious physical, intellectual and affective development of a child. A child who does not play is a sick child. A child who is prevented by his teacher or guardian from playing will fall ill, physically and mentally. Little wonder the notion "all work without play makes Jack a dull boy". Dance play is one of the most important of all educational activities and deserves acknowledgement of its rightful place in formal schooling, beyond the nursery school to which it is too often confined. Dance play provides the teacher not only with a way of improving his knowledge of the child, but also with a means of renewing his teaching methods.

II. Statement of the Problem

Emotionally disturbed children serious threats to their own development and the development of other children around them. Sometimes they are withdrawn hyperactive reclusive etc. Emotionally challenged learners may lack nonverbal academic readiness skills needed to productively engage in learning activities. Children who lack these skills may have emotional challenges in concentration and self-control that may result in behaviors such as jostling and disturbing others when lining up or receiving instruction on the rug. For these children, dance activities can offer a productive entry point for addressing their growth as learners, and an opportunity for them to experience success in school. This paper is geared to address the place of dance play as a strategy for helping students who are emotionally challenged.

II. Psychological Functions and the Role of Dance Play in the Classroom

Various psychological approaches appreciate the role of the dance in the development of the individual psyche play is a functional relaxation activity or, again, a way of using up excess energy that cannot, or can no longer, be absorbed for survival. A certain form of play is indissolubly linked with each stage of development, and although the rate or age at which various games appear may vary from one society to another or *one* individual to another, the order in which they appear is always the same. Play is a yardstick of a child's mental development.

Dance play is an integral part of education; it is accepted and encouraged or alternatively rejected as an

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obstacle to the children's productive capacity. Whatever a society's is, play is an essential role in education. It may even be said that play is an education in itself outside the school. Play activities and materials are the best way for a child to express himself and the best testimony by which the adult can attempt to understand him; and on the other, they can serve as a basis for the teaching methods and techniques which the adult wishes to devise for the child with whose education he has been entrusted. For it would seem only natural that play should have its place in the classroom. For the teacher, dance play is one of the best ways of getting to know a child who is emotionally challenged, both as regards his personal psychological make-up and his cultural and social background. By observing a child at play, it will be possible to detect the appearance of affective, psychomotor or intellectual disorders in his development, identify what stage of mental development he has reached which will have to be borne in mind if the learning methods employed are to be improved upon. This will also expose which methods are most likely to succeed in the classroom communication process. Or even dictate placement alternatives for the child in the classroom.

Observation shows that communication between pupils, or between the teacher and his pupils, is established through dance play, where verbal communication may have failed. Dance play provides a release from the pressure of *school*. Having acquired the conviction, therefore, that play is a vital need for a child, that it is at once a 'preserve' apart and the foremost educational institution, teachers will begin by acknowledging the legitimate importance of dance play method, before even contemplating ways of incorporating it into their teaching.

To effectively adopt dance play method of teaching the teacher should bear in mind that; the effective utilization of dance/play method with emotionally disturbed learners must flexibly involve:

- Exercises - attitudes and physical behaviour: running, jumping, chasing, etc,
- Verbal expression - nursery rhymes, stories, tales, riddles, games of logic and reasoning.
- Concrete items - figurative and symbolic objects such as dolls, masks or other meaningful objects.
- All behaviour related to performing or plastic forms of expression - choreography, theatre, transforming appearances, drawing, modeling.
- Any objects which are not specifically intended as playthings but might acquire such a function because of their appeal and the service they might render to the subject.
- Create a safe, friendly and positive atmosphere.
- Adapt a language to suit the age and experience of students
- Give regular verbal feedback that respects students and helps them develop as independent learners.
- Teach safe dance principles; non-judgmental attitudes; positive body image; punctuality, planning and preparation.

III. Effective Application of Dance Play Method of Teaching Children who are Emotionally Challenged

The following should be taken into consideration before adopting dance play method of teaching emotionally challenged children.

- The type of class (community, social, school, studio, professional etc)
- Participants' age, stage and needs
- The dance style/genre
- Class size and venue

IV. Importance of using Dance Play Method for Teaching Emotionally Challenged Children

The following strategies can be adopted for effective dance play method of teaching thus; Participate and model behaviour:

- It is sometimes necessary to limit your demonstration or participation in the actual moving/dancing portions of class. Modeling behaviour is also important for showing children how to behave. Ask the students what is the proper way to sit or stand while waiting on their spot or number, then show them, and then have them practice it with you.
- Offer "Dancers' Choice"

  The freedom to choose is empowering, particularly for children who are learning to become independent in their thoughts and decisions. Try to include a chance for your dancers to make a choice at least once in each lesson. However, be careful about offering unlimited possibilities.
- Enlist and recruit a misbehaving child

  A chronically misbehaving child can be like a little thorn in your side. If you're familiar with the advice to keep your enemies closer than your friends, this tip is similar. Instead of constantly reprimanding the child, *enlist* his/her help in some way. Ask her to be your helper when handing out props, or recruit him to make the check marks in the attendance roster.
- Offer positive feedback at every opportunity

  Children respond well to positive feedback. Continually be on the look out for things that are

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being done well. This gives the class a chance to model the appropriate behavior.

- Limit negative attention

  A child will eventually stop responding to his/her name if it is said over and over in a negative way.

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