

## Chapter 13

# Gifted and Talented School Activities for Students With Special Educational Needs Through Drama Therapy

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### ABSTRACT

*This chapter checks the background, brief history, theoretical base of drama therapy in the beginning, followed by introduction of the developmental process and seven stages of drama therapy. An example of evidence-based practice of drama therapy for a group of students with special educational needs in a wide range of settings and ended with a list of gifted and talented school activities was illustrated in the subsection of the main focus of the chapter. This heterogenous group included students with learning disability, intellectual and developmental disability, autistic spectrum disorder, cerebral palsy, and Down's syndrome. Research findings indicate that gifted and talented school activities through drama therapy has been especially effective with their verbal and non-verbal expression, social skills using, efficient communication, cooperation, self-confidence, and flexibility.*

### INTRODUCTION

Human beings are made for drama. From the perspective of development, when infants realize that they are independent individuals, they have two different entities. One is the actor, the self that thinks and perceives. The other is the role, the thought and perceived self. Human beings are connected with the inner world through thinking, and connected with social reality via behavior (Emunah, 1992; Jennings & Minde, 1993). The thinking and perceiving self is the originator of behavior. The thought and per-

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ceived self is the carrier of behavior. In this sense, it is in line with the characteristics of drama. Here is an obvious example like a little girl said to her teddy bear in a mother's voice, "If you don't brush your teeth before going to bed, you will have cavities" (Landy, 1994). Drama therapy generates in the mid-twentieth century in European and American countries (Jennings et al., 1994). Pioneers of drama therapy worked from many different perspectives to enrich theoretical base and practical experiences, which will be presented in detail in the subsection of brief history of drama therapy. In the contemporary era, drama therapy is extensively applied in school, hospital, prison and community settings. Drama therapist systematically and intentionally use of drama and theatre arts, techniques and processes to help clients extend the depth and breadth of inner experience while increasing flexibility between roles to move toward balance of mental world, which all promote self-integration through movement-based imagination, roles taking, projection, improvisation (Johnson, 1991). Drama therapy may be practiced between two individuals, a group, a family, or a larger community for any age group. In the field of special education, the remarkable effective application of drama therapy for students with learning disability, intellectual and developmental disability (Barton-Hulsey, Sevcik, & Ronski, 2017), autistic spectrum disorder (Hodermarska, 2013) indicates that drama therapy raises their non-verbal understanding and expression, social skills, efficient communication, self-esteem and self-confident, and promote the well-being. The objectives of the chapter focus on a brief review of drama therapy and an illustration of how to develop school activities for students with special educational needs through drama therapy. In the end of this chapter, a list of gifted and talented school activities using drama therapy techniques were given for readership.

## **BACKGROUND**

### **Brief History of Drama Therapy**

Drama is mime, sound, gesture, body language and speech. The theater is unique in its capacity to integrate several art forms can art, music, dance, play, story, and drama come together in a single entity (Jennings et al., 1994). Theater is where we may refer more often to the character, we are playing which in itself has many roles. Early theater was linked to belief and therefore to vision in ancient societies, and that more formal theater grew out of dramatic group rituals. We are engaged by the juxtaposition of visual images, sounds, movement, verbal, statement at sensory, emotional and thinking levels. But how could drama be a way of therapy? As early as Aristotle, people have recognized the role of drama in catharsis of emotions for humans. Rituals in drama therapy can even be traced back to the primitive shamanism (Jennings et al., 1994). The burial of ancient Chinese terracotta warriors with their bodies is not only a ritual, but also a spiritual comfort and a symbol of identity. Modern drama therapy shed mythical yarn, is a highly artistic temperament of the discipline, involved in multiple disciplines including drama, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, anthropology. Especially in the field of psychology, practitioners apply dramatic methods, technologies and its process into action-oriented gestalt, psychological drama, and play therapy mainly through role playing, spontaneous participation, as well as the creative improvisation and performance to help clients get catharsis and achieve self-integration. Most writers agree that drama therapy evolved in Britain in the 1960s from drama in education. Peter Slade creatively applied drama to the education and intervention of children with low academic achievement, with remarkable effects, and invented the term 'dramatherapy'. After Slade, a large number of theorists

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