THE IMPACT OF DRAMA PEDAGOGY ON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT, ATTITUDE, AND EMPATHY: AN ACTION RESEARCH STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This action research study evaluated a problem of practice which emerged from the apathy and passive responses of students to reading classic literature in the high school English classroom. Teachers instructed while students received information with little investment on their part. The purpose of this study was to determine how to help students read closer and develop a deeper comprehension of literature while tapping into the affective domain.

Through a convergent mixed methods action research design, the study addressed three research questions that explored how drama pedagogy affected student comprehension, their attitudes toward reading classic literature, and their perceptions of their empathy toward others. Qualitative and quantitative data collection instruments of pretest and posttest assessments, Likert scales, and reflective journals were used.

The study revealed that drama pedagogy strategies did increase comprehension and improved students’ attitudes about studying Shakespeare’s work *Othello*. The study also revealed that the use of drama pedagogy was the impetus for more open classroom discussions. The findings and supporting themes suggest implications for professional development at the school, district, and state level that helps teachers develop and practice drama pedagogy strategies to implement in the classroom. Future research will determine if the drama pedagogy approach to teach literature is effective on other genres of literature such as prose and poetry and with all levels of students.

*Keywords:* drama pedagogy, classic literature, Shakespeare, close reading, affective domain