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The role of drama in education in fostering a soft skills curriculum in the paperless classroom of South African primary schools

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ABSTRACT

We welcome the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and its technological advancement with open arms. Well, we do not have much of a choice because whether we like it or not, it plans to stay. With this digital progression, South African educational bodies migrate its educational framework to the 'paperless classroom': a teaching and learning transition from pen and paper to blended learning (technologically enhanced) systems (Shonfeld & Meishar-Tal 2017:185).

Emerging conversations around 4IR have one wondering what this educational shift will result in, especially around our human connection and interaction. I question the implications of the paperless classroom and its technologies on a learner's interpersonal aptitudes and how it will achieve the development of a holistic learner. The research warns that the paperless classroom may put a higher value on hard (technical) skills over soft (interpersonal) skills, which may result in learners' limited ability to foster positive relations, communication and collaborative effort (Elmore, 2014).

Using a summative evaluation through an analytic approach, I present the possibilities of introducing Drama in Education as a relevant and dynamic educational strategy in the paperless classroom, alongside the voices of practitioners, researchers and educational specialists. Although the research is not conducted practically, it proposes that when specific Drama in Education strategies are successfully implemented by educators, they may further motivate a soft skills enhancing curriculum. This may foster a beneficial hard-soft skill balance in the learner.

The research is catalyzed by the observation of a leading paperless primary school, in their Blended Learning Facility and focuses on their endeavors to create an alternative educational experience. I investigate the school's paperless model, identify possible gaps and recommend Drama in Education as a mediating learning instrument. Finally, in the commitment to hone in on a holistic individual in an ever-changing educational environment, this transformational approach to education is recommended to core educational bodies in South Africa for consideration.