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Strategies for inclusion through play among disabled and abled children :an integrative review of role-theory's effect on inclusive practice

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2019
https://hdl.handle.net/10539/29465

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Abstract

Drawing from a drama therapeutic perspective, this study explores the notion of using play and role-play for the purpose of developing inclusive thinking among differently and typically abled grade two and three leaners in South Africa. It first provides an understanding of how role theory has evolved over time and explains how the drama therapeutic understanding of role-theory can stimulate inclusive practice. Via an extensive theoretical review, it critically analyses the use of play and role-play in the light of projection, embodiment and storytelling.

The findings posit that through role-play, children can start to familiarise themselves with the idea of difference. Role-play provides a platform to identify and understand idiosyncratic differences which may not be evident through separation or merely meeting in one space. Via a case study analysis, this report also refines aspects of exclusion that propagate damaging consequences such as peer rejection and low self-esteem. It postulates that through play-based techniques it could be possible to begin fundamental conversations and create a deeper understanding around the differences which children carry.

The idea of difference is nuanced in ways which we would not be able to understand if we remain ideologically and practically separated. Consequently, the selected material provides impetus for a play-based, inclusive intervention for foundation phase learners, when children are beginning to form and interpret notions of themselves and others. Ultimately the paper acts as a primary resource tool which speaks to the necessity for inclusive based practice specifically with grade two and three learners, and delineates ways in which current play-strategies can be practically augmented to promote holistic inclusive thinking.

Key words: Differently and typically abled; inclusivity; role theory and role-play; drama therapy; notions of self, self esteem, peer rejection, play, exclusion, inclusion.