
**DRAMA-BASED PEDAGOGY AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL
INTEGRATION IN DIVERSE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

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Doi: <https://doi-doi.org/101555/ijarp.6597>**ABSTRACT**

Students in many secondary schools lack social integration skills and competencies required for harmonious interaction in the 21st century. Consequently, these learners do not relate effectively with peers from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds which often results in exclusion and classroom conflicts in the long run. Even their present social needs in daily school activities are not easily addressed due to weak collaborative competences and one of the ways to address this issue is through drama-based pedagogy in diverse classrooms. This study investigated social integration outcomes through drama-based instruction. It is a randomized control trial with 100 participants, 50 students randomly assigned to experimental group and another 50 students assigned to the control group with age bracket of 14 to 19 years. The results of this study reveal that there is a statistically significant difference between the social integration outcomes of students in the experimental group (Mean = 8.72, SD = 1.48) and the control group (Mean = 6.84, SD = 1.91), with the experimental group performing better ($p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.62$, 95% CI [0.58, 1.46]) in application of social concepts. The findings of this research imply that curriculum planners and other educational stakeholders should integrate drama-based pedagogy in social integration programs offered in secondary institutions to improve social integration outcomes.

KEYWORDS: Social integration, Drama-based pedagogy, Learning outcomes, Secondary education.

INTRODUCTION

Education remains a fundamental instrument for human and societal development because of the role it plays in shaping knowledge, values and skills across all aspects of human endeavors. According to Offiah and Felix (2025), education serves as the primary vehicle through which individuals are prepared to function effectively within their communities and contribute to collective progress. In contemporary times, classrooms have increasingly become diverse learning environments composed of learners from varied cultural, linguistic and socioeconomic backgrounds. Such diversity enriches the learning environment but also presents challenges related to interaction, participation and mutual understanding among learners. Within diverse learning environments, the need for social integration becomes evident because effective teaching and learning depend on the extent to which students relate, collaborate and coexist. According to Philippopoulou-Iosifidou and Mastrothanasis (2025), social integration in the classroom is vital for fostering a sense of belonging and reducing barriers that hinder group cohesion and academic engagement. Drama-based pedagogy has been identified as an instructional approach that promotes active participation and shared experiences among learners. Mastrothanasis et al. (2025) maintained that drama-based pedagogy helps students to acquire suitable skills and attitudes that are vital for managing social relationships constructively which goes a long way to enhance classroom cohesion, cultural understanding and development as well as enhanced social equality.

However, Mastrothanasis and Kladaki (2025) noted that it is the role of educational institutions to use interactive instructional approaches to enhance social integration among students sequel to the fact that traditional methods of teaching face numerous problems in that regard, more particularly, students' participation and sense of belonging. Every learner therefore needs socially responsive instruction that will help them address every aspect of their social life, making it needful for educators to address issues affecting social integration by using modern approaches such as drama-based pedagogy (Mastrothanasis et al. 2025). Given the recognized importance of inclusive classrooms, many studies on social integration only revealed the teaching and learning of social skills using traditional methods or approaches, leaving an apparent gap in the impact of drama-based pedagogy in multicultural context.

Over the years, diverse learning environments have continued to face persistent challenges with learners' social integration despite the acknowledged benefits of multicultural classrooms. Students from different linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds often experience exclusion, poor peer interaction, low participation and limited sense of belonging

during instructional activities. Traditional methods of teaching, which are largely teacher-centred and content-driven, have proven inadequate in addressing these social gaps because they provide minimal opportunities for collaborative expression, empathy-building and cross-cultural dialogue (Kostas et al., 2023). Consequently, the current situation in many classrooms reflects an unsatisfactory state where learners coexist physically but remain socially disconnected, leading to reduced cooperation, recurring interpersonal conflicts and weak classroom cohesion that ultimately hinder both academic and social development. If this study is not conducted, educational institutions may continue to rely on conventional approaches that fail to equip learners with the practical social competences required for thriving in diverse settings. The gap between instructional practice and the social demands of multicultural classrooms will likely widen, resulting in sustained marginalization of minority learners, poor intercultural understanding and increased tension within learning environments. Without empirical evidence on the effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy as a tool for social integration, educators will lack a viable, interactive alternative to improve collaborative competences, intercultural knowledge and conflict-resolution skills among learners in diverse learning environments. The main purpose of this study therefore, is to examine social integration outcomes through drama-based instruction in comparison with the traditional method of teaching. The study will specifically determine the effects of drama-based pedagogy on collaborative competences, acquisition of intercultural knowledge as well as practical conflict-resolution skills.

Research Questions:

Based on the above objectives, three research questions guided the study and they are stated below:

1. What are the baseline social integration levels among learners in diverse classrooms before the introduction of drama-based and conventional instructional interventions?
2. What are the effects of drama-based pedagogy on the ability of students to apply social concepts in real-world classroom scenarios?
3. How do social integration outcomes of students differ between students who experience drama-based pedagogy and those who receive traditional instruction?
4. What are the perceived factors moderating the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration

Literature Review

The review of related literature is structured based on the following subheadings: Drama-based pedagogy, social integration in diverse learning environments, effects of drama-based pedagogy on social integration, comparative effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy for social integration in education, theoretical framework and gap in literature.

Drama-based pedagogy

Drama-based pedagogy is widely conceptualized as an instructional strategy that integrates elements of theatre such as role-play, improvisation, mime, simulation and storytelling into classroom teaching to enhance learning outcomes. Turner-King and Smith (2024) explained that drama-based pedagogy shifts learners from passive recipients of knowledge to active participants who embody concepts, negotiate meaning and reflect on human experiences. The approach is rooted in the principle that learning is deepened when cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains are engaged simultaneously. Zhang (2021) further argued that drama-based pedagogy democratizes the classroom because it redistributes power by allowing learners to co-create narratives and make decisions within fictional contexts that mirror real-life situations. In practice, drama-based pedagogy manifests in forms such as process drama, forum theatre, image theatre and mantle of the expert. Each form requires learners to assume roles, solve problems and respond to emergent challenges, thereby fostering spontaneity, empathy and critical reflection. Tuncer and Karataş (2022) observed that when teachers adopt drama-based pedagogy, classroom discourse becomes more dialogic, with increased learner-to-learner interaction and reduced dominance of teacher talk. The pedagogy is not limited to arts subjects; it has been applied in science, social studies and language education to contextualize abstract content. However, successful implementation depends on teacher competence, available time and learners' willingness to participate in performative activities (Abuhammad, 2020). In this study, drama-based pedagogy is contextually defined as a learner-centred instructional approach in which teachers use structured dramatic techniques within regular subject lessons to enable students in diverse classrooms to explore social roles, practise communication and collaboratively resolve fictional conflicts that reflect real classroom diversity.

Social integration in diverse learning environments

Social integration describes the extent to which individuals feel accepted, valued and connected within a group, leading to cooperative relationships and shared identity. Within educational settings, Kuhfeld et al. (2023) described social integration as a multidimensional construct involving behavioural participation, affective belonging and cognitive acceptance

among learners from different backgrounds. Diverse learning environments are characterized by the presence of students who differ in culture, language, ethnicity, religion, ability and socioeconomic status. Aguliera and Nightengale-Lee (2020) noted that while diversity provides opportunities for broadened worldviews, it also introduces barriers such as stereotyping, communication gaps, formation of cliques and unequal participation. Ahmed and Opoku (2022) asserted that poor social integration manifests through silence of minority learners, dominance of majority groups, avoidance of mixed-group tasks and recurrent interpersonal misunderstandings. These conditions weaken classroom cohesion and reduce the effectiveness of cooperative learning strategies. Conversely, high social integration is marked by inclusive peer interactions, equitable turn-taking, mutual support during tasks and collective responsibility for classroom norms. Tam(2020) emphasized that social integration is not automatic; it requires deliberate pedagogical interventions that structure contact, promote perspective-taking and reward collaborative behaviour. For the purpose of this study, social integration in diverse learning environments is contextually defined as the degree to which learners of varying cultural, linguistic and social backgrounds actively participate, experience belonging and demonstrate mutual respect and cooperation during instructional and non-instructional interactions in the classroom.

Effects of drama-based pedagogy on social integration

Empirical studies across contexts suggest that drama-based pedagogy positively influences components of social integration. Alhaider(2023) conducted an experimental study among junior secondary students and found that those exposed to role-play and improvisation showed significant improvement in empathy, active listening and conflict de-escalation compared with peers in conventional classes. The researchers attributed this to the requirement in drama that participants must interpret and respond to the verbal and non-verbal cues of others, thereby practising perspective-taking in real time. Similarly, Al Mazrooeiet al. (2022) reported that process drama increased learners' willingness to work with classmates outside their usual social circles. The fictional frame provided psychological safety that lowered the risk of real-life rejection, enabling students to experiment with new social alliances. AlQashoutiet al. (2023) further documented that image theatre activities helped learners to visualize and physically rearrange social power imbalances, leading to post-drama discussions where marginalized students articulated feelings of exclusion and majority students proposed inclusive actions. In terms of communication, Baş et al. (2023) maintained that drama-based pedagogy expands learners' communicative repertoire because roles demand adjustments in tone, register and body language to suit different characters and

situations. This flexibility transfers to authentic peer interactions, reducing misunderstandings that arise from mono-cultural communication norms. Additionally, Beach and Washburn (2023) noted that the collaborative scripting and rehearsal phases of drama build interdependence, as the success of a scene depends on every member's contribution, thereby reinforcing collective accountability. Within this study, the effects of drama-based pedagogy on social integration refer to measurable changes in learners' collaborative competences, acquisition of intercultural knowledge and demonstration of practical conflict-resolution skills resulting from participation in drama-based instructional activities.

Comparative effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy for social integration in education

Comparative studies consistently position interactive, experiential methods above traditional lecture methods for social outcomes. Beach et al. (2023) compared traditional instruction with drama-based instruction and observed that while both groups gained subject knowledge, only the drama group recorded statistically significant gains in peer acceptance and group cohesion indices. The control group maintained pre-existing social clusters, whereas the experimental group formed new cross-cultural work teams. Betthäuseet al. (2023) explained that traditional methods prioritize individual mastery of content and offer limited scaffolding for social skill development. Teacher talk dominates, and assessment focuses on recall rather than interaction. In contrast, Bubeck et al. (2024) demonstrated that drama-based pedagogy embedded in curriculum content produced dual outcomes: academic learning and social learning. Learners not only understood concepts but also practised negotiating, compromising and asserting ideas respectfully. However, Cziboly and Bethlenfalvy(2020) cautioned that the comparative advantage of drama-based pedagogy is moderated by implementation fidelity. In classrooms where teachers lacked training in facilitation, drama activities degenerated into unstructured play with minimal reflection, diminishing social gains. Class size also emerged as a factor; large classes above 50 learners limited opportunities for every student to assume significant roles. These findings indicate that while drama-based pedagogy is potentially more effective than traditional instruction for social integration, its superiority depends on pedagogical, contextual and cultural conditions. In this study, comparative effectiveness is contextually defined as the statistically and qualitatively determined difference in social integration outcomes between learners taught with drama-based pedagogy and those taught with traditional methods, measured through collaborative competence, intercultural knowledge and conflict-resolution skills.

Theoretical framework

This study is anchored on Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory (1978) and Boal's Theory of the Theatre of the Oppressed (1979). Vygotsky (1978) posited that all higher-order functions originate in social relationships and that learning occurs first interpersonally before it is internalized intrapersonally. The concept of the Zone of Proximal Development supports drama-based pedagogy because role-play with more capable peers and teacher scaffolding enables learners to perform social behaviours they could not achieve alone. Boal (1979) developed the Theatre of the Oppressed as a rehearsal for reality, arguing that dramatic enactment allows participants to analyze power, rehearse alternatives and transform social relations. Forum theatre, a key technique, invites spectators to become "spect-actors" who intervene to change the course of a scene, thereby practising agency and collective problem-solving. Together, these theories frame drama-based pedagogy as a mediational tool that externalizes social processes, makes them visible for reflection and enables learners to internalize new patterns of interaction. The theoretical framework is contextually applied to explain how drama-based pedagogy creates socially mediated learning experiences that activate the zone of proximal development for social skills and provide a rehearsal space for equitable interaction in diverse classrooms.

Gap in literature

Despite growing evidence on drama-based pedagogy, three gaps persist. First, Hatton (2024) noted that most studies focus on language proficiency, creativity or self-confidence, with few isolating social integration as the primary dependent variable. Second, Hautala et al. (2024) observed that research is concentrated in Western and monolingual settings, leaving scarce data on multilingual, multicultural African classrooms where social distance is compounded by colonial language policies and ethnic diversity. Third, Hirsuet al. (2020) pointed out a methodological gap: studies often use qualitative case designs without comparison groups, limiting claims about the relative effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy over traditional instruction. Furthermore, contextual factors such as large class sizes, limited teacher preparation in drama techniques and cultural attitudes toward public performance are underreported. Without evidence from such settings, policymakers and teachers lack guidance on adapting drama-based pedagogy to resource-constrained diverse classrooms. This study addresses these gaps by employing a comparative design to measure social integration outcomes, focusing specifically on collaborative competences, intercultural knowledge and conflict-resolution skills within a diverse Nigerian learning environment.

Method

Research Design

In this research, a randomized controlled trial design was adopted to conduct the study. This design is made up of two groups known as the pre-test and post-test. This indicates that students in the control group will be taught using traditional approaches to teaching while students in the experimental group will receive drama-based instruction. The experimental and the control groups operated within the same diverse learning environment which was aimed at isolating the instructional concept.

Population and Sample

The population of this study is made up of 100 secondary school students who were enrolled in Community Secondary School, Awka South Local Government Area, Anambra State, Nigeria studying in culturally and linguistically heterogeneous classrooms. However, the participants were assigned on random basis to either the control group or the experimental group through the use of computer-generated random sequence in Excel and the researchers also applied a 1:1 allocation ratio. This means that $n=50$ study participants for traditional instruction group and $n=50$ for the drama-based pedagogy intervention group. To reduce the allocation bias, the group assignment were effectively implemented by the instructor while a research assistant generated randomization sequence. Concealed sealed envelopes were used for group. Furthermore, the researchers adopted block randomization made up of 4 block size with the aim of maintaining balanced group sizes. Independent-samples t-tests was employed to assess baseline equivalence for continuous variables and Chi-square tests for categorical variables. No statistically significant baseline differences were observed between the experimental and control groups ($p > .05$) However, between the control and experimental groups, in terms of social integration scores, demographic attributes as well as prior work experience, indicated equivalence on the initial groups. In addition, GPower version 3.1 was employed to conduct a priori power analysis which helped the researchers to find out the required sample size. With an expected medium effect size (Cohen's $d=0.5$), alpha level of 0.05 and power threshold of 0.80, the calculated sample size for this research is 128 study participants. However, the research selected 100 participants due to resource problems.

Table 1: Baseline Difference Between The Experimental Group And Control Group.

Variable	Category	EG	CG
Sex	Male	24(48%)	26(52%)
	Female	26(52%)	24(48%)
Age	Category		

	14–15	22(44%)	20(40%)
	16–17	18(36%)	19(38%)
	18-19	10(20%)	11(22%)
Class level	Jss 2	16(32%)	15(30%)
	Jss 3	18(36%)	20(40%)
	Ss 1	16(32%)	15(30%)
Place of residence	Urban (city)	12(24%)	14(28%)
	Rural (village/small town)	38(76%)	36(72%)
Prior work experience	Yes	5(10%)	5(10%)
	No	45(90%)	45(90%)

Research Instruments

In the course of conducting this research, different instruments were employed for comprehensive data collection. The first instrument is the pre-test and post-test social integration assessment, covering key domains such as collaborative competences, intercultural knowledge, peer acceptance, as well as practical conflict-resolution skills. The instrument comprised of a five point Likert scale of strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. The tool has a score range of 20-100 and higher social integration was used as remark for higher scores. Another instrument used for this study was a 5-point likert scale questionnaire that unveils students' perception regarding their experiences towards drama-based pedagogy. This instrument was constructed based on the framework of social-emotional learning competencies by Adeyemi et al.. The third instrument is also a 5-point likert scale questionnaire that measured the factors moderating the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration. The researchers conducted semi-structured interviews using 20 study participants to gather qualitative information regarding their learning experiences using drama-based instruction. The three instruments were validated by three experts in the field of educational drama and sociology of education and the corrections made by the experts led to certain modifications of the instruments before it was used for field work.

Reliability of Instrument

Very importantly, the researchers used 20 participants to conduct a pilot study with the aim of testing the social integration measurement tool and drama-based pedagogy intervention. A lot of changes were addressed regarding the guidelines for drama-based pedagogy as well as social integration questionnaire which led to improved relevance and clarity. Cronbach's Alpha method was used to determine the reliability coefficient of social integration assessment which yielded 0.89, the students' perception questionnaire yielded 0.84 while the

questionnaire that measured the factors moderating the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration yielded 0.82. Hence, the instruments were considered reliable and deemed fit for the study.

Intervention

Regarding the intervention, the students in the experimental group were given a 12 weeks drama-based instruction course which was made up of 4 social integration projects including role-play on cultural diversity, forum theatre on conflict resolution, image theatre on peer exclusion, as well as storytelling for empathy building. These authentic social interaction projects were taught by the researchers through classroom sessions. Boal supports the use of participatory drama techniques in teaching. On the other hand, the researchers used traditional teaching approach to teach students in the control group using the same classroom setting but without the drama-based component. However, they were taught identical content domains after which the two groups were given tests.

Table 2: 12 Week Intervention Using Four Social Integration Projects.

Week	Topic	Drama-based instruction	Assessment/deliverables	Digital tools or platforms
One-two	Cultural awareness	Define culture and enact cultural stereotypes	Reflection journals, cultural identity maps	Google docs and canva
Three-four	Project one known as role-play on diversity	Ability to assume roles from different cultures and identify common values	Role-play script, peer feedback forms	Use of whatsapp groups and google forms
Five to six	Communication and empathy	Finding out verbal and non-verbal barriers to peer interaction	Empathy dialogue recordings and communication plan	Flipgrid and padlet
Seven to eight	Forum theatre on conflict	Ability to rehearse strategies for managing classroom conflicts	Scene interventions and conflict resolution report	Zoom breakout rooms and google slides
Nine-ten	Image theatre on exclusion	Ability to physically represent and transform scenes of peer exclusion	Before-and-after tableaux photos and reflection report	Group discussion and mobile camera
Eleven to twelve	Collaborative storytelling	Inclusive stories that are comprehensive to be created by students	Final performance and social integration plan	Canva as well as google docs

Method of Data Analysis

In this study, different statistical tools for analyzing data were employed including descriptive statistics, frequencies, as well as standard deviation with the aim of providing an

overview of the generated data. Apart from that, normality testing (Shapiro-Wilk) was used to inform the choice of statistical tests. Also, paired-sample t-test was employed to determine within-group gains whereas, independent-sample t-test enabled the researchers to compare between-group differences. Specifically, the SPSS version 28 was the software for analysis. In addition, the pre-test differences were controlled using ANCOVA while the effect size was measured using Cohen's d.

Ethical Consideration

Before this study was conducted, the researchers prioritize the dignity and rights of students involved in the study through informed consent. To achieve this, the protocol for this study was first submitted for institutional ethics board for approval which indicated that the research met the required ethical standard. The identity of the study participants were not revealed and the information they provided were also treated confidentially. Besides, participation in the study was made voluntarily and any student who wished to withdraw from the study at any point in time was permitted to do so without facing any form of penalty or consequences.

RESULTS

The results of this study are discussed below;

Table 3: Descriptive statistics for questionnaire statements. (Likert 1–5)

S/N	Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Decision
1	Role-play enhanced my understanding of cultural diversity	4.28	0.76	Strongly Agreed
2	I learnt about conflict resolution strategies through forum theatre	4.18	0.81	Agreed
3	Image theatre helped me to understand peer exclusion	4.05	0.88	Agreed
4	I developed empathy with the help of storytelling sessions	4.32	0.73	Strongly Agreed
5	My collaboration skills improved after working on role-play with a team	4.22	0.79	Strongly Agreed
6	Forum theatre is better than traditional teaching	4.10	0.84	Agreed
7	I can retain social concepts because of drama-based learning	4.26	0.77	Strongly Agreed
8	Other students should use image theatre	4.08	0.86	Agreed
9	I can achieve positive peer relationships because of the drama-based sessions	4.24	0.75	Strongly Agreed
10	Drama-based instruction is flexible	4.20	0.68	Agreed

The findings of the study in the above table show that all the questionnaire items were rated high by the study participants which indicate that students have positive feelings about the use of drama-based pedagogy in enhancing their social integration.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics and Paired-Sample t-test Results regarding social integration outcomes of study participants in control and experimental groups.

Variable	N	Pre-test Mean	Pre-test SD	Post-test Mean	Post-test SD	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Effect Size (d)
Experimental group	50	51.64	9.84	79.36	11.72	9.24	<0.001	[24.18, 31.26]	1.31
Control group	50	50.92	9.12	64.08	10.58	4.03	<0.001	[9.56, 16.76]	0.21

Data in Table 4 show there is no statistical significant difference between the baseline social integration levels of secondary school students in the experimental group and control group. Hence, the two groups had similar social integration levels before the introduction of drama-based and conventional instructional interventions. After the intervention, the experimental group indicated a significant gain in social integration with a large effect size. The control group also indicated a significant gain but with a small effect size.

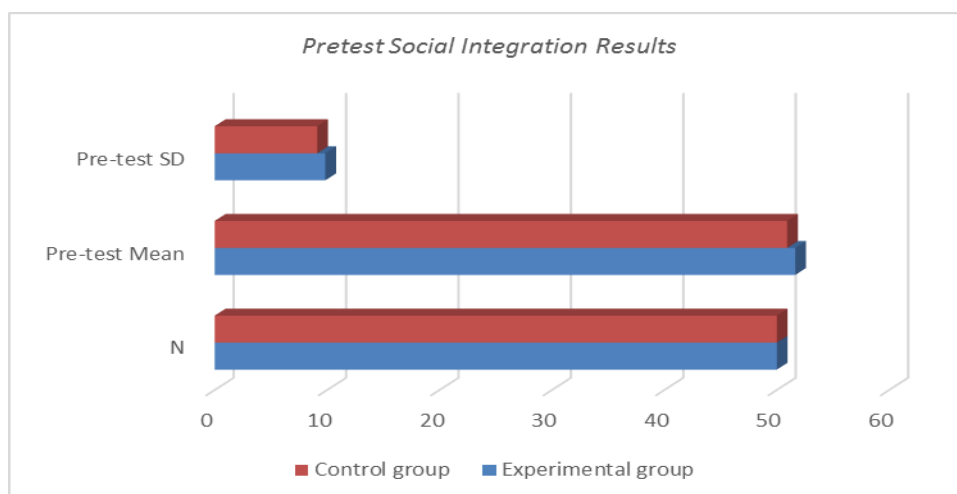


Figure I: Pretest Social Integration Results of Experimental Group and Control Group

Figure 1 simply shows that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean and standard deviation for pretest among study participants in the experimental group and control group.

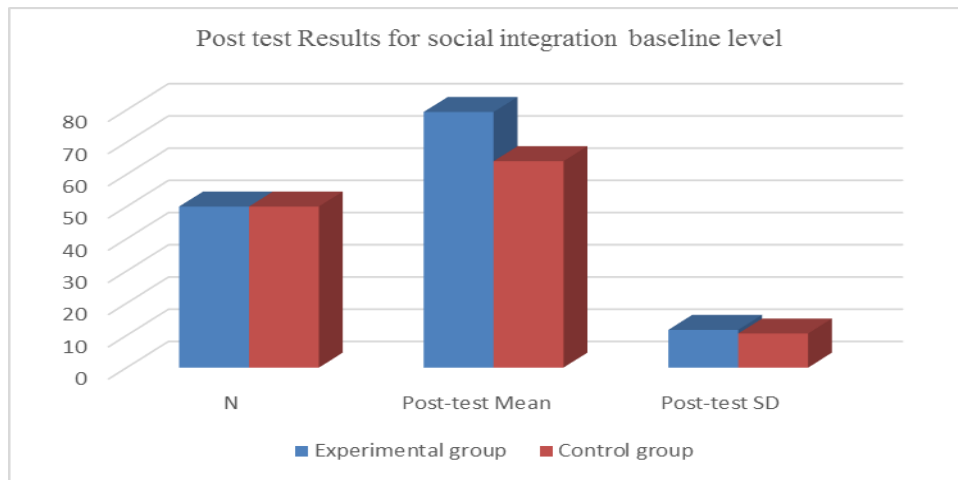


Figure 2: Social Integration Outcomes of Experimental Group and Control Group.

Figure 2 indicates that the experimental and control groups recorded significant improvements but the experimental group had higher score.

Table 5: Summary of the Shapiro-Wilk statistics.

Variable	Shapiro-Wilk W	p-value	Distribution
Scores for pretest social integration	0.97	0.48	Normal
Scores for post test social integration	0.96	0.29	Normal
Scores for application of social concepts	0.95	0.18	Normal
Scores for perception of students	0.94	0.12	Normal

The Shapiro-Wilk statistics indicate normally distributed among all the major variables which justifies the use of parametric tests (t-test and ANCOVA).

Table 6: Results for application of social concepts using independent sample t-test.

Variable	Number	Mean	SD	t-value	p-value	95% CI	Cohen’s Effect size (d)
Experimental group	50	8.72	1.48	3.12	0.002	[0.58, 1.46]	0.62
Control group	50	6.84	1.91				

The results in Table 6 reveal that the experimental group performed better than the control group in terms of applying social concepts to real-world classroom scenarios. This is because the experimental group obtained mean score of 8.72 with a standard deviation of 1.48 whereas, the mean score of the control group is 6.84 with standard deviation of 1.91. In addition, the p-value of 0.002 and the t-value of 3.12 simply means that there is a statistically significant difference between the experimental group and the control group. Hence, drama-based pedagogy is effective in promoting the ability of students to apply social concepts.

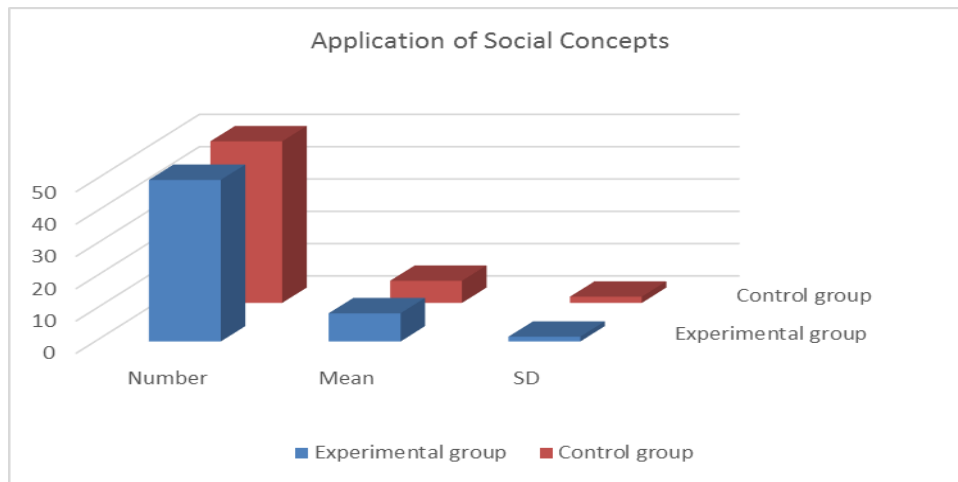


Figure 3: Application of Social Integration Concepts.

Data in figure 3 revealed that the experimental group performed better than the control group for application of social integration concepts. Hence, drama-based pedagogy is effective in enhancing students’ ability to apply social integration skills in real-world scenarios.

Table 7: Findings for social integration outcomes using ANCOVA.

Source	F-value	p-value	η^2	Cohen’s d	Decision
Pre-test scores	11.84	<0.001	0.17		Pre-test scores impacted significantly post-test scores
Group	19.36	<0.001	0.30	0.62	There is significant group effect which supported drama-based pedagogy

In Table 7, the findings via ANCOVA show that the scores for pre-test significantly impacted the scores for post-test at $F=11.84$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.17$. Regarding the control for pre-test scores, the findings also show that there is significant group effect at $F=19.36$, $p<0.001$, $\eta^2=0.30$, meaning that drama-based pedagogy is better than traditional or conventional method of teaching in social integration. One can therefore infer that drama-based pedagogy moderately influenced the social integration performance of students.

Table 8: Pedagogical, contextual and cultural factors that moderate the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration.

S/N	Questionnaire items	Mean	SD	Interpretation
1	Adequate teacher’s expertise in drama	100	4.12	0.80
2	High academic engagement of learners	100	4.35	0.76
3	Provision of needed drama materials	100	3.92	0.95
4	The size of the classroom	100	4.08	0.74
5	Access to space for performance	100	4.00	0.88
6	Suitable classrooms with minimal noise	100	4.06	0.81

7	Drama-based learning aligning with the curriculum	100	4.18	0.73
8	Adequate feedback and reflection among students	100	3.64	0.90
9	Effective collaboration	100	3.96	0.77
10	Availability of time for drama activities	100	4.04	0.69

Note. N = number of respondents; SD = standard deviation. Interpretation is based on the mean intervals: 1.00–1.80 (Strong disagreement), 1.81–2.60 (Disagreement), 2.61–3.40 (Uncertainty), 3.41–4.20 (Agreement), 4.21–5.00 (Strong agreement).

Data in Table 8, indicated that the respondents agreed to all the items; in simple interpretation, it shows that they are pedagogical, contextual and cultural factors that moderate the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration.

Table 9: Thematic Analysis of semi-structured interviews.

S/N	Theme	Experimental group (N= 20)
1	Application of social concepts	78% of the participants indicated improved application of social concepts to classroom challenges
2	Intercultural understanding	70% of the study participants reported improved intercultural understanding
3	Academic engagement and motivation	88% of the participants affirmed high academic engagement and motivation

The analysis in Table 9 indicate that significant differences regarding the experiences of study participants regarding drama-based instruction. Participants in the experimental group agreed that drama-based instruction enhanced their application of social concepts to real world problems. On the other hand, participants in the control group, had lesser opportunities for practical application, and motivation with traditional teaching method. One can infer that drama-based instruction is an effective method to enhance social integration among students in secondary institutions.

DISCUSSION

The findings of the study unveiled the way and manners students perceive the use of drama-based pedagogy in diverse learning environments. Accordingly, the result of this study revealed that many students have positive perception in that regard. This means that they prefer using drama-based pedagogy in studying social concepts as it enhances their engagement and improves their collaborative competences and intercultural knowledge. This is because learners in the experimental group had better scores than learners in the control group that use the traditional teaching method. Thematic analysis indicated that drama-based pedagogy promotes students’ engagement and motivation, which moderates its effectiveness.

The result of this study therefore adds to the existing studies on the effectiveness and impact of drama-based pedagogy on social integration. The findings of this research is supported by Jianget al. (2023) that many students have positive mindset regarding the use of drama-based pedagogy as it creates room for them to engage in practical interaction and also apply their skills and knowledge in solving real-world classroom conflicts.

The findings of the study for research question one reveals that there is no significant difference regarding the baseline social integration levels among secondary school students before the introduction of drama-based and conventional instructional interventions but participants in the experimental group obtained advanced mean score than those in the control group. The implication is that the two groups had similar social integration levels. The mean score of students who participated in the experimental group is 79.36 with standard deviation of 11.72 whereas those who participated in the control group has mean score of 64.08 with standard deviation of 10.58, suggesting that learners who were involved in drama-based pedagogy indicated a significant improvement regarding their scores for social integration when compared with their counterparts in the control group. The results of this research are in agreement with Mastrothanasis andKladaki (2020) that when drama-based pedagogy is used to educate students about the need for social integration and skills, their collaborative behaviour and attitude becomes better because they will have the ability to address the social challenges that may surface in their daily interactions. Differently stated, the findings of this study contradicts the result by Mastrothanasis et al. (2023) which states that traditional teaching methods are also effective in teaching students social skills. The outcome of this assertion could be explained by variations in the implementation of drama-based pedagogy, site for research, as well as socio-demographic variables. The second findings of the study showed that the designed drama-based pedagogy in targeting social integration competencies is effective compared to conventional instruction. This is because learners in the experimental group outperformed learners in the control group that use the traditional approach. The result of this study therefore adds to the existing studies on the effectiveness of drama-based instruction on social integration. The findings of this research is supported by Mastrothanasis et al. (2024) that drama-based pedagogy is effective in enhancing students' intercultural knowledge and conflict-resolution skills.

Comparatively, the findings of the study show that students in the experimental group perform better than those in the control group in terms of social integration outcomes. This is because the study revealed significant differences in the performance for social integration among learners who participated in drama-based pedagogy than those who were taught using

conventional style of teaching. This analysis clearly agrees with studies by Mastrothanasis et al. (2023) and Paris et al. (2023) who revealed that when students are taught social concepts via drama-based pedagogy, they become better in handling peer relationship issues. The fourth findings of the study revealed pedagogical, contextual and cultural factors that moderate the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration. Accordingly, the result of this research indicated that adequate teacher's expertise in drama, high academic engagement of learners, provision of needed drama materials, the size of the classroom, access to space for performance, suitable classrooms with minimal noise, drama-based learning aligning with the curriculum, adequate feedback and reflection among students, effective collaboration and availability of time for drama activities are the pedagogical, contextual and cultural factors that moderate the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration. This is because each of the items had mean score above 3.50 and above indicating agreed by the study participants. This result is supported by Philippopoulou-Iosifidou and Mastrothanasis (2025) and Mastrothanasis et al. (2025) that participatory drama techniques enhance teaching among diverse learners and availability of performance space, quality teacher facilitation and high student engagement impact drama-based instruction for social integration. There appears to be validity threats in this study and one of such threat is selection bias as the study participants were not assigned randomly to the control group and experimental group. The researchers addressed this issue by ensuring that secondary school students in the control group and experimental group had same baseline social integration levels. The second threat is Hawthorne effect because of influence of drama-based instructional approach as the performance of students in the experimental group were better than those in the control group sequel to the novelty of the approach. The researchers addressed this threat by ensuring the implementation of drama-based pedagogy over a period of time so that students in the experimental group would become familiar with the method of learning.

The outcome of this research immensely contributes to the existing literature as it gives teachers concrete evidence that the implementation of drama-based pedagogy is very effective in enhancing social integration of students. However, there is no research without limitation, the first to know is that the participants of this study were few as the perception of 100 students is not good enough to make conclusions about the study findings. Therefore, it affected the generalization of findings for the present study. Also, there is no way the researchers could determine the honesty of study participants and hence, future researchers are encouraged to carry out a similar study and increase the scope and population size.

CONCLUSION

This comparative study investigated the use of drama-based pedagogy in fostering social integration outcomes of students. The objectives of this study were to determine the baseline social integration levels among secondary school students before the introduction of drama-based and conventional instructional interventions, the effectiveness of designed drama-based pedagogy in targeting social integration competencies compared to conventional instruction, compare social integration outcomes of students who use drama-based pedagogy and those who receive traditional instruction and the pedagogical, contextual and cultural factors that moderate the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration among secondary school students. The findings of this research agree that drama-based pedagogy enhances learners' comprehension of social integration concepts. Hence, when the use of drama-based instruction is effective in teaching social concepts, more particularly in a diverse setting, it makes students to have positive perception about social interaction and the attitude towards learning how to relate with peers becomes better. This is because the experimental group outperformed the control group in their social integration learning scores as students who participated in the study via drama-based instruction had higher scores than those who were taught social concepts using traditional teaching methods. Learners in the experimental group reported positive perception regarding the use of drama-based instruction, as they agreed that it improved the application of social concepts and collaborative competences. Thematic analysis showed that drama-based pedagogy enhanced academic engagement and motivation of learners, moderating its effectiveness. Drama-based pedagogy is generally regarded as a vehicle that enhances social integration outcomes of students in educational institutions more particularly in diverse settings. Thus, drama-based instruction makes students have positive attitude and feelings about social integration programs and it motivates them to learn how to interact prudently; this is consistent with the findings by Boal (1979) who encourages the implementation of participatory drama techniques in educational process. Based on the results of this research, it is recommended that teachers and administrators in educational institutions should utilize drama-based instruction to help secondary school students enhance their social integration knowledge and skills. Therefore, teachers may impact the way and manner students learn by giving them activities that will motivate them to make good use of what they have studied regarding cultural awareness, empathy, conflict resolution, as well as peer collaboration in their day-to-day interactions. When this is achieved, secondary school students will get the practical knowledge and skills that are required for social integration now and in the long run. It is important for educational

institutions to provide teachers with adequate training and resources for them to implement drama-based instruction in diverse classrooms effectively. There is need for curriculum planners to incorporate drama-based instruction in social integration programs to enhance the practical skills and knowledge of students. Researchers who will carry out similar study in the future could address some existing gap in this study by investigating the long-term impact of drama-based instruction, more particularly, in the aspect of intercultural attitude and behaviour, as well as students' retention to foster better understanding of social integration via drama-based pedagogy. Secondly researches that focus on cross-cultural and cross-institutional could be conducted to validate the effectiveness of using drama-based instruction in different settings. In addition, the development and evaluation of blended drama-based pedagogy-conventional hybrid models optimizes instruction for social integration. Moreover, when drama-based pedagogy is studied based on different populations such as school administrators, teachers and students, as well as strategies to ensure its effective implementation in school environment, stakeholders in education would gain knowledge and insight the more.

Pedagogical Implications

The results of this research show that drama-based pedagogy is an effective tool for promoting the outcomes of students in diverse learning environments. Consequently, administrators of the curriculum as well as teachers can utilize drama-based pedagogy to enhance students' social integration. This implies that teachers may adopt drama-based instructional strategies in providing students learning experiences that are interactive and participatory as students will be able to explore social roles and build empathy at their own pace. These drama-based strategies may be designed by educational stakeholders in such a way and manner that they cater for the diverse cultural needs of students and also provide them with adequate opportunities for reflection. When this is achieved, teachers will now have more time and resources to offer more individualized attention to learners. This shows that drama-based pedagogy is useful in classrooms that are large. The second pedagogical implication of this research is that curriculum administrators should ensure drama-based techniques, more particularly, role-play and forum theatre, are utilized to supplement traditional approaches to teaching in diverse classrooms as collaborative practice and intercultural dialogue can be facilitated via drama activities within the classroom setting. This will go a long way in allowing learners to practise social skills whenever they interact. Hence, curriculum administrators should ensure that students are given extra support regarding their

social integration and teachers who adopt drama-based pedagogy will benefit more in that regard.

Limitations of the Study

This research has different limitations and one of these limitations is the number of study participants which comprised of 100 secondary school students. This may limit the generalizability of the result in other geographical areas and different population context. It becomes necessary for future studies to conduct a similar study using a larger sample size in order to increase the external validity of the findings of this research. Again, there is no way the researchers would have measured the degree of honesty of study participants in answering the research questions in the questionnaire. Apart from that, the study only investigated the effects of drama-based pedagogy on collaborative competences, intercultural knowledge and conflict-resolution skills without considering other relevant outcomes of drama-based learning including self-confidence, motivation, as well as anxiety among students. Another key limitation of this research is its narrow focus on students in Awka South Local Government Area which restricts the generalization of results as these results may not be applicable in broader contexts. Hence the findings of this may not be useful to students in urban schools, different school types and cultural backgrounds. There is need for future studies to be conducted on the effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy across students in different cultural settings.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study the following recommendations are made

1. School administrators should integrate drama-based pedagogy into the existing social studies and civic education curriculum by allocating at least one double period per week for structured role-play, forum theatre and image theatre activities to systematically improve students' collaborative competences and intercultural knowledge.
2. The Ministry of Education should organize termly professional development workshops for teachers on facilitation of drama-based instruction, with emphasis on managing large class sizes, using low-cost materials and guiding reflective discussions to address the identified need for adequate teacher expertise in drama.
3. School heads should provide dedicated space and time for drama-based activities by rearranging classroom furniture or utilizing open halls during co-curricular periods, since

availability of space and time were found to moderate the comparative effectiveness of drama-based instruction for social integration.

4. Teachers should be encouraged to adapt drama-based techniques to reflect local cultural contexts and languages, ensuring that scenarios used in role-play and storytelling are relevant to students' lived experiences to strengthen intercultural understanding and peer acceptance.
5. Curriculum planners should develop and distribute a teacher's guide on drama-based pedagogy that aligns dramatic activities with specific social integration objectives such as conflict resolution, empathy and teamwork, so that implementation remains purposeful and measurable across diverse secondary schools.
6. Educational stakeholders should conduct periodic monitoring and peer-feedback sessions where teachers share challenges and successes in using drama-based pedagogy, and document best practices for replication, thereby sustaining student engagement and motivation which were shown to influence the effectiveness of the intervention.

Future Research Directions

Based on the findings of this research, there is need to conduct further studies on the following areas:

1. The impact of drama-based pedagogy on academic achievements of students in diverse classrooms.
2. Effective utilization of drama-based pedagogy in social integration, more particularly, in other contexts such as primary schools, tertiary institutions and adult education.
3. Drama-based pedagogy that supports multiple cultures in diverse educational settings.
4. Effectiveness of drama-based pedagogy on students with special needs in diverse learning environments.

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