

An Adventure around Educational Methods: Teachers' Explorations for Application of Dramatic Activities

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Over the past five and a half years starting in 2006, forty practitioners at a research group Kakutokugata Kyoiku Kenkyukai have worked toward reform in educational methodology. The purposes of their research have been to enable students to gain embodied learning experience, and to deepen and enrich their learning by introducing dramatic activities to learning in subject areas. Due to the scarcity of research existing in Japan on application of dramatic activities as tools of learning, the group's research projects can be deemed pioneering work.

The outcomes of the research have been published in three books. One deals with the results of theoretical research. A model of acquisition-oriented learning consisting of four elements—research work, discussion/debate, presentation, and drama work—is proposed in this book along with a model of teacher training programs. The other two books cover areas of research on practice. They argue for incorporating sixteen dramatic activities and seventy activities for warming up, as well as suggest an insight into the ways engagement in these activities can improve teachers' expertise. A total of eighty-six activities have been selected for these books after trying a variety of activities in actual classrooms to verify their effectiveness.

Such pioneering research has been made possible owing to the group's efforts and enthusiasm. The members have shared the same sense of mission to bring forth reform in Japanese classrooms. They have had a common perspective of their research, and a creative community of discourse has been established among the members. The members have also started giving open lessons and workshops across Japan for promotion of their research outcomes and for self-training.

1 Introduction

The theme of this article is to describe the attempts of a research group to bring about reforms in education by applying dramatic activities to the classroom. The author has been the president of a research group named Kakutokugata Kyoiku Kenkyukai (The Society for Acquisition-

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Oriented Learning, or the SAOL hereafter). This group was organized in April, 2006 in pursuit of educational reform in Japanese classrooms. The SAOL is composed of forty members, most of whom are practitioners at elementary through tertiary levels. The SAOL is a project-based research group and functions in a cycle of three years so that it has predefined goals to achieve in a limited time. Three books have been published as a result of the SAOL's research in the second term.

This article explores the SAOL's contribution to research on educational methodologies in Japan as a case study. It will trace the course of their research projects over the five and a half years and review current aspects and progress of their collaborative research.

2 Acquisition-oriented lessons as an ideal type

According to Watanabe (1990, 20–24), acquisition-oriented (AO) lessons as an ideal type can be defined in relation to knowledge-pouring (KP) lessons. There are two aspects to AO lessons (AO learning from the side of the learner). One has to do with self-learning. A series of methods from information gathering to thesis writing belongs here. This type of training is at the core of AO lessons in that the learner “learns to learn.” It provides the learner with opportunities to frame their thoughts and to update their knowledge, just to name a few.

The other is related to participatory learning. Expressive activities such as presentation and discussion take the central position here. These two aspects of AO learning are closely linked with each other since trainings in collecting information, writing reports, and presentation/discussion are usually done in sequence. It is true there are cases where the learner does research and writes a report independently. However, emphasis on collaborative learning through group work is one of the characteristics of AO learning.

The two types above are rooted in the author's experience as a social studies teacher at a high school, teaching a total of 1,600 overseas returnees¹ in ten years starting in 1980. The two types have been extracted from information gathered from interviews and questionnaires to survey the students' experiences in schools outside Japan.

“Chalk and talk” has been the prevalent method of teaching in classrooms in East Asian countries, including Japan. It transmits knowledge to a large group of students in the form of lecture, and is considered an efficient means of teaching carefully selected pieces of knowledge. However, it is prone to make the learner a mere receiver of knowledge, a passive being who swallows what is given. This is one of the characteristics of KP lessons.

In contrast, a significant number of returnees from Western countries mentioned that lessons in which they experienced research work and presentation/discussion were the most impressive. For instance, they referred to show & tell and research paper writing in American schools, as well as book making and debate in schools in Britain. They reported gaining sense of achievement in lessons where they were the doers. Along with collecting and organizing such experiences, the author started experimenting with AO lessons himself. To be more exact, the author gave guidance on writing a research paper on politics and economics to 2,400 seniors at high school. The author also introduced such programs as debate and presentation to lessons when little was known about them in Japan. These attempts have led the author to a conviction that it is imperative to systematize methods of guiding research work and presentation/discussion for Japanese teachers so that these activities can take root in Japan.

The term *AO lessons* was coined and proposed by the author in 1990, pointing out that edu-

cation in Japan has a strong inclination toward KP lessons. Since then, the author has been suggesting the need to gradually shift in the direction of AO lessons to keep balance. Learners in AO lessons think, express themselves, and learn by using their whole body in educational activities. That is to say, the main feature of AO learning is learning through the whole body. At the same time, AO learning means always learning through expressive activities, namely the unification of expressive work and learning.

The philosophy of AO lessons is connected to fostering autonomous learners. The teacher encourages learners to participate in lessons actively and guides them to learn how to learn in addition to gaining knowledge itself. The image of autonomous learners is in line with that of citizens to support democratic society as well. Such citizens are expected to have the following attributes: active physical readiness for public participation, rich experiences and skills with which to explore topics of their interest through the whole body, an open mind and critical reasoning to examine social rules and frameworks through democratic discussion.

Teachers of AO lessons are those who can continuously review and verbalize their practices to improve their own skills to proceed to the next level. Therefore, they are practitioner-researchers as well as researcher-practitioners.

3 Research interests of the SAOL

The SAOL has two research interests. One is to sort out and systematize existing activities which serve as the foundation of AO lessons. The other is to develop teacher training programs.

The author had proposed research work, presentation and discussion/debate as the main constituents of AO learning. In SAOL projects, however, the model has been restructured by adding drama work as a new component.

Furthermore, a publisher whose interests are in sympathy with the philosophy of AO learning has been supporting the SAOL in publishing research results in a series of books. These books are expected to enable more teachers in Japan to feel comfortable with incorporating the research findings in their lessons. In other words, the sequence of research activities leading to publication of results consists of the work defining the common language of AO lessons. Moreover, other themes underlying teacher training programs are being suggested on the basis of these books.

There are two background reasons for choosing these two research topics. One impetus is the social experience precipitated by an increased interest in debate. Japanese society saw a social phenomenon called the “debate boom” in the 1990s. In the process of globalization, a new need emerged in society to train people to express their opinions to the international community. In this context, debate, combined with an emphasis on English language education, was brought into focus. Upon recommendation by the then Ministry of Education (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology since 2001), debate was hastily introduced into school education from elementary to tertiary levels. As a result, the word *debate* itself had become a part of terminology in school education by the middle of the 1990s, but only as an incorporeal loan word. In fact, debate rarely has a place in everyday lessons today. Debate is but one example of numerous educational methods that have disappeared soon after they were imported and introduced into Japan.

This has led the author to the conclusion that systematizing activities and developing teacher training programs are indispensable if AO lessons are to take root in classrooms in Japan. To that

end, the focus is on reviewing the stock of educational activities which have long been employed in Japanese schools and arranging them as an entity. It is also important to develop and offer training programs so that teachers can learn to use those activities. Training programs must be developed where new teachers can experiment with the application of educational activities and be able to visualize the image of an expert in teaching how to learn. This is an urgent issue as more teachers born during the baby boom era are retiring, which has been causing the alternation of generations at an unprecedented pace in Japanese schools.

The other and more direct reason is the author's experience in giving open lessons at high schools and universities in different parts of the country. Funded by the Japan Foundation from 2003 through 2006, the author organized a team of secondary teachers to develop and promote materials on understanding the United States of America. The team was named the Society for USA Understanding (March, 2003–March, 2006). It spent one and a half years developing Japan's first full-fledged textbook on the topic, and continued to promote the book themselves by demonstrating how it could be used in actual classrooms.

With sixteen topics familiar to the youth—American movies, Disneyland and Major League Baseball—as starting points, the textbook (Watanabe, 2005) is a material for international understanding, which guides the reader to both positive and negative aspects of American society. All topics in this 123-page-long compilation of teaching materials are designed to encourage student participation through such activities as games, simulations, and debates².

The textbook was developed by eleven secondary teachers from the Tokyo Metropolitan area, Osaka, and Okayama, all of whom belonged to the Society for USA Understanding. Most of the members had been teaching for over twenty years and were talented specialists in their own subject areas such as English, civics, history, mathematics, art, *etc.*

The team embarked on a year-long promotional tour in 2004 called the Akariza (Theater of Lights) Tour. The members visited eleven schools from Hokkaido to Okinawa, giving open lessons and workshops. The tour also served as the members' own training in classroom management. When the tour was over, most of them concluded that they should enhance their stock of activities and continue with their training in order to realize their ideal AO lessons (Watanabe, 2007, 134). Furthermore, many members pointed out that additional research should be done on those activities which require use of the whole body, especially on dramatic activities such as hot seating. In hot seating, a student or the teacher taking on a role sits on a chair and answers questions asked by the other students.

4 Focus on research on drama work

The SAOL chose to focus on theoretical and practical research on drama work in its first term (April, 2006–March, 2009), as it is an area not fully studied in Japan.

Though putting on plays is a tradition at Japanese schools, this is usually understood as theater in education, where students either put on a play at cultural festivals or watch a performance of professional actors. In contrast to these narrow definitions of theater in education, Tomita (1993, 53) finds a broader use of plays in education and calls it dramatic education. It involves using techniques of drama in teaching subject areas and for educational guidance. At the moment, however, little body of research exists in Japan on attempts to introduce drama into teaching subjects areas. Therefore, this was a challenging task.

What are the rationales for pursuing research on drama work? Let us first consider the main characteristics of drama work. Drama work is a method of acquiring deep and rich learning experiences. The learner and/or the teacher each takes on a respective role in approaching the topic of a lesson, which enables learners to embody their learning as they make an effort to think and feel in someone else's shoes.

The dramatic method refers to a process of learning in which the teacher consciously incorporates activities to carry the learner between fiction and reality. A fictional world presupposes a set of conventions shared among its participants, namely dramatic activities. Dramatic activities can be compared to a vehicle for traveling between the two worlds, beyond time and space.

However, it should be noted that dramatic activities used in the context of teaching a subject area may require different approaches than those used by a drama teacher in a drama workshop. The SAOL has explored the possibilities of dramatic activities as tools of learning for two major reasons. One is that dramatic activities as tools of learning are applicable to students of all levels, from elementary schools through colleges and universities, regardless of age or school level. The other is that, except for rare cases, schools in Japan do not offer drama as a subject within their curricula and there are very few well-trained experts who can facilitate drama workshops.

There are three major reasons why dramatic activities can be expected to prove effective in classrooms in Japan.

First, dramatic activities have the capability of enriching expressive activities in schools in Japan. Expressive activities are carried out through three modes—language, objects, and the body—and dramatic activities make comprehensive use of all of these. The emphasis of dramatic activities on the bodily mode is expected to have the biggest impact on the current situation in Japan, as Japanese education tends to rely almost exclusively on the linguistic mode. This, therefore, has the possibility of unfolding even richer and more expressive activities.

Second, dramatic activities have correspondence with learning in subject areas. They can be applied not only to the humanities, such as the Japanese language and social studies, but also to fields of science. There is documentation of a lesson where students played the role of molecules, showing how they are bonded and separated (Ginnis, 2002). Ginnis includes hot seating, teacher in role, freeze frames, the mantle of the expert, and the forum theater in his list of sixty-seven activities teachers can use as tools of learning.

Third, there is a wide variety of activities to choose from while new ones are being developed and introduced continuously. This allows for different approaches to designing a single lesson.

The following is one example of a history lesson in which dramatic activities are used. The assassination of Caesar is a typical topic for a dramatized lesson, where learners dress up in costumes from the time of the Roman Empire. A lesson like this usually requires elaborate preparation, but there are simpler activities which can still invite learners to deepen their learning. For instance, after briefly discussing casting and plot, learners can improvise a role play to reflect on the characters' inner changes. They can also physically express some symbolic scenes representing their character in a series of imaginary photographs called "freeze frames". For Japanese students, still images may work better than an activity which requires bodily movement as they are usually not used to acting or being watched by an audience.

Also, the teacher can interrupt a skit at some point, and may ask the learner playing the role of Brutus what is the motive for assassinating Caesar. This is an activity called "thought tracking." It makes learners ponder over the meaning of the character's actions from the viewpoint of

the character.

5 Research organization

The SAOL is a voluntary research group consisting mainly of practitioners who support the principles of AO learning. Fifteen are the former members of the Society for USA Understanding, including staff members, and twenty-five are those who have joined afterward, making a total of forty members. In principle, a new member must be approved by the president before they can join. The activities of the SAOL are based on projects, with each project having a predefined term of three years.

The reason for limiting the number of members to forty is the following. In order to establish a creative *community of discourse*, the number of participants in a meeting should not exceed twenty. Taking into account the workload of teachers in Japan now, few are in a position to attend monthly meetings on a regular basis, no matter how enthusiastic they are. Thus, the average rate of attendance has been estimated at 50 percent, which limits the total number of members at forty.

To accomodate this situation, the SAOL has set up a website³ and a mailing list. This way, members in remote areas can share information by reading the minutes posted online. This organic combination of the community consisting both of face-to-face and virtual discourse has been successful. Owing to active discussions over various topics, more than 3,300 messages have been exchanged over the past five years.

According to the list of members in 2006, thirty members resided in the Tokyo Metropolitan area, and the others were in other areas across the country. Six members belonged to elementary schools, four to middle schools, eleven to high schools, nine to six-year secondary schools, and four to colleges and universities. The other six included a teacher at a special school and an editor.

The four members in higher education are researchers of drama in education, whose specialties are early childhood education, English language education, and environmental education. They serve as resource persons and have worked as facilitators at workshops held by the SAOL. However, they are not in a position to instruct other members because SAOL's collaborative research is done by all members who are on equal terms with each other. The author supervises the entire project as a specialist in educational methodology.

The SAOL is coordinated by a steering committee, whose six members are the president and five committee members (one teacher each from elementary school, middle school, high school, six-year secondary school, and one staff member). This committee meets outside the regular meetings to discuss SAOL policies. The SAOL does not require membership fees, but members pay a nominal participation fee of 500 yen (equivalent of US\$7) when they attend a regular meeting. Over the five years, six members have chosen to suspend their membership due to retirement, childbirth, and excess workload. This has led to the addition of five new members.

6 Research methods and progress

At the SAOL, theoretical research and practical research are coordinated. As for the former, its main interest is in positioning drama work in the system of AO education. For the latter, all

members have been incorporating various dramatic activities into their school and university lessons in search for the universality of these activities. The research style of the SAOL is that of practice/verification. One of the features in terms of research methodology is that the SAOL announces its progress in annual seminars open to the public. Participants' responses are reflected in the policies made for the following year.

The SAOL holds eleven meetings per year. There are ten regular meetings and one overnight retreat. The final meeting consists of the open seminar mentioned above. During the three years of the first term (April, 2006–March, 2009), thirty regular meetings and three open seminars were held.

At the beginning, most SAOL members had little knowledge of or experience in drama work. Therefore, experts in drama in education, a director of a theatrical company, and workshop leaders from both Japan and overseas were invited to give workshops and seminars. Guests were also invited from disciplines related to AO education, such as the study of the role of the body in teaching and learning, communication, and political science.

Among the guests was J. Neelands, Chair of Drama and Theatre Education in the Institute of Education at the University of Warwick. He takes the “convention approach” (Neelands & Goode, 2000) to dramatic activities, where seventy-two activities are divided into four categories: context-building action, narrative action, poetic action, and reflective action. This approach provides an implicative perspective into the taxonomy of dramatic activities.

In the second term (April, 2009–March, 2012), the main focus has been shifted to publication of research outcomes and their promotion. This style of conducting promotional activities after publishing research results derives from the previous project on USA understanding. The members of the project have held twenty-seven regular meetings and two seminars⁴.

Since the start of the second term, most of the time and effort have been put into editing a series of books. Manuscripts are written using the following steps. First, members experience new activities while attending a workshop in a regular meeting. Then, they try them out in their own lessons, write up and report on the results to the SAOL's mailing list, and ask for comments. The members revise their drafts on the basis of these comments. This process took a considerable amount of time, as most members were unfamiliar with dramatic activities in the first few years.

Also, since the results are not published as an academic report but as a readable book to be sold in bookstores, the text must be polished to sophistication. To give a coherent tone to all passages written by different members, the members of the steering committee also serve as editors to improve the language and to give the authors advice for revisions. These exchanges have helped deepen the members' understanding of drama work.

7 Status quo

The current progress of the SAOL's research can be found in Neelands & Watanabe (2009) and Watanabe & Kakutokugata Kyoiku Kenkyukai (2010 & 2011). They are entitled “*Kyouiku houhou toshite no dorama* (Using drama as a medium of instruction),” “*Manabi wo kaeru dorama no shuhou* (Change the way you teach with dramatic conventions),” and “*Manabi heno uoominguappu: 70 no gihou* (Seventy warm up activities to learning).”

The first book (Neelands & Watanabe, 2009) shows the result of theoretical research. In this book, the present author proposes a model of learning as well as a model of teacher training

programs, both of which have drama work embedded as the conceptual framework of AO learning.

As mentioned previously, AO lessons are composed of the two aspects of training in self-learning and participatory/expressive learning activities. Model 1 in Figure 1 shows the relationships of each component as a model of learning. The arrows indicate the relationships between each component. For instance, a sophisticated debate requires both parties to provide resources and contentions required for objective discussion (RW to D/D). Also, there are often cases where new issues arise from a debate, calling for additional research (D/D to RW). This way, these three elements are mutually supportive and prompt activities of the others.

Model 2 in Figure 1 has been formulated through the SAOL's research. This is a model of AO learning which incorporates drama work. In this model, participatory/expressive activities of presentation (P), discussion/debate (D/D) and drama work (DW) are positioned at an equal distance from the core element of research work (RW). Drama work in this context is expected to function as a tool of learning rather than as an artistic activity. Research work provides objectivity and factuality for the content of learning.

Pure conventions of drama alone do not contribute to drama work. Discussions/debates among learners are indispensable for drama to have an effect as an activity of learning. Thus, the borders between the three elements on the outer circle are not clear-cut, and the three elements should be considered as mutually permeating and loosely connected with each other.

The main target of the SAOL's teacher training programs is incumbent teachers. This is because effectively carrying out activities across the four elements of AO learning requires years of experience. This requirement overlaps with issues around career formation and improvement of professionalism of teachers in active service.

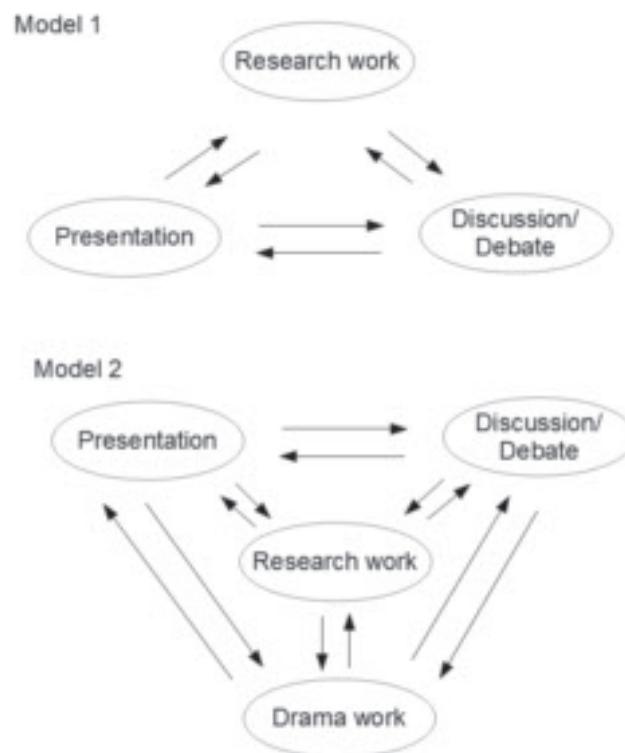


Figure 1 Model of learning

Model 1 in Figure 2 illustrates teacher training programs where the four elements of AO lessons are dealt with as independent themes. The term *teachers' physical skills* refers to a separate program for acquiring skills to enhance learners' activities. To be more exact, the main focus is on cultivating skills in the following three areas: warm up activities to facilitate learners' readiness for participation, activities to facilitate human relationships such as grouping, and skills to enhance awareness of the teacher's own physical characteristics, such as posture, quality of voice articulation, speech, and behavior. This type of program, with physicality as its central position, has especially strong relevance to training programs on drama work.

One of the teacher's primary tasks is to create an environment where learners prepare themselves for educational activities in response to calls from the teacher (preparing the body for action). In this sense, the physical skills of the teacher and those of the learner comprise two sides of the same coin.

In Model 2 in Figure 2, *teacher's physical skills* activate the four components as well as connect them. To be more exact, teachers do the following: design a process of learning, create positive human relationships among students with warm up activities, prompt students to prepare themselves for participation, and deepen students' learning by efficient facilitation of the four elements.

Models 3 through 5 depict the gradual process in which the teacher's operational competence in the four elements becomes a unified group of skills through practical training in AO lessons. It should be noted that these are theoretical models and that there are few teachers who reach the level of Model 5 where they can handle the four components equally and freely.

The other two books (Watanabe & Kakutokugata Kyoiku Kenkyukai, 2010; Watanabe & Kakutokugata Kyoiku Kenkyukai, 2011) are the first and second volumes of the series. Both are products of practical research, and all the activities introduced in these books are coupled with a

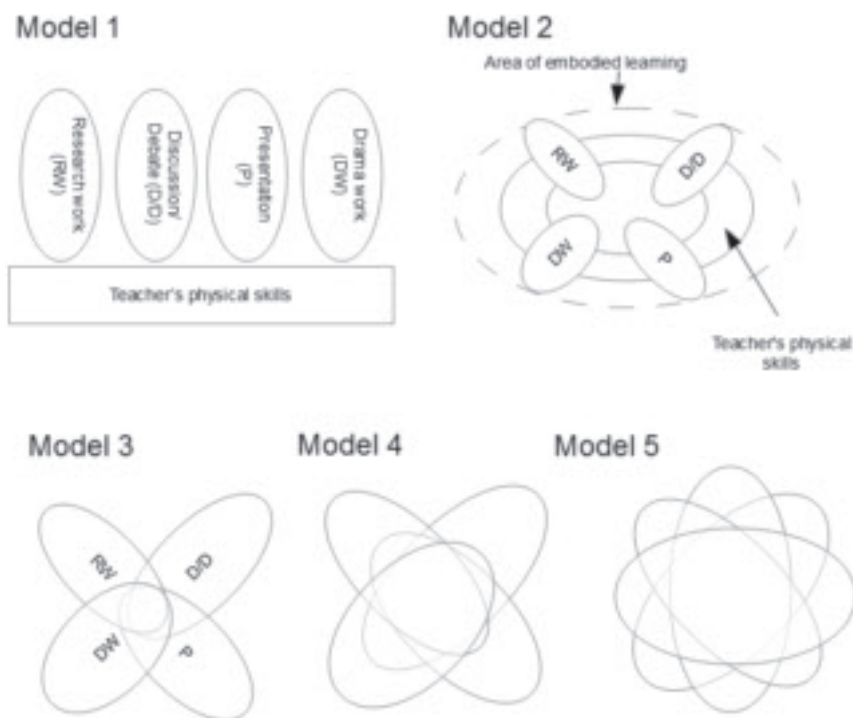


Figure 2 Model of teacher training

case report by members from elementary to tertiary levels. Thus, these would make excellent textbooks for teacher training programs. They can also be read by novice teachers who plan to incorporate educational activities into their lessons. These are the first books in Japan to have the characteristics of an activity book yet are also compilations of reports on praxis.

In the first volume, a selection of sixteen dramatic activities is proposed for application to learning in subject areas, lessons in integrated studies, moral education, and educational guidance. Of the sixteen activities, six are described in more detail as core activities, namely freeze frames, role play, hot seating, the mantle of the expert, the teacher in role, and thought tracking⁵.

There are three criteria for selecting the core activities: universal applicability to subject area learning, wide use as basic activities in drama in education overseas, and compatibility with activities developed by the SAOL. The number of activities to be introduced in this book is limited to sixteen since most educational circles in Japan have little familiarity with dramatic activities. The SAOL has decided that less is better in terms of their recommendation to Japanese educators.

For example, the section for freeze frames has consists of three reports following an introduction of the activity. The reports depict the following three cases: sixth graders posing for three imaginary photographs about a children's story called "Urashima Taro," high school freshmen in an art class posing for Leonardo da Vinci's "the Last Supper," and a school-wide training program for teachers where fifty teachers in groups of six produced four still images per group.

Let us take a closer look at the case of "the Last Supper" to observe how a lesson can be designed by combining dramatic activities with other types of activities. The lesson incorporated the following procedures. 1) Explanation: The teacher hands out copies of the painting to the students. 2) Grouping: The students are divided into groups of twelve to match the number of the Apostles. Each group is further divided into four groups of three. 3) Creating the words: In the picture, Jesus Christ says that one of his apostles will betray him. The students discuss in groups the possible replies of each apostle and write them down on a worksheet. 4) Freeze frames: The groups take turns trying to make faithful reproductions of the painting while appreciating the other groups' presentations. 5) Review: The students discuss their findings in the whole class and share their experiences.

The case above shows learning taking place by combining different activities such as freeze frames, discussion, and word creation. But in this particular lesson, freeze frames play the most significant role. This is because by actually posing as the characters in the painting, the students can realize that they are standing surprisingly close to each other. This realization leads students to an entirely new perspective of this painting because they now understand that Leonard da Vinci has structured the composition of this painting using a dramatic image.

The first volume of 223 pages lists thirty-two reports by twenty-three teachers. There are seven reports from elementary schools, four from middle schools, sixteen from high schools, four from colleges and universities, and one from a teacher training program. As for subject areas, there are six from English classes, four from Japanese, four from social studies, three from drama, and one each from art and international understanding. Outside these subject areas, there are three from integrated studies, one each from homeroom, club activities, an orientation for a study abroad program, and a drama workshop. All four reports from colleges and universities come from the study of education.

The second volume introduces the reader to activities which function as a dynamic impetus to start the model of learning. The book consists of three parts and is 195 pages long. Part 1 intro-

duces warm up activities in three categories. The first category “twenty-seven activities to enjoy encounters and interaction” describes how people who meet for the first time can become acquainted with each other and cooperate in a group. The second category “twenty-one activities to enjoy cooperation and concentration” is about cooperating in pairs and sharpening the senses, for example, an exercise where the learner’s eyes are closed. In the last category “twenty-two activities to enjoy action and creation” the reader can find physical activities for relaxation, activities to invite the learner to play in fantasy, and activities to appreciate dramatic expressions. By reading Part 1, readers can gain knowledge of warm up activities, grouping, and teacher’s physical skills.

Part 1 details seventy reports written by twenty-eight teachers. There are twenty reports from elementary schools, eleven from middle schools, seventeen from high schools, twenty-one from colleges and universities, and one from a teacher training program. All activities here have been selected, practiced, and written up by respective authors.

Part 2 takes the form of twenty Q&A sessions between young teachers and experienced teachers. It explains the types of facilitation necessary before, during, and after a lesson. Part 3, entitled “how to be a teacher with a good command of activities,” shows the prospect of a teacher’s development as a professional who can manage activities efficiently by describing the philosophy of AO lessons, the functions of educational activities, and the differences between activities and methods.

The author categorizes the development of teachers’ prerequisite skills for creating AO lessons into the following four phases: gaining sufficient knowledge on the function and effect of individual activities (P1), possessing the ability to design programs for a single lesson or a unit (P2), operating activities effectively in actual lessons (P3), and creating original activities in accordance with various conditions, such as the content to be learned, the atmosphere of the classroom, and the state of the students (P4).

There is a particularly significant gap between P2 and P3, as P3 can be attained only through long years of (self-)training in methodological practice and accumulation of experience.

Following the publication of these two books, promotional activities have started in earnest. Since 2010, four different types of Akariza open lessons and workshops have been held in different parts of the country, and these are directly connected to the task of developing teacher training programs. More of such activities is to be expected in the near future⁶.

8 Conclusion

As noted above, the projects of the SAOL are a pioneering attempt to do research in exploring the applicability of dramatic activities. The SAOL has had some success.

The research is still underway, but it will be worthwhile making an interim recapitulation as to why projects starting from scratch have achieved a level of success. Tentatively, there are five reasons for this.

- 1) The members share a strong sense of mission. Even before the SAOL was launched, all members had been questioning the over-reliance on chalk and talk lessons and had been searching for ways to improve the situation. By participating in projects and accumulating research, their personal interest has developed into a sense of higher mission to change the ways of teaching in Japan as a whole.

- 2) The members share a deep interest in conducting research. Research on drama work is

being pursued in a broader context of systematizing activities to realize AO learning. This has provided the members with a wider perspective from which to evaluate their individual practice in the classroom.

3) The members come from a variety of backgrounds, from elementary to tertiary levels. The SAOL is a place where experts in their respective fields gather together. The members have been engaged in stimulating discussions on the common topic of dramatic activities through exchanging various approaches, which have resulted in establishing a creative community of discourse. In this sense, the projects of the SAOL serve as a space for members to receive training in new approaches to their lessons.

4) The members have gained positive outcomes to their practice. Initially, few members took interest in dramatic methods. However, their expectation for the possibilities of dramatic activities has grown as they experimented with the activities in actual lessons. Being able to actually see and feel the results of incorporating activities has contributed to the members' common understanding of the significance of their research.

5) The research presupposes making an appeal to the general public. The SAOL has the premise of making research outcomes public by publishing them in a series of books, as well as offering open lessons and workshops across the country. Hence, the eventual practical applications of members' research activities stem from their strong sense of responsibility, mission, and motivation.

Notes

¹ The term *returnees* refers to children of school age who have lived outside Japan due to their parents' job or other circumstances. They are called *kaigaisei* (school-age children living outside Japan) while they are abroad and *kikokusei* (returnees) after they come back to Japan. Liberalization of direct foreign investment in 1972 accelerated Japanese companies' operation overseas. As a result, the number of *kaigaisei* and *kikokusei* increased drastically. For example, the number of *kikokusei* aged for elementary through high schools in Japan was 1,544 in 1971, but exceeded 10,000 in 1985. Over 10,000 *kaigaisei* are returning annually to be *kikokusei*. These numbers have been stabilized in recent years.

In the 1970s and 1980s, assimilation to Japanese society was the main focus of education for returnees, because the period in which they were away from Japan was considered a blank and a disadvantage. The goal was to remedy the gap of their experience as Japanese citizens so that they would be able to integrate into the Japanese education system. However, the maintenance and expansion of their international characteristics have gradually become mainstream in education for returnees. This is because research has shown that returnees are capable of accommodating themselves to different cultures and of expressing themselves. Children who have received conventional education in Japan are often not strong in these areas as Japanese education tends to emphasize uniformity. This way, returnees' educational experience abroad has come to be seen as beneficial or advantageous to education in Japan. In the late 1980s, returnees' experiences came to be known widely as a mirror image of Japanese education, which was in a troubled state. This has had a significant impact on the education system.

² This compilation of teaching materials consists of the following sixteen topics: 1) New York, New York: As seen by Akiko, 2) High school student Chris wants to drive to school, 3) What do you have for breakfast?: Eating habits in America, 4) Bill Gates and computers, 5) Amanda is worried: A case of a high school student in the suburbs of Atlanta, 6) How do we qualify as adults?: An American family, 7) Haruka is getting married, 8) All about Tokyo Disneyland: A kingdom of dream and magic, 9) Spielberg and American movies: A giant industry of entertainment, 10) America seen from the point of view of Major League Baseball, 11) Atsushi transfers to a school in America: The power of English, 12) Japanese high school student shot to death in America, 13) The Mazdas, a family of Japanese ancestry, 14) Dreams of NASA, 15) When will a female be President?: American society and gender, and 16) Is America a superpower?: Interview with a journalist Mr. Suzuki.

³ <http://www.kakutokuken.jp/index-e.html>

⁴ The first three seminars of the SAOL highlighted announcements related to the research progress, while the fourth and fifth seminars emphasized promotional activities. Since the first seminar in 2007, lectures, symposiums, and workshops have been featured as the main programs. Participants include not only teachers but students, members of theatrical companies, and officials from boards of education. They come from all parts of Japan.

The titles of the past seminars were: 1) "How to learn through the whole body: Workshops employing dramatic activi-

- ties,” 2) “Can drama work change education?: The current situation of using drama in education in England (by J. Neelands),” 3) “Drama work changes learning: Exploring new horizons of education for expression and communication,” 4) “Sixteen activities of drama to explore new horizons of learning: Improve your lessons with dramatic activities!” and 5) “Warm up activities to learning: Seventy activities to cultivate the basis for communication.”
- ⁵ The ten other activities are sound scape, body scape, collective statues, the voice in the head, choral speech, mime, the forum theater, the promenade, collective characters, and meetings.
 - ⁶ The four types of promotional activities consist of the following: 1) open lessons at Akita Meitokukan High School in Akita Prefecture, where 200 teachers of an educational organization in the Tohoku area gathered, 2) a teacher training program at Muroran Otani High School in Hokkaido, which all the teachers at two neighboring schools attended, 3) team-teaching programs at Ooi High School in Saitama Prefecture, where members of the SAOL teamed up with teachers at the host school, and 4) a workshop for the International Youth Art Festival, Osaka, which was open to teachers and the general public who came to watch and participate in dramatic activities.

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