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An analysis of the knowledge level of prospective teachers who have taken drama classes

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Abstract

In this study, an analysis of the basic knowledge levels of prospective teachers who have taken this course is aimed. As a tool of data gathering, “Creative Drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” (CDBKLS) is used in this study, and a total of 256 prospective teachers from 7 different undergraduate programs of various departments of Hacettepe University are participated. As a result of the statistical analysis of the evaluation of each item in the scale, a comparison between the point averages among groups is done, and these findings are discussed in the light of related literature.

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Keywords: Drama; creative drama method; training programs; prospective teachers.

1. Introduction

That the children love to deal with art and have a taste of the richness of art enables them to reflect this richness into their lives. For many kids, the first encounter with art takes place in school. While music and painting are part of the school curriculum on a long-term basis, drama is not given much place to. According to McCaslin (2000), among the art forms, drama is the one that includes a full participation of children in the process emotionally, intellectually, verbally, and socially. As actors, children assume the role of others, and they become more sensitive individuals since they deepen their knowledge on human values and problems. Moreover, since drama is an art performed in groups, each child learns to work cooperatively, becoming a part of the whole.

Dramatic acts stand at the centre of a healthy development and learning for children. In this respect, each class should include an environment on creative drama and fictional plays. In this environment, children step out of certain limitations of the real world. Children who are given the chance to act out as another person or thing produce situations and motions that their roles necessitate. With these acting-outs, they also have the chance to develop skills that would facilitate their lives in the future when they deepen their perception of the world that surround them (Gonen and Dalkılıç, 1999; Dodge et al. 2002; Machado, 2003; Fein and Rivkin, 1986; Paley, 1990; Piers, 1972; Piaget, 1962 qtd in: Brown and Pleydell, 1999).

In dramatic acting-outs, little children gain the perspective of behaving with an “as if” attitude towards the events that happen around them. This “as if” attitude is correlated with the formation of inter-personal and social skills and

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cognitive development, along with the other aspects of the play. Through dramatic acting-out, children develop the skills of problem solving, reflecting their emotions, and critical thinking (Brown and Pleydell, 1999; Crumpler et al., 2006; Dickinson et al., 2006; McLauchlan, 2007). According to McCaslin (2000), drama is the least costly yet the one having the most potential in terms of learning experience. Because of these, it is necessary to include “Creative drama Method” for all levels of teaching programs in our education system.

2. Method

This study is carried out to determine the basic knowledge levels of prospective teachers on Creative drama Method. The sample group of the study consists of a total of 256 prospective teachers, who have taken a Creative drama class, from the departments of English Language Teaching, Early Childhood Education, Elementary Education, Elementary science education, Elementary Mathematics Education, Physical Education and Sports Teaching, and Child Development and Education. In order to determine the knowledge levels and opinion of prospective teachers, a type Likert quintet “Creative drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” (CDBKLS) that consists of 41 items is used. The items in the scale are graded as “I definitely do not agree:1,” “I don’t agree: 2,” “I am undecided:3,” “I agree:4,” and “I definitely agree:5.” The scale which is developed by the researchers by surveying literature and related studies has, at the beginning, consisted of 44 items, but then, in the light of the views of 10 experts in the field, it is reduced to 41 items. In the statistical analysis of the gathered data, SPSS 16.0 program is used, and by making comparisons between the point averages of the groups, data related to the average of the total points and points got from each item is achieved.

3. Results (Findings)

The range of point averages related to the items in “Creative drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” according to the departments is given in Table-1. In the tables, departments are abbreviated as follows: English Language Teaching: ENG, Early Childhood Education: ECE, Elementary Education: EE, Science Education: SCI, Child Development and Education: CDE, Elementary Mathematics Education: EME, Physical Education and Sports Teaching: PES.

When Table-1 is examined below, in relation to the 1st item “play is the most important tool in enabling the child to relate to his or her environment,” it is seen that students from the Department of Early Childhood Education have the highest point (4.83). The point 4.70, which is achieved in relation to the average points of all departments, is the desired and high value. The all-departments point average in relation to the 2nd item, which is about the use of creative drama to facilitate interaction among students, is 4.37, and is determined as a desired result. While it was expected from the prospective teachers to give low points to the 3rd item, which includes the statement “It is not necessary to give everyone a task in creative drama activities” by ticking “I definitely do not agree,” it is seen that their point average (3.98) proves their having made an assessment that is closer to “I agree.” To the 4th item, all prospective teachers have given an average of 4.35 points, thus indicating that they have “taught the topics by various techniques when they use the creative drama method.” All prospective teachers have given an average of 4.36 points to the 5th item, thus admitting that “drama created an environment for shy kids to express themselves”. The average point of 1.98 to the 6th item that includes the statement “a guideline should be given in drama studies” comes as an unexpected result since not providing a guideline would cause confusion especially among the young age groups. All prospective teachers have given an average of 3.68 points to the 7th item which includes the statement “they might be a problem of noise during drama activities.” To the negative statement in the 8th item, that is, “during the drama activities, details such as costumes, props, and décor cannot be given place to,” all prospective teachers give an average of 2.93 points, thereby they are “undecided.” However, in fact, impersonations and the use of the body are sufficient rather than the details such as costumes, props, and décor. The average point given to the 9th item, which includes the statement “during the activity, the steps of creative drama should be used seriatim,” is 3.94. In the 10th item, it is indicated that gymnastic activities will be done after the drama activity, and while it was expected to get low points for this item, all prospective teachers have given an average of 3.00 points, thereby indicating they are “undecided. However, when the steps of creative drama should be considered, it is known that gymnastic activities should be done before the drama activity. It is seen that all prospective students that participated

in the study have given an average of 3.98 points to the 11th item, which includes the statement “there should not be any discussion during the creative drama activities,” this proves that they agree with the statement. However, it is absolutely necessary to have discussions after the drama sessions in order to thoroughly assess the topic that is performed and to find out other solutions related to the problems. All the participants have stated that they agree with the statement “there is a need for a special environment for drama activities” in the 12th item by giving an average of 3.96 points. However, the existence of a special environment designed specifically for drama activities should not be regarded as a must, and considering the fact that there are schools which are physically inadequate the idea that these activities can be performed in any place.

Table 1. The range of Point Averages Gathered from the Items in “Creative Drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” According to Departments

Items	Departments							
	ENG Mean (N=30)	ECE Mean (N=60)	EE Mean (N=53)	SCI Mean (N=39)	CDE Mean (N=40)	EME Mean (N=19)	PES Mean (N=15)	Total Mean (N=256)
11	4.47	4.83	4.77	4.56	4.77	4.63	4.53	4.70
12	4.23	4.42	4.45	4.33	4.52	4.11	4.27	4.37
13	4.40	3.75	3.96	4.23	4.10	3.95	3.27	3.98
14	4.47	4.33	4.36	4.28	4.57	3.95	4.20	4.35
15	4.40	4.40	4.30	4.51	4.30	4.32	4.20	4.36
16	1.90	2.07	1.91	2.05	2.00	1.95	1.80	1.98
17	3.80	3.65	3.74	3.64	3.65	3.26	4.00	3.68
18	3.60	3.35	2.51	2.67	2.62	2.74	3.07	2.93
19	3.87	3.87	3.74	4.05	4.30	3.89	3.87	3.94
I10	3.37	3.33	3.02	2.54	2.98	2.79	2.47	3.00
I11	4.17	3.93	4.30	3.82	4.02	3.95	2.93	3.98
I12	3.43	3.68	4.17	4.15	4.15	4.42	3.80	3.96
I13	2.63	2.57	2.30	2.46	2.53	2.26	2.13	2.45
I14	2.70	3.40	3.45	2.87	3.08	3.16	2.00	3.10
I15	3.67	2.47	2.92	2.72	2.18	2.63	1.87	2.67
I16	4.37	4.33	4.32	4.38	4.68	4.42	4.07	4.39
I17	4.47	4.43	4.09	4.41	4.58	3.84	4.33	4.34
I18	4.17	3.63	3.58	3.54	3.65	3.42	4.13	3.69
I19	4.40	4.17	4.00	4.33	4.52	4.11	3.13	4.18
I20	4.07	3.95	3.87	3.95	4.20	3.68	3.13	3.92
I21	4.17	4.52	4.30	4.46	4.70	4.26	3.80	4.39
I22	4.30	4.40	4.43	4.28	4.47	4.32	3.80	4.35
I23	1.70	2.53	2.53	1.95	2.15	2.37	2.27	2.26
I24	4.37	4.33	3.96	4.31	4.55	4.26	3.27	4.22
I25	4.20	4.47	4.43	4.31	4.55	4.53	3.60	4.37
I26	4.30	4.07	4.00	4.36	4.40	3.95	4.00	4.16
I27	4.17	4.45	4.25	4.41	4.65	4.16	4.20	4.36
I28	3.93	4.40	3.98	4.10	4.50	4.32	3.07	4.14
I29	3.67	3.52	3.43	3.56	4.08	3.79	2.93	3.60
I30	3.20	3.42	3.68	3.64	3.62	3.42	2.47	3.46
I31	4.07	4.28	3.77	3.82	3.82	3.68	3.87	3.94
I32	4.20	4.22	4.04	4.21	4.47	4.16	3.93	4.20
I33	4.17	4.22	4.15	4.26	4.55	4.05	4.00	4.23
I34	4.33	4.35	4.21	4.46	4.80	4.11	4.13	4.38
I35	3.83	4.02	3.87	3.87	5.75	3.53	4.13	4.18
I36	3.87	3.62	3.74	3.90	4.32	3.79	3.87	3.85
I37	4.03	3.92	3.83	4.23	4.32	3.95	4.00	4.03
I38	3.33	3.58	3.32	3.49	3.80	3.68	3.20	3.50
I39	3.37	3.50	3.30	3.56	4.02	3.63	3.33	3.54
I40	4.43	4.35	4.08	4.10	4.60	3.95	4.33	4.27
I41	4.63	4.55	4.60	4.54	4.63	4.47	4.47	4.57

In the 13th item, it is stated that it is necessary to comment on the activities of children during the play, and all prospective teachers have given an average of 2.45 points, thereby indicating that they do not agree. This is an expected result. The 14th item states the idea of providing learning in creative drama activities by asking the students questions and enabling them to reach to one particular solution. It is seen that an average of 3.10 points is given to

this item, which indicates that they are undecided. However, creative drama aims at showing more than one way of solution instead of a single one. In the 15th item, it is stated that “drama is not a spontaneous activity,” and that prospective teachers have given an average of 2.67 points. In the 16th item, it is seen that an average of 4.39 points is given to the statement “the opinions of all students that participate in drama activities should be heard,” and in the 17th item, it is seen that an average of 4.34 points is given to the statement “during the dramatic plays, in addition to their feelings and opinions, their fears and interests can also be revealed,” thereby giving an “I agree” opinion. In the 18th item, the participants have given an average of 3.69 points to the statement “more drama methods should be used in the employment of in-class education activities.” In the 19th item, it is seen that the prospective teachers have given an average of 4.18 to the statement “the knowledge of the kids are not lasting in the topics taught through creative drama method,” thereby giving an “I agree” opinion. However, it is a known fact that due to the creative drama activities, kids have a more lasting learning. In the 20th item, prospective teachers give an average of 3.92 points to the statement “the children cannot put themselves in someone else’s shoes in drama activities,” thereby making an observation that is close to the “I agree” opinion. However, it is also known that, with the creative drama method, children can easily put themselves into the position of another’s easily and that it is especially helpful to develop the concept of empathy in children. In the 21st item, the statement “I can support the students’ ability to express themselves by the creative drama method” is given an average of 4.39 points, in the 22nd item, the statement, “I can, in order to enhance their motivation, use music-rhythm during the drama activities” is given an average of 4.35 points, and in the 23rd item, the statement “I would interfere with the problem situations that occur during the applications in creative drama activities after the play is over” is given an average of 2.26 points, which shows that expected evaluations are made. For the statement “It is necessary to frequently emphasize that students should not make mistakes during the creative drama activities” in the 24th item, all prospective teachers have given an average of 4.22 points, thereby indicating an “I agree” opinion. However, it is very much wrong to make such emphasis during the drama activities. In the 25th item, the statement “I would emphasize that everyone’s opinion and feelings are important” is given an average of 4.37 points. In the 26th item, “I can make consistent interpretation on the development of the child by observing his reactions during the creative drama activities” is given an average of 4.16 points, thereby indicating an “I agree” opinion. In the 27th item, for the statement that creative drama method can be used for fun and relaxation as well as for educational purposes at schools is given an average of 4.36 points, thereby giving an expected evaluation. In the 28th item, all prospective teachers that participated in the study have given an average of 4.14 points to the statement that participating the drama activities with the children would weaken their authority in class, thereby indicating an “I agree” opinion. However, instead of weakening their authority, participating in the drama activities facilitates the in-class applications. In the 29th item, the statement “It is necessary to interfere with the emotional content during the application of creative drama method” is given an average of 3.60 points. However, the emotional content during the application of creative drama should not be interfered with. Prospective teachers that participated in the study have given an average of 3.46 points to the statement “creative drama activities do not necessitate a planned teaching and evaluation process” in the 30th item, thereby indicating that they are “undecided.” However, creative drama method in education is used to teach a specific topic or concept, and this requires a planned teaching and evaluation process. In the 31st item, the statement “I can make students’ behavior meaningful by keeping many anecdotes during the drama activities” is given an average of 3.94 points, and in the 32nd item, the statement “with creative drama method, I can support students’ asking new questions while finding solutions to the problems they face” is given an average of 4.20 points, in the 33rd item, the statement “with the creative drama method, I can enable students to generalize the concepts and definitions they have learned and to use them in life” is given an average of 4.23 points, in the 34th item the statement “I can increase the sensitivity of children towards nature, things, and people by the creative drama activities” is given an average of 4.38 points, and in the 35th item, the statement “I can make children control the time they spend during the creative drama activities themselves” is given an average of 4.18 points, indicating that they agree with these statements. In the 36th item, the statement “I can allow for topics such as spatial relations, numerical operations in the creative drama activities” is given an average of 3.85 points, in the 37th item, the statement “I can enable students to understand abstract and complex concepts during the creative drama activities” is given an average of 4.03, thereby indicating an “I agree” opinion. In the 38th item, “it is difficult for children to comprehend the part-whole relationships in the creative drama activities” is given an average of 3.50 points.

However, this negative statement should have been assessed with a lower point. In the 39th item, the statement that in the projects and plays of children using the creative drama method would make it difficult to discuss the concepts in detail is given an average of 3.54 points, thereby indicating an “undecided” opinion. However, it is thought that this negative statement should have also been assessed with a lower point. In the 40th item, the statement “I can apply more effective and lasting programs with creative drama method” is given an average of 4.27 points, and in the 41st item, the statement “As a prospective teacher, I think creative drama class is very helpful for my career” is given an average of 4.57 points.

In Table-2, the total points gathered from CDBKLS are given. It can be seen that students from the Department of Child Development and Education have the highest point with the average of 4.05 points, this department is followed, respectively, by the Department of Early Childhood (average of 3.88 points), Department of English Language Teaching (average of 3.87 points), Department of Science Teaching (average of 3.83 points), Department of Elementary Teaching (3.79 points), Department of Elementary Mathematics Teaching (average of 3.75 points), and the Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching (average of 3.50 points).

Table 2. The Range of Total Point Averages Gathered by “Creative Drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” According to Departments

Items	Departments							Total
	ENG	ECE	EE	SCI	CDE	EME	PES	
Mean	3,8740	3,8846	3,7971	3,8374	4,0530	3,7522	3,5089	3,8525
N	30	60	53	39	40	19	15	256

It is seen that the average sum total point of all the departments that participated is 3.85 points. When the fact that the full point that can be achieved in the scale is 5.00 is taken into consideration, this value shows that creative drama course is comprehended by the prospective teachers and because this is an applied course and they remember better what they are taught.

4. Discussion

In this study where the knowledge and opinion of prospective teachers on the method of creative drama is examined, when the total points achieved in the “Creative drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” are taken into consideration, it is seen that the highest point is gotten by the Department of Child Development and Education. This department is followed, respectively, by the Department of Early Childhood Education, the Department of English Language Teaching, the Department of Science Teaching, the Department of Elementary Education, the Department of Elementary Mathematics Teaching, and the Department of Physical Education and Sports Teaching. Although the prospective teachers that participated in the study have given an average of 4.27 points to the statement “I can apply more effective and lasting programs with creative drama method,” thereby indicating an “I agree” opinion, they have indicated an “undecided” opinion by giving an average of 3.69 points to the statement “in the application of educational class activities, creative drama method should be used more frequently.” In addition to that, prospective teachers have given an average of 4.14 points to the statement “participating in the drama activities with the children would weaken my authority in class.” According to these findings, prospective teachers, although they are aware of the necessity of using creative drama method, are undecided in applying this method. This points out that prospective teachers lack self-sufficiency in applying the method. Can and Gunhan (2009) developed a scale in order to determine the self-sufficiency perception of teachers and prospective teachers in using creative drama method, thinking that they should have high self-sufficiency to apply these methods and techniques in class however learned they may be in the methods and techniques themselves. The developed scale is undergone a study of validity and reliability, and the result is $\alpha=0.96$. In the “Scale of Self-Sufficiency Perception in Using the Creative Drama Method,” there is a total of 47 items, 36 of which are positive and 11 of which are negative. It is indicated that this scale can be safely used in institutions that train teachers. Prospective teachers generally have given an “I agree” opinion for the items that includes statements such as creative drama enables children to “use the concepts and definitions in real life (average of 4.23 points), to increase their sensitivity towards nature, objects, and people (average of 4.38 points), to take part in activities such as spatial relations, numerical operations (average of 4.03). In the study performed by Paksu and Ubuz (2009), the effect of traditional education method and a drama-based

education is compared on the attitudes of children towards geometry, geometrical thinking, and mathematics. As a result of the study performed with 102 7th grade students that attend public schools, a drama-based education has a decisive role in the accomplishment of students, in their thinking and memory skills, in their attitudes, and in refraining from sex discrimination. According to another result of the study, a drama-based education facilitates learning, geometrical concepts and problems are more easily comprehended due to a better communication created in a cooperative environment, and a drama-based education provides children with positive attitude since it creates an environment that is interesting, motivating, and exciting. Mattson (2008) argues that creative drama should be used in history education supporting it by pedagogic methods, and that a combination of drama and history enables a certainty and fun, which should be used in the education of the youth. When the total points of the students of the Department of Elementary Education gathered from the Creative Drama Basic Knowledge Level Scale” are taken into consideration, it is seen that they have an average of 3.79 points. In the study performed by Hamurcu (2009), attitudes of the students of Elementary Education Department towards creative drama are also determined. By assessing the results of student attitudes during some applications and after the process, it is determined that there are certain differences in the attitudes of prospective teachers towards creative drama according to various variants. It is seen that the type of education that prospective teachers have show meaningful differences only in one of the sub-dimension of the attitude scale. When the attitudes of students towards creative drama according to their gender are taken into examined, it is determined that there are meaningful differences in all 3 sub-dimensions.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

When the average of points the sample group has achieved in the scale in the result of the study are taken into consideration, it is seen that the knowledge of prospective teachers on creative drama in teaching is at a sufficient level. When the creative drama classes in the 7 departments which are in the sample group are considered in terms of their being compulsory or elective, it is seen that this course is compulsory in the Departments of Child Development and Education, Early Childhood Education, and Elementary Education, and that it is an elective course in the curriculum of other departments. The course’s being compulsory or elective does not create an observable difference in the study findings. When the findings concerning the points achieved from the scale is taken into consideration, it is observed that students from the Departments of English Language Teaching and Science Teaching, who have taken this course as an elective, have achieved higher points compared to the students from the Department of Elementary Education, who have taken this course as a compulsory one. When the range of the number of prospective teachers according to the departments is considered, it is seen that there are more prospective teachers in the departments where creative drama classes are compulsory, in other words, more prospective teachers have knowledge on creative drama use in teaching. When the fact that an education based on drama enables children to have a more lasting and fun learning is taken into consideration, it is thought that creative drama in teaching as a method should be known by a much more number of prospective teachers. In addition to that, when the early childhood and elementary education programs, which are constructed upon a constructivist approach, are taken into consideration, it is evident that in order for children to learn by doing and experiencing, necessary environments and methods should be used, and in this respect, creative drama method in teaching is highly important especially in the education of little children. In order for this method to be used more frequently, correctly, and effectively by our teachers, it is necessary for Creative Drama classes to become compulsory in higher education programs that train teachers, and it is also necessary to emphasize on applied activities while giving classes. Making evaluations at the end of creative drama classes and giving frequent place to qualified activities as to how to process the topics can enable the enhancement of the proficiencies of prospective teachers in effectively incorporating this method in the educational curricula.

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