

Teaching Social Studies with Creative Drama Method

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1. Introduction

Social Studies is a field where the skills, attitudes and values in social life are acquired by students based on knowledge and selected from Social Studies discipline in order to raise good citizens who know their responsibilities in primary education schools (Sever, 2015, p. 4). In the Social Studies curriculum that was designed in the light of the Constructivist Approach that was adopted as of 2005, students are placed in the very heart of the education. In this approach, the teacher is expected to guide the educational process, and create a step for the learner to acquire relevant knowledge in an efficient manner. A teacher who adopts the Constructivist Approach is not considered as the absolute authority in the learning environment, but as the supporting guide for the individuals who discover, learn and make sense of what they learn. The teacher is also considered as the guide who makes students notice their missing points and mistakes; and then, correct them (Şimşek, 2009, p. 126).

In this context, Social Studies Program;

1. Accepts that each student is a specific individual.
2. Casts a light on the future lives of students and shows sensitivity to the improvement of the qualities expected from the individual.

3. Ensures that knowledge, concepts, values and skills are improved; and prioritizes the realization of learning.
4. Encourages students to think, ask questions and exchange ideas.
5. Aims to raise students as healthy and happy individuals in physical and emotional terms.
6. Cares for the raising of students as individuals who know and use their rights and fulfill their responsibilities.
7. Ensures that students are sensitive to social problems.
8. Ensures that students use their prior knowledge in learning process and establish communications with their environment (Aykaç and Adıgüzel, 2011, p. 299).

In the light of the Constructivist Approach, teachers are expected to see the differences between their students, create enhanced learning environments for them, and support the education process with relevant materials. A learning environment in which students can express themselves freely and show their existence during the learning process is important for the Constructivist Approach. This approach emphasizes the use of various learning methods and strategies. In Social Studies field, cognitive learning is focused. For this reason, using mere traditional methods like the narration method or asking questions and receiving answers method will be inadequate. In the Constructivist Approach, on the other hand, the understanding claiming that the individual must be dominant in the learning process prevails. Creative drama method constitutes the basis of the “*live and learn*” method.

The word “*drama*” is derived from the Greek word “*dran*”, which means “*doing, making, acting*” (Lehman, 1986; Narrated by: San, 1990). Creative Drama, on the other hand, means “Animating a purpose or a thought by using some techniques like improvising or roleplaying based on the experiences of a group and its members” (Adıgüzel, 1993, p. 56).

Creative Drama is the animating or making sense of an experience, an event, an idea, an educational unit, and sometimes an abstract concept or behavior in a “*gamily*” process by individuals in a group work by making use of improvising, roleplaying, theatre or drama techniques through re-organizing past cognitive patterns, observations and experiences (San, 1996, p. 149). According to another definition, Creative Drama, as an educational method, an artistic training field, and as a discipline, is an approach that will enable individuals to become people who are open to group work and who can express themselves freely in a creative manner (Üstündağ, 1996, p. 19).

Drama is called “Creative Drama” in the USA, “Drama in Education” in the UK, as “School Play” and “Play and Interaction” (*Schulspiel, Spiel und Interaktion*) in Germany, and as “Creative Drama” in Turkey.

Major characteristics of drama are as follows:

- Drama integrates education.
- Reality and plays are integrated in drama.
- Reality and fiction are integrated in drama.
- A situation is created with improvisation.
- Drama converts knowledge into experience.
- Drama is based on dramatic experiences.
- Drama is social, and is created with single, double, and multiple groups.
- Drama is a process. There is a difference between the initial and present points.
- Drama consists of improvisations. Without improvisation, there will be no dramas (Okvuran, 2003, p. 82).

Creative Drama is becoming widespread in every stage of education. The purpose in formal education is to save student from being passive listener and make him/her become an active individual. This is possible by using the Creative Drama Method in educational environments. In this way, students become active during the learning process, and activate sensory organs and learn by doing, and experience the events or situations (Üstündağ 1988, p. 59).

The aims of Creative Drama are as follows:

- Providing creativity and aesthetic development,
- Acquiring critical thinking skills,
- Acquiring social development and cooperation habits,
- Acquiring self-confidence, and decision-making skills,
- Acquiring language and communication skills through vocabulary enrichment,
- Developing imagination, feelings and thoughts,

- Developing the skills to understand and feel others (establishing empathy),
- Acquiring experience on different events, phenomena and situations,
- Providing the opportunity to develop moral and spiritual values,
- Being able to analyze problems and acquiring problem-solving skills,
- Providing information to the individual on the acquired, changed or corrected behaviors,
- Showing the individual how to cope with unwanted situations, events or phenomena,
- Ensuring that the individual sees the world in a more concrete manner,
- Concretizing abstract concepts and experiences,
- Providing that the differences among individuals are considered with tolerance (Üstündağ, 1988, p.59).

Tekerek defined creative drama as “An experience that brings important contributions to the acquisition of some humane characteristics like creativity, imagination, acting together, organization, empathy, self-discipline, freedom, and respect that are functional on the self-confidence and self-existence in a process that proceeds from abstract one to the concrete one” (Tanrıseven and Aytaç, 2013, p. 332).

Drama has an extremely great importance in education. Drama is an efficient way that makes individuals acquire certain characteristics such as cultural development, self-confidence, self-recognition, creativity, critical viewpoint, self-realization, problem-solving and producing solution ways (Genç, 2003). Considering Creative Drama activities as an approach whose sole purpose is to make students conceptualize a set of knowledge will lead us to a dead-end. Creative Drama helps students to socialize and increase their self-confidence. Creative Drama activities may be included in every step of formal education, in informal education, in classes, or may be considered and used as a separate educational field (San, 1992). Creative Drama expands the language usage areas and the quality of the individual. It creates various opportunities to try different speaking methods. Creative Drama, which has a certain language form in itself, ensures that students approach themselves and others in a critical manner (Aytaç and Çetinkaya, 2013, p. 675).

During Creative Drama activities, students find the opportunity to express their feelings and thoughts freely; and therefore, increase self-confidence and gain the skill of discriminating

between their feelings. Since Creative Drama provides real sections from daily life, students may acquire the opportunity of producing solutions for possible problems they may face in life.

Creative Drama Method, which brings the opportunity of contributing to the cognitive, affective and behavioral development for the individual, has been used to increase the academic success of students in different subjects and to acquire certain acquisitions in curricula. Study results revealed that drama is influential in increasing students' success. For example, significant increases were reported in academic success levels of students in the following fields in favor of the Creative Drama; Social Studies, (Bağcı-Kılıç, 2005; Özer, 2004; Yılmaz, 2013; Zayımoğlu, 2006), Mathematics (Bulut and Aktepe, 2015; Hatipoğlu, 2006; Şenol-Özyiğit, 2011), Physical Sciences (Arieli, 2007; Hendrix, Eick and Shannon, 2012; Öcal, 2014), Information Technologies (Atalay and Şahin, 2012), Citizenship and Democracy Education (Ulubey, 2015), The History of Revolutions and Kemalism (Altinkulaç and Akhan, 2010), German (Kırmızı, 2012), French (Aydeniz, 2012), Art (Atan, 2007), Music (Yiğit, 2010), Life Sciences (Selanik-Ay, 2005), Physics (Şahin, 2012) and Turkish (Karacil, 2009). On the other hand, the studies conducted by Sağır, (2001), Tımbıl (2008) and Dikmenli-Vardar (2015) reported that there were no significant increases in the academic success levels of students in Physical Sciences and in Social Studies in the studies conducted by Bingöl (2015) and Rüzgâr (2014) (Ulubey and Toraman, 2015, p. 198).

1.1. Application Steps of Drama

Although it differs according to the structure of the group, there is a certain order in drama activities. These are; warm-up, playing (pantomime and roleplaying), improvisation, creation and evaluation.

1.2. Warm-up and Relaxation

This step is where several activities are made on using senses with different methods, strengthening observation power, bodily and tactile works, recognition, establishing interactions, receiving reliability, and adaptation. There are certain codes in this step, and the leader guides the way (San, 1996; San, 2001; Üstündağ, 2000). The participants establish communications with themselves, recognize their bodies, move their bodies in a rhythmic manner, and use their hearing, seeing, touching and smelling senses (Morgül, 1999, p. 21). With the introduction activities in this step, the participants know themselves and other people (Üstündağ, 1998).

During the warm-up step, the leader must motivate the group in the light of the purpose of the activity. Through these activities, the participants activate their sensory organs. Relaxation activities include the relaxation of the body and the relaxation of the soul and mind (Morgül, 1999). Relaxation activities are sometimes performed after warm-up activities and sometimes before the evaluation step. Using music in these activities ensure the relaxation of the body and thoughts.

1.3. Playing (Pantomime and Role-playing)

This step is where playmaking is made, and the plays are developed. Creation and imagination dimensions are also included in the activity (San, 1996; San, 2001). This step includes activities intended for interaction and communication in the group, development of imagination; and involves the use of five senses through pantomime (Okvuran, 2001).

1.4. Improvisation

Improvisation is explained as the situation that develops spontaneously and suddenly without sticking to any text as it occurs to someone. It cannot be expressed as a definite process. The individual expresses himself/herself in a comfortable manner. Improvisations are the bases of drama activities (Üstündağ, 1998). Improvisation may be performed based on a study, tale, poem, tableau, photograph, a piece of news in the paper, or an imaginary situation (Okvuran, 2001). This process may be evaluated as a specific process since the details are not defined in advance. This is a stage where participants may express themselves in a comfortable manner. This step starts by defining a topic or a theme by considering the individual characteristics of the participants. Sometimes, certain steps are planned for a predefined target.

1.5. Creation

This step is started as based on a predefined point. It is not known how the process will proceed and end (San, 1996; San, 2001). In this step, the participant may need certain materials. Materials and equipment may be used when necessary. Sometimes, although there are no preparations for this, the participants may use the things that exist in the environment at that moment. In this process, an object, a picture, or a photograph may be used, and the communication may be based on these objects (Üstündağ, 1998; Üstündağ, 2000).

1.6. Evaluation

The evaluation step is one of the most important steps of drama activity. Evaluation must be made when it is demanded by the leader or by the participants (Üstündağ, 1998). Evaluation may be made after several steps. The leader may start this step by asking questions like “What did you feel?”, “At which points did you feel joy?”, “Where did you have difficulty?”, “What else can be done?” to the participants (Aral et al., 2000; San, 1996). This step ensures some outcomes like developing the skill to make evaluations, ensuring interaction, constructive criticism, leaving the drama activities in a satisfied manner, etc.

1.

1. Elements in Drama Process

1.1.The Leader: The importance of the leader is great in achieving the target of drama activities. In drama, the leader must create an environment in which the participants will feel safe. The leader must ensure that the group achieves a level that enables its participants to discover and express their feelings and thoughts in a comfortable manner with dramatic plays. A good leader is a respected, tolerant person and is a good observer that conveys reliability to its environment; and during application stage, s/he must have the necessary flexibility of making changes in the play. The leader must be familiar with the theatre science and must have a detailed knowledge on the rules of the theater. The leader must be a psychologist and a pedagogue in order to understand the psychology of the players and be helpful to them. S/he must prepare the equipment and materials to be used during the play. In addition to these, the leader must also have a high imagination and must be good at playwriting. The role of the leader is great in establishing efficient communication among group members (Aral et al., 2000; Aral et al., 2000).

1.2.The Participants: Participants are also important in drama, because one of the most important elements that constitute drama is participants. The ages, genders, interests and needs of the participants must be considered in drama. The individuals participating in drama activity must be willing and suitable to work as a group (Aral et al., 2000; Aral et al., 2000).

1.3.The Medium (The Place): The conditions of the place where drama activities are performed are important. The ground must be covered with parquet or carpet to facilitate movements like stretching or sitting. Well-lit places without noise where it is possible to work on bare feet, safe, and suitable are influential for drama works to be performed in accordance with the targets of the drama (Aral et al., 2000; Aral et al., 2000).

1.4.Materials: In drama activities, materials are not necessary. However, sometimes materials may become important in making the participants adopt their roles and feel themselves in the play. Almost any type of materials may be used in drama activities. The most important thing is the fitting of the material to the targets of the drama activity (Aral et al., 2000; Aral et al., 2000).

2. Creative Drama Method in Social Studies Education

Drama has a great importance in educational processes. It is also influential in the realization of permanent behavior change in individuals. A memorization-based traditional education prevents children from developing cognitively and learning sharing the questioning power. Drama, on the other hand, is a field on its own that develops and educates children. It is also an efficient method that develops creativity (MoNE, 1998, p. 32).

Demirel (2009) reported that the rate of remembrance and permanency in verbal-based (what is read/heard) education was 10% - 20%; and it rose to 30% in learning with visual elements; and to 90% with experience-based (by seeing/hearing/touching/saying) learning. These rates reveal that drama may be of great help in Social Studies education, which is dominated by cognitive elements (Sevda, 2013, p. 48).

As it is mentioned in Social Studies program, new approaches have emerged in educational curricula with the influence of the changes and transformations experienced in the whole world. Social Studies program has moved away from mere behavioristic approaches, and have evolved towards an approach that constructs the education in the light of active participation in life, making accurate decisions, supporting and developing problem-solving processes by caring for the existing experiences of the individual and the value of the information. With this approach, a new understanding has been adopted that is student-centered, therefore activity-centered; balancing knowledge and skills in terms of Social Studies by considering the experiences and individual differences of students to enable them interact with the environment (MoNE, 2005, p. 51).

Using drama in education will contribute in acquiring educational targets and skills in several disciplines like Mathematics, Science, Social Studies (Koç and Dikici, 2003, p. 2). When the studies conducted on drama are analyzed, it is possible to claim that there are positive developments in recent years in the field of education. However, studies conducted on Social Studies are few in number among these. In actual fact, having abstract concepts and being a multidisciplinary field make drama become important for this study field.

The drama method for social science classes is extremely suitable to activate the students from being inactive, and make them “*live and learn*”. Especially when historical events are animated, students act and feel like the people in the past, and therefore understand the cause-effect relations of the historical events (Sever, Yalçınkaya, Mazman, 2009, p. 157).

Morris (2004) reported that using dramatization method was very useful in developing the thinking skills of students in Social Studies subjects and in learning them. While students are studying the history subjects, they imagine the events in history, and in this way, feel as if they are living in old times and places. Students use structured drama to learn about past events, places and people and replace them with the characters of the past. In this way, students also develop their prediction skills for future events and their future lives (Sever, Yalçınkaya, Mazman, 2009, p. 157). With the drama method, students may acquire many experiences, skills and historical attributes they cannot otherwise learn in the traditional education method.

In Social Studies classes, students make use of creative drama methods and concretize abstract experiences. In this way, they will have the power of analyzing the events and phenom-

ena happening around them and in the whole world. In this way, contributions will be made to the development of critical thinking skills in students.

In Social Studies classes, students have the opportunity of experiencing their citizenship responsibilities, social roles and social problems with drama activities. Animating different social problems helps individuals better understand the society and the relations in it.

Values education has an important place in today's educational concept (Koçoğlu, 2014). The awareness of an individual on certain values, and adopting them and forming the personality in the light of these values occur through education. This education is called as *Values Education* (Yeşil and Aydın, 2007, p. 71). One of the basic subjects in teaching values is Social Studies classes. The values that have been planned to be taught to students in Social Studies Curriculum for 6th and 7th Grades in units have been mentioned as follows; "the family union, being fair, independence, peace, freedom, being scientific, hardworking, solidarity, sensitivity, honesty, aesthetics, tolerance, hospitality, being healthy, respect, love, responsibility, cleaning, patriotism, and helpfulness" (MoNE, 2005, p. 89). Drama method may be made use of in teaching students the above-mentioned values. The perception of students may be stimulated with drama activities.

Students may acquire the habit of taking responsibility and working together with the help of drama activities in Social Studies classes. Students may also acquire the habit of developing empathy with these activities. Drama activities also ensure that students develop in terms of individual and social skills, establish comfortable and healthy relations with others, and thus, become socialized (Kavcar, 1985, p. 37).

During Social Studies classes, using one single method may make it become boring and unproductive. Several methods may be combined and used in Social Studies classes rather than limiting the methodology with one single method. If the drama method is used in a way that will support other methods, Social Studies classes may become an attractive subject for students. Drama is an influential method to avoid that students spend boring and motionless time in classes for long hours. In this way, contributions are made to the physical and cognitive developments of students (Aydın ve Aydın, 2011).

The contribution of Social Science classes to the awareness of individuals on their feelings may become more influential when combined with this method. The individuals have the opportunity of observing and assessing the feelings and behaviors of theirs and others during the drama activity. The inclusion of the individuals in such activities increases their self-confidence. It is already known that teaching classes with drama method help develop the communication skill within groups. In this way, students may understand other people and societies starting from their social environment in historical and geographical aspects, and thus, develop their imaginations (Küçükahmet, 2001, p. 69).

For a successful drama activity, the teacher who will apply the drama activity must have the behaviors required by the method and must be trained in this field (Önder, 2009, p. 53).

Results

Social Studies field is dominated by cognitive learning method, and hosts many disciplines in it. For this reason, the process of the teaching of this field has great importance. Right at this point, the importance of the methods and techniques that will be used by the students and teachers in acquiring the knowledge is not debatable.

It is not possible to mention one single method and technique in achieving the targets of education. More than one method and technique may be used in classes. Social Studies classes are suitable for using more than one method and technique simultaneously.

Parallel to the development of modern education concept, many methods and techniques have been developed to keep students active in classes. One of these methods and techniques is the creative drama. Unlike the traditional educational concept at schools today, creative drama method allows students express themselves in classes and makes them become active throughout all steps of the learning process. Drama activity may be applied in all units of Life Sciences and Social Studies classes where abstract concepts are intense for the purpose of increasing success. Meanwhile, students may experience a situation that may be never encountered in their lives in drama activities. It may be possible to revive possible events that might be encountered in daily life. On the other hand, children may also have the opportunity of experiencing and learning situations which they cannot face in daily life with drama activities in Social Studies classes, and thus, they can develop their thinking, interpreting, perception, listening and speaking skills.

When the contents of Social Studies classes are analyzed it is seen that these contents are suitable for using the drama method in classes. For this reason, when the curriculum is being prepared, it will be more beneficial to include drama activities in classes.

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