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Action Research on Using Drama in Human Rights Education

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ABSTRACT

Human rights and democracy education is a form of education which includes furnishing individuals with social behaviors, and learning through experience should be considered as the grounds in order for it to make permanent changes and allow students to internalize human rights and democracy manners. Thus, the problem statement of the research question is as follows; "What are pre-service teachers' perceptions, opinions and interpretations on the effectiveness of using drama about human rights and democracy education in training Social Sciences pre-service teachers?" The study group of the action research consists of 69 junior students who were studying in the Department of Social Sciences Teaching during 2012-2013 academic year and who were taking Human Rights and Democracy course. Data for the study were gathered through open-ended question forms, semi-structured interviews and video recordings taken during drama activities. The data were analyzed by using content analysis and descriptive analysis methods. It was observed that human rights and democracy education could turn into social behaviors and the setting required for enabling awareness could be provided through drama activities.

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Keywords:
Human rights, human rights education, democracy education

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Introduction

Human rights education is promoted from primary school to higher education through being integrated in various courses and also through self-contained courses with its unique name. In both methods, courses fail to go beyond the understanding of theoretical transference. However, both theory without practice and practice without theory are far distant from attaining the objectives. With this respect, in this study, the theoretical basis of human rights is presented before resorting to the drama method which contributes to learning through experience within the field of application.

Human rights is both an active and also a passive principle when each human right is considered individually. In other words, it refers to the actions that people themselves need to display and actions they expect from others to display towards them. On the other hand, these principles stand as attempts to propose ethical demands for social order, legal and political matters. What is demanded with these principles is to continuously provide the general conditions required for people to realize their potentials (Kucuradi, 2008).

Human rights structures and guarantees the protection of the social conditions that individuals need in order to effectively and spiritually realize themselves. Thus, without human rights individuals cannot be expected to humanistically realize themselves, display required actions and become a part of the society. Human rights, which constitute the keystones of human identity, are the core elements of human existence and human dignity (Duben, 1994). Yet, human dignity underlines the human position among other beings. This value is due to some features that consist of its structural potentials and deems every individual worthy

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of receiving an attitude that will enable them to enhance their structural potentials. Human dignity is derived from the knowledge of historical success that people realize these structural potentials in and which provides them with their position in the universe. No matter what natural or random features a person has, or whether the individual is aware of this value or not, this knowledge requires the person to treat other people in accordance with this value. This knowledge also enables the person to become aware of the one-and-only common human identity and also that he himself is a person. As a result of their conscience and activities, people went beyond being mere biologically evolution creatures and entered into humanitarian history. Thus, unlike other beings, they became creatures who can change the world they live in and who can go beyond themselves after each step they take (Kuçuradi, 2008; Sahin, 2000).

Human rights, which have become a common discourse among many disciplines, does not embody much subjective value for many individuals. The need for human rights becomes crucial when an individual confronts impediments. In other words, the concept of human rights enters the agenda in cases where there exists no rights. Today almost all educational activities across the world have been degraded to factual grounds, thus people have been deprived of certain values. This deprivation has caused people to refrain from showing love, tolerance and understanding to each other and led to display hostile attitudes (Elkatmış, 2007; Özdek, 2000). Thus, humans assumed an intellect identified with what Alatli stated as "a man is a wolf to another man" (2011, p.834) and forgot the knowledge of his own value and avoided his natural needs such as love and brotherhood. Creating an awareness concerning human rights is without doubt closely related to the event of education.

As stated in the records of the Congress of Vienna, the aim of human rights education is to "raise awareness", "increase the awareness concerning the need to go on act to end violation of human rights across the globe". Though such an aim is crucial, it is not sufficient. This is because this education aims at promoting the desire to act in order to eliminate the results of violations but does not include the will to act so that violation of human rights will not be possible. In other words, it does not aim at promoting a desire in the individual to do actions which are determined by the demands of human rights and which are set as action principles for certain cases. Obtaining such a desire requires sharing the sense of being a human or the term defined as "human dignity". This awareness can be raised in three ways (Kuçuradi, 1999):

- This awareness can be raised initially by providing the knowledge of the value of various humanistic potentials. What is referred to by humanistic potentials is, for example Edison's discovery of the areas of usage of electricity or the potentials that led to Albert Camus to write about Plague.
- Secondly, the awareness can be raised by providing the knowledge of human rights. This knowledge is nothing but the knowledge of conditions that enable the emergence of such humanistic potentials.
- And lastly, individuals should be educated in order to be able to correctly evaluate actions, events and circumstances. For an individual to act in order to be able to protect his human rights, he needs to evaluate the situation correctly.

Because human rights and democracy education is an education which includes furnishing individuals with social behaviors (Yesil, 2004), in order for it to make permanent changes, at the same time allow students to internalize human rights and democracy manners, learning through experience should be considered as the grounds (Oktay & Unutkan, 2007). It is observed that human rights and democracy education focuses mainly on the information dimension, however it is assumed that it should concentrate on the behavior dimension and attitude-skill oriented process evaluations rather than information-oriented assessments and evaluation (Lister, 1982). On the other hand, it has been accepted that in order for human rights and democracy education to be successful open societies should be structured in classrooms, students should carry out group studies, investigative and problem solving approaches should be adopted and interests and problems of students should be taken as starting points (Hilligen, narrator: Shafer, 1987). In human rights and democracy education, where practice should predominate, which should be process oriented and which learning by experience should operate, students should work and think together in groups and should express their ideas in mutual interactions (Tibbits, 1994). In order to carry out an effective human rights and democracy education, methods in which students are given the opportunity to select, observe, think, research and examine should be adopted. Among these methods educator's advice teachers to implement activities such as discussions, narration, drama and role playing. For example, in the study "Effects of Creative Drama in the Citizenship and Human Rights Education Course on Achievement and

Student Attitudes Towards the Course" conducted by Ustundag (1997), it was stated that teaching is more effective through creative drama and that it also enables positive changes in student attitudes towards the course. In Adıguzel's (2006) study "The Concepts, Components and Stages of Creative Drama", it was underlined that learning achieved through drama creates an atmosphere for criticism and discussion by accelerating group communication and that as a result stretches beyond a cumulative learning style. In their article "An Effective Teaching Method in Social Sciences Education: Dramatization" Sever, Yalcınkaya and Mazman (2009) emphasize the significance and effects of using drama in teaching the social sciences course. However, for teachers to effectively promote students to carry out these activities they themselves need to internalize them first. Thus, the purpose of the research is to determine the perceptions, opinions and interpretations of pre-service social studies teachers on the effectiveness of drama in promoting human rights and democracy education".

Thus, the problem statement of the research is the question, "What are pre-service teacher perceptions, opinions and interpretations on the effectiveness of drama in training social studies pre-service teachers about human rights and democracy education".

Method

Research Model

The research model was planned as an action research. Action researches can be defined as long term researches in which data on a specific problem are gathered, appropriate resolution options are decided on and finally the results are evaluated. The process of the action research was carried out with the following steps (Yıldırım & Simsek, 2013):

- Deciding on the problem statement
- Determining the action research questions
- Data collection
- Literature survey
- Data analysis and comment
- Developing an action plan
- Implementing the action plan
- Analysis and evaluation of the implementation

Study Group

The study group of the research consisted of 69 junior students who were studying in the department of social studies teaching during the 2012-2013 academic period and who were taking Human Rights and Democracy course.

Data Collection Instruments

An open-ended question form was prepared in order to determine the perceptions, opinions and interpretations of students (self-efficacies, methods they prefer in education etc) about human rights education. Dramas that students performed were recorded and a visual data collection instrument was developed. A semi-structured interview form was prepared to conduct on some of the students to confirm the findings.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was conducted on the data gathered from the open-ended question forms, descriptive analysis was conducted on data from the interview form and content analysis was conducted on the data from visual recordings.

Findings

The findings were classified into two groups' namely as primary findings and secondary findings. Primary findings consist of the findings gathered from the open-ended question form which was carried out in order to determine the problem of the situation, in other words the problem statement. Secondary findings consist of the findings gathered from the action plan, which was prepared according to the problem statement resulting from primary findings.

Primary Findings and Interpretation

Data, which were gathered from the open-ended question forms of the study group, were analyzed with the content analysis method and supported with literature review and are summarize below. In order to determine the problem statement and questions of the action research and to collect data, open-ended question form was conducted on students before beginning the Human Rights and Democracy course. The questions directed to the students with the open-ended question form were categorized under three themes and presented in tables.

Table 1. Primary data gathered from the open-ended question form

Themes	Pre Service Teachers	
Having completed HRD course	Yes, I have taken this course before.	9
Participation in drama activities	No, I haven't participated in such an activity before.	3
Self-efficacy of the HRD course	I don't find it sufficient.	4

It is evident on Table 1 that although the majority of the students received Human Rights and Democracy course during primary school or at high school, they stated that they found themselves insufficient to teach this course. Students also stated that they didn't take courses which included drama activities and didn't attend to out-of-school activities which involved drama. Thus, although students have theoretic knowledge regarding the Human Rights and Democracy course, they find themselves insufficient when it comes to teaching this course. In literature reviews, Human Rights and Democracy education focuses mainly on the knowledge dimension and pushes learning through experience to the background. Thus, the problem statement of the research is the question, "What is the effectiveness of drama in training social studies pre-service teachers about Human Rights and Democracy education?" and the questions constituting the action research are "Are there any betterments in the a) opinions b) self-efficacies of pre-service teachers after implementing drama in training pre-service social studies teachers about Human Rights and Democracy education?"

Developing and Implementing the Action Plan

The problem statement was agreed upon and questions of the action plan were determined after the analysis of the primary data. The action plan was prepared in accordance with these questions and the process given below was carried out.

1. Students formed the study groups.
2. Subjects discussed under the Human Rights and Democracy course in the Primary and Higher Education curriculums were determined.
3. Each group specified which topic they were going to prepare a drama.
4. Students staged their drama when the related subject was being discussed in the Human Rights and Democracy course. Video records were taken while staging the drama.
5. At the end of the course the open-ended question form was distributed to the students and their perceptions, interpretations and opinions regarding the subject was detected and the effectiveness of drama on human rights education was determined.
6. Interviews were carried out with randomly selected 10 students in order to confirm the data gathered from the responses that students gave to the open-ended questions.
7. Open-ended question forms were subject to content analysis and interviews were subject to descriptive analysis.
8. Content analysis was conducted on the video recordings in order to determine which concepts of human rights the students were focusing on.

Secondary Findings and Interpretation (Implementation Analysis and Evaluation of the Action Plan)

In this section an evaluation was carried out by analyzing the implementation results in order to discover to what extent the problems were resolved or enhanced.

Findings Gathered from the Open-ended Question Form

After teaching Human Rights and Democracy course with drama activities, open-ended question form was distributed to the students to determine their opinions and acquisitions regarding the process.

Categories were set based on the open-ended questions and were themed by displaying positive or negative statements of students regarding the subject, these are given below.

Overall Opinions about the Drama Activities

The data gathered from student opinions regarding drama activities carried out in Human Rights and Democracy course were conceptualized and the themes were later determined according to the concepts. The data which were subject to content analysis are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Overall opinions about the drama activities

Themes	F
Enhancing the sense of empathy	2
Concretization	14
Positive process	4
Entertaining	10
Inquiring	2
Permanent	20
Effective	6
Thought-provoking	3
Learning through experience	11
Creativity	5
Increasing classroom participation	5
Unnecessary implementation	1
Waste of time	1

It is evident that the majority of the students focused on the permanence of learning, physical learning, learning through experience and entertaining learning process. Concrete experience and learning through experience constitute the core steps of Kolb Learning Model. According to Kolb, people learn through feeling (with senses) during the concrete learning stage (Oral, 2003). It has been asserted that the learning style in which drama is used is in line with the Kolb Learning Model. Students learn from personal experiences of the people around them and become more sensitive to their feelings through drama. Thus, students enable a permanent learning through both concrete experiences and also with learning through experience. Students also state that this implementation, which increases classroom participation, is a positive process which enhances their creativity. On the other hand, one student stated that it was an unnecessary implementation and one other stated that it was a waste of time. Although there were very few negative opinions regarding drama activities, the researcher became curious about the reason and directed questions to students about this during classroom discussions. The fact that there was a curriculum that had to be completed and that this activity took time was detected as the reason for these negative opinions and it was assumed that giving the lecture would save time.

Classroom Environment during Drama Activities

Table 3. Opinions on the classroom environment

Themes	F
Active classroom	3
Empathetic	4
Intriguing	14
A difficult activity	1
Giving a message	7
Good, positive	10
An educational theater hall	2
Classroom participation	16
Focusing on the subject	11
Regular	2
Distracting	2

Data gathered from student opinions on classroom environment during drama activities are given in Table 3. The majority of the students state that drama activities increase classroom participation and this is

thought to be a crucial fact the period of lessons. As Sonmez (1997) states, classroom participation refers to the student being physically, mentally and affectively included in the education environment (Narrator: Sarıtepeci, 2012). Harper and Quaye state that along with the activities the students attend to throughout the process, classroom participation also consists of the feelings and senses about the process (2009). In conclusion, that drama activities increase classroom participation is a crucial process for education and training. The majority of the students also state that it is an intriguing course and that they can focus on the subject. These features, namely an intriguing course, a course in which one can focus on the subject, have enabled an increase in classroom participation and ensured it to be a positive process.

Effects of Drama Activities on Self-efficacy

When students were asked if they found their drama activity planning skills sufficient before the drama activities, the majority of the group of 54 students responded negatively. Student opinions on their self-efficacies after the drama activities under the Human Rights and Democracy course are given in Table 4.

According to the data which were collected from the open-ended question to which students stated the positive or negative effects of drama activities on their drama activities planning skills, majority of the students asserted that drama activities have overall positive effects. They also added that their drama activity planning skills enhanced, they found themselves more efficient and gained more self-confidence regarding this subject.

Table 4. Opinions on self-efficacy

Themes	F
Positive effect	21
Self-confidence	12
Planning Skills	17
Efficiency	13
Usefulness	7
Self-improvement	8
Direct to researching	3
Improving creativity	5
Spotting the alternatives	2
Ineffective	2

According to Table 4., although drama activities are believed to have overall positive effects, to students stated that these activities have neither positive nor negative effects on their efficiencies or skills. When the other responses these two students gave to the open-ended question were examined, it was evident that they had already attended a drama course and participated in such activities and were already familiar with them.

Overall Acquisitions of Drama Activities

Students were asked to evaluate the acquisitions they gained from the process after taking the Human Rights and Democracy course along with drama activities, the data were subject to content analysis and are summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Overall acquisitions of drama activities

Themes	F
Improving social skills	29
Time management	21
Pleasureful moments	4
Self-confidence	4
Creativity	6
Improving the point of view	6
Self-control	5
Topic knowledge of HRD	28
Empathy	7

The majority of the students who participated in drama activities stated that their social skills concerning respect, listening, expressing oneself, self-control, working together had improved and that they had some knowledge about the subjects that they had to learn under the Human Rights and Democracy course. They also expressed their acquisitions concerning time management, which is a crucial factor for education and training. As Gozel and Halat (2010) asserted, when teachers use their time more productively and make successful planning, they will increase their successes and performances along with the success of their students.

Findings Gathered from Student Interviews

Interviews were carried out with 10 randomly selected volunteer students who were among the participants of the activity. Data gathered from interviews were analyzed with the descriptive analysis method and presented in Table 6.

Table 6. Findings from the interviews

Category	Themes	Pre Service Teachers
Educational effectiveness	Attaining the course acquisitions	I believe I have learnt human rights better...I learnt human rights issues better because they were presented with visual and audible means...Drama, which improves the sense of empathy, better teaches HRD course...Drama activities help the HRD course to be more instructive.
	Classroom participation	When the course is given with the classical method some students would listen and some wouldn't. But with drama activities, those who didn't started to listen and became interested in the course... I believe students at the class listens more carefully during the drama activities. It draws attention of students, it's not boring and is more effective because the student can actively participate.
	Meaningful learning.	Because the subjects are presented physically we learn more meaningful. It is more permanent then. We find ourselves in the middle of the event. We learn by experience. .. HRD course with drama has made a connection with the proximity principle of life. Students acquired meaningful and permanent knowledge through learning by experience.
Self-efficacy	Social Skills	This activity enhances self-confidence of students... They enable self-expression in front of the public with drama activities. It's an activity which promoted in-class communication... Our group working skills have improved. I believe our skills of empathy have improved... Because it require group work, it is socially beneficial for the student... Now, I can control myself...
	Planning Skills	I believe our planning skills have improved. Time is not a problem when we study in a planned way...
	Time management	We learnt how to use the time well. I saw that drama didn't take much time as I thought it would.

The question "I can resort to drama activities when I become a teacher. Because, ..." was directed to the students participating in the interviews. The data were subject to descriptive analysis and the statements are presented in Table 7.

Table 7. Findings from the interview

I can resort to drama activities when I become a teacher. Because;	It promotes permanence and creativity, increases communication... It has positive effects in comprehending the course... We learn through experience... It is a visual and audible activity which is entertaining, instructive and which eases understanding... Putting things to practice promotes permanence... It enables improving creativity and the skills of students, they entertain and learn at the same time. This helps knowledge to be permanent... It is a method which embodies concepts... I believe that this course enables student acquisitions to be permanent...

Findings Gathered from Video Records

As Kuçuradi (1999) states, in order to raise awareness in sharing what is called human dignity or sense of being a human, individuals should be provided with the knowledge of values of the human potential, knowledge of human rights and they also need to be educated to be able to judge events and situations correctly. Thus, drama activities of students (12 groups with 2 activities each) were analyzed under three main categories and are presented below.

Table 8. Findings gathered from the video records

Categories	Sub-Categories	F
Knowledge of values of the human potential	Discoveries, inventions etc.	5
Knowledge of human rights	Examples from history	10
	Modern examples	7
Judging events or situations correctly	Example cases	12

Çotuksöken believes that problems that people encounter while protecting their rights are due to the lack of knowledge concerning the individuals themselves and of the similar events around them (2010: 51). Based on this idea and Kuçuradi's statements, students were asked to be loyal to these criteria while performing drama activities. In conclusion, when video records are analyzed, it is evident that students find drama activities instructional with respect to human rights.

Discussion and Conclusion

Human rights and democracy education is an education type which includes furnishing individuals with social behaviors. Which method or methods should be adopted is a crucial matter for human rights and democracy education, which focuses on both content and the process, to reach its goals. Drama activities were implemented in human rights and democracy education throughout this study and targeted acquisitions were gained.

According to Kepenekci (1999), classroom environment is a crucial factor for the human rights education to process on a sound basis. Student statements prove the effectiveness of drama activities in creating a classroom environment which encourages participation and which enables to express and discuss ideas freely. In their work titles *Creative Drama as a New Approach to Settling Human Rights and Democracy Concepts in Police Training* Kivrak and Balci (2012) state that it is important to use techniques of creative drama during lessons in order to turn human rights and democracy culture into a lifestyle. They also add that with drama, which is a method of learning through experience, it is possible to provide students with the knowledge dimension and with the attitude and behavior dimensions of human rights and democracy education. With this respect, pre-service Social Sciences teachers, who are expected to provide human rights and democracy education under a course, were introduced with these educational methods and the expected goals were attained once they used it during their lessons.

In their article "Future Citizenship, Democracy and Human Rights Education through Creative Drama and Other Interactive Teaching Methods", Ulubey & Gozutok (2015) suggested using creative drama and other interactive methods in preparing the Citizenship and Democracy Education curriculums and aimed at training future generations as individuals who are aware of their citizenship responsibilities, who believe and defend democratic values and who benefit from their rights and freedoms. In conclusion, they underlined that using creative drama in the citizenship and democracy education course contributed to the active classroom participation of students and helped them become aware of democracy and human rights violations and also increased their commitments to democratic values.

The drama method is not only used in human rights education but also in the delivery of other courses. For example, in the study "The Effects of Creative Drama Method in the Social Studies Course in Furnishing Students with Specific Social Skills", Kaf (2000) examined whether or not there is a significant difference between the creative drama method and the traditional method in delivering various social skills and observed a better improvement in the social skills of the experimental group students than in the control

group students. In the thesis "Effects of Using Creative Drama Method in The Social Sciences Course on Attitudes, Achievement and Persistency", Sarac (2015) observed that there was a significance difference in the academic achievement levels and attitudes towards the course of the experimental group students who were subject to drama-assisted teaching method. Er (2003) conducted a study "Drama and Language Teaching: Effects of Drama on Verbal Language Teaching" and stated that the drama method is one of the most effective implementations in attaining the objectives of verbal language teaching.

With their study titled The Affect of Creative Drama in Promoting Social Skills Kara and Çam (2007) asserted that creative drama contributed to the improvement of social skills such as working and implementing with a group, initiating and sustaining a relationship and self-control skills. In this research, the majority of the students who participated in drama activities stated that their social skills concerning respect, listening, expressing oneself, self-control, working together had improved.

When international studies are considered, there are various studies concerning the application of drama in education. Findings of Papavassiliou-Alexiou & Zourna (2016)'s study "Teacher' Professional Competences: What Has Drama in Education to Offer? An Empirical Study in Greece" indicate that applying drama in education has a determinant effect on the professional development of teachers. For example, like effective communication, collaborative work and life-long learning. In the study "Learning From Participants' Responses in Educational Drama in the Teaching of Education for Sustainable Development", McNaughton (2006) made a connection between various educational terms and drama courses in sustainable development and observed that the active and participative learning promoted by drama has a crucial role in students acquiring the skills and attitudes that they require for an active citizenship. One other example study is "Critical Episodes in Student Teachers' Science Lessons Using Drama in Grades 6 and 7 conducted by Braund, Ekron and Moodley (2013). This study consists of a teaching process of specific scientific terms in similar classrooms carried out by four teachers some of whom applied the drama method and some did not. The lesson presented through the drama method was observed to have positive outcomes.

Results of this study are parallel with the studies mentioned above. In conclusion, the setting required for human rights and democracy education to turn into social behaviors and to raise an awareness was provided with drama activities -in which learning through experience is prevalent- and also pre-service social studies teachers increased their knowledge and enhanced their perspective to become qualified enough to teach this course.

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