

Research into Kindergarten Teachers' Drama Activity Planning with Respect to the Department They Graduated from and Their Length of Teaching Experience

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Abstract: This research aimed at determining whether or not the department which kindergarten teachers graduated from and their length of teaching experience caused a difference on the factors taken into account while planning a drama activity, the objectives of the drama activity (what the children will acquire) and the decisions regarding how the families will be involved in drama activities. The research group was composed of 113 voluntary teachers out of 134 teachers working in the kindergartens affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in the provincial center of Ankara. The Questionnaire Form developed by the researchers was used as the data collecting instrument. The data obtained was transferred to the SPSS programme and evaluated by means of the "Chi-Square Test". As a result of this study, it was found that whereas the department the teachers graduated from caused a statistically significant difference in the factors taken into account while planning drama activities and in the objectives of the drama activity (what the child will acquire), it did not have a significant impact on the decisions regarding how the families will be involved in the drama activities. On the other hand, the length of the teaching experience of kindergarten teachers did not cause any significant difference on the factors taken into account while planning a drama activity, the objectives of the drama activity (what the children will acquire) and the decisions regarding how the families will be involved in drama activities.

Key words: Preschool education, teacher, drama activity

INTRODUCTION

Drama activities carried out by the teachers in preschool education institutes or by the drama leaders coming from outside the institute have significant influences on children. The preschool period, when the development of children is quite fast and supported by effective and well-rounded learning environments, is of great importance in a person's whole life. Therefore, it has been accepted that children should receive preschool education. According to Oğuzkan and Oral (1983), preschool education is an educational process which covers the childhood years from birth to primary school, is appropriate for the individual characteristics and developmental levels of children at this age, provides rich and stimulating environment possibilities and guides their development in the best way, in the direction of societal traits and cultural values. According to Batak (1997), as children in this period learn by touching, seeing and experiencing, and cannot perceive of abstract concepts, it is important to prepare learning environments based on experience in order for the child to learn.

Drama is a field that uses the power of play in education. Starting from the preschool period, people have a tendency for playing throughout their lives including the adulthood. It is notable that drama has a playful characteristics and it is appropriate for creative acts and creativity processes. Owing to such properties of drama, its use in education is under consideration (Fleming, 1994; San, 1995).

When games, the most natural way of learning for children, are supported, they turn into drama which is an efficient way of learning and a form of art. Drama studies give children an opportunity of acquiring various thoughts and developing themselves; the independency, creativity, imagination and communication skills of children are supported (Wesswls, 1987; O'Neill and Lambert, 1990; Pinciotti, 1993; Aral *et al.*, 2001; Guven, 2001). Accordingly, drama activities have a prominent place in the preschool education curricula.

It has been noted that there are inadequately few pieces of research examining the use of drama activities by kindergarten teachers. Girgin (1999) conducted research on drama activities applied in preschool

education institutes. The findings of the research indicated that drama activities took place in most of the preschool education institutes and that these kinds of activities were performed as a field of art education at separate times or throughout the programme; and it was emphasized that the drama leaders definitely had to be qualified educationalists. In another study conducted by Güven (2001), it was established that the age, the educational status and the length of experience of the drama leaders and the kindergarten teacher and the number of children they worked with did not influence their opinions about drama. The research carried out by Ömeroğlu *et al.* (2004), on the other hand, investigated the points of view and the applications of the teachers working at preschool education institutes regarding creative activities and drama studies in a sampling of twenty-one provinces. The findings of the study revealed that the teachers did not have sufficient knowledge of creative activities and drama studies.

As drama is an effective way of learning, it is used in preschool education institutes by the teacher for the purposes of education. In order to incorporate drama activities into preschool education curricula and apply them, preschool teachers should be equipped with the necessary qualifications and knowledge in this field. It is thought that where teachers studied and the length of their teaching experience are two influencing factors on their knowledge and experience in the field of drama. For this reason, this research aimed at determining whether or not the department which kindergarten teachers graduated from and their length of teaching experience caused a difference on the factors taken into account while planning a drama activity, the objectives of the drama activity (what the children will acquire) and the status of family involvement in drama activities.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research group: The research group was composed of one-hundred and thirteen voluntary teachers out of one-hundred and thirty-four teachers working in the kindergartens affiliated to the Ministry of National Education in the provincial center of Ankara.

Instrument of measurement: To assess the drama activity planning status of the teachers, a Questionnaire Form developed by the researchers was used. The Questionnaire Form involved questions about the demographic information and drama activity planning status of the kindergarten teachers. In order to determine the validity of the measurement, after the questionnaire had been designed, it was presented to seven experts,

who were child development and education experts, preschool teachers and drama teachers, to receive their opinions. The experts were asked to explain their views on the survey questions and the questionnaire was rearranged according to the feedback received from them.

Procedure: The researchers explained to the teachers that the questionnaire aimed at determining the drama activity planning status of teachers at a meeting held by the administrators, during which the researchers did not give any questionnaire forms to the teachers who were not present there or who did not want to participate in the research, but distributed the questionnaires to the teachers volunteering to participate in the research and informed them about how to fill in the forms correctly. The data collecting process was completed upon gathering together the questionnaires filled in by the teachers.

Analysis of the data: In this research, whether or not the department which kindergarten teachers graduated from and their length of teaching experience caused a difference on the factors taken into account while planning a drama activity, the objectives of the drama activity (what the children will acquire) and the status of family involvement in drama activities was examined by using the Chi-Square Test (Buyukozturk, 2002).

RESULTS

The results of this research which was conducted to determine the effects of the department the teachers graduated from and their length of teaching experience on drama activity planning are presented below.

According to Table 1, when planning drama activities, the developmental characteristics of the child were taken into consideration by 43.3, 26.8, 16.5 and 13.4% of the department of child education and preschool teaching graduates, the department of preschool teaching graduates, the department of child development and education and the graduates of other fields, respectively. As can be seen from these results, the teachers who graduated from the department of child development and preschool teaching are far more careful about the developmental characteristics of children when planning drama activities, compared to the graduates of the other departments. The Chi-Square Test which was applied to find out whether or not these results were statistically significantly different from each other showed that the difference was significant ($\chi^2 (3, N=97) = 8.198, p \leq 0.05$). The Chi-Square Test results further indicated that the department which the teacher graduated from did not cause any significant difference on the following factors

Table 1: The distributions and the chi-square test results regarding the factors taken into account while planning drama activities, as per the department the kindergarten teachers in the research graduated from

The factors taken into account While planning Drama activities	Frequency/ %	Department the teacher graduated from				Total	Chi-square Test
		Preschool teaching	Child development and education	Child development and preschool teaching	Other		
Children's development period characteristics	Frequency	26	16	42	13	97	$\chi^2=8.198$
	Row%	26.8	16.5	43.3	13.4	100	sd=3
	Column%	96.3	69.6	89.4	81.3	85.8	p=.042*
Interests of children	Frequency	22	16	40	14	92	$\chi^2=2.949$
	Row%	23.9	17.4	43.5	15.2	100	sd=3
	Column%	81.5	69.6	85.1	87.5	81.4	p=.399
Needs of children	Frequency	21	14	31	11	77	$\chi^2=1.821$
	Row%	27.3	18.2	40.3	14.3	100	sd=3
	Column%	77.8	60.9	66	68.8	68.1	p=.610
Individual differences between children	Frequency	18	11	25	13	67	$\chi^2=5.782$
	Row%	26.9	16.4	37.3	19.4	100	sd=3
	Column%	66.7	47.8	53.2	81.3	59.3	p=.123
Physical conditions of the school	Frequency	10	8	21	7	46	$\chi^2=.854$
	Row%	21.7	17.4	45.7	15.2	100	sd=3
	Column%	37	34.8	44.7	43.8	40.7	p=.837
Materials available at school	Frequency	10	7	19	7	43	$\chi^2=.911$
	Row%	23.3	16.3	44.2	16.3	100	sd=3
	Column%	37	30.4	40.4	43.8	38.1	p=.823
The properties of the region where the school is located	Frequency	5	5	11	5	26	$\chi^2=.327$
	Row%	19.2	19.2	42.4	19.2	100	sd=3
	Column%	18.5	21.7	23.4	25	22.1	p=.955

* $p \leq 0.05$

when planning drama activities: interests of children, needs of children, individual differences between children, physical conditions of the school, materials available at school and the properties of the region where the school is located.

An examination of the Chi-Square Test results regarding the objectives of drama activities (what the child will acquire) when planning drama activities according to the department they graduated from show that departments graduated caused a statistically significant difference in the objective of children's acquiring experience in various events ($\chi^2 (3, N=73) = 13.447, p \leq 0.05$). Forty nine percent of the child development and preschool teaching graduates, 27.4% of the preschool teaching graduates, 12.3 % of the graduates of other fields and 11% of the child development and education graduates aimed at children's acquiring experience in various events. It was found that the department that the teachers graduated from was influential on supporting children's cognitive development ($\chi^2 (3, N=66) = 13.436, p \leq 0.05$) at the following rates: 47% of the child development and preschool teaching graduates, 31.8% of the preschool teaching graduates, 11% of the child development and education graduates and 9.1% of the graduates of other fields. It was found that the department the teachers graduated from was influential on supporting children's psychomotor development ($\chi^2 (3, N=59) = 8.162, p \leq 0.05$) at the following rates: 40.7% of the child development and preschool teaching graduates, 33.9% of the preschool

teaching graduates, 15.3% of the child development and education graduates and 10.2% of the graduates of other fields. As a result of the Chi-Square Test, it was determined that the department that the teachers graduated from caused a statistically significant difference in the development of the sense of responsibility ($\chi^2 (3, N=65) = 10.514, p \leq 0.05$) and the development of the senses of cooperation, solidarity and sharing ($\chi^2 (3, N=81) = 9.778, p \leq .05$) in children, while planning drama activities. 36.9% of the child development and preschool teaching graduates, 35.4% of the preschool teaching graduates, 16.9% of the child development and education graduates and 10.8% of the graduates of other fields aimed at developing the sense of responsibility in children. When the proportions of the teachers who aimed at developing the senses of cooperation, solidarity and sharing in children is examined, the rates are as follows: 34.6% of the child development and preschool teaching graduates, 29.6% of the preschool teaching graduates, 18.5% of the child development and education graduates and 17.3% of the graduates of other fields. It is notable that among the objectives of planning drama activities, taking into consideration what the child will acquire from the activity, the following objectives were those marked at a highest rate by the teachers who were the graduates of the department of child development and preschool education: ensuring children's acquiring experience in various events, their cognitive and psychomotor development, their development of the senses of responsibility, cooperation, solidarity and sharing. As a

Table 2: The distributions and the chi-square test results regarding the factors taken into account while planning drama activities, as per the length of teaching experience of the kindergarten teachers in the research

The factors taken into Account while planning Drama activities		Length of teaching experience			Chi-square test
		0-10 years	11 years and more	Total	
Children's development period characteristics	Frequency	54	41	95	$\chi^2=.023$
	Row%	56.8	43.2	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	84.4	87.2	85.6	p=.881
Interests of children	Frequency	53	37	90	$\chi^2=.089$
	Row%	58.9	41.1	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	82.8	78.7	81.1	p=.766
Needs of children	Frequency	45	31	76	$\chi^2=.079$
	Row%	59.2	40.8	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	70.3	66.0	68.5	p=.779
Individual differences between children	Frequency	42	24	66	$\chi^2=1.818$
	Row%	63.6	36.4	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	65.6	51.1	59.5	p=.178
Physical conditions of the school	Frequency	26	18	44	$\chi^2=.003$
	Row%	59.1	40.9	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	40.6	38.3	39.6	p=.959
Materials available at school	Frequency	23	18	41	$\chi^2=.093$
	Row%	56.1	43.9	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	35.9	38.3	36.9	p=.956
The properties of the region where the school is located	Frequency	12	12	24	$\chi^2=.390$
	Row%	50.0	50.0	100.0	sd=1
	Column%	18.8	25.5	21.6	p=.532

result of the Chi-Square Test, it was determined that the department graduated from did not have an impact on ensuring that children can express themselves, getting hold of the group dynamic, ensuring that children learn about themselves and others, supporting their social and emotional development, supporting their creativity and developing their self-confidence while planning drama activities.

It was found that the department the teachers graduated from did not have an effect on the status of involving families in drama activities ($\chi^2(3, N=104)=2.312$, $p>.05$). There are not any differences between the graduates of preschool teaching, child development and education, child development and preschool teaching departments and graduates of other fields in terms of the status of involving families in drama education. In other words, all teachers have families participate in drama activities at similar percentages although they graduated from different departments.

As can be seen in Table 2, the length of the teaching experience of the teachers did not cause any statistically significant difference on the following factors when planning drama activities: the developmental characteristics, interests, needs or individual differences of children, physical conditions of the school, materials available at school and the properties of the region where the school is located. Whether the length of experience of teachers is long or short does not influence the factors they take into account when planning drama activities.

An examination of the Chi-Square Test results regarding the objectives of drama activities (what the child will acquire) when planning drama activities

according to the length of teaching experience show that the length of experience did not cause a statistically significant difference on different objectives. That is to say, however long the experience of the teacher is, there are not any differences between their objectives of what the child will gain from the activity.

It was determined that the length of teaching experience did not have an effect on the status of involving families in drama activities ($\chi^2(1, N=102)=.347$, $p>.05$). Teachers have families participate in drama activities regardless of their length of teaching experience.

DISCUSSION

As a result of the research, it was determined that while the department which the teacher graduated from was influential on their taking into account the developmental characteristics of children, it did not cause any significant difference on the following factors when planning drama activities: interests of children, needs of children, individual differences between children, physical conditions of the school, materials available at school and the properties of the region where the school is located. It was found that the properties of the developmental period of the child are taken care of most by the graduates of the department of child development and preschool teaching. Furthermore, it was determined that the major subject of study at college affected the objectives of drama activities significantly. It is notable that among the objectives of planning drama activities, taking into consideration what the child will acquire from the activity, the following objectives were those marked at a highest

rate by the teachers who were the graduates of the department of child development and preschool education: ensuring children's acquiring experience in various events, their cognitive and psychomotor development, their development of the senses of responsibility, cooperation, solidarity and sharing. This ratio is followed by the graduates of the department of preschool teaching.

The departments of child development and preschool teaching have been providing education within the vocational education faculties for many years. The preschool teaching departments, on the other hand, started providing education affiliated with the faculties of education in 1998. As Gürkan (2005) also established, these departments encounter problems such as the inadequate number of teaching staff, and hence, overloaded teaching hours for them. As a matter of fact, in many preschool teaching departments, teaching staff from outside the field give some of the lessons. In this sense, their status is not as advantageous as that of the departments of child development and preschool teaching.

The teachers who graduated from preschool education departments, on the other hand, were more careful about children's developmental characteristics in planning drama activities, compared to the teachers who graduated from the child development and preschool education and other departments. The teachers who study in the department of preschool education take lessons in the direction of becoming a preschool teacher during their education process and they are continuously reminded that they will be working as preschool teachers when they graduate. However, the graduates of the child development and education departments can work at a preschool as well as working as a teacher at girls' vocational schools or as child development and education experts in various institutes. During the course of their education process, the graduates of this department also focus on different subjects such as special education or the education of ill children. This might have affected the finding that the graduates of child development and education departments did not take into consideration the developmental characteristics of children when planning drama activities as much as the graduates of the departments of preschool teaching or those of child development and preschool teaching did. Moreover, due to the same reasons, the graduates of the departments of preschool teaching or those of child development and preschool teaching may have aimed at children's acquiring various experiences, supporting the development of cognitive and psychomotor skills and developing their senses of responsibility, cooperation,

solidarity and sharing - more than the graduates of other departments. As the other departments are from outside the field and irrelevant to child development, the teachers from such departments may not have taken care of the developmental characteristics of children as much as the others.

The research findings show that there is not a significant relationship between the department the teachers graduated from and the status of involving families in drama activities. The family participation is accepted by the teachers regardless of the department they graduated from. According to Gürşimşek *et al.*, (2002), the family environment is the basic institute where the well-rounded development of the child takes place starting from the moment he is born. For this reason, the importance attached to family participation in drama activities by any department's graduates can be evaluated as positive.

When the findings are investigated, it can be seen that the length of teaching experience of the teachers does not have an impact on the factors to be taken into account while planning drama activities. In recent years, drama lessons have been added in the curriculums of the departments training teachers in the field of preschool education, and this has given the newly starting teachers the opportunity of gaining drama knowledge. Meanwhile, as the importance attached to drama in education increased, the experienced teachers were also given the opportunity of getting drama education through in-service training courses arranged by the Ministry of National Education. For this reason, teachers may be taking care of similar topics regardless of their length of experience when planning drama activities. In Güven's study, it was also determined that the length of teaching experience did not have an impact on the drama activity planning status of kindergarten teachers (Güven, 2001).

The research results indicate that the length of experience of teachers is not effective on the objectives of drama activities in terms of what the child would gain out of the activity. In the study that (Güven, 2001) conducted on the views of kindergarten teachers on drama activities, no relation was found between the behaviour that teachers wanted the children to acquire and the length of experience of the teachers.

Another result that was achieved was that there was no relationship between the length of the teaching experience of kindergarten teachers and their status of involving the families in the activities. They all get the families participate in the activities regardless of their length of experience. When the importance of family involvement studies is considered, it can be asserted that this is a desirable and expected result. In recent years, topics about the family involvement are taking more and

more place in the undergraduate programmes training teachers for preschool education and the views in this direction are increasing, which explains the situation. Oktay (2004) established that the role of the family is significant in preschool education and that families' perceiving of themselves as an important component of the programme will have a positive influence on children. Therefore, ensuring family involvement in preschool education is considered important.

RECOMMENDATION

Some recommendations have been made paying attention to the results of the research:

- Teachers need to have the necessary skills and knowledge in order to apply drama activities in the preschool period. For this reason, drama lessons should be given adequate care in the institutes where teachers are trained. In-service training courses for teachers should be arranged.
- In order to eliminate the shortages of the teachers on the subjects that they are inadequate, cooperation with the institutes that are in an effort of making drama widespread should be established, and meetings and applied workshops with experts should be held.
- Teachers should make space for the family involvement in drama activities, ensuring that parents feel as part of the education and also providing an opportunity for the child to play with his parents.
- This research was conducted on the teachers who work in the kindergartens affiliated to the Ministry of National Education. Similar research can be carried out among the teachers working in the kindergartens within primary schools and the teachers working at private nursery schools.

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