

The role of theatre in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents in the era of digitalisation

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Abstract

The purpose of this research is to get the opinions of teachers in order to determine the role of creative drama in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents in the age of digitalisation. The research was carried out in the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. The participant group of the research consists of 40 teachers who teach in various primary, secondary and high schools in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the 2021–2022 academic year. The data collection tool of the research is the semi-structured interview form developed by the researchers. As a result of the research, the vast majority of teachers stated that they benefited from creative drama activities and digital creative drama activities several times in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents. The majority of the teachers participating in the research stated that they found themselves somewhat inadequate regarding the use of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents. Teachers participating in the research categorised the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents as practical, learning situations and assessment-oriented advantages. In-service training programmes should be organised to improve this situation, since teachers benefit from creative drama activities and digital creative drama activities several times in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents and find themselves a bit inadequate.

Keywords: Creative drama, spiritual and moral education, teacher opinions;

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1. Introduction

Computer technology and the Internet have added new layers of reality to the world, resulting in different perceptions and perspectives (Uzunboylu & Tuncay, 2010). The reasons such as the disappearance of the distance problem with Internet networks, fast and versatile data exchange with multimedia have enabled the shift of fields and sectors into the digital environment (Ong, Chou, Yang, & Lin, 2020). People's daily lifestyles and spaces have also been adapted to the digital environment. Theatre and creative drama could not remain independent of new developments and took their share from digitalisation. Digital expansions in the art of creative drama have changed the building blocks and some balances of the theatre.

1.1. Theoretical and conceptual framework

Technological advances have made great changes in all areas of life, as well as making great impacts on the art of theatre and creative drama. The main purpose in the use of theatre and creative drama is to put oneself in someone else's place and to get to know oneself and his environment better. Modern educators also say that the child learns best by living and playing. While the child learns by playing and experiencing, he also realises his mental development (Kuyumcu, 2012).

We think that it is possible to direct students to creative drama activities in educational institutions so that they can gain self-confidence, put forward productive and creative ideas, communicate more positively with others in the society they live in, approach others tolerantly and create a democratic and tolerant society (Aykaç, 2013) because creative drama, as a concept, is a method, a technique and a method that can be used to internalise many sub-skills (Jindal-Snape, Vettraino, Lowson, & McDuff, 2011). The use of drama in education as a method allows modern people to organise social relationships, to know themselves, to produce and to display their existence (Ormanci & Fatma, 2010). Events and situations and the connections between them can be learned easily through creative drama. From a sociological perspective, individuals will be able to have more in-depth knowledge not only about themselves, but also about the past, present and future of the society they live in, and also about humanity (Hendrix, Eick, & Shannon, 2012).

Drama activities in preschool education can contribute to both the basic development areas and religious education of the child and provide an opportunity for the transfer of national culture, depending on the content of the story, fairy tale or fable to be chosen for drama, and the personal skills of the educator (Toivanen, Komulainen, & Ruismäki, 2011). There is a need for educational programmes enriched with course content that children can learn by having fun and internalise by experiencing life themselves. Here, drama is an important technique for gaining children the desired behaviours, skills and attitudes (Svabova, 2017).

In an age that is intertwined with technology, increasing the use of technology in educational environments and integrating technology into various learning and teaching processes will be an important way to raise the individual in need of the age. Today, it is accepted that a learning process enriched with technology will encourage students to think creatively and critically, improve their problem-solving skills and turn them into individuals who can communicate better and learn collaboratively (Valtonen et al., 2015).

1.2. Related research

Numerous studies reveal the importance of drama in education. These studies have generally been conducted on issues such as the effects of drama on children, its contribution to their development, teachers' competencies, opinions, perceptions and attitudes about drama. The importance of drama in education has been better understood as a result of these studies (Fleming, Merrell, & Tymms, 2004; Hui & Lau, 2006; Veach & Gladding, 2006).

Aktepe and Tahiroglu (2016) stated that in order for value education to be successful, the teacher should make the process fun by giving importance to the process rather than the result while implementing the activities in the value education process and play, skit, drama, music, film, theatre

etc. They stated that they should do activities. Killeavy (2005, p. 72) found that primary school teachers found imaginative creative activities, such as creative drama and role-playing, very useful for the development of values, and they used drama, role-playing, discussion and storytelling activities in value teaching.

Stephenson (2005), in his research, determined the opinions of teachers about which methods can teach values better and concluded that the methods of discussion, small group work, projects and drama are seen as the most effective methods by teachers. In his study, Zengin (2014) aimed to determine the effect of using the creative drama method on the values in the primary school fourth-grade social studies curriculum. It has been determined that children participating in activities blended with creative drama are an important means of gaining values, such as tolerance, respect for feelings and thoughts. Gocmen (2019) stated that the use of drama in the moral education of preschool children provides them with the opportunity to learn moral values by doing and living. In this respect, it is important to use drama as a technique in moral education and to develop new ideas on this subject.

One of the few studies examining the connection between drama and moral education was carried out by Gervais (2006). The main purpose of the study, in which the process drama approach is used, is to discover the moral values of the students, to raise awareness in them and to provide them with conflict management skills. In the study in which first-year high school students participated, the students examined their values about family, friendship and matters that they personally attach importance during the drama process. According to the findings, the researcher states that dramatic practices focused on personal stories are a tool that can be used effectively to improve students' moral values. In Batdı and Batdı's (2015) meta-analysis, in which a total of 40 studies investigating the effect of creative drama on success between 2000 and 2014 were examined, it was determined that creative drama had a significant and positive effect on students' academic achievement. They also stated that a wide variety of skills and values develop in students.

1.3. Purpose of the research

The purpose of this research is to take the opinions of teachers in order to determine the role of creative drama in the moral and moral education of children and adolescents in the age of digitalisation. In this direction, the following sub-objectives have been determined:

1. What are the opinions of teachers about the use of creative drama activities in spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?
2. What are the teachers' views on the use of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?
3. What are the views of teachers on the competence of benefiting from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?
4. What are the teachers' views on the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?

2. Method and materials

2.1. Research method

The research was carried out in the phenomenology pattern, one of the qualitative research methods. Phenomenology is a qualitative research method that allows people to express their understanding, feelings, perspectives and perceptions about a particular phenomenon or concept and is used to describe how they experience this phenomenon (Rose, Beeby, & Parker, 1995). Although qualitative research is a cyclical process, it is thought that qualitative research takes place in the scientific method process with the common stages required by every research. In this respect, in a qualitative research process, the first step in general is to determine the problem related to the gap or deficiency in the literature after creating a subject and a basic research area. In the next stages, the

researcher examines the literature on the problem, asks questions, generates data and then analyses them and writes his report. However, in addition to this general process, since there is a flexible approach in qualitative research, it can be reshaped again and again according to new situations and analyses encountered in the research process. However, in general, all qualitative methods basically go through these stages (Tomaszewski, Zarestky, & Gonzalez, 2020). In this direction, this research was carried out in accordance with the qualitative research method and phenomenology pattern.

2.2. Participants

The participant group of the research consists of teachers who teach in various primary, secondary and high schools in Almaty, Kazakhstan, in the 2021–2022 academic year. Teachers agreed to participate in the research voluntarily. The study group participating in the research was selected by simple random sampling method. In random sampling, also called simple random sampling, every possible combination of elements in the universe has an equal probability of being included in the sample. In order for this method to be used, the information about the problems addressed must be homogeneous (homogeneous) according to the universe. The simple random sampling method is useful when a good sampling frame is available and the population is geographically concentrated in a particular region (Bryman, 2007). Demographic characteristics of teacher candidates participating in the research are given in Table 1.

Table 1

Demographic Characteristics of Teachers

Gender	F	%
Female	16	40
Male	24	60
Sum	40	100
Experience		
1–5 years	7	17.5
6–10 years	9	22.5
11–15 years	11	27.5
16 years and above	13	32.5
Sum	40	100
Teaching level		
Primary school	14	35
Secondary school	10	25
High school	16	40
Sum	40	100

In Table 1, the demographic characteristics of the teachers participating in the research are given. 40% of the teachers are female and 60% are male. 17.5% of the teachers have 1–5 years, 22.5% have 6–10 years, 27.5% have 11–15 years and 32.5% have 16 years or more experience. 35% of the teachers work in primary school, 25% in secondary school and 40% in high school. A total of 40 teachers participated in the research.

2.3. Data collection tools

Before developing the data collection tool to be used in the research, a literature review was conducted. Then, a semi-structured interview form was created by the researchers in order to get the opinions of the teachers participating in the research. The semi-structured interview form was sent to two academicians to get their opinions. As a result of the corrections made in line with the opinions of the academicians, the final form of the form was created. The semi-structured interview form used in the research is given in Appendix.

2.4. Data collection process

The collection of research data took place during face-to-face interviews with teachers. The interviews were conducted one-on-one in the schools where the teachers work, in a suitable environment where the interviews could be conducted. After giving detailed information about the content and importance of the research to each of the teachers, they were asked to answer the questions in the semi-structured interview form. It took approximately half an hour for each teacher to answer all the questions on the form. All interviews took 6 weeks to complete.

2.5. Data collection analysis

Data analysis in qualitative research includes preparing the data for analysis, coding the data, bringing the codes together and reducing them to themes and finally presenting the data in figures, tables or a discussion. These stages are a general process used by all researchers and constitute a general template for qualitative researchers. The general stages of phenomenological data analysis are preparation of data (bracketing/bracketing), phenomenological reduction of data (cascading and phenomenological reduction/reduction), creative variation (imaginary variation) and revealing the essence of experience (synthesis of meaning and essences) (Kleiman, 2004). In this direction, the answers given by the teachers participating in the research to the questions in the semi-structured interview form were transformed into findings, considering the qualitative research method and phenomenology approach.

3. Results

In Table 2, the opinions of the teachers participating in the research on the use of creative drama activities in spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are evaluated.

Table 2

Opinions of Teachers on the Use of Creative Drama Activities in Spiritual and Moral Education of Children and Adolescents

Teachers' opinions	F	%
I always took advantage	4	10
I have used many times	7	17.5
I have used several times	21	52.5
I never took advantage	8	20
Toplam	40	100

In Table 2, the views of the teachers participating in the research on the use of creative drama activities in spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are categorised. 10% of the teachers stated that they always benefited from creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents, 17.5% of them used it many times, 52.5% of them used it a few times and 20% of them never used it.

In Table 3, the views of the teachers participating in the research on the use of digital creative drama activities in spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are evaluated.

Table 3

Opinions of Teachers on the Use of Digital Creative Drama Activities in Spiritual and Moral Education of Children and Adolescents

Teachers' opinions	F	%
I always took advantage	-	-
I have used many times	1	2.5
I have used several times	30	75
I never took advantage	9	22.5
Sum	40	100

In Table 3, the views of the teachers participating in the research on the use of digital creative drama activities in spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are categorised. 2.5% of the teachers stated that they benefited from creative drama activities many times in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents, 75% of them used it a few times and 22.5% of them never used it. Among the teachers participating in the research, it was seen that there was no teacher who stated that they always benefited from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents.

In Table 4, the opinions of the teachers participating in the research on the competence of benefiting from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are evaluated.

Table 4

Opinions of Teachers on Their Ability to Benefit from Digital Creative Drama Activities in the Spiritual and Moral education of Children and Adolescents

Teachers' opinions	F	%
Very enough	-	-
Sufficient	7	17,5
A little insufficient	22	55
Very inadequate	11	27.5
Sum	40	100

In Table 4, the views of the teachers participating in the research on the competence of benefiting from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are categorised. 17.5% of the teachers found themselves sufficient in benefiting from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents, 55% found themselves somewhat inadequate and 27.5% very inadequate. Among the teachers participating in the research, it was determined that there were no teachers who found their competence to benefit from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents very sufficient.

In Table 5, the views of the teachers participating in the research on the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents were evaluated.

Table 5

Opinions of Teachers on the Advantages of Digital Creative Drama Activities in the Spiritual and Moral Education of Children and Adolescents

Category	Subcategory	F	%
Application advantages	Integration of technology and drama		
	A fun practice environment	32	80
	Flexibility of the learning environment		
Advantages for learning situations	Experience-based learning		
	Technology-based learning		
	Social learning	21	52.5
	Collaborative learning		
	Learning without realising it		
Advantages for evaluation	Ability to make individual assessment		
	Ability to make group assessment	14	35
	Ability to observe		
	Process evaluation opportunity		

In Table 5, the views of the teachers participating in the research on the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents are categorised. Teachers discussed these advantages in three categories: advantages for practice, advantages for learning situations and advantages for assessment. The advantages for practice were discussed by the teachers from three different perspectives: the integration of technology and drama, a fun practice environment and the flexibility of the learning environment. Advantages of learning situations are discussed in five areas: learning based on experiences, technology-based learning, social learning, cooperative learning and learning without realising it. The advantages for evaluation were evaluated by the teachers in four areas: individual evaluation, group evaluation, observation and process evaluation. 80% of the teachers stated that digital creative drama activities have practical

advantages in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents, 52.5% stated that they have advantages for learning situations and 35% have advantages for evaluation.

4. Discussion

The majority of the teachers participating in the research stated that they benefited from creative drama activities and digital creative drama activities several times in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents. Basci and Gundogdu (2011) state that the effectiveness of drama education and the teachers' ability to use drama and creative drama as a technique and method in their classrooms in their professional lives is directly proportional to the positive attitudes of the teacher candidates who receive this training towards the creative drama course.

The majority of the teachers participating in the research stated that they found themselves somewhat inadequate regarding the use of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents. Maden (2010), in his study on teachers, determined that teachers' self-efficacy in using the creative drama method in education was generally at the level of 'moderately agree'.

Teachers participating in the research categorised the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents as practical, learning situations and assessment-oriented advantages. Advantages for practice by teachers were categorised as integration of technology and drama, a fun practice environment and flexibility of the learning environment. Advantages for learning situations were categorised as experience-based learning, technology-based learning, social learning, cooperative learning and unconscious learning. The learners stated the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents for evaluation as individual evaluation, group evaluation, observation opportunity and process evaluation opportunity.

In some studies conducted in the field, positive perceptions regarding the effective use of drama in education were emphasised (Freeman, Sullivan, & Fulton, 2003; Morris, 2001; Turner et al., 2004). Kaya, Gunay, and Aydin (2016) tried to find out the effect of drama method in values education on increasing students' awareness of values. As a result of the study, they revealed that the lessons taught with the drama method are more effective in both raising awareness and creating behaviour change. For this reason, they recommended creative drama as a method for teachers in values education. In a study by Sextou (2002), it was determined that teachers in Greece think that drama activities are appropriate in primary education and they seek support from different segments (drama experts, universities etc.) in this regard.

4. Conclusion

The digital world we live in offers us much broader opportunities in terms of technology compared to the past. Today, where digital tools are frequently used in education, creative drama activities are seen as a rehearsal of daily life for children and adolescents. Spiritual and moral education is at the forefront of the education to be given to reintegrate children and adolescents into society. For this reason, it is important that the spiritual and moral education that will be given to children and young people by using digital opportunities is given through digital drama activities. Accordingly, the aim of this research is to take the opinions of teachers in order to determine the role of theatre (creative drama) in the moral and moral education of children and adolescents in the age of digitalisation. As a result of the research, the vast majority of teachers stated that they benefited from creative drama activities and digital creative drama activities several times in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents. The majority of the teachers participating in the research stated that they found themselves somewhat inadequate regarding the use of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents. Teachers participating in the research categorised the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents as practical, learning situations and assessment-oriented advantages. Advantages for practice by teachers were categorised as integration of technology and drama, a fun

practice environment and flexibility of the learning environment. Advantages for learning situations were categorised as experience-based learning, technology-based learning, social learning, cooperative learning and unconscious learning. The learners stated the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents for evaluation as individual evaluation, group evaluation, observation opportunity and process evaluation opportunity.

6. Recommendations

In line with the results obtained from the research, the following recommendations were developed:

1. Implementation plans using the creative drama method should be developed, since children and adolescents acquire more permanent learning as a result of the implementation of spiritual and moral education with the drama method.
2. Since teachers benefit from creative drama activities and digital creative drama activities several times in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents, in-service training programmes should be organised to improve this situation.
3. Considering that teachers find themselves somewhat inadequate regarding the use of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents, training programmes for teachers should be established in schools.

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APPENDIX

Semi-Structured Interview Form

DESCRIPTION: Dear Teachers, the purpose of this research is to take the opinions of teachers in order to determine the role of theatre (creative drama) in the moral and moral education of children and adolescents in the age of digitalisation.

For questions 1 and 2, put an (X) where you see fit. In questions 3 and 4, give your opinion. While answering the questions, your sincerity and patience are important to reveal the current situation. Therefore, please do not leave any questions unanswered. I would like to thank you for your interest and contribution, I present my respects.

Demographic Information

Gender:

Experience:

Teaching level:

Questions

1. What are your views on how you benefit from creative drama activities in the moral and moral education of children and adolescents?

I have not always benefited () I have benefited many times ()

I have used it a few times () I have never used it ()

2. What are your views on your use of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?

I have not always benefited () I have benefited many times ()

I have used it a few times () I have never used it ()

3. What are your views on your ability to benefit from digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?

Very sufficient () Sufficient ()

Slightly insufficient () Very insufficient ()

4. What are your views on the advantages of digital creative drama activities in the spiritual and moral education of children and adolescents?

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