

Creative Drama Course in College of Education: A Study of Content Analysis**Ayhan Dikici**

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Abstract

Drama at primary teaching course is given as a compulsory course to students enrolling department of the primary teaching in college of education in Turkey. In drama, assessment is problematic as the content of the lesson often deviates from the plan because of spontaneous input from the students and on-the-spot changes in direction by the instructors. This paper is present an assessment model for the creative drama at education. The research was carried out with 213 teacher candidates enrolling drama at primary teaching course. One group pre-test and post-test models were formed in the research. The candidates were required to write letters to one of their friends on the creative drama in the first week of the program. The program lasted 14 weeks and at the end of it candidates were required to write letters as the post-tests. By analyzing the letters with content analysis method, main themes and sub-themes were formed. The increase between pre-test and post-test frequencies in the way of using themes in the letters were found. The correlation among main themes was investigated. It was seen that the students using concepts correctly in written letters as the post-tests.

Introduction*What is the Creative Drama?*

Creative drama (CD) is defined by the American Alliance of Theatre and Education (AATE) as “an improvisational, nonexhibitional, process-centred form of imagine, enact and reflect upon human experiences” (Waldschmidt, 1996). San (1996) describes creative drama as “spontaneous actions formed by participants with their own freedom without an organized or a ready text. Beginning with an imaginary situation, the play and characters are planned by the group and performed with spontaneous action and dialogue.” Activities in drama have holistic in nature, requiring participants to represent externally what takes place internally (Schattner & Courtney, 1981). The combination of internal reflection and external representation is inclusive of cognitive, affective and aesthetic. Burton (1981) describes drama as a total activity, concerned with the inner self and surroundings, the physical and the mental self, the individual and the community and the human situation and potential (Quote: Freeman, Sullivan, & Fulton, 2003).

Relationship between Creative Drama and Theatre

CD has a part in the natural play of children and formal theatre. CD activities and experiences give illusionary situation in children’s symbolic play, but they are not as formalized as theatre. CD comprises the use of imagination and improvisation to develop

communication skills, creativity, social awareness, empathy, positive self-concept and social skills.

Benefits of Creative Drama

The long-term benefits of creative drama are also stimulate imaginative and creative thinking, provide opportunities for social cooperation, require active participation, help release emotions appropriately, develop problem solving skills. Besides, CD is enjoyable (Pinciotti, 1993; Jahanian, 1997; Freeman et al., 2003). In addition to, keeping them active through physical movement helps them remember what they are learning (Jensen, Rechis, & Luna, 2002).

CD refers to the use of drama techniques to support learning in the classroom. Via curriculum and use CD activities, students indeed do experience as well as social gains (Bailey, 1987). By means of motion and interaction, discussion, discovering and cooperating CD presents to students various types of learning such as social, emotional, concept and active learning all together depending on experience. CD activities are directly related to multiple intelligence and emotional intelligence. CD activities are also related to individual differences. CD necessitates active participation in the process of students in order to obtain the cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning.

Teacher's or CD Leader's Job

According to Jackson (1997), a teacher's job is to facilitate learners' acquisition of knowledge by providing lessons and experiences in which learners can make those important links between past knowledge and new information. Besides, the teacher facilitates learning by creating a stimulator learning environment for students, asking questions to the students that led them to think critically, and allowing students to investigate, explore, and the concepts questions that they are trying to learn. In most subjects, CD is a tool which can be used to facilitate the construction of knowledge

CD has leader or teacher as a key person who encourages and stimulates dramatic learning. In process of drama, the drama leader is a person who moves first, act and evaluate. The teachers guide in drama activities and encourage dramatic learning their students. As stated by Bulton, a teacher cannot guarantee specific meanings which will be generated by the participants in a drama session, but the teacher should be aware of the students' potential in every situation (Darell, 2002). As an educational tool the success of CD and its continued inclusion as a form of art in the schools is dependent upon teachers' ability to identify, articulate and ultimately asses what children are learning when they are engaged in dramatic activity (Pinciotti, 1993). The CD leader sets the learning goals, develops the curriculum, introduces the lessons, connects between the experiences from one meeting to the next, and assesses dramatic growth. Simons and Ewing (2001) explain that these skills are best learned in practice that the teacher's knowledge needs to be embodied.

Creative Drama in Turkey

CD was first put forward scientifically in 1980s in Turkey. The concept of "creative drama in education" was tried to got into effect especially by Prof. Dr. İnci San, who was the head of department in division of fine arts education of college of educational sciences in Ankara University, and Tamer Levent, an actor in state theatre. CD has started to develop with seminars and workshops towards to primary teachers and lecturers who work in different universities in Turkey. Workshops on CD have organized especially by the "Çağdaş Drama Derneği (Modern Drama Association) and Oluşum Drama Atölyesi (Formation Drama

Workshop)” since 1990. College of Education Programs in Turkey, the drama has been included in education as a course since 1998. This course is four hours per week in a semester for all students. Main aim in the course is to develop both practical skills for teaching of most subjects and social skills of teacher candidates. Objectives and behaviors in the drama activities are obtained by participants.

Related Researches

Evaluation depending on questionnaires, meetings and observations about CD activities are available in literature (Philbin & Myers, 1991; Salazar, 1993; Kieffer, 1996; Simons, 2000; Bisland, 2004; Macy, 2004). There are also video recorded images and writing short essays (Kieffer, 1996; Morris, 2001; Andersen, 2004) evaluated by content analysis method in CD activities.

According to Morris (2001, p.44), “through drama, students increase their engagement with social studies and often exceed teachers’ dramatic and assessment expectations. Students’ enthusiasm can spark interest in their collaborating peers so that the members of the group become more involved”.

Jahanian (1997) suggests a student’s progress be measured informally and individually, instead of formally and in comparison to classroom peers in CD. This may be done easily by occasionally videotaping students as they participate in activities. Simons (2000) explains that an important assessment tool is the teacher’s observation of the class. According to Thompson (1991), this tool can be used effectively by teachers because of their professional knowledge of drama and of their students (Quote: Simons, 2000). Pearce (2003), in his paper discusses how a projective technique known as “cartoon tests” can be used by drama educators for evaluating program and for learning-needs analysis and monitoring.

Kieffer (1996), in his research, his data included observation, videotaping, individual interviews, and reflective sharing and writing. Results indicated that informal drama: 1) Provided language arts connections of reading, writing, speaking, listening and higher-order thinking. 2) Promoted cooperation, confidence, creativity and imagination. 3) Enhanced self-esteem of students during the school year, and in the process. 4) Provided everyone with a fun way of learning.

Authentic assessment depends on evidence of students’ accomplishments, which students provide with their produced portfolios and performance assessments (Morris 2001). Students demonstrate the way of thinking, knowledge and creating processes they have used to create their products. Morris (2001) used authentic assessment in his study. In the study, he used drama as a method of instruction, and the seventh grade students worked, for illustrating their understanding and competency in social studies. Through in their art work, salient comments and group projects, the students demonstrated what they had learned about the way of solving problems posed by the dramatic situations.

Portfolio Assessment

For CD the evaluation of the process, namely review of the process, discussion of it and sharing what has been lived, is significant. One of the methods for assessing the process is portfolio assessment. Portfolio assessment is used in various fields from fine arts to marketing, from architecture to education. Portfolios can be described as the purposeful compilation of works reflecting the struggle, progress and success of learners (Paulson, Paulson, & Meyer, 1991: 60; Mullin, 1998; Jacobson, Sleicher, & Maureen, 1999). Often

drama teachers include all of the arts in their lessons. Visual works can be included in portfolios to be used to assess progress (Salazar, 1993).

Evaluation Problem in the Drama

In the drama assessment it is problematic that the content of the lesson often deviates from the plan because of spontaneous input from the students and on-the-spot changes in direction by the teacher. Evaluating in the drama activities is difficult. The type of assessment that a teacher uses partly depends on the planned outcomes. In our study, the drama activities were evaluated in both process and product. Owing to the evaluation including cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains, the teachers who can use the drama as a method should have cognitive, affective and psychomotor learning. In other words, teacher candidates should have theoretical knowledge on CD, positive attitude towards CD, ability to plan and practice of the teaching of a subject by using CD method.

Research Method

Design of the Research

In our study a one group pre-test/post-test design were used. Qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the assessment. In the quantitative method, the teacher candidates responded to multiple-choice test about the objectives of curriculum. In the qualitative method, observation forms were filled for each teacher candidate. In addition, the teacher candidates prepared portfolios. These portfolios included both lesson plans of a subject for CD and the letters written by them to their friends on CD. The letters written by teacher candidates to their friends both before starting the course and end of the course on CD experiences were included in these portfolios. Knowledge about CD activities was included in these letters. In this paper, merely, the content analysis of the letters written by the teacher candidates was involved in the assessment of drama activities as an alternative assessment method.

Participants

The participants were the senior students enrolled at the department of primary teaching in Nigde University. For the sampling of the research, 213 senior students who attended the drama at primary teaching course within the 2005–2006 academic years were selected. The participants in the study were 101 males (47.5%) and 112 females (52.5%). Their Age levels ranged from 21 to 24. The average age for students was 23.2 years old.

The Department of Primary Teaching aims at training teachers for primary level schools after their four-year education. The first, second and third year mainly focuses on developing trainees' teaching skills. Starting from the third year, teacher training courses (i.e., classroom management, teaching methods, drama education in primary teaching, lesson plans etc.) are provided. For the students the last year of the program highlights the practicum approach in school settings; where trainees are taken to schools to teach and understand the daily routines at schools.

Data Collection Method

The first letters which were written by teacher candidates were used as data collection method. At the beginning of the course, the sentence "Write a letter to one of your friends, describing CD" was given as a duty. We took as pre-test the letters because the students in college of education had taken various courses in previous years whose subjects contain teaching methods. One of these subjects was CD as teaching a method. For this reason we thought that it was necessary to know what the teacher candidates knew about CD. After the

application of CD for 14 weeks, we required the teacher candidates to write introducing CD again. These letters were used as post-test.

Application of the Program

CD was applied as a method in the drama at primary teaching courses. The participants were divided into eight mixed groups and all of them participated in CD activities. The program lasted for fourteen weeks by putting into practice four hours in every week. At the beginning and end of the program the letters were taken. Activities were planned according to objectives of the drama at primary teaching course. At the beginning of the course, we posted the objectives so that students knew what we expected from them. The application stages of the program are as in the following Figure 1.

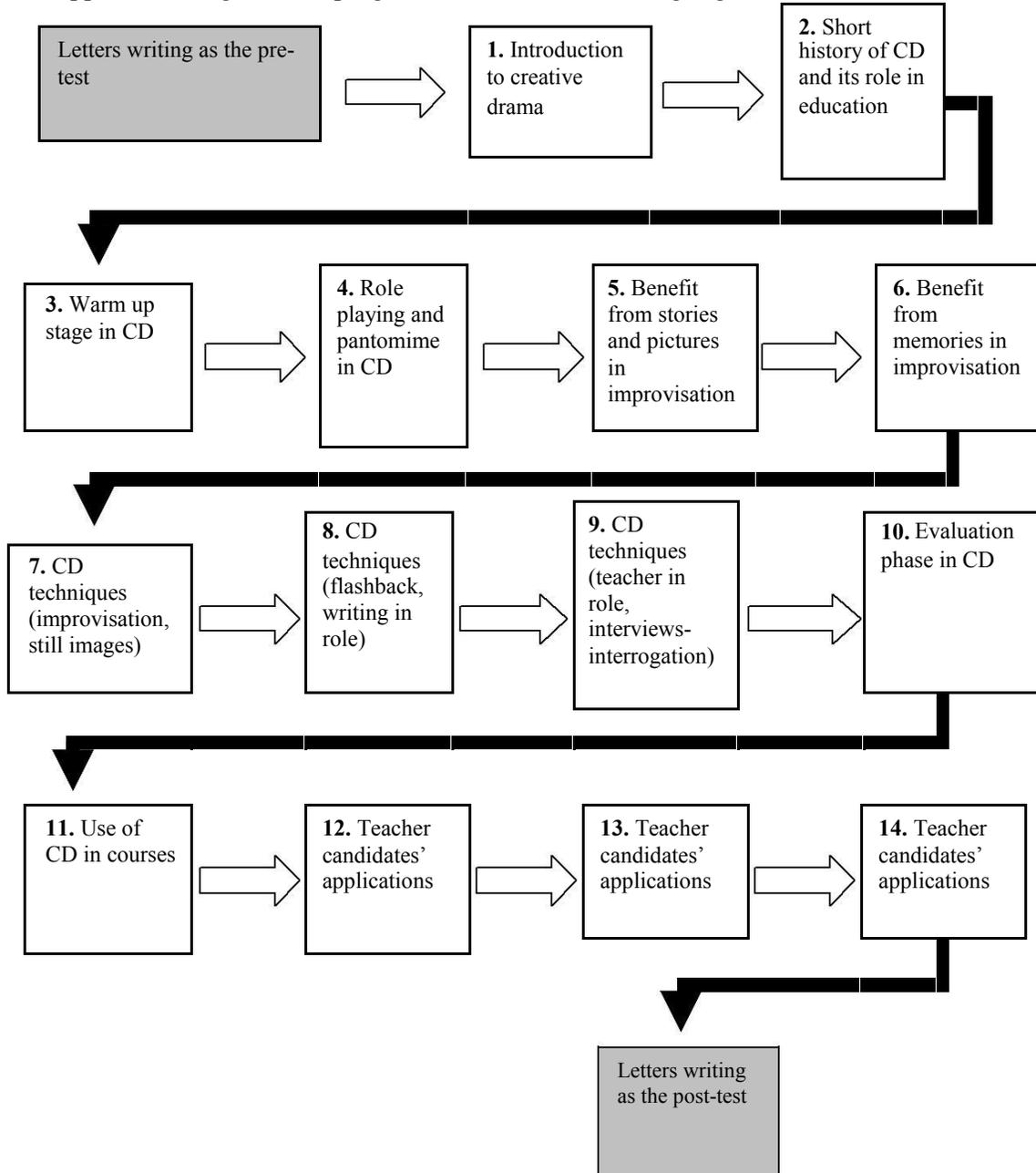


Figure 1. Plan of the Program Application Stages

Analysis of the Data

The data were analyzed with content analysis method in this research (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The basic process done in the content analysis is to gather similar data in the borders of particular themes and to interpret these by regulating them in an understandable way for reader. The data which were gained via discussion, observation and documents are analyzed in four steps. These are; firstly is data coding, and then is theme finding out and regulation of codes and themes, and finally is description and comprehension of findings. Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggest three ways for data coding. These are:

Coding according to the concepts determined before: This way is used in such cases where there is a theory which forms the basis of research or in which there is a conceptual situation.

Coding according to the concepts found out from data: This way is applied if there is a search made on subject lacking of conceptual basis.

Coding which is made from general view: A coding is made up to conceptual structure. However, the codes which exist are also added to the list.

In this research, each letter was examined by three researchers individually. The data were coded depending on the code list by scanning related literature. Also, the new codes, existing in the letters, were added to list. The similar codes were gathered together by determining their similarities and differences. Concepts and themes were determined. Whether the concepts, placing under the themes, constitute a meaningful internal consistency or not was examined. We also examined for the coding similarities among us as we did this research as three researchers. We found out that the internal consistency coefficient was 89%. Then, we also applied for another researcher's opinion in content analysis.

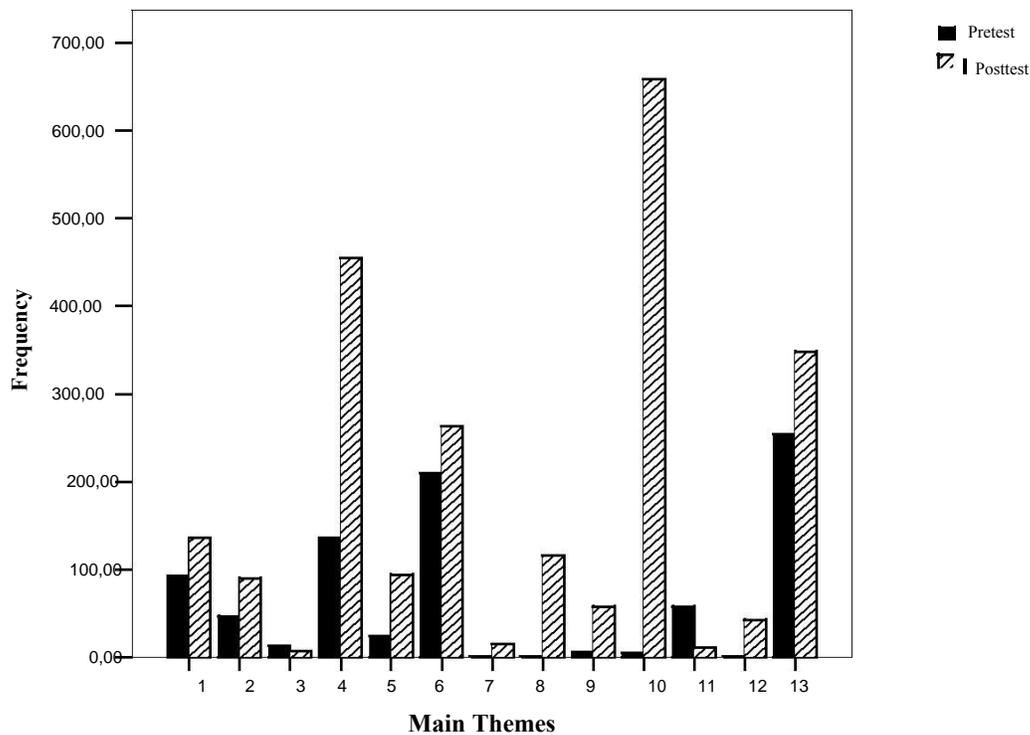
The features used in describing CD and short and long term acquirements were taken into consideration in categorizing. We gathered the data according to frequency of the related concepts. Finally, each main theme and sub-theme was expressed with frequencies and interpreted. In addition, the relationship among categories was analyzed in order to determine whether the concepts were used correctly or not. Findings were introduced with graphic, figure and table.

Findings

Before all else, the main themes were directly related to the topics in literature and 13 categories (themes) were identified according to the CD. These were definition of drama, its role and significance in education, relationship between play and CD, stages, warm-up, improvisation, formation, relaxing, evaluation, CD techniques, place, planning, and individual development. Sub-themes that should exist in each main category were determined in order to define main themes in a more detailed way. Frequencies of main themes and sub-themes are given in following Table and Graphic

**Table of Main Themes, Sub-Themes and Frequencies
Related to the CD in the Letters of the Teacher Candidates**

Main Themes	Sub-Themes	Pre-test Frequency	Post-test Frequency
1. Definition of CD	Method	21	43
	Process as play	18	14
	Animation	20	29
	Making use of theatre techniques	24	36
	Group study	10	14
2.Role and significance in education	Active learning	44	83
	Interactive learning	2	5
	Collaborative learning	1	2
3.Relationship between play and CD	Freedom	6	3
	Illusionary structure	4	3
	Tension and pleasure	3	1
4.Stages	Warm-up	54	124
	Improvisation	34	138
	Formations	3	5
	Relief	22	99
	Evaluation	23	87
5.Warm-up	Physical warming	4	27
	Group dynamic	9	24
	Developing of senses	1	5
	The Use of active and instrumental music	10	38
6. Improvisation	Without text	21	30
	Performance	78	40
	Making use of stories	1	38
	Making use of photographs	10	19
	Making use of paintings	95	45
	Making use of sentences	--	33
	Making use of memories	1	17
	Making use of objects	2	18
	Making use of newspaper news	2	23
7.Formations	Reach to objectives and behaviours	--	15
8.Relaxing	Physical and mental	--	22
	Using classical music	--	53
	Using text	--	38
	Breath exercise	--	3
9.Evaluation	Appropriate for objectives	2	16
	Summarizing	--	4
	Sharing the experiences	1	17
	Discussion and brain storming	3	11
	Open-ended questions	1	10
10.CD Techniques	Still images	1	65
	Conscious alley	--	77
	Gossip circle	--	50
	Flash back	1	50
	Writing in role	--	10
	Interviews-interrogation	--	23
	Teacher in role	--	5
	Split screen	--	25
	Dream technique	1	54
	Inner thought	--	50
	Pantomime	1	139
Role playing	--	81	
11.Place	Drama classroom	58	11
12.Planing	Relation to goals	--	41
	Characteristics of participants	--	2
13.Individual development	Enjoyable	78	71
	Self confidence	52	58
	Communication skills	25	65
	Creativity	42	63
	Co-operation	10	20
	Self express	26	49
	Imagination	5	10
	Adaptation	16	12



Graphic of Pre-test and Post-test Frequencies

Looking through the Table and Graphic, an increase is observed in the frequencies of the *1-definition of CD, 2-role and significance in education, 4-stages, 5-warm-up, 6-improvisation, 7-formation, 8-relaxing, 9-evaluation, 10-CD techniques, 12-planning and 13-individual development*. Samples from the letters written as post-tests by teacher candidates were given below.

Dilek “...but now, I can admit that I did not know drama at those weeks. We have completed the term and I have acquired invaluable knowledge.I have learnt how to present the lesson more efficiently and more enjoyable using drama techniques depending on the aims and objectives of the lesson...”

İlhan “...the drama enables people permanent learning and it is an enjoyable way to turn the subjects into games...”

Doğan “Not only do we learn but also enjoy ourselves... I sometimes think that I would use this activity in this subject when I became a teacher. I can also produce new activities on some topics...”

Asuman “...I was shy at the beginning. I have overcome this problem and this course has increased my self-esteem....improvisation is what I like the most. It’s because of the fact that I feel myself free while improvising and I think I direct the play with my own thoughts...”

Seher "...I have learned to think critically and to predict the former and the subsequent forms of events..."

Mehmet "...One of the most significant contributions of drama to me is to know myself. As Yunus Emre said "Science knows science. Science is to know yourself..."

It may be said that there was an increase in the cognitive and affective learning of the teacher candidates about CD method by means of CD education. A decrease was observed at the post-test in the frequencies of the *relationship between play and CD*, *places*, and in the frequency of the *process as play, performance, drama classroom, making use of paintings, enjoyable, adaptation*. At the beginning, teacher candidates' attention grasped the places and techniques, because they were new and extraordinary for them. However, the reason of the decrease it may be thought that the teacher candidates learned the aspects of CD at end of the course.

Elçin "...Drama course began as a curiosity for me. Both the name of the course and the place where we take it were very different..."

The analysis of correlation among main themes was shown in Figure 2.

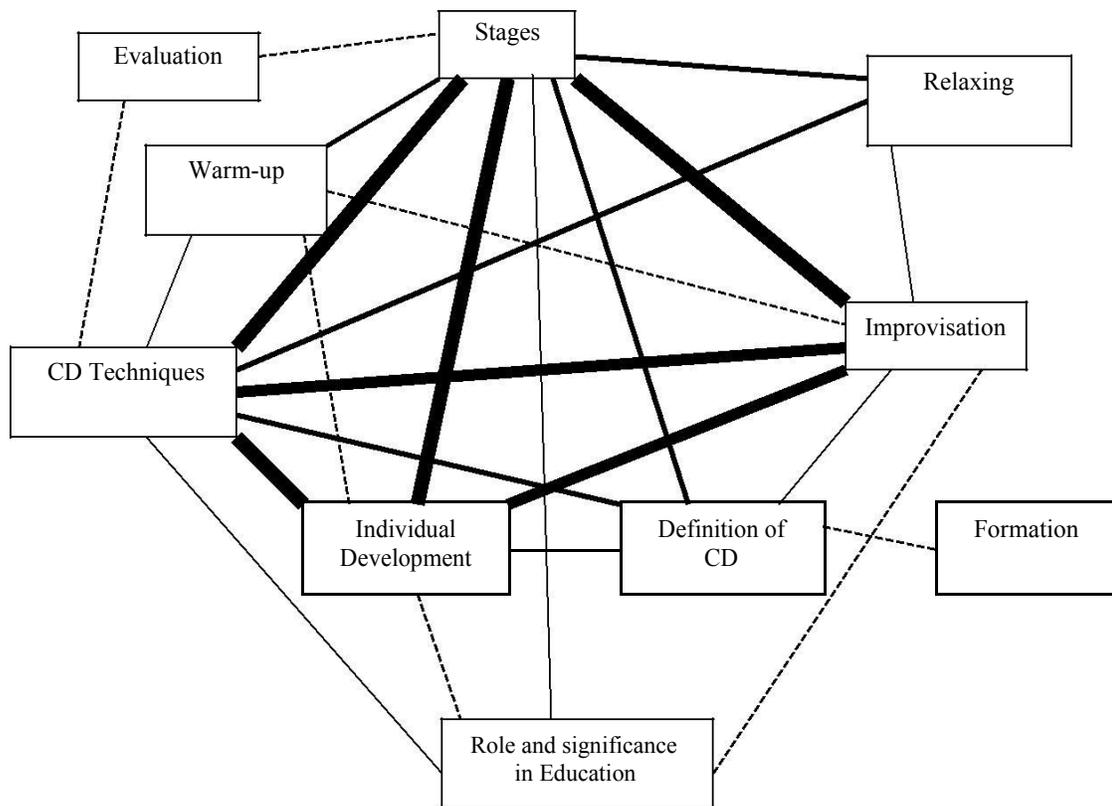


Figure 2: Analysis of correlation among the main themes. (The strength of the correlation among the themes was shown by thickness of the lines)

As seen in the Figure 2, the themes that took place in main categories in the teacher candidates' letters, stages, improvisation, individual development, and CD techniques were used in strong relation with each other. Besides, the definition of CD, and its techniques, relaxing, warm-up, individual development, its place and importance in education were used all together. It was observed that the concepts were used accurately in the letters of teacher candidates. A few sample sentences from the letters where the aforementioned concepts were used accurately were given below:

Berna "...Except for this, we used inner voice, conscious corridor and dreaming techniques while improvising. These were my favourite techniques. I think these techniques disclose creativity..."

Bayram "...We performed such activities as improvisation and role play in front of the whole class. I felt myself closer to the class when I had been hesitant even to speak in front of the class..."

Neslihan "...I think we learn creative drama in order to teach the information more permanently, logical, in certain rules and forming them into plays in order to develop our students..."

Osman "...Improvisation enables students to see the events in a different perspective, to use their imagery strength and to move with the group as a part of that group..."

Kenan "...We both make the topics concreted and increased their permanence by using creative drama and its techniques..."

Nuray "...Effective learning takes place as the students participate in the activities personally through creative drama..."

Derya "...Students can not only enjoy but also learn by role-play, improvisation and pantomime instead of a tedious and an ordinary lesson..."

Result and Discussion

One of the most difficult aspects of CD is to assess the cognitive and affective learning of teacher candidates. The letters, teacher candidates wrote to their friends about CD, were used with other assessment aimed methods. The images that were recorded with video at CD activities (Kieffer, 1996; Noble, Egan, & McDowell, 1997; Simons, 2000) and written short essays were observed to be assessed by using content analyzing method in literature (Kieffer, 1996; Morris, 2001; Andersen, 2004).

In our study, we used the letter in order to assess as a method similar to short essay method. Andersen (2004) made two groups of students -one participates in and the other not participates in drama activities- to prepare snail care guide at science lesson. It was pointed out that the study of students who participated in drama activities was better. Morris (2001) used drama as a method to teach problem solving to 7th grade students. The students displayed what they had learned about problem solving by studying art and making comments, preparing group project works, writing short essays in order to respond specific questions.

Kieffer (1996) used drama activities in his class during a year. Through writing and other methods, students and author discovered the value of informal drama in the classroom. We

observed at the end of our study that there was an increase in the cognitive and affective learning of teacher candidates about CD method. The findings of our research are parallel to the findings of Morris (2006) and Kieffer (1996). In addition, there are some stages such as warm-up, role playing and improvisation in CD activities (San, 1996). We observed that the teacher candidates used accurately these stages in their letters. Hornbrook (1993) points out that the students enjoy participating in CD process. The process is as enjoyable and interesting as visiting a museum or watching a video. This feeling of the students makes them eager to learn. It is possible to come across findings which support this thought of Hornbrook when the sentences of the teacher candidates in the letters are examined.

Limitations of the Study

We examined the letters (213) of all the teacher candidates who took the course in eight groups. The content analysis lasted in 3 months as the number of teacher candidates who participated in the CD activities was lot. We, the researchers, had to examine the letters many times. If the number of teacher candidates had been less, it would have taken a short time to do the content analysis of their letters. The teachers who will use the CD method should have a little number of students in order to do the content analysis of their short essays, articles, compositions and letters.

We had given a duty to teacher candidates: "Write a letter to one of your friends, describing CD." We didn't limit or construct the content of letters. Therefore, teacher candidates determined themselves the content of their letters about CD. Although some of the letters were very long, some of them were very short. We observed especially in the short letters that the main themes were not included. It may be thought that teacher candidates corresponding through e-mail reflected their habit of writing short on writing letters on paper. We even observed that some students didn't take it serious, thinking he wouldn't be graded for his letter. In long letters, on the other hand, teacher candidates had mentioned their private lives, their concerns about their prospective jobs and the difficulties they had with the courses at the college along with CD. Such kind of limitations should be taken into consideration while using letter writing as a technique in the assessment of drama activities.

Conclusion

Improvisation in CD can be designed according to the curriculum. This designation helps teaching the desired objectives and behaviours in a more effective way (Üstündağ, 1999). Having drama courses at teacher training programs is essential. A teacher uses CD as a method should know the objectives of CD, its principles and techniques, the learning types provided, where it is used, its contribution to individual development, difficulties that can be encountered and precautions that should be taken, and how to plan a lesson by using CD. Besides, teacher candidates should have some characteristics of creativity, cooperation, self-esteem and communication skills.

It may be thought that short essays and letter writing are significant to the development of the writing habits of teacher candidates. However, the writings of students should be assessed as well as multiple choice tests for evaluation. We suggest that the letters written by teacher candidates should be examined with content analysis technique. It is important to determine firstly the main categories and then the sub-categories of these letters, and to find their frequency. It is also necessary to determine the strength of the relation between these categories in order to determine whether the concepts have been used accurately or not.

Getting the letter write is a helpful way in evaluating the student's the cognitive, affective, and psychomotor learning gained through CD. We suggest that this method should be used not lonely but with the other methods (multiple choice tests, observation forms, portfolios et al.).

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