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Heritage education for primary school children through drama: The case of Aydın, Turkey

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Abstract

This paper argues the use of drama as a teaching method for heritage education of primary school children in order to awaken awareness on cultural heritage of their city, Aydın. Drama helps children of Aydın understand where they live, why the historic buildings and environment matters and what children can do for the preservation of cultural heritage in their city. Based on the Project titled ‘Discovering the Cultural Properties in Our City’ supported by the TUBITAK’s (The Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey) Science and Society Project Support Program in 2011, the paper will argue the aspects of drama as a teaching method for heritage education.

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Keywords: Heritage education; raising awareness on cultural heritage; primary school education; drama; Turkey.

1. Introduction

Heritage-related education programs have witnessed a rapid increase all over the world, from Europe to Asia, and from America to Australia, and have become a main policy of both governments and other institutions. In parallel with attempts to increase public participation in the heritage field through such programs as European Heritage Days (1991) and the Faro Convention (2005), there has been a concerted effort to include a cultural heritage dimension also in education. Recently, the goals and means of heritage education, and the ways of improving cross-border cooperation throughout Europe, were explored during the Hague Forum (Europa Nostra, 2004), however this is only one example of the broad variety of attempts to integrate heritage into education. In preservation discourse, heritage education has become one of the main components of both theory and practice. With an eye on the future, focus has been on increasing the awareness of children and young people on the issue since the earliest international documents, with an early example found in the Athens Charter, which recommended educators ‘...teach them to take a greater and more general interest in the protection of these concrete testimonies of all ages of civilization’ (1931: article 7). Since that time, the education of children and young people has been recommended in a variety of documents developed in the field of preservation as summarized by Asatekin (2004). Among these documents, Recommendation No: R (98) 5 (1998) adopted by the Committee of Ministers of the European Council defines heritage education as ‘... a teaching approach based on cultural heritage, incorporating active educational methods, cross-curricular approaches and a partnership between the fields of education and culture and employing the widest variety of modes of communication and expression’. In addition, the goals and methods of heritage education and the

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ways to improve cross-border cooperation throughout Europe were explored through The Hague Forum (Europa Nostra, 2004). Today, the education of people of all ages is considered as part of every interpretation program at all levels, such as school curricula, informal and lifelong learning programs and special activities (ICOMOS Charter for the Interpretation and Presentation of Cultural Sites, 2008). Besides, in the field of education, the importance of heritage education is expressed through numerous documents such as The Dakar Framework for Action (2000), the Recommendation for Education Policies at the beginning of the 21st century (2001), Culture for Children and Young People, Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development issued by UNESCO as summarized by Asatekin (2004). In parallel with these developments, a variety of governments and non-governmental organizations have developed and applied heritage education programs for the general public, and especially for children and young people, in both formal and non-formal education (Gimenez et.al, 2008).

In Turkey there have been attempts to include 'culture' and 'cultural heritage' in the national curriculum of elementary education since the 2000s; and a number of different activities have been conducted as a part of the curriculum development in elementary education, in public and private museums, and in the programs of relevant bodies such as ÇEKÜL (the Foundation for the Promotion and Protection of the Environment and Cultural Heritage), the Ankara Section of the Union of Architects and the Çatalhöyük Archaeological Research Team (educational program conducted at the Neolithic site of Çatalhöyük in Turkey between 2002–2004 within the EU-funded TEMPER) for school-age children. Each heritage program and activity has a different goal, ranging from building awareness on a specific type of cultural heritage to the development of citizenship, and from teaching local history to raising awareness on preservation issues.

On the European Heritage Network website, a number of different teaching methods and tools, including guided tours, experimental excavations, seminars, dramas and exhibitions, are explained for heritage education. Drama, having found popularity in different fields of education, is one such teaching method that has had some success (Courtney, 1968). Drama has been defined as the experiencing and living of a concept, an idea, an event in daily life, or a behavior through the use of acting techniques, considering previous cognitive patterns in the education context (San, 1991). Generally viewed as an appropriate method for heritage-related issues, it is in common use in heritage-related education in many countries in Europe, the United States and beyond (Jackson, 2000).

The use of drama has become a popular approach, particularly at heritage sites and in museums, to educate the general public and schools (Roth, S., 1997); and there have been a variety of studies on use of drama in the museum context. Adigüzel claims that drama enriches the lives of children and young people by contributing to their self-confidence and the development of skills of social interaction (2000). Apart from use of drama in the museum context, drama is also used for heritage education in relation with site-based works. Jackson studied two 'living history' programs based on the use of the site as stage set and characterization through first-person interpretation. He has pointed out both the negative and positive uses of theatrical techniques in educating children in the 'living history' program, claiming that finding a balance between the telling of a good story and opening up the period to complex and often contradictory voices can be difficult (2000). Although there have been a number of researches into the use of drama, both in a museum and a site context, the aim of this study is to investigate its use in real-life situations with particular focus on heritage-related issues, without taking children on a journey to another time and place, and without giving roles to the audience. The children take on the roles of people in real-life present-day situations, and are encouraged to improvise around themes related to basic heritage issues and problems. In this respect, the study raises a variety of questions: Is drama alone an appropriate teaching method, independent from other methods for gaining knowledge in heritage education? Is it necessary to support drama with other teaching methods? What are the effects of implementation drama on the place of cultural heritage or its surroundings? Does it have positive effects on the creation of a bond between children and places, or not? Is drama an effective teaching method for making children aware of certain types of heritage, such as mounds, and related problems, such as illegal excavations, the absence of presentation installations, and a lack of maintenance of cultural heritage? In answering these questions, this study allows an understanding of the effects and effectiveness of drama as a teaching method in the education of primary school children in matters of heritage.

2. Aim

The study is based on a 2011 project entitled ‘Discovering Cultural Properties in Our City’,[‡] supported by TÜBİTAK’s Science and Society Project Support Program. The goal of the project is to build student awareness on the cultural heritage of their city, the preservation of cultural heritage and a critical awareness of problems related to them, while the main goal of this paper is to discuss the use of drama as a teaching method for the heritage education of primary school children (aged 12–14) to instill within them an awareness of the cultural heritage of their city, Aydın[§]. In relation to this goal, the study aims to analyze the effects and effectiveness of creative drama activities by:

- Understanding the difference between the students’ knowledge of the ‘maintenance of cultural properties displayed in museums’ before and after attending the Science School,
- understanding the difference between the students’ knowledge of ‘mounds’ before and after participating in the Science School,
- understanding the difference between the students’ opinions and approaches to illegal digging and treasure hunting before and after attending the Science School, and
- understanding the difference between the level of importance attributed by students to the ‘presentation of archaeological sites to visitor’s understandings’ before and after attending the Science School.

3. Method

The participants are 164 children aged 12–14 studying in ten primary schools located in the city of Aydın, with the students of the Aydın Child and Youth Center, which is one of the local department of the Ministry of Family and Social Policies in Aydın and gives services for working children and the ones having potential to work at streets, given priority in participation. The majority of the students (59%) attend three primary schools (Yunus Emre Primary School, Abdullah Gül Primary School and Ahmet Şerife Sanlı Primary School) all of which are located in the suburbs of Aydın, and are attended by the children of immigrant low income families from Eastern Anatolia. The project is applied to five groups, each comprising a minimum of 32 students. The children were selected from different primary schools located close to the city center of Aydın, and were required to have received no previous education on the preservation of cultural heritage.

In order to understand the context in which the drama activities were undertaken it is necessary to provide a brief description of the project. The Science School provides students with many opportunities to experience a wide variety of cultural properties in Aydın through not only drama, but also site visits, games, seminars and workshops. An eight-day program, including 61 activities, was prepared for each group, with each day given a specific theme: Day 1) ‘The General History of Aydın’, Day 2) The ‘Cultural Properties of Aydın Museum’, and Day 3) ‘Aydın in Prehistoric times: Deştepe Mound’. A researcher specialized in creative drama prepared sixteen activities, developed with the principles of creative drama, and conducted them throughout the project. Among the sixteen activities, the four based on building awareness of cultural properties with an archaeological character are selected for this paper. The drama activities are applied on the second and third days of the program, based on the themes mentioned above, with activities prepared covering four topics:

- The maintenance of cultural properties in a museum,
- Illegal digging,
- ‘It is not just a hill, but a mound!’, and
- The maintenance and presentation of two ancient cities.

The program was carried out over 40 days between 13 July–05 August, 2011. The students, who played together and formed a group synergy, expressed themselves comfortably through the drama activities and became confident in

[‡] The project is based on use of a variety of teaching methods and tools, such as site visits, workshops, games, and seminars given by experts in different disciplines dealing with the past (history, archaeology, history of art and architecture) from Adnan Menderes University, and is applied five times for the different groups of participants. During the project, immovable cultural assets, dating from prehistoric times to period that began with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey in the city of Aydın, which is located at the west Anatolia, are studied.

[§] Aydın is a city located in Western Anatolia, Turkey. The early settlement within the city center is dated to the Bronze age, and the ancient city of Tralleis lies to the north of the current city center. In addition, there are varieties of monuments such as mosques, inns, madrasahs, mesjids, baths and complexes from the Ottoman period, and buildings such as banks, hotels, houses and shops from the period that began with the foundation of the Republic of Turkey.

taking on roles. The activities began with an explanation of the subject, continuing with warm-up activities and improvisation, and concluding with an evaluation of the day's events. The children were engaged in conversation to gain feedback and semi-structured interviews were implemented. These were out-of-classroom activities, applied at the Aydın Museum and the Deştepe Mound, so as to integrate the children's sensations from the environment into the evaluation.

The creative drama method is generally described as having some principal components, such as the stages of creative drama and evaluation (Adıgüzel, 2002), and some other basic elements, such as drama moments, drama techniques and make-believe plays (Adıgüzel, 2002; Akar, 2000; San, 2002). In this respect, the drama activities are prepared in relation to the stages of creative drama (including warm-up activities, improvisation and evaluation), drama techniques, make-believe plays and evaluation, as shown in Table 1. The drama techniques, blind walking, role playing, teacher in role, hot seating, still image and pantomime are used in the four drama activities.

For data collection, a content analysis, observations and semi-structured interviews were the major methods. The data obtained through the content analysis is classified in relation to the groups, with the findings interpreted through a descriptive analysis. Data triangulation is based on an overlapping content analysis, semi-structured interviews and observations so as to maintain the reliability and validity. Two researchers carried out individual codings and classifications of the data in order to increase reliability. The data and findings are supported by observations and the results of an end-test so as to increase the reliability of the study. The documents analyzed through the content analysis have been read three times, with a similar classification made each time.

Table 1. The characteristics of creative drama activities

	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3	Activity 4
Subjects taught	The effects of maintenance of cultural property displayed in museums.	The effects of illegal digging and treasure hunting.	The differences between a hill and a mound.	The effects of presenting an ancient city for the understanding of visitors.
The stages of creative drama	Warm-up activities (1.Walking)	Warm-up activities (-)	Warm-up activities (-)	Warm-up activities (1.Imagination)
	Improvisation in pairs about the effects of museum workers on the cultural properties displayed in a museum	Improvisation in groups of three on the effects of illegal digging and treasure hunting, giving examples of its negative effects, results on daily life.	Improvisation in groups of three on the difference between a hill and a mound, and the effects of peoples' behaviors on the research, information and archaeological values of a mound	Improvisation in groups of three on the effects (as if they were tourists) of existing presentation installations at two ancient cities on visitors' understandings
	Evaluation through the sharing of thoughts and feelings on the creative drama process with the whole group, and discussions of the effects of people's behavior on cultural properties	Evaluation through the sharing of thoughts and feelings on the creative drama process with the whole group, and discussions of the effects of illegal digging.	Evaluation through the sharing of thoughts and feelings on the creative drama process with the whole group, and discussions of behaviors performed by the students.	Evaluation through the sharing of thoughts and feelings on the creative drama process with the whole group, and comparisons of the group plays in relation to the objectives of the activity
Drama Techniques	Role playing, teacher in role	Not included	Hot seating	Pantomime, still image, teacher in role

Make believe plays	Two students taking on the role of museum workers having the features written for the character	A student taking on the role of a treasure hunter, with two other students playing the roles of his/her family, having the features written for the character	Students taking on the role of the director and teacher of a school visiting a mound with their students,	Students taking on the role of tourists to two different ancient cities; one having presentation installations and the other having no presentation installations
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4. Results and Discussions

It is necessary to give background information on the level of knowledge of student on Aydın Museum and Deştepe Mound prior to Science School in order to evaluate the results of this study. The pretest applied prior to Science School indicates that the majority of the students (61%) have not been in any museum prior to Science School and only 29% of the students have visited Aydın Museum and had information on the collections. Besides, the students generally were at the Deştepe Mound prior to Science School and viewed it just as a hill, not as a mound. Almost all students are not aware of that Deştepe Mound is the earliest settlement close to the city center of Aydın and the cultural heritage.

From the first drama activity, the most frequently mentioned phrases by the students of all groups acting in the role of a clean and tidy museum worker were, 'This is our history, you must clean it,' and 'This is our past, therefore you must keep it clean and tidy'. Other phrases mentioned frequently by students included, 'It is your responsibility to clean the museum, don't leave it dirty and untidy,' and 'You don't have the right to leave the museum dirty and untidy'. Sometimes emphasis was on economic perspective, through such phrases as: 'It is our history, if the museum is dirty and untidy, no tourists will come. We won't have an economic income,' and 'You don't have right to leave the museum dirty and untidy. If you leave it like that, no tourist will come'. The rarely stated phrases included, 'These are very important and are our cultural property, you should clean them and the museum' and, 'It is a shame to present the museum to visitors in this dirty and untidy state'. It was observed that the students were very sensitive to rubbish in the museum, and warned other students when they littered unintentionally.

The second drama activity aims to build awareness on the activity of illegal digging and treasure hunting. In this activity, students play the roles of family members (mother and brother/sister) of somebody who has found ancient treasures on Deştepe Mound while digging illegally. The students showed a common approach. Among these phrases, the most frequent was, 'It is our cultural property, you will be punished and go to prison,' and 'You must give them to authorities within three days, otherwise you will be punished'. General emphasis of ownership was given through such phrases as, 'They don't belong to you; they are our national treasures,' and 'they are our national treasures'. A disagreement arose when a student in the role of an illegal digger stated: 'It is for us, not just for me. We will be rich,' to which the students acting as family members protested, 'They do not belong to us'. Again, some students focused on the economic value of the items, with such phrases as, 'They are sources of economic income for our country,' and 'These are important for tourists and the economy of our country'. A phrase rarely mentioned was, 'If you don't give them to authorities, they will be yours and nobody will see them,' with consensus being that 'Everyone has right to see and know of them'. Observations of the drama activities indicate that almost every student believed that: 'These are our cultural properties; they are not your private property. You should not use them only for personal purposes'. The students in the role of the illegal digger generally stated that, 'There may be very precious jewels, gold or coins in Deştepe Mound; I will find them'. From these observations it can be seen that performing next to Deştepe Mound had a positive effect and contribution to the imagination of the students.

The third drama activity aims to awaken student awareness on the features of a mound, which is composed of a variety of cultural layers from different periods and is considered as common cultural property in Turkey. In this activity, three students assume the roles of a director, a teacher and a student (Ali) of a school visiting the mound of Deştepe. The students most frequently used the phrases, 'It is the oldest settlement in Aydın, and people lived here 6,000 years ago,' and 'Ali, this is not just a hill. Many people lived here and left their clothes, houses and possessions within this hill'. Generally, the students stated that: 'You can't destroy the past. Those that do not know their history cannot have a future,' the latter sentence being a common phrase in the Turkish language. In one improvisation, in which the student (Ali) found and stole an article of cultural heritage, such as gold, the most frequent statement used was, 'It does not belong to you, you must give it to the authorities'. A rare statement used was, 'These are documents of the past; you cannot destroy them'. During the site visit to Deştepe Mound it was observed that the students who

made an experimental surface investigation under the supervision of an archaeologist,** after finding pieces of pottery, replaced them in their original locations, indicating an awareness of the value and importance of such items as a source of information. In addition, the mound was commonly described as ‘a mound composed of layers of many peoples and societies’ by the students. It was interesting to note that the groups of students who attended the Primary School next to the Deştepe Mound had viewed it just as a hill up to that time, and were very surprised to hear the description of its features as a mound.

In the fourth activity, the objective of the drama activity is to build critical awareness of the importance of the presentation and maintenance of archaeological sites and ancient cities. In this context, two groups of students act as tourists in two different types of ancient city: one city presented through information and guidance panels and the other with no presentation installations. The students taking the roles of tourists visiting an ancient city that is well-presented through guides, and information and guidance panels, frequently gave emphasis to the information and educational value, using such phrases as, ‘This site is very good, there are presentation panels relating the history of the site,’ and ‘We learned how people lived, and what they ate and wore in the past. It was very interesting ... the guide gave us information on how people lived there,’ ‘I would recommend everyone to visit the site,’ and ‘We learned so much on how people lived there, everyone should visit it’. Some students gave emphasis to the existence of information panels and guides, using such phrases as, ‘Everywhere is very clean, clear and there are information panels telling us about the structures,’ and ‘There are information panels telling the stories of the structures,’ ‘We had fun and learned so many things. There are guides and information panels’. In contrast, the students acting as tourists visiting an ancient city that was untidy and had no presentation panels predominantly used such phrases as: ‘There is rubbish everywhere. There is no guide or information panels, we could not find how to get there or to return,’ ‘There is no guide, we understand nothing,’ and ‘There is no guide or information panels, we have learned nothing’. Some students gave emphasis to graffiti, using such phrases as, ‘There is graffiti all over the structures, we cannot see them properly,’ and ‘We couldn’t find our way to structures. We will never come back’. The students rarely stated, ‘We just saw some stone blocks and graffiti’.

It was observed that the students who experienced the Deştepe Mound, which has no presentation installations, but where information on the mound is imparted through seminars and information given by the research team, understood the importance of information panels and installations. During the evaluation, the students suggested that the site would benefit from the installation of an information panel next to the Deştepe Mound containing details of its history, surrounding the mound with fences and employing a guard to prevent illegal digging. They were also very surprised to see a high-voltage electricity pylon in the vicinity.

5. Conclusion

It is necessary to emphasize once again the purpose of this study, which was to analyze the effects and effectiveness of drama activities prepared for building awareness of cultural heritage issues among children. In the first activity, the researchers expected the students to consider the importance of the museum as a place in which movable cultural properties from different periods of Aydın are displayed, however the pretest applied prior to the Science School indicated that the majority of students had not been to a museum before. In this context, the participating students generally considered movable cultural property to be a part of history, and suggested that the museum should be maintained as a clean and tidy environment. There was also some emphasis on the importance of the museum as a place where movable cultural property can be presented. Although these drama activities were supported by a museum visit and a seminar on movable cultural heritage, it is clear that the museum is not sufficiently viewed as a ‘shelter’ for movable cultural properties, but is rather viewed from a general perspective of ‘history’ and ‘the past’.

In this regard, drama activities can be considered as an effective method for awareness-building among students on the keeping of cultural property in a museum, to some extent. However, considering that the majority of students have never visited a museum before and the emphasis is not just on ‘movable cultural properties’ and Aydın

** Assoc.Prof.Dr.Engin Akdeniz guided the site visits and experimental surface investigation at Deştepe Mound. During the experimental surface investigation, children found some pieces of pottery on the site and showed them to the guide. The guide told them how the pottery had been made (hand-made, or using a potter’s wheel), its ingredients and others. He also explained how people lived in Deştepe) and why they had selected this particular site.

Museum, the duration of programs in Museum should be longer than a day and such drama activities should be supported by other programs.

The drama activity related to illegal digging and treasure hunting is supported by a seminar given by a museum official on how immovable cultural properties become part of 'heritage', and through the provision of some practical information, such as how the public should act when finding items of archaeological heritage. The information given to students prior to the drama activity is used directly during their improvisation, and the described punishment handed out to people engaged in illegal activities has the effect of deterring students from engaging in such behavior. This is reflected in the most frequently used phrase during the improvisations, '... you will be punished and be put in prison'. The general emphasis given through the phrases '... they are our national treasures' shows that the educational activities implemented for two days are effective tools for building awareness of illegal digging and treasure hunting as a negative behavior that prevents access to movable cultural property by all. As a result, supporting drama activities with other teaching methods, such as seminars, games and site visits, increases the power and effectiveness of drama in promoting positive behavior among students. Additionally, performing drama activities next to cultural property enriches the imagination of students and strengthens the effects of drama.

The third drama activity indicates that almost all students gained an understanding of the difference between a hill and mound, as can be seen from the phrases used by the students referring to the overlapping cultural layers. They learned that 'Deştepe Mound is the oldest settlement near the city center of Aydın, being first settled 6,000 years ago'. This activity shows that the information given through other teaching methods allows the students to form their own positive opinion, which was reflected in a positive manner in their improvisations. In this respect, drama can be considered as an effective method for condensing information and promoting a positive attitude.

From the fourth drama activity the students were able to understand that presentation installations, such as information and guidance panels, were necessary for imparting information on an ancient city, thus providing an understanding of its history, monuments and civilizations. They were also made aware of the importance of information given by guides, which they emphasized through such phrases as: 'The guide relates information on how people lived there. It is very interesting,' and 'It is so interesting. Our guide provides us with information'. In addition, the absence of presentation panels on Deştepe Mound was a cautionary experience for students, allowing them to understand the importance of providing presentation installations in developing the knowledge of visitors.

In conclusion, the drama activities prepared as part of the Science School allow students to share opinions and feelings on issues of heritage, putting them in direct contact with the subjects and issues of cultural heritage in Aydın, their home town. At the end of the drama activities, the students, who had no previous knowledge of the cultural heritage of their city, the problems related with illegal digging, the maintenance of movable cultural properties displayed in Aydın Museum, and the lack of presentation installations in ancient cities and the Deştepe Mound, were able, through the application of real-life situations related to their heritage and the associated problems, to form a positive opinion.

The implementation of drama activities at site allowed the students to experience first-hand their cultural heritage, as in the cases of Aydın Museum and Deştepe Mound, indicating that drama has the potential to contribute to their forming of an emotional connection with the cultural heritage within their city, Aydın. Drama, as a well-known method for developing social skills, contributes to some extent to the development of a sense of belonging to a place and the creation of a bond between students and places. Implementing drama activities at site permits a direct experience with cultural heritage, and fosters the development of interactions among students, while also having a positive effect on developing a connection between the students and the cultural heritage within their city. However, there is a great need to implement these activities more frequently in order to garner better results in terms of developing a sense of place. Therefore, drama, which stimulates an interest in heritage, can be considered as an effective tool for building awareness among students of their cultural heritage, as well as all related issues and associated problems.

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