



## Teachers' Views on Using Creative Drama as a Method in Social Studies Education\*

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### ABSTRACT

In today's world, scientific and technological developments are on the rise every day. These changes are reflected on the perspective towards education and lead to radical changes and updates in the education systems. As a result of these changes which are based on the reformation of the elements of the education and teaching processes, new approaches, methods and techniques have come out. Education system in Turkey was re-built on the basis of restructuring approach by being affected by these developments in the year 2005. Within this scope, there were many important changes that took place in social sciences education programs. Within the concept of fields and facts such as history, geography, economy, human's rights, civics, law and democracy, raising individuals that can be aware of their physical, emotional features as well as their interest, need and capabilities as free individuals was determined as the main purpose. In conformity with this purpose, the need to provide the individual with a learning environment, where the individual can feel safe inside, release emotions with control, develop decision making and problem solving abilities has come out.

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the social studies teachers' views on using drama as a teaching method in social studies education. In order to achieve this purpose, interviews had been made with 22 social studies teachers. The method of this research is qualitative and the research design of this research is phenomenology. The research data were collected with a semi-structured interview form. Collected data were analyzed with descriptive analysis. The views of the participants about the use of creative drama were presented in the graphics with frequency and percentages. The findings of the study prove that the teachers don't use creative drama method enough level and they have some problems about implementation of the method.

**Keywords:** Social studies education, creative drama, teachers' views.

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## Sosyal Bilgiler Eğitiminde Yaratıcı Dramanın Bir Yöntem Olarak Kullanılmasına İlişkin Öğretmen Görüşleri

### ÖZ

Günümüz dünyasında bilimsel ve teknolojik gelişmeler her geçen gün hızla artmaktadır. Bu değişimler, eğitime bakış açısına yansımakta, eğitim sistemlerinde köklü değişikliklere gidilmesine, güncellemeler yapılmasına neden olmaktadır. Temelde eğitim ve öğretim süreçlerinin öğelerinin yeniden düzenlenmesine dayanan bu değişimler sonucunda yeni yaklaşımlar, yöntemler ve teknikler ortaya çıkmıştır. Türkiye'deki eğitim sistemi de 2005 yılında bu gelişmelerden etkilenerek yapılandırıcı yaklaşım temelinde yeniden kurgulanmıştır. Bu kapsamda, sosyal bilgiler eğitim programlarında da önemli değişiklikler yapılmıştır. Tarih, coğrafya, ekonomi, insan hakları, yurttaşlık bilgisi, hukuk, demokrasi gibi alan ve olgular bağlamında Özgür bir birey olarak fiziksel, duygusal özelliklerinin; ilgi, istek ve yeteneklerinin farkına varabilecek bireylerin yetiştirilmesi temel amaç olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu amaca uygun olarak, bireye kendini güven içinde hissedebileceği, yaratıcılığını ortaya koyabileceği, denetimli duygu boşalımı sağlayabileceği, karar verme ve problem çözme becerisini geliştirebileceği bir öğrenme ortamı sunulması gerekliliği ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Bu araştırmanın amacı, sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin sosyal bilgiler eğitiminde yaratıcı dramanın bir yöntem olarak kullanılmasına ilişkin görüşlerini incelemektir. Bu amaçla, 22 sosyal bilgiler öğretmeniyle görüşülmüştür. Araştırma, nitel yöntemle yapılmış olup, fenomenolojiyle (olgubilim) desenlenmiştir. Görüşme verileri, açık uçlu sorulardan oluşan, yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşme formlarıyla toplanmıştır. Toplanan veriler betimsel analiz yoluyla çözümlenmiştir. Öğretmenlerin sosyal bilgiler dersinde yaratıcı drama yöntemini kullanma durumlarına ilişkin görüşleri grafikler halinde sunularak bu görüşlerin frekans dağılımları verilmiştir. Ayrıca öğretmenlerin görüşleri sorulara ilişkin verdikleri yanıtlardan aynen alıntılar yapılarak desteklenmiştir. Araştırma sonunda, sosyal bilgiler öğretmenlerinin yaratıcı drama yöntemini yeterli düzeyde kullanmadıkları ve yöntemin uygulanmasıyla ilgili çeşitli sorunlar yaşadıkları ortaya konmuştur.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Sosyal Bilgiler eğitimi, yaratıcı drama, öğretmen görüşleri.

## **INTRODUCTION**

In today's world, scientific and technological developments are on the rise every day. These changes are reflected on the perspective towards education and lead to radical changes and updates in the education systems. As a result of these changes which are based on the reformation of the elements of the education and teaching processes, new approaches, methods and techniques have come out.

Education system in Turkey was re-built on the basis of restructuring approach by being affected by these developments in the year 2005. Within this scope, there were many important changes that took place in social sciences education programs. Within the concept of fields and facts such as history, geography, economy, human's rights, civics, law and democracy, raising individuals that can be aware of their physical, emotional features as well as their interest, need and capabilities as free individuals was determined as the main purpose (Ministry of National Education (MEB), 2005)

In conformity with this purpose, the need to provide the individual with a learning environment, where the individual can feel safe inside, release emotions with control, develop decision making and problem solving abilities has come out.

The Teacher must give importance to the notion of 'social sciences as reflective thinking' towards the application of social sciences. The teacher must confront students with real life problems and conflicting situations quite frequently and make them think reflective on the social problems they encounter" (MEB, 2005). The teacher must adopt the role of helping the students to create meanings instead of a role of an informer. He / she must encourage the students to question with thought-provoking and open-ended questions" (MEB, 2005).

In order to achieve the general goals for social sciences teaching, teachers that can actualize these purposes are needed. Training teachers to be trained in accordance with modern educational approach and make them adopt more alternative method which will enable individuals to be more active rather than the traditional teaching methods, must be the privileged conditions.

One of the contemporary teaching methods that is suitable to reconstructing approach is the creative drama.

### **Creative Drama**

"Creative drama is the creation of a purpose, an idea, with the use of improvisation, role playing (taking a role) etc. techniques by a group or on the basis of the experiences of group members" (Adıgüzel, 2013).

There are two dimensions of creative drama. These can be named as the creative drama on the levels of method and lesson. Creative drama as a method means using the creative drama as a tool on the basis of any experience taking place in creative drama education programs. Creative drama as a lesson however means teaching creative drama as a lesson such as math, science and Turkish, by covering the knowledge and subjects of the creative drama field.

Creative drama is planned as a three-staged process. These stages are;

- I. Warm up - Preparation
- II. Impersonation
- III. Evaluation / Discussion.

In the planning of a lesson where creative drama is to be used as a method, an integrated planning that covers all these three stages must be created. Even though creative drama has different dimensions based on the intended uses, applications on both sides develop an individual's critical thinking, communication, empathy, cooperation skills within a group, ethical and aesthetic behavior and democratic culture.

### **Social Sciences Education and Creative Drama**

Social sciences lesson is a lesson given to 4th – 7th Grade students and aims to present the social sciences by making it suitable for the age level of the child. MEB (Ministry of National Education) defines social sciences lesson as an elementary education lesson created from the notion of mass education that reflects social sciences and civics subjects such as history, geography, economy, sociology, anthropology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law; includes combination of the learning fields under a unit or theme; analyzes the interaction of human beings with social and physical environment in terms of past, today and future in order to help individual create his social existence (MEB, 2005:52).

Social Sciences, which play the greatest role for an individual to become socialized, carries the responsibility to transfer many concepts directly related with life. Additionally, it helps individual acquire necessary skills, gain universal and social values. In the teaching of social sciences, which is different from other lessons due to deriving its subjects directly from life, it is a must to take benefit from the methods that take its roots from the experiences of the individuals.

While being used as a method, creative drama has other purposes such as gathering the attention of the participants at a short time, enhancing the interest, triggering the feelings and ideas, taking the understanding and explaining skills to its maximum especially for the teaching of social subjects, making the learning process more joyful and developing imaginative thinking (Adıgüzel, 2013).

Creative drama can be shown as a teaching method that develops the individual from multiple perspectives, gets him/her closer to life and can deeply affect his/her understanding of life. Creative drama processes are structured on the human life. The experiences dealt with are impersonated with different creative drama techniques. It is found with the studies conducted that using creative drama in social sciences education as a method contributes student's academic success, make them gain the ability of self-expression, effective communication, empathizing, critical and creative thinking and problem solving and that the lesson aiming to raise democratic individuals accomplishes its goals directly (Adıgüzel, 2001; Atar, 2003; Aykaç, 2008; Aylıkçı, Şimşek, 2001; Başbuğ, 2008; Çelikkaya, 2014; Debre, 2008; Göncüoğlu, 2010; Günaydın, 2008; Gürel, Çelik, 2004; Güven, 2006; Hasırcı, Kaf, 2013; Hayoğlu, 2012; Kartal, 2009; Koç, 1999; Nayci, 2011; Özcan, 2004; Özer,

2004; Sever, Yalçinkaya ve Mazman, 2009; Taşkiran, 2005; Yalçın, 2004; Yıldız, 2011; Yurtalan, 2005; Zayimoğlu, 2006).

### **The Aim and Importance of the Research**

The aim of this study is to analyze the status of usage of the creative drama, which was proven as an effective method to be used in social sciences in previous studies, by social sciences teachers, in what level the teachers' educational background of creative drama is, to which subjects they address with creative drama and the views of social sciences teachers on using creative drama in social sciences education in general.

72% of the 1144 studies in the "Creative Drama Bibliography" (2014), seems to have focused on the methodical dimension of the creative drama. Within this context, it can be said that there is an important experience and culture existing in terms of using creative drama as a method. It is an important problem to analyze how much this culture and experience is reflected on the social sciences teachers.

Based on the experiences that social sciences teachers live in the classes they used creative drama as a method, it is expected for new practices to occur in a more qualified and productive way.

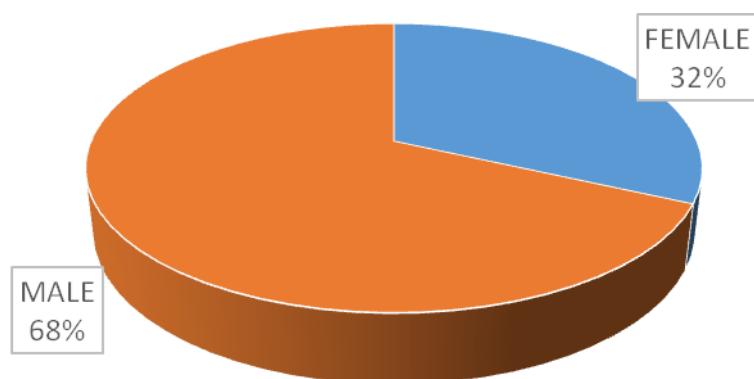
## **METHOD**

### **Research Model**

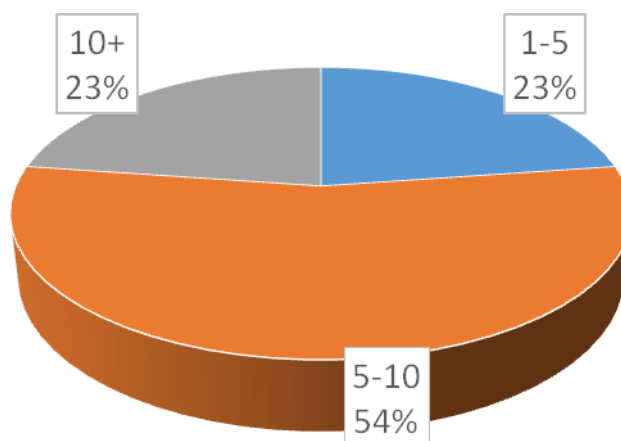
The purpose of this research is to analyze the views of social sciences teachers on using creative drama in social sciences education as a method and problems they encounter during practice. For this purpose, since the aim is to put forward the situation as it is, "descriptive model" is used, and phenomenological pattern is used in the research. Phenomenological pattern focuses on the phenomena that we are aware of but we do not have a deep and detailed understanding of (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). Qualitative research method is used in collecting, analyzing and interpretation of the data acquired in the research. Qualitative research is a research in which qualitative data collection methods such as observation, interview and document analysis are used, and where qualitative process towards putting perceptions and events in a real and integrated way in the natural environment is followed (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). In order to determine the creative drama method usage status of social sciences teachers and their views on creative drama, the data is collected through semi-structured interview forms.

### **Study Group**

The research is conducted with social sciences teachers who work in different cities and schools of Turkey. 22 social sciences teachers, who are selected via easy accessible case sampling which is one of the purposive sampling methods, participated in the research. Various characteristics of the teachers participated in the research are given in the graphic below.



**Graphic 1.** Gender distribution of the study group



**Graphic 2.** Seniority distribution of the study group

### **Collection and Analysis of the Data**

The data related with the research are acquired through semi-structured interviews conducted with teachers who were included in the research. In a semi-structured interview, pre-determined questions are asked to the participant. Apart from that, new questions can be asked when deemed necessary or some questions may be skipped (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). First of all, the interview questions of the interview are prepared by the researcher. Opinions of three field experts on the interview questions prepared were taken. Afterwards, a pre-interview is performed with two teachers and the questions are given their last form at the end of the interview.

Data acquired from the research are analyzed with a descriptive analysis technique. In descriptive analysis, the themes determined earlier with the acquired data are summarized and interpreted (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2006). Recorded

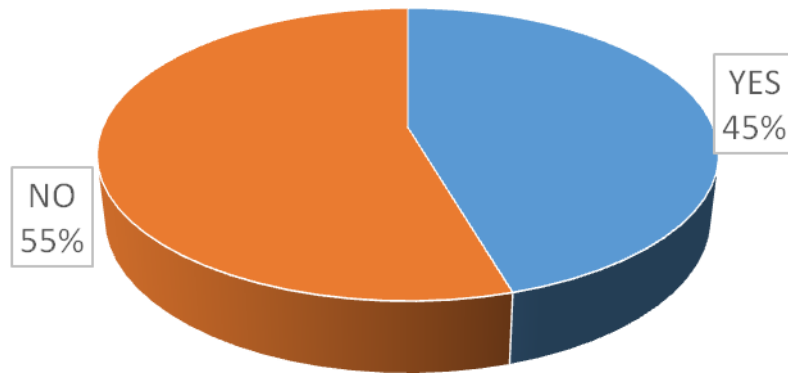
interviews are deciphered and turned into a plain text. After the texts are placed on the matrix, they are coded into data and searched how often they are repeated. Direct quotations taken from the answers given by the research participants are coded as “K, number”.

In order to ensure the reliability of the data acquired in the research, data collection and analysis process are explained in detail. Besides, in order to ensure the internal reliability, the acquired data analyzed separately by three different researchers and a mutual decision is made by comparing the analyses conducted by the researchers at a later step. Within the context of external reliability however, the role and responsibilities of the researcher such as designing, conducting and ending the research process are reported in detail.

### FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

#### Information Related to the Teachers’ Education Background of Creative Drama

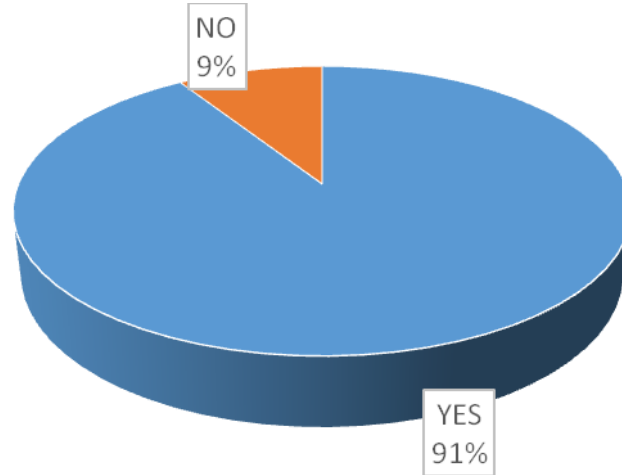
10 out of 22 teachers who were included in the study group stated that they received creative drama training in different education institutions that give drama education (compulsory lesson taken during the university education, in-service seminars of Ministry of National Education, training given during democratic mass organizations and other educations), and the remaining 12 teachers stated that they never took any kind of drama education.



Graphic 3. Status of receiving creating drama training

#### Information Regarding Whether Teachers Use Creative Drama as a Method in Their Lessons

20 of the social sciences teachers who were included in the study stated that they used creative drama as a method in their lessons. Remaining two teachers however stated that they did not use creative drama in their lessons for the purposes such as the intensity of the lesson schedule, inappropriateness of the places that lessons take place and not having a good command of the method.



**Graphic 4.** The situation of using creative drama as a method in lessons

### **The Reasons of the Teachers for Using Creative Drama as a Method**

In order to effectively study the social sciences lesson, different teaching methods can be used. These teaching methods are separated from each other by their way of application, duration, easiness and the responsibility which is given by them to the student. Creative drama, one of the methods that can be used in social sciences lessons, gives the student an opportunity of putting himself into another one's situation. Alongside with this, it opens the ways of being respectful to the other ideas by providing a chance for group works.

The use of creative drama as a method in a class setting for different lessons, primarily, aims to create a student based learning environment, to make the studied topic more permanent and experiential, to make the learners (they can be children, adolescents, adults) think differently and critically, to have them express their emotions in a healthy way, to provide an opportunity for the development of free thoughts and expression, to develop creativity and written-verbal communication skills (Adıgüzel, 2013).

In the study of Taşkaya and Bal (2009) titled as “class teacher's views about teaching methods of social sciences”, it is determined that drama is the second teaching method of the ones that the class teachers know but cannot use in social sciences. For the reason of not being able to use drama in the lessons, the most frequently used excuse is limited opportunities of the school.

The teachers' opinions regarding the reasons for using creative drama method, which is trying to create an interactive tie among student, teacher, class environment and lesson context, are stated below.

*K1: “I use it in my lessons, it makes a contribution through animation or having a critical look on an event from a different perspective while giving democracy education and teaching a historical event; meanwhile, it makes me and the students closer and more sincere, student adopts his/her teacher and cares what he teaches more when he/she considers the teacher as a person, performing or playing roles.”*



K6: *“Rendering learning stronger and permanent by enabling students to play a role in order to ensure their active participation; Ensuring the lesson to be more enjoyable.”*

K9: *“I become quite happy while I am watching their improvisations related to the lesson as I see how they present such creative plays.”*

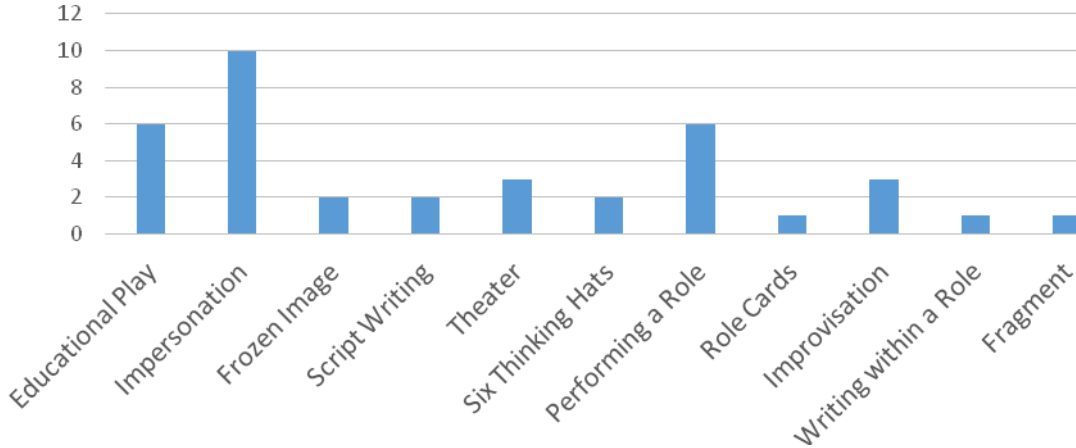
As well as these positive opinions, the negative views, describing the difficulties related to the use of drama method, are expressed by the teachers:

K21: *“It cannot be said that I, frequently, use creative drama in my lessons since the general concern is to complete the curriculum. Moreover, these types of activities require a process of good plan and preparation in advance.”*

When the teachers' views are examined within the scope of the study, it is seen that creative drama is preferred as it provides different perspectives to student, increases the existing closeness and sincerity between teacher and student and makes the students participate in a more active way. And the causes like the hurry for completing the teaching curriculum, the skill of planning and the long preparation process, can be shown as the major reasons why creative drama method is not used.

### **Techniques which are used by Teachers in Creative Drama Practices**

The teachers included in the study group mentioned that they involved different methods in their lessons in which they used creative drama methods. Even though some techniques, used in the lessons which are studied with creative drama method, are the techniques belonging to the fields of psychology, theater, cinema etc., these techniques are among the techniques of creative drama in the international literature since they are often used in the field of creative drama. This situation may cause some delusions along with it. As the techniques, which are not among the techniques of creative drama, are, absolutely, used with the creative drama method in that lesson, they are supposed to be the techniques of creative drama. The graphic below provides hints about what the used techniques are and how often they are used, based on the answers of the study group:



**Graphic 5.** Implemented techniques and frequency of implementation

### Conceptional Mistakes of Teachers in Creative Drama Practices

When the answers of the participants are examined, the notions like feeling empathy with someone, script writing and performing, educational plays, six thinking hats technique, telling with conversations, which are not creative drama techniques in fact, are addressed to be creative drama techniques used in social sciences lessons. Through their answers, the teachers included in the study group provided data on the conceptual confusion they are in.

K4: *“Impersonation, feeling empathy with someone, frozen image, script writing and playing.”*

K7: *“Impersonation of the subject in a story genre, in a theater style. Narration of a war in the conversation of two sides. Educational plays.”*

K8: *“Like six thinking hats method, performing a role, drama.”*

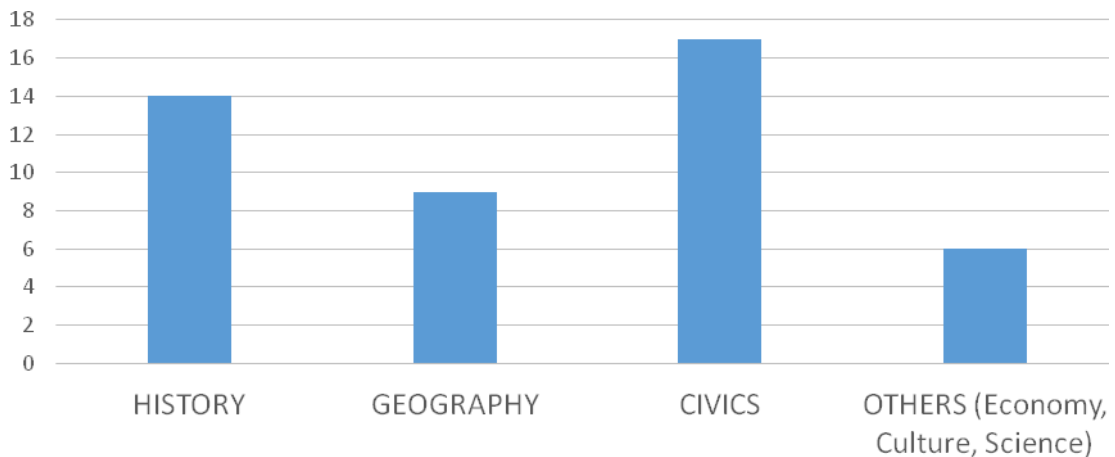
Alongside with these examples, the ones, which are careful about the planning phases of creative drama and using the notions correctly within the process, are encountered. The following view of a participant can be shown as an example to the correct use of notions.

K9: *“As a warm-up practice, I am using the ones providing interaction and mutual trust. Sometimes, I give the role-playing and warm-up at the same time (Like freeze and escape game, “Önde Turna”). I use the knowledge that I have acquired at the university in this subject and I, generally, follow the example works on the internet. By preparing role cards, I am making the students take a part in an improvising play. Sometimes, I skip the formation part in accordance with the level of the students. We always make the evaluation.”*

### The Subjects which the Teachers think that they can be studied better by Creative Drama

The field of social science, which tries to combine its subjects with the reality of the social life and the direction of creative drama, which is a process constructed based on the experiences of the group members, coincide in the matters of social facts and relating human lives.

When the description of creative drama is considered, it is stated that any notion, general experience, idea except of the private experiences can be mentioned in creative drama. Based on this statement, it is seen that the use of drama, dealing with the experiences of human, is possible in the lessons like history, geography, civics, economy, culture, science, which can be named as the general heritage of humanity and are the sub-fields of social sciences occurred as the result of the historical experience of humanity. Studying the some subjects (historical events, fights during the acquisition of the notion of citizenship, humane geography subjects etc.) by creative drama can relatively be easier due to their dramatic constructs. The teachers, involved in the study group, stated that they used creative drama as a method in the subjects below:



**Graphic 6.** The Sub-Fields in which Creative Drama Method is used

Study participants, who state that it can be used in almost each subject of these sub-fields, have given these specific examples:

*K1: "Democracy education, historical events which are open discussion in our present day, the controversial subjects of the republic history, attempts to begin to multi-party system and transformation phase; creative drama must be used more in these subjects."*

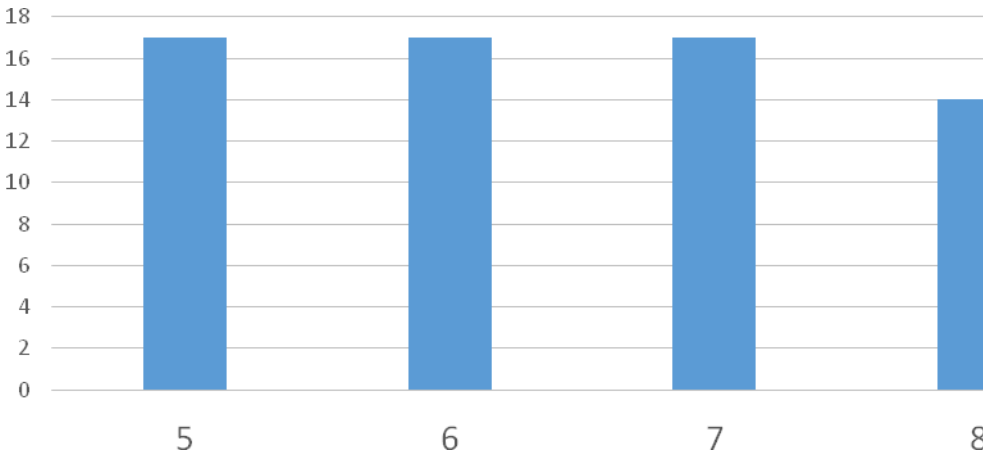
*K4: "I want to mention my example works: In the primary education, 5<sup>th</sup> grades are at the stage of Secondary School now. I tried to develop something by myself for the 5<sup>th</sup> grades. In the unit of I Am Learning My Rights of the 5<sup>th</sup> grade, I think I can use it for crowded, group, institute, roles, duties, changing duties and roles, responsibilities. I used it for the subjects of roles and duties."*

*K18: “It can, particularly, be adapted to the subjects from the life. It is convenient for the unit of Democracy’s Journey, and it can be used for the subject of population, Independency War and Çanakkale and in many subject of the unit “I am Learning My Rights.”*

### **The Class Levels in Which Creative Drama Can Be Used According to Teachers**

An education process must follow a three-step method to be described as a creative drama session. Besides, this process must include the components of the creative drama as a context. These components are group, leader, environment, subject (idea) and techniques. The level of the class in which creative drama can be used is related to the two of the components of creative drama, “group” and “subject (idea)”. Because, a subject, parallel to the development features of the participant group, must be chosen for a creative drama session. In order to make the chosen subject studied in creative drama method, the way of impersonation with techniques must be followed. However, a participant must be at a specific level of development to realize “improvisation”, one of the methods of creative drama which is based on being spontaneous and creativity. The steps of application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation steps in Bloom’s Taxonomy can be shown as the level of this development (Arı, 2011). When the groups, which social sciences education is applied on, are considered, it can be said that these groups are the persons at the periods of transition to the abstract processes and in abstract processes. It is predicted that the persons in this development period can realize the processes in Bloom’s Taxonomy.

Within this context, it can be said that creative drama is a method which can be used on the process of social sciences education. Considering the results of the study, it is seen that teachers use creative drama at all class levels. The data below prove the thesis:



**Graphic 7.** Class levels in which creative drama can be used

K1: *"I found it convenient to be used especially at the level of 5<sup>th</sup> grade since children are not too much directed and imposed at this level. If the education is given at this period, we can raise children who can express themselves well in the further classes, are not influenced in the aspect of his/her idea and look at the events in a more critical and objective way."*

K2: *"5<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> grades, because permanence and impressiveness are higher as it is a younger age group."*

K15: *"7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades are making it easier, because each student can perceive their duties better. Also they easily understand the message intended to be transmitted."*

K18: *"In 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grades, very beautiful activities occur, yet there are not many drama activities because the lesson of the history of Revolution is in the last 2 hours and the subjects must be completed before TEOG exam. If the lesson hours are increased, beautiful works can be done."*

## RESULTS

As a result, it is found that social sciences teachers included in the study group use creative drama to a large extent. The status of teachers in the study group regarding their training on creative drama shows difference in terms of their occupational seniority. Many of the teachers that studied in university after the year 2005 took creative drama as a compulsory lesson. In spite of this, the rate of receiving creative drama in teachers that graduated before the year 2005 decreases even more.

The frequency that the teachers in the study group use creative drama is different from each other. Besides, it is seen that the teachers who state that they received creative drama training, experience a lot of confusion in concepts relating to the field.

It is seen that there is a mutual thought dominating in the subjects of social sciences, in which creative drama is used by the teachers in the study group. While the social sciences teachers included in the aforementioned study group state that creative drama is more suitable for civics lesson, the number of teachers using the same statement for geography field is quite few.

## SUGGESTIONS

Since the creative drama is a compulsory lesson in social sciences teaching program since 2005, teachers graduated earlier than this date need to receive more frequent in-service training on creative drama in order to satisfy their lack of notional and practical knowledge.

In order to eliminate the contradiction in terms of social sciences teachers that took creative drama as a compulsory lesson, instructors and / or academic members conducting these compulsory lessons must be experts in the field of creative drama. Teachers included in the study group stated that they used creative drama quite often. However, they stated that they could not use it as much they want it since they could

not finish the curriculum in time. In this context, the weekly lesson hours of the creative drama must be increased.

In order to use creative drama effectively especially in Civics education, it is suggested to increase the weekly lesson hours of the Civics lesson included in the curriculum.

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