



## The Progress and Current Situation of Creative Drama in the Turkish Education System

H. Ömer Adıgüzel\*

### Abstract

The 1980's are considered to be the era in which the Turkish education system reflected on the scientific aspect of creative drama and research became intensive. Creative drama started to take its place in the system as a method of teaching, a branch of learning, and an aesthetic art form and become a class taught not only in private schools or institutions, but has become a mandatory class in state primary schools as well. YÖK (the Higher Education Council) has started a new initiative "The Reconstruction of Education Faculties "Preschool Drama" and "Primary School Drama" courses have become mandatory lessons for teacher training. This is considered to be an important point that the Turkish education system has attained.

**Keywords:** Creative drama, Turkish Education System, the progress and current situation of creative drama.

---

\* Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences, Ankara, Turkey.  
E-mail: omeradiguzel@gmail.com

## INTRODUCTION

### **The Historical Process of Drama in Turkish Education System**

Creative drama, or dramatization, was first considered as an education tool in the Republic period. However, towards the end of the Ottoman period, we find I. H. Baltacıoğlu to be a pioneer in this field. An important educator during the Republican period, Baltacıoğlu in his book “Collective Education” points out Muammer Targaç, a teacher, who was using theater in his classes.

In 1908, Baltacıoğlu made amendments in the Meşrutiyet period lesson program under the heading “Historical Enactments” and started giving theater a place in Istanbul schools. He published a document entitled “The Teaching of School Performance” to clarify the role of dramatic performances in schools and discuss the relationship of theater in education (Çoruh, 1950:6). Baltacıoğlu stated, “School performance is not only useful in teaching reading, writing and verbal communication but also history, literature and other social science classes.”(San, 1998).

Dramatic arts were first considered, in a real sense, to be a teaching facility and way of expression in the Primary School Program during the Republican era in 1926. In this program, performance and dramatic arts were considered fundamental in primary school education principals (Çoruh, 1950:10). In the following years, performance art through dramatization is mentioned at least in part for primary and secondary schools.

In his book “Dramatization in Schools” written in 1950, Çoruh mentions the importance of the following subjects: The introduction of dramatization in schools, Children and Drama activity, The Principals of Education and Drama, The Role of Drama in the Parent Teacher Association, Drama Presentations, Theater, Puppeteering, *Karagöz and Hacivat* (shadow plays) and Radio Theater, among others.

Emin Özdemir published “The Application of Dramatization” in 1965. In this work, he points out that in the progressing and changing understanding of education of modern times, dramatization-based techniques are an inherent way of teaching, more suited to the children’s natural instincts for story telling (imitation) (Özdemir, 1965:3). This book was aimed at enlightening teachers during their in-house training given by The Ministry of Education (MEB) and refers to the meaning of dramatization, finger puppet games, silent plays (pantomime), storytelling, freestyle and structured drama, as well as applications of dramatization in classes such as Social Studies, Civics Studies, Geography and History.

In the 1968 Primary School program, it is indicated that stories, fables, novels, poetry, nature stories, enactments from books and magazines may be read and dramatized as long as the subject matter was suitable for the children (MEB, 1968:23). Also, along with these activities, stories’ being enacted by a couple of students as well as in groups was included in the primary education curriculum, the goal of these activities being enjoyment and fun (Oğuzkan, 1983:235).

The following explanations were given in the 1968 Primary School program about written and verbal Turkish language lessons, p. “Small dramatization activities play an important role in getting students to speak in class and learning to use body

language. The students should be encouraged by the teacher to immediately enact a story they have read or learned, perhaps in a social studies class. What is being described here is the students verbally enacting a situation or person they have heard, read or studied about, basically role playing. Preparing the puppets and stages in art class, students writing the plays to be presented as theater shows, brings an improved knowledge of writing. Sometimes, the use only of body language in these enactments is also useful (MEB, 1968:121,122, Oğuzkan, 1983:235).

In the 1962 Secondary School Program, the importance of students' "expression through enactment" of what they have seen, read and thought has been emphasized. Also, in this program, using techniques acquired in primary school such as "Enactment through presentation (dramatization)" in Turkish language lessons, relating to better verbal communication skills was stressed. As well as "conversing, explaining, debating and storytelling, dramatization also has an important role in improving verbal communication skills" (Oğuzkan, 1983:236).

Turkey's history is steeped in theater tradition and old documentation. However the concept of Creative Drama (Theaterpaedagogik-Darstellendes Spiel) must be construed having a modern and broader meaning than traditional plays and dramas. The beginnings of this concept in Turkey date to the 1980's under the leadership of Prof. Inci San and thespian Tamer Levent. San and Levent trained with British and German experts in the theoretical and practical areas of creative drama use in education and started using these methods in teaching. Even though notions that are close to creative drama had been seen in the past in the Turkish education system, the concept only found its true meaning in the 1980's. In 1982, workshops began with 70 students at Ankara University Education Sciences Faculty on creative drama (Theaterpaedagogik-Darstellendes Spiel).

### **Creative Drama in Primary and Secondary Education**

The High Advisory Board of The Ministry of Education (MEB) compiled a report on "Suggestions for the improvement of Fine Arts in Turkey". In this report, suggestions were made on playtime; dramatization / drama activities and a selection of these are listed below:

In preschool and kindergarten, lessons such as human relations should be done through methods such as dramatization (plays). These activities should be complemented by sound, speech, coloring/drawing, storytelling, etc. and on "education should be theatrical" concept encouraged in the educational programs (...) Out of the 10 hours allocated to Turkish language lessons, 2 should be used for verbal expression and drama activities. These activities should be connected to Turkish lessons, however, developing its own lesson characteristics. The "Theatric Education Concept" started in Preschool should be continued extensively during Primary Education. For the homeroom teacher to be able to teach the 2 hours of Turkish Language lessons spent on "Verbal Description and Drama Activities", they must be educated in-house for better preparation for these classes. The "Verbal Description and Drama Activities" class should be taught during a period of Turkish lesson and the necessary textbooks must be prepared (...) In Secondary school

theater education, diction and dramatization must be included in Turkish Language lessons (MEB, 1983:1, 2, 3, 6, 7).

The first International Drama in Education Seminar was organized in 1985 in Ankara, with the contributions of the German Council and British Council and creative drama experts from both Britain and Germany. The first educators that adapted to creative drama in Turkey were lecturers and pedagogues. These international seminars, organized every 2 years in Turkey, have prioritized usage of creative drama in education.

In addition, the Creative Drama Association, being the only non-governmental agency pushing for creative drama to expand in the Turkish education system has initiated a 350-hour creative drama-teaching course, approved by The Ministry of Education. This agency has also been accepted as a member of the German BAG Spiel und Theaterpädagogik e.V.

A large percentage of educators in schools are members of the Creative Drama Association. These educators have learned this concept in courses that the association provides and attended the national and international lectures and seminars regularly. Furthermore, these instructors attend Ankara University, which started creative drama courses within their Educational Sciences Faculty in 1990 and earned a doctorate and/or graduate degree. Also, Gazi and Hacettepe Universities have introduced creative drama as a course in their Child Development and Language, History and Geography departments.

In 1991, a report published on the problems in art education, "The Special Interest in Improving Fine Arts Education in Turkey" mentions drama and dramatic dimensions. According to this report, a healthy balance has not been obtained between the phonetic, plastic and dramatic dimensions in Art education (MEB, 1991:14, article 7). In art education drama has not been utilized properly until now (p.14, article 9). The solutions to these problems have been listed as follows:

In art education, a healthy balance must be found between the phonetic, plastic and dramatic dimensions (p.18, article 8)...In art education "drama", due to its humane and community based essence, its attribute of providing self-confidence and learning through living, must become a branch, an educational tool in its own right (p.18, article 9)...Art is an undeniable part of the "common cultural" aspect in preschools, primary, secondary and higher education. Thus, as a first step, music and drawing, which are "elective" classes in schools, must be made mandatory and an elective class on "Drama" must be implemented (article 120)...Starting from preschool, drama activity in art education must be emphasized. In primary and secondary education, drama activity and classes must take their place in the education program (MEB, 1991:22, article 8)...As for professional art education programs provided for teachers "drama" must be made a mandatory lesson (article 8, p.24). As for suggestions to improve art education, including the Anatolian Fine Arts Secondary School's Drama division's "Framework Division Programs", implementation is necessary through the Instruction and Training Committee (article 5, p.25).

If we compare and contrast the two reports made in 1983 and 1991, we arrive at certain conclusions. The report in 1983 mentions drama in writing, accepting how it may be utilized as an educational tool in certain classes and considered as an

important social activity. However, in 1991, drama is viewed as an extensive learning instrument within general education as well as fine arts education and its effectiveness is emphasized. Also, according to this report, drama is viewed as a teaching implement with a humane essence, influencing the individual to become social and confident. Most importantly, it was emphasized that drama must be a mandatory class for higher education in teaching.

The initially congested state of the Turkish education system forced the Ministry of Education to start developing both the educators and the system. Central and active teaching methods started being discussed and creative drama emerged as the most effective, taking its place in the education system. Teachers found creative drama to be adaptable and received effective results in many fields.

The Ministry of Education's Instruction and Training Committee published the Primary School 1<sup>st</sup> – 2<sup>nd</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Elective Drama Class Program in September 1998. Starting from the 1998 educational year, elective drama classes have been officially included in the Turkish education system as part of the 7 elective classes offered to primary school students from the 4<sup>th</sup> grade to the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Creative Drama classes have been made mandatory for all educator schools and education faculties. This has eased the difficulty in finding qualified creative drama educators, as well as increasing the use of creative drama by all branch teachers as an effective teaching implement.

These advances in creative drama done during the PISA research have totally renewed the program and, in 2006, the education program went through radical changes, implementing new and effective teaching methods. As for the results obtained, Turkey has become 36<sup>th</sup> in mathematics, sciences and problem solving and 34<sup>th</sup> in reading and writing out of 41 countries. Turkey reacted to the results of this project with haste and changed the primary and secondary schools curriculum, producing a new education program.

The new program is student centered; activity based and concentrates on active learning. It can be used parallel with creative drama, as it focuses on the means instead of the end, it is theme based and requires intellect and body working together, thus making creative drama an excellent educational tool.

Drama is an effective instrument, for example, in Life Studies lessons, in understanding the concepts Life Studies curriculum for 1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup> grades, or learning the Social Studies' concept, "cultural heritage, people, and places". These concepts can be understood easier if learned in play, role-play and improvisation and textbooks have been prepared to compliment these classes. Creative drama as a teaching method has begun to be seen as an important factor as efforts are underway to harmonize the Turkish education system with that of the European Union.

### **Creative Drama in Higher Education**

In 1997, the Higher Education Council made "Drama in Primary Education" and "Drama in Preschool Education" classes mandatory in the programs educating homeroom and preschool teachers. With this program, it has also begun elective drama courses for teachers in the training of such subjects as social sciences, foreign languages, guidance counselors, science education and mathematics. In other

government institutions such as the Police Academies, mandatory creative drama lessons have also been introduced.

The program, which had been introduced in 1997, has also been revised and creative drama has become a mandatory lesson for social sciences candidate teachers as well. In 1999, Ankara University Faculty of Educational Sciences, Department of Fine Arts initiated the program “Creative Drama Graduate Degree”. Towards the end of 2006, the graduate degree in creative drama, so far only being offered in Turkey at Ankara University, has become an independent branch of science. This program is composed of no less than 30 credits and at least 10 lessons along with a semester project. This program is geared towards teacher candidates from all levels, as well as graduates of educational sciences, theater and theater studies and is restricted to a 25-person contingent.

Creative drama education Turkey has progressed rapidly amongst the European countries in this field (The educators from The Berlin Fine Arts University, Theater Pedagogy Institute have contributed creative drama education in Turkey.) for 30 years. It may be considered a positive development for creative drama to be included in teacher training as a mandatory lesson, as well as becoming an elective class in primary schools.

## REFERENCES

- Adıgüzel, H.Ö. (2002). “Yasantılara dayalı öğrenme ve eğitimde drama ilişkisi” (the relation of experience based learning and drama in education), Marmara Üniversitesi, 1. Öğrenme ve öğretim sempozyumu (Paper Presented. 1st Instruction and Teaching Symposium) İstanbul.
- Coruh, S. (1950) *Okullarda Dramatizasyon (Dramatization in education)* (2. baskı), İstanbul: Isıl Matbaası.
- MEB (2004). *PISA 2003 Projesi, (PISA 2003 Project) Ulusal Ön Rapor (National Preliminary Report)*, Ankara.
- MEB (1983). *Türkiye’de Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimini Gelistirilmesine Yönelik Öneriler, (The advices for developing of fine arts education in Turkey)* Ankara: MEB Yük. Dan. Kur. Bask.
- MEB (1991). *Türkiye’de Güzel Sanatlar Eğitimini Gelistirme Komisyon Raporu, (The report of fine arts education development committee)* Ankara: MEB: Ankara, Tal. Ter. Kur. Bask.
- MEB (1968). *İlköğretim Programı, (Elementary Education Curriculum)* Ankara: MEB yayınları.
- OECD (2003) *Learning for Tomorrow’s World-First Results From*, Paris.
- OECD (2003) *Results From PISA Executive Summary*, Paris.
- Oguzkan, Ferhan. (1983). *Cocuk Edebiyatı, (Children Literature)* Ankara: Gül Yayınevi, 4. baskı.
- Özdemir, E. (1965) *Uygulamalı Dramatizasyon, (Implemented Dramatization)* Ankara: Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Yayınları.
- San, İ. (1998). “Türkiye’de yaratıcı drama çalışmalarının dünü ve bugünü”, The history of creative drama education in Turkey) 2. *Ulusal Çocuk Kültürü Kongresi, (Paper presented in 2<sup>nd</sup> National Child Culture Congress)* (4-6 Kasım 1998), Ankara.

## **Türk Eğitim Sisteminde Yaratıcı Dramanın Mevcut Durumu ve Gelişimi**

**H. Ömer Adıgüzel**

### **Özet**

Türk Eğitim Sistemi'nde 1980li yıllar, araştırmaların yoğun olarak yapıldığı ve yaratıcı dramının bilimsel yönünün yansıdığı dönem olarak kabul edilir. Yaratıcı drama; bir öğretim yöntemi, öğrenme yolu ve estetik bir sanat formu olarak eğitim sisteminde yerini almaya başlamıştır. Yaratıcı drama yalnızca özel okul ya da kurumlarda bir ders değil; aynı zamanda devlet okullarında da seçimlik de olsa yer bulabilmektedir. YÖK (1997), Eğitim Fakültelerinin yeniden yapılanması kapsamında bir girişimde bulunmuş ve “Okul Öncesi, Sınıf Öğretmenliği ile Sosyal Bilgiler Öğretmenliği programlarında zorunlu bir ders olarak yer vermiştir. Bu durum, Türk Eğitim Sistemi'nde önemli bir nokta olarak görülmektedir. Bu doğrultuda bu çalışmada, yaratıcı dramının Türk Eğitim Sistemi'ndeki tarihsel gelişim süreci incelenmiştir.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Yaratıcı drama, Türk Eğitim Sistemi, yaratıcı dramının tarihsel gelişimi.

