

Teacher's and Students' Opinions on the Use of Drama Method in Distance Education and Drama Activity Proposals

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Abstract

The need for distance education due to the Covid-19 pandemic has led researchers to seek to increase the quality of distance education. It is obvious that the usage levels of different teaching methods in education should be changed. With the use of drama in education, it is aimed that children who participate in the learning process by having fun become self-actualized, creative, honest, open to communication and independent individuals. In this study, it was investigated whether the drama method, which is one of the effective teaching methods, can be applied in distance education, and drama activity proposals were created. In the study, three different drama activities were presented, which were prepared in accordance with the outcomes for the primary school 1st grade Life Science lesson and suitable for distance education, after the teaching with these activities, the opinions of the classroom teacher and students about the process were collected with a semi-structured interview form. According to the opinions received, it was concluded that technological problems can be a major obstacle to the application of the drama method in distance education, some students may have motivation problems. Better results can be obtained by increasing the frequency of using the drama method, this method can be used in almost every unit of the Life Science lesson, if the curriculum was revised according to distance education, appropriate drama activities should be included, the drama activities presented in this study were sufficient in terms of unit gains and implementation, and students found the lesson taught with this method enjoyable. The results obtained were evaluated in the light of the literature.

Keywords: Distance Education, Face to Face Learning, Drama

Introduction

It is the duty of educational institutions to create a generation that can think productively, critically, independently and creatively, to form original ideas, to make judgments, to produce solutions to problems, to reflect the individual difference, to get to know the culture and history of the place they live in, and to gain the behaviors required by their roles in society. The main purpose of these institutions is to enable the child to recognize himself as an individual, to develop interpersonal relations, and to raise the child as a good citizen by understanding his responsibilities. (Öztürk 776, Binbaşıoğlu 35).

Among the most important disciplines that serve this purpose in primary education institutions are the courses named Life Science and Social Studies (Kop and Tuncel 107). The first lesson a student takes in this adaptation process is Life Science. According to Sönmez, it is not known exactly when and where Life Science education started, but the following can be said about this: The individual is born, grows, develops, matures, gets older and dies. At every moment of this period, individuals begin to take part in Science and Social Sciences education. Life Science lesson is of great importance as it includes both of these fields.

Another lesson that allows individuals to better understand themselves and their environment is Social Studies. Social Studies aims to ensure that the child gains a social personality; includes social sciences and citizenship subjects such as history, geography, sociology, psychology, philosophy, political science and law. It is an elementary education course that is a continuation of the Life Science lesson (1st, 2nd and 3rd grades) in which the concepts of past, present and future are examined (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı). However, the aim of the Life Science course is to provide students with important social skills, to socialize them and to create a basis for raising them as good citizens. In addition, this course enables students to establish more comfortable and healthy relationships with others and socialize (Koç 164).

In the Life Science Lesson Curriculum, which is based on constructivist learning, it is seen that students actively create, interpret and reorganize information according to their prior knowledge (Milli Eğitim Bakanlığı Talim Terbiye Kurulu Başkanlığı). Since the drama method, which is frequently mentioned in the curriculum, involves the revival of social roles, the child who tries to put himself in the shoes of others tries to shape the roles in the games in accordance with social issues and thus develops his abilities (Çağlaroğlu 21).

In the drama method, children are able to understand the adult world, which is complicated in their lives, and they can get to know their surroundings and interact with people and adapt. The contribution of this method to the cognitive development of students should not be overlooked, as children adopt adult roles such as mother, father, driver and pilot and use their imaginations creatively. The cognitive development of the child, who is in cooperation with his / her friends, is positive under favour of the attitudes and movements towards objects and events and the evaluations made at the end of the drama activity. In addition, the drama method helps children learn to be permanent by concretizing abstract lesson subjects and enables introverted children to communicate well with their environment by expressing their suppressed feelings by mingling with their friends and relaxing (Aralet al. 4041). Based on this, drama, which is both a teaching method, a discipline and a tool of art education, is

an auxiliary field that improves the socialization and awareness of the child (Aral et al. 40).

The purpose of drama in education is to make a concept better comprehensible, to be studied by reviewing and thinking on it (Okvuran). In addition, by including drama in education, it is aimed that children who participate in the learning process by having fun are self-actualized, creative, honest, open to communication and independent individuals (Üstündağ 9).

Coronavirus-2019 (COVID-19), which was first seen in China in December 2019 in the world, affected the whole world in a short time and was declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization (World Health Organization). This situation has brought many difficulties and changes in daily life (Guragai 353; Karakuzu et al. 109). One of the main factors most affected by the pandemic has been the education system. Institutions responsible for education all over the world have put into practice the necessity of closing schools and providing distance education. In the most general sense, distance education is defined as a teaching method based on the active use of information technologies to facilitate learning and lectures, as instructors and students are located in different times or places (Valentine). UNESCO has stated that it will assist states in distance education in order to reduce the negative effects of school closures (UNICEF). This situation shows that the distribution of successful students may not be the same as past in the future (Giannini & Lewis). School closure forces countries to innovate in order to keep their education systems alive, so a new education system is taking shape all over the world. While countries produce solutions to continue education without interruption, the quality of learning has largely depended on the level and quality of digital access (Gilani). This has increased the use of technology and the need for technological devices such as internet, phone, computer, tablet (Uyar 27).

Based on these, during the Covid-19 pandemic process, the question of whether the drama method can be applied by distance education in the primary school 1st grade Life Science lesson comes to mind. For this reason, it has become necessary to take and evaluate the opinions of the teacher who will apply the drama activity on this subject.

The purpose of this research is to evaluate views of an elementary school teacher and several students about the applicability of drama method in the process of remote training applications in Turkey in the process of Covid-19 pandemic. Also proposing some drama activities which can be used in distance education is aimed. This research is important in terms of providing ideas to practitioners and decision makers in terms of ongoing distance education applications, as well as correcting mistakes made.

In addition, the concepts taught within the scope of the “safe life” unit further increase student’s interest in Social Studies as they increase communication, decision-making and problem solving skills, which are among the basic skills in the Social Studies Curriculum. Based on this, it is thought that this study will be able to prevent possible problems and difficulties in practice that may be encountered in the drama studies conducted through distance education and to be able to carry it out effectively, contribute to Life Sciences education and thus will make important contributions to community life and education. In line with this purpose of the research, the research questions of the study are as follows:

- What are the teacher’s opinions about the use of drama method in distance education and drama activities?
- What are the students’ opinions about the use of drama method in distance education and drama activities?

Materials and Methods

In this paper, drama activities that can be applied with distance education within the scope of the unit of “safe life” in the Life Science lesson curriculum of the first year were presented, and the opinions of teachers and students about this application were taken. This study is a case study. Case studies are studies that aim to study, describe and reveal current situations in real life (Creswell and Poth 218). In this paper, it was aimed to examine in depth the effectiveness of drama activities presented with case study in distance education.

The study consists of a first grade teacher and 3 students of an elementary school located in the central district of Ağrı, which was selected with the appropriate sampling method because they are continuing their education with distance education.

Before developing drama activities that can be applied in distance education, drama activities related to Life Science lesson existing in the literature were examined. In order to do this; drama books, theses containing drama activities, and articles were investigated. Thus, drama activities that can be used in distance education were organized and created (Appendix-2).

Content analysis, one of the qualitative analysis methods, was used in the study. Using this method, the information obtained from the teacher and students were coded and analyzed, and comments were made about the effectiveness of the drama activities and the drama method in distance education in general.

Data were collected with a semi-structured interview form (Appendix-1). The semi-structured interview form was created by scanning the literature to reveal the opinions of teacher and students as a result of the drama activities and the final form was taken by taking the opinions of 2 experts in assessment and evaluation. The semi-structured interview form, which was created in two different forms, was applied to the teachers and students, and the opinions were interpreted by coding. While analyzing the data, 1st student is coded as S1, 2nd student is coded as S2, 3rd student is coded as S3.

The data are presented in two parts as teacher and student views. The opinions received from the classroom teacher were evaluated in the categories as: Difficulties in using the drama method in distance education, the frequency that should be applied to be used more effectively, the usability of the Life Science lesson in other subjects, the cognitive and affective effects on the students, the adequacy of the activities in the curriculum, and the effectiveness of the examples of the activities.

The opinions received from the students were categorized as whether the activities were entertaining or not, the activities they liked and the reasons they were liked, whether they would like to learn again with the drama method, and whether there was any point they did not understand while learning with this method.

While creating drama activities that can be applied in distance education, first of all, the acquisitions in the Ministry of National Education Life Science 1st Grade curriculum were examined. In the literature,

existing drama activities have also been discussed in detail, and activities that students can do individually at home have been revealed. These activities were finalized by taking the opinions of two experts in drama.

The classroom teacher was informed about the study and she stated that she could voluntarily apply the drama activity to the students. In addition, the students were informed about the activity before the lesson and it was seen that all students wanted to participate in the activity voluntarily. The data are encoded with emphasis on the privacy of personal data.

Before the drama activities were applied in distance education, the classroom teacher verbally conveyed the basic information about the subject to the students. Then, she applied the activities offered over the Education Information Network (the formal name of the network is EBA) to the students. Then the teacher continued the lesson with the step of applying the drama activities. These activities, which are carried out with approximately thirty minutes for each, have been implemented and completed as specified in Appendix-2.

Results and Discussion

Findings Related to the First Sub-Problem

As a result of the interview with the classroom teacher, it was seen that technological problems can be a major obstacle to the application of the drama method in distance education. Because the teacher stated that “the students sometimes did not hear my voice, when I said show me the papers with numbers on it, some of them would lift them when they saw the others lifted them”.

In addition, while using the drama method in distance education, it has been observed that some of the students may do the activity for a short time and leave it, and are not involved in the process during the target period. The classroom teacher stated that “some students took a few steps in the activity that took a walk and then stopped”. In this process, it was observed that the group motivation was not provided enough because the students did these activities individually on the computer. In this regard, the teacher said, “If we were in the classroom, they would all continue their activities together more effectively”.

It is seen that with the increase in the frequency of using the drama method in distance education, students may benefit more from this method, and students’ role-playing skills may not be sufficiently developed when this method is rarely used. Because the classroom teacher said, “The children had a little difficulty getting used to it at first. Because we had never done such an application on distance learning. But I think it would be more beneficial if we regularly do drama activity once or twice a week”.

It was concluded that drama method can be used in almost every unit of the Life Science lesson. The classroom teacher said “drama method can be used if it is suitable for the outcomes, and the gains of the Life Science lesson are generally very suitable for using the drama method”.

As a result, using drama method with distance education, it was concluded that the interest and motivation of the students in the lesson increased in general and it rarely attracted the attention of some students. The classroom teacher said, “While I was teaching, a student said: wow, how enjoyable this lesson was, and this motivated me even more in terms of practicing the activity. On the other hand, two of my students were not interested to the lesson from time to time” she said.

It has been observed that the activities in the 1st grade Life Science Teaching Program (perhaps due to its implementation in the form of distance education) are not sufficient. On the other hand, there was an opinion that the drama method can facilitate the learning of the information and increase the permanence of the information. Because during the lesson, it was observed that some students could not give correct answers to the questions about the subject even after the activities in the EBA were completed, but could reach the correct answer after the drama activities. The teacher also said, “I was very surprised that the children learned the subject immediately, especially in the activity related to the passage superiority in traffic. They had not fully learned in previous activities. I didn’t think the drama method would be that effective. They watched the subject in the videos, but their active involvement has ensured its permanence”.

It was stated that the drama activities presented in this study and that can be applied in distance

education are appropriate for the class level and include the necessary gains. In addition, it has been observed that many concepts within the scope of the relevant unit can be comprehended under favour of the drama activities created. In this regard, the classroom teacher said, "I found the activities quite adequate. Almost all of the concepts that we needed to teach in the unit were included in the activities. They also included the gains".

Findings Related to the Second Sub-Problem

Students found it very enjoyable to use the drama method in distance education. Because it has been observed that they are more active than the lessons taught without using this method. In this regard, some of the students' statements are as follows:

S1: "Previously, the teacher had computer-based activities, now I like to move."

S3: "I did not expect this lesson to be so good. I had so much fun."

It was seen that among the activities held, they liked the activity prepared on the subject of "People in Traffic" the most. In general, it has been observed that there is no dislike of the children in the activities. The students stated the following on this issue:

S2: "I like the event where we wrote the numbers and put up to the air the most."

S3: "I like the event I was the police car the most. It was so much fun. All were good."

The students stated that they wanted the drama method to be used frequently in distance education. They stated that they understood what was told with this method very well and that they did not have difficulty in doing the activities. Some of the sentences students said about the drama activity process applied with distance education are given below:

S1: "Told like that, I already understood them all."

S2: "I wish we did such activities in every lesson."

Research Gap & Conclusion

In this study, it is seen that the drama method can be used quite effectively in distance education and that the interest and motivation of the students in the lesson can increase with this method. There are

many studies in the literature that show that students make progress in both cognitive and affective areas with face-to-face application of the drama method both in the Life Sciences lesson and in other lessons also (Doğan 13, Erhan 155, Gürbüz and Ilgaz 196, Koç 90). Accordingly, it is understood that the drama method can be used effectively both in face-to-face education and in distance education.

It is known from the literature that technical problems are one of the biggest obstacles in technology supported studies (Engin, Tösten & Kaya 77). In this study, from time to time problems were experienced in sound and image transfer, and attention should be paid to technological competence in order to use the drama method in distance education effectively.

It is known that students show superior improvement in group studies such as cooperative learning method (Genç and Şahin 389; Nakiboğlu and Benlikaya 54). In this study, the motivation of some of the students could not reach the desired level because the drama activities were more individualized. This is a negative aspect of the use of drama in distance education.

Considering that the students sometimes fail to reach sufficient knowledge level after the applications in EBA and can reach them after the drama activities, it can be said that drama activities should be added to the curriculum for distance learning if the pandemic process continues.

On the other hand, it has been concluded that the drama method in distance education can be used in some other lessons besides the first grade Life Science lesson. Finally, it has been concluded that it is recommended to use these activities in the distance education process.

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Appendix-1

Semi-Structured Interview Form Questions

Questions asked to the teacher

1. What are the difficulties in using the drama

- method in distance education?
2. How often should it be done in order to use the drama method more effectively in distance education?
 3. Can the drama method in distance education be used in other subjects of the Life Science lesson in the first grade of primary school?
 4. What are the cognitive and affective effects of drama method in distance education on students?
 5. Are the activities in the 1st grade Life Science Teaching Program sufficient? If distance education continues, should drama activities be included in the program?
 6. Did you find the drama activities sufficient? Do you think the activities cover the unit gains?

Questions asked to the students

1. Were your activities fun? If yes, how did you find it fun? If no, what is the reason?
2. What was your favorite event? Was there any activity you didn't like? Which aspects do you like / dislike?
3. Would you like to be taught again with this method?
4. Was there a point you did not understand about the lesson while the activities were taking place?

Appendix-2

Drama Activity in Distance Education – 1

Lesson: Life Science

Unit: Safe life

Subject: Home safety rules

Class: Primary school 1st grade

Time: 30 minutes

Gain: Complies with safety rules at school and at home.

Teaching-Learning Methods and Techniques:

Discussion, question & answer.

Educational Technologies and Tools Used:

Computer, mobile phone or tablet.

Stages of Activity

Introductory Activities (Preparation)

The teacher draws the attention of the student to the lesson by showing an object that can endanger safety if handled incorrectly. She then gives information about the misuse of it and tells about the vital importance of safety rules in our lives. Then the teacher asks if there are any experiences that would

endanger the students' safety. It is said that learning what the dangerous objects are at home will help them lead a safer life in their future lives.

Development Activities (Animation)

The teacher asks the students to find and bring an object that they think is dangerous in the house within 1 minute. Then the activity ends by introducing the object in their hands to their friends and asking them to explain the dangers that may arise as a result of misuse.

Conclusion Activities (Evaluation)

Teacher creates a discussion environment by asking the question "What kind of technology would you produce when you grow up to ensure security in homes?". On the other hand, if it is not mentioned in this process, it is mentioned what risks such as detergents, electrical products, lighter-matches or injurious materials carry.

Drama Activity in Distance Education– 2

Lesson: Life Science

Unit: Safe life

Subject: Emergency phone numbers

Class: Primary school 1st grade

Time: 30 minutes

Gain: Knows the phone numbers of the institutions to call for help in emergency situations.

Teaching-Learning Methods and Techniques:

Discussion, question & answer.

Educational Technologies and Tools Used:

Computer, mobile phone or tablet, flashcards.

Stages of Activity

Introductory Activities (Preparation)

The teacher shows a visual material about the theft. She asks, "What would you do when they saw such a situation?" The teacher makes an explanation about the subject in line with the answer given by the students. She mentions the importance of the numbers to be called in case of emergency.

Development Activities (Animation)

The teacher asks the students to take 5 A4 size papers and prints them the phone numbers that should be called in case of emergency. Then, the

teacher shows images such as fire, accident, theft and asks which numbers should be called in which cases. Students are asked to hold the paper up which the correct number is written and show it to the screen. The student who gives the wrong answer is given the necessary feedback.

Conclusion Activities (Evaluation)

The consequences of not notifying the relevant people when we see an emergency are discussed. Obligations of occupying emergency phone numbers unnecessarily are mentioned.

Drama Activity in Distance Education– 3

Lesson: Life Science

Unit: Safe life

Subject: People in traffic

Class: Primary school 1st grade

Time: 30 minutes

Gain 1: Observes people’s behavior in traffic during school arrivals and departures.

Gain 2: Obeys the traffic rules when going to and from school.

Teaching-Learning Methods and Techniques:

Discussion, question&answer.

Educational Technologies and Tools Used:

Computer, mobile phone or tablet, materials showing traffic signs.

Stages of Activity

Introductory Activities (Preparation)

The teacher draws attention to the issue by showing a picture of a traffic accident. She talks about the life-threatening risks that may arise if traffic rules are not followed.

Development Activities (Animation)

The teacher asks the students to stand up. She tells them to imagine that they are going for a walk together and to pretend to walk on the sidewalk, taking steps where they are. Then she makes them

think that they come to a corner and want to cross the road. Displays material with a pedestrian crossing and a red light image for pedestrians. She asks what they should do in this case. Students are expected to stop their walk. Then teacher shows a material containing the crosswalk and the green light visual for pedestrians. Thus, the students continue to walk.

An image of a pedestrian crossing with no traffic lights is shown in a new material. In this case, they are asked how they will control the road to cross. Students are expected to continue their walk by looking first to the left, then to the right, then to the left again. Here, the students are asked verbally about what they have to do, and the students are asked to express their actions. At the end of this activity, all students are asked to sit down.

In the continuation of the activity, a few students are asked to perform in turn, which seat they should sit on when starting to travel in the vehicle, how they should fasten their seat belts, and which side of the vehicle they should exit from after unfastening their seat belts.

Finally, one of the students is given the role of a fire truck, one is an ambulance, and another is a police vehicle. All three are asked to run quickly where they are. When the paths of these three cross, they are asked which one should pass first and which one should wait. Those who do not have transition priority are asked to stop and continue running when their turn comes. Thus, it is presented for the reasons that the passage advantage is first in the ambulance, then in the fire department, and finally in the police.

Conclusion Activities (Evaluation)

The students are asked whether they obey the traffic rules or not, and they are reminded that obeying the traffic rules is important both for our own life and for the lives of others. The activity is concluded by asking them to talk about the traffic rules they know.

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