

Sustainability in Drama*

Ayşe Okvuran

Faculty of Education, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey

Email: okvuran@education.ankara.edu.tr

Received 13 September 2014; revised 28 September 2014; accepted 14 October 2014

Copyright © 2014 by author and Scientific Research Publishing Inc.

This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution International License (CC BY).

<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>



Open Access

Abstract

Cultural sustainability is a very important concept. Drama can be considered in the area of cultural sustainability as well. Throughout the history of Turkish education, learning drama gained importance both in educational sciences as a teaching method and in arts education. The years of 1980s-1990s-2000s-2010s can be accepted as appropriate years to analyze the sustainability of drama. The purposes of this study are to obtain opinions of experts coming from different decades; to conduct interviews; to investigate how the transitions occurred among those decades and the reasons of this sustainability. In this qualitative research, data will be collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis techniques. Participants will be chosen from four different decades.

Keywords

Drama, Sustainable Development, Art Education, Museum Education, Methods of Drama

1. Introduction

2005-2015 is the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development focusing on learning how to make decisions that balance and integrate the long-term future of the economy, the natural environment and the wellbeing of all communities, near and far, now and in the future (<http://www.unesco.org/education>) (Drama Australia, 2014).

Drama is an improvisational form of theatre in which participants are guided by a leader to imagine, enact and reflect on human experiences. In drama process of acting out is more important than the results. That is how the participants develop the activity is more important than the final product of the activity (Zipes, 2004; Okvuran, 2010, 2012).

The use of creative drama in the classroom is a student-focused process where experiential learning can be fostered and developed within any given curriculum. It can help students to develop divergent thinking skills,

*This paper was represented as an oral presentation in 4th ARTSEDU Conference (World Conference on Design, Arts and Education) in 1-3 May 2014, Dubrovnik, Croatia.

inventive creativity, and cognitive thinking skills, and it can stimulate the development of oral and written communication skills. Used in a social context, creative drama can show the student the way to be empathetic to the needs of others and consequently the student will be better able to form a value judgment (Annarella, 1992). Drama invites imaginative and divergent thinking, analysis, problem solving, storytelling, collaboration, creation and recreation and thus provides a rich basis for challenging current ideas, opening doors to new ones, and providing capacity for action. Drama Australia recognizes that sustainable education implies four descriptors: educational policy and practice which is sustaining, tenable, healthy and durable (San et al, 1990).

Sustaining: it helps sustain people, communities and ecosystems;

Tenable: it is ethically defensible, working with integrity, justice, respect and inclusiveness;

Healthy: it is itself a viable system, embodying and nurturing healthy relationships and emergence at different system levels;

Durable: it works well enough in practice to be able to keep doing it (Cited in Drama Australia, 2014).

2. Problem Statement

The concept of cultural sustainability is very important. Drama can also be considered in the area of cultural sustainability. Learning drama gained importance both in educational sciences as a teaching method and in arts education throughout the history of Turkish education. The years of 1980s-1990s-2000s-2010s can be accepted as appropriate years to analyze the sustainability of drama.

The Contemporary Drama Association was founded in the 1980's. Dr. İnci San, from Ankara University, along with theatre actor, Tamer Levent, began the first drama practices. In the beginning they studied at the university and later drama activities expanded into independent organizations. Today, the field of drama is becoming widespread in Turkey through national and international seminars. Now drama techniques, concepts and terms are included in Turkish course books; especially in the areas of social studies, science, and visual arts. As of 2008, there have been 93 master thesis and 15 doctoral dissertations about the topic of drama, written in Turkey. During the 1980's drama educators and instructors, along with drama associations and universities, organized and participated in national and international drama seminars throughout Turkey. The development of drama in education in Turkey dates back to beginning of the 20th century.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purposes of this study are to obtain opinions of experts coming from different decades; to conduct interviews; to investigate how the transitions occurred among those decades and the reasons of the sustainability of drama.

4. Importance of the Research

This study is the first research on sustainability of drama in Turkey. Through its historical period, drama is considered a benchmark field for contributing to learning and development of related educational fields in Turkey. It is believed, that this study can provide a perspective for young researchers specializing in the field of theoretical and practical drama.

5. Methods

The purposes of this study were to obtain opinions of experts coming from different decades; to conduct interviews; to investigate how the transitions occurred among those decades and the reasons of the sustainability of drama. In this qualitative research, data was collected through semi-structured interviews and document analysis techniques. Participants were chosen from four different decades, including two people, a male and a female, from each decade. The focus group of the study was consisting of eight people.

In the study, open-ended interview questions were asked to people who were considered as leaders in the field of drama for each decade. Prepared research questions were given to three experts in drama for the purpose of assessing the content and appropriateness of the questions. Based on their recommendations, the semi-structured questions were finalized. Additionally related research on study questions was analyzed. The research questions are listed below:

- 1) What are conditions for sustainability in drama?

- 2) What are the methods of learning drama? When and how you learned drama?
- 3) How do you aim to teach drama?
- 4) What is the place of drama in your life? Is drama a hobby or a profession?
- 5) What is your future plans regarding drama?
- 6) What do you think about the history of drama? Do the masters have contributions, benefits and damages to drama?

6. Limitations

This is a qualitative study with a small focus group. The focus group participants were asked to answer semi-structured questions in writing. At the same time, related literature about the study questions was reviewed and answers to the study questions were searched. Thus, the data of the study is limited to literature review and responses gained from the focus group participants.

7. Findings

7.1. Research Question 1: What Are Conditions for Sustainability in Drama?

In 1980s, the main purpose of drama was creating and maintaining a formation in which drama will be accepted as a concept, educational method and a tool for creativity and art education (Yaratici Drama, 2010).

In terms of sustainability, 1990s generation highlighted the place of drama in educational sciences and in different countries as well as its importance as a method. It was stated that drama filled the gaps in social life and inadequacy of art and aesthetic education. The importance of drama in education and it's being a democratic mass organization strengthened the sustainability.

The generation of 2000s recommended that in order to obtain sustainability there should be long-term policies and drama should be adopted by the community. Creativity of drama will keep it popular and effective. Thus, drama leaders should be trained well. In other words, the generation of 2000s provided more concrete and realistic recommendations. To them drama teacher should be creative and unique and an efficient policy for training drama leaders help the sustainability of drama.

The last generation in 2010 provided more detailed recommendations for the sustainability of drama. They mentioned its social and political aspects. According to them there should be a need to create drama and they have suggested that creating a place in civil organizations can be useful. It can be said that they cared about the academic sided of drama and they were aware of how they used drama.

7.2. Research Question 2: What Are the Methods of Learning Drama? When and how You Learned Drama?

It is understood that 1980s generation learned drama through foreign publications and interactions. They developed drama games and improvisations based on drama experts' unique drama exercises and games (Yaratici Drama, 2010).

1990s generation stated that they learned about drama through national and international seminars, the first postgraduate course in creative drama, advanced drama courses, in-service trainings and mostly from Inci San's theoretical courses and Tamer Levent's practical workshops. For example, "My drama learning technique depended on my drama leader and his experiences. The leader's experiences in education, art, and theater enriched our learning process".

3rd generation in 2000s learned drama mainly from drama courses provided by Contemporary Drama Association, works of Ankara University Creative Drama Community and finally from graduate programs with theses and without theses. They continued learning drama academically. It is seen that 4th generation learned drama from courses of Contemporary Drama Association and related graduate programs besides undergraduate level drama classes. In the field of drama, they continued their doctoral studies. It can be said that learning drama evolved into more academic level for the 4th generation. For example, "Graduate programs from two universities helped me understand in which way drama is taught and transferred".

7.3. Research Question 3: How Do You Aim to Teach Drama?

In 1980s creative and rational thinking, inquiry-based learning, creative drama combined with arts education

was intended. The main purposes were to prove that drama would be the answer to quests in education, to create public awareness and civil society organizations (Yaratici Drama, 2010).

2nd generation in 1990s stated that they considered the needs of groups in teaching drama. Additionally, they mentioned responsibilities for fighting against the pollution in drama and how they learned and improved their experiences, rules and principles of drama via participating to Ankara University Creative Drama Community (EYAT). Drama was taught only by letting learners actually doing and experiencing it. When making drama more common it was observed that they also tried to solve the confusion. For instance, one participant said, “I organized and planned my drama teaching according to the learning needs of the group. Also, I often created drama activities based on our own experiences”.

It is observed that generation of the 2000s tried to configure drama through more specific approaches and techniques. They stated that they did not only teach drama but also learned drama by doing it. For instance, they mentioned that they do not only teach drama but also learn along with their participants and students.

Last generation, the 4th generation, stated that they used drama as a teaching method for the purposes of aesthetic concerns, raising awareness and teaching senses. Aesthetic aspects of drama and using it as a tool were dominant beliefs for the people of the last generation.

7.4. Research Question 4: What Is the Place of Drama in Your Live? Is Drama a Hobby or a Profession?

For the first generation of the 1980s drama was an effective tool and a teaching method for arts education. It can be said that they saw drama as a philosophy of life rather than just a hobby (Yaratici Drama, 2010). The second generations in 1990s wrote that they considered drama as an area of expertise and profession but they did drama as a hobby and they enjoyed teaching drama. For example, one participant stated that drama is both his job and his hobby. Additionally, he does drama with pleasure and believes it provides value and has a place in his life. The third generation saw drama as a profession and stated that they enjoyed working in this area. The last generation in 2010s also saw drama as a profession. This generation also mentioned that they were aware of the fact that drama was also a method and so they used this method.

7.5. Research Question 5: What Is Your Future Plans Regarding Drama?

The first generation of the 1980s gave importance to drama because it was a tool to make an individual creative and contemporary. They had the dream that in the future all the courses will be taught via drama (Yaratici Drama, 2010). For them drama is an art and creative and a tool for independent education.

1990s generation mentioned that they will continue teaching drama as a profession and a teaching method through seminars and courses etc. At the same time opening a graduate education department for teaching drama was their main goal and responsibility. For example, one participant said, “I will continue to promote drama through national and international level presentations, meetings, and workshops”. Another participant mentioned that his goal is to become a drama instructor at the university undergraduate level. 3rd generation in 2000s mentioned that they will continue learning more about in the area of drama and they aimed to introduce drama more in international studies and settings.

The 4th generation of 2010s wrote that they aimed to develop drama as an area taking place in art and aesthetics. Additionally, they stated that their purposes were to learn about drama and to provide written recourses regarding drama.

7.6. Research Question 6: What Do You Think about the History of Drama? Do the Masters Have Contributions, Benefits and Damages to Drama?

According to the generation of 1980s drama originally was an amateur spirit which was in the hands of a small minority however now they are happy about the situation of drama because it spread out and reached many individuals.

The 2nd generation in 1990s explained that in order to reach the expertise in drama an individual should carry the criteria such as having publications, conducting graduate level studies, writing books, giving national and international seminars and directing many different workshops regarding drama. It was also stated that the experts of this decade nowadays stayed away from drama, did not adopt the new developments and they some-

times blocked the way for young people. They also stated that, for instance, “Masters do not spend enough time with the younger generation”.

The 3rd generation of the 2000s showed a contradictory situation. While some of them continued to contribute to the field others demonstrated a conservative approach. They also stated that in order to be the master in the field an individual should have some responsibilities such as serving in the field and working for drama. For instance, they stated, “While some drama leaders are very supportive, some other leaders insist on their own ideas”. The last generation of 2010s believed that the masters in the history of drama contributed a lot so they felt respect to them.

8. Conclusion

*To the question regarding the sustainability of drama, the first generation mentioned that gave importance to the place of drama in educational sciences and arts education. For the same inquiry the last generation stated that they gave importance to drama’s academic and political aspects.

*The second question of the study was investigating how drama was learned. The participants stated that they learned about drama mainly from national and international seminars, courses organized by the contemporary drama association, and the graduate department provided by Ankara University, Faculty of Educational Sciences.

*The third research question was asking how drama was taught. While the first two generations mentioned rules and principles for teaching drama, the later generations stated more detailed explanations with sub-headings.

*The fourth question of the study asked whether drama was a profession or a hobby. Based on the survey respondents drama was seen as a professional field.

*The fifth question was about whether they had future plans related to drama. In all generations drama had important aims such as becoming academic level studies and a main teacher education field.

*The last question asked whom they can call as experts-masters of drama. Young individuals considered old generations as masters however continuing saying these masters also stayed away from the innovation in drama.

This study is the first research on sustainability of drama in Turkey. Drama provides many perspectives regarding learning and teaching across the generations. Drama is both theoretical and applied, and as a result, learning occurs mostly through a master-novice relationship. Research findings highlight that drama is best instructed, both theoretically and applied, via a master-novice relationship. However, this study also has a small focus group. The participants of this focus group also engaged in academic studies in drama. Thus obtained data shows the characteristics of the group however the results cannot be generalized to the whole population. It is believed that the study should be replicated in larger groups.

References

- Annarella, L. A. (1992) *Creative Drama in the Classroom*. ERIC Document Reproduction Service ED: 391206.
- Drama Australia (2011). *Acting Green*. Drama Australia Guidelines for Sustainable Drama Practice and Drama Teaching.
- Okvuran, A. (2012). Development of Creative Drama in the Museum as a Teaching Method in Turkey. *Education and Science*, 37, 170-180.
- Okvuran, A. (2010). History of Drama as a Teaching Method in Turkey. In G. Papanikos (Ed.), *Issues on Education and Research 2* (pp. 323-329). Athens: Athens Institute for Education and Research (ATINER).
- San, İ. vd. (Ed.) (1990). *Ankara’da Yarattıcı Drama*. Ankara: Alman Kültür Merkezi Yayını.
- Yarattıcı Drama (2010). *1999-2002 Yazılar*. Edt: Ömer Adıgüzel, Ankara: Natürel Yayınevi.
- Zipers, J. (2004). *Speaking Out: Story Telling and Creative Drama for Children*. UK: Routledge.

Scientific Research Publishing (SCIRP) is one of the largest Open Access journal publishers. It is currently publishing more than 200 open access, online, peer-reviewed journals covering a wide range of academic disciplines. SCIRP serves the worldwide academic communities and contributes to the progress and application of science with its publication.

Other selected journals from SCIRP are listed as below. Submit your manuscript to us via either submit@scirp.org or [Online Submission Portal](#).

