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The Role of Creative Drama in Improving the Creativity of 4-6 Years Old Children

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Abstract

The present study examines the influence of creative drama on the creativity of 4 to 6 years old children. Accordingly, using a multi-stage cluster sampling, 52 children (21 girls and 31 boys), of district of Ahwaz city, were chosen and then randomly divided into two groups of experimental (33 people) and control (19 people). The researched was directly involved in intervention as regarded the experimental group. The intervention group participated in creative drama activities for two months (15 sessions). The creativity level of the children in these two groups, before and after the intervention, was measured using the creativity test of Jean-Louis Cellier? This test includes verbal creativity, completing and interpreting the pictures that are determinative of creativity components, fluidity, extension, flexibility and originality. The data and the results were analyzed based on descriptive statistical and inferential methods such as frequency, mean, standard deviation and non-parametric rank (Kruskal-Wallis, Wilcoxon and the Spearman correlation). The results indicated that the creative drama significantly increased the creativity of children at the ages of 4 to 6.

Keywords: Creative Drama, Creativity, Fostering Creativity, Early Childhood.

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Introduction

The significance of "creativity" lies in the fact that many scientific and industrial advancements in the world, the achievements of human civilization, man's peaceful and tranquil life are considered as the results of creative thinking. According to Albert Einstein, "creativity is more important than knowledge". The Ministry of Education and other educational institutions in any country can carry out studies and scholarly researches on new methods of creativity-building and their precise application in order to build creativity and therefore, produce creative ideas.

One of the efficient methods in building creativity in children is drama (role playing). With the evolution and development of drama, many theoreticians of theatre and scholars and specialists from other disciplines such as psychology, educational sciences, etc. as Bertolt Brecht's theories became widespread, the issue of education in theatre became more and more serious, and this fact paved the way for some new theatrical functions one of which is called Applied Theatre. Applied Theatre is a form of theatre whose main concern is not simply imitating an action, or even merely performing in front of an audience. It is, on the other hand, an educational tool for teaching the various concepts of life, and sharing experiences.

Creative drama makes special use of theatre in schools and educational institutions, and it does not require too many facilities. Therefore it can be helpful for schools in Iran and educational centers most of which lack such useful facilities. Creative drama can act as a new and effective tool in the educational system. In the process of creative drama, children, who inherently possess creative and impudent minds, may be able to find a chance to display their creativity. Many psychologists believe that creativity shows itself in the first few years of a child's life. They also believe that this creativity comes together with imagination. Undoubtedly, imagination is one of the important factors in making creative thought possible. According to Freud, "Creative thought is the highest form of free thoughts and childhood games". Freud believes that the roots of creativity are found in childhood experiences, for the form of these childhood experiences is utterly effective in the emergence of new thoughts.

The 25th principle of the Ministry of Education accepted by Iran's Educational assembly of fundamental changes (1989), clearly states that, "In editing and performing educational curricula, methods should be used which reinforce such factors as thought, analysis, creativity, inventiveness, criticism, and research, in order to pave the way for their self-study." Therefore, paying attention to creativity and inventiveness in educational organizations is part of the main policy. One of these activities is creative drama in which the child can participate

and express his/her needs, desires and thoughts. These activities give the participant such a freedom of improvisation, which enables the imagination and creativity to be expressed. Creative drama is shaped whenever theatre is able to arouse the child's imagination and place him/her in a special situation using improvisation and free narration (so the participant can express himself). In this process, children use their imagination firstly to envisage an imaginative world which is analogous to their real experiences and they can perform it. All these things happen in a few seconds, and the child's mind merges the real with the imaginary, and creates a new thing.

In his memoirs, Albert Einstein writes how children think creatively comparing to adults by mentioning his childhood experience:

A wonder of such nature I experienced as a child of 4 or 5 years, when my father showed me a compass. That this needle behaved in such a determined way did not at all fit into the nature of events, which could find a place in the unconscious world of concepts... this experience made a deep and lasting impression upon me. Something deeply hidden had to be behind things. What man sees before him from infancy causes no reaction of this kind... (Einstein 2007 [1949]: 342).

McCasslin believes that new education and creative drama share many common objectives some of which are the aesthetic and creative development, the ability to think critically, improving communicational skills, social change and participating in group activities, improvement in spiritual moral codes, and self-knowledge (2006: 68) Creative drama includes all activities in the direction of improving children's creativity. Participating in creative drama activities helps the participants to be more creative, inventive and curious. It reinforces their sense of questioning, and fortifies their self-consciousness and imagination (Annarella, 2000).

Part of the research results show that creative drama has many creative uses and various functions. Creative drama influences reading and writing skills (Annarella, 2000), social skills (Erbay and Doğru, 2010), and artistic skills. Also, it affects teaching math to children (Şengün and İskenderoğlu, 2010), learning science (Arieli, 2007), history and social sciences.

According to the results of the study, the present paper seeks to answer to what extent creative drama is important in the progress and improvement of creativity in children.

Methodology

The research population consists of 52 4-6 years old children from district one in Ahwaz, chosen by cluster sampling. At first from four districts, the first one was chosen and among 30 kindergartens in that district, two centers were chosen. Then, 52 children were randomly picked out of 4-6 years old children and placed in experiment group (33 people) and control group (19 people) based on their tendency towards dramatic activities. Consequently with parents, managers and instructors cooperation, the experiment group gathered in a qualified center to participate in creative dramatic activities. In pre-experiment stage, all the kids were tested by Jean Louis Cellier creativity test. During two months, the experiment group participated in two one-hour sessions programs of dramatic creative activities per week, but the control group did not do so. After two months the creativity of the two groups were evaluated. Some of demographic variants of the samples are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic variants

Group	-	Involvement	Control
Gender	Girl	15	6
	Boy	18	13
Age	4	5	2
	5	12	7
	6	16	10
Father's Education	Without a degree or diploma	7	8
	Two year diploma course in college or BA	19	7
	MA or higher	7	4
Mother's Education	Without a degree or diploma	11	9
	Two year diploma	17	

	course in college or BA		8
	MA or higher	5	2

In the present research, the principles of the main plan of creative dramatic activities workshop are run and planned by creative dramatic expert Matt Buchanan (2016). This pattern consists of readiness activities (poems, music and movement), improvisational activities (pantomime and improvisation) and writing activities (storytelling and playing). And it must be said that the content of these activities are based on national and cultural topics and are equivalent to Persian poems, parables and stories. A summary of the workshop activities are listed below:

1. Simple physical exercises, rhythmic movement and group singing of those poems which can be dramatically played: like Davidam-o-davidam, Amoo zanjirbaf, Gol-e-gandom and etc.
2. One-person pantomimes with different educational subjects such as job learning, sanitary points' observance, learning animals, fruits and seasons names and etc.
3. Group pantomimes based on family subjects, familiarity with social places like kindergarten, school, hospital and etc.
4. Storytelling: retelling the old stories like Shangool and Mangool, Intrusive Guests, Kadoo Ghelghele Zan, etc by the instructor.
5. Choosing some scenes of stories by the kid's presence in a way that the preparation of the performance is made by children themselves due to conceiving the situation and the play atmosphere.
6. Performing creative plays with instructor's guidance.
7. Analyzing the plays and their messages.
8. Writing and creating a play via visual books, stories without ending and paintings by which children can create stories.

Creativity test of Jean Louis Cellier

This test was designed by French Cellier in 70's and is a functional test with which we can measure creativity criteria such as fluidity, expansion, flexibility and authenticity and consequently each tested kid can get a mark. This test is composed of verbal, picture puzzles

and picture interpretation sections and is suitable for elementary and pre-elementary level picked from “Mental Experiment and Individual Differences” by Dr. Hamze Ganji. Seven experts in psychology and educative sciences, Dr. Yadollah Mehralizade, Dr. Sudabe Basak Nejad and Dr. Haji Yakhchali have confirmed the value of the test. This test is also has been used in other national researches like Ganji et al. (2012) . Credibility factor of the research in a 45 people group shows equality and has four factors which measures 56% variance of creativity.

Findings

Examining the relation of creative performance as the test factor reveals that cooperation in creative performance activity as an experiment factor really increases children’s creativity in all age levels. The obtained results are (Wilcoxon non-parametric grade test- a test to get a comparison between two dependent populations- is done for control and experiment groups and based on different levels of ages separately):

The "4 years olds" group

In control group, when $P\text{-value}=0/180>0.05$, there is no great difference between the level of creativity measured in pre-test and post-test. While the result for experiment group which were present in the workshop is $p\text{-value}=0.043<0.05$; so in the experiment group the zero assumption is rejected and with respect that all the amounts are positive, it can be concluded that participation in creative activity has had a great influence on the amount of the group creativity.

Table 2. Four years olds group results

Group	Stage	M	SD	z.	Sig.
Control	Pre-test	31,50	2,12	-1.342	0.18
	Post-test	33,00	1,41		
Involvement	Pre-test	29.20	6,64	-2.023	0.043
	Post-test	38,00	8,27		

The "5 years olds" group

In control group we see $P\text{-value}=0/414>0.05$, so creativity level is not changed; while the result for the workshop group was $p\text{-value}=0.002<0.05$; so in experiment group the zero assumption is rejected and with respect to the fact that all the amounts are positive it can be concluded that the cooperation in creative activity had a great influence on 5 years age group.

Table 3. Five years olds group results

Group	Stage	M	SD	z.	Sig.
Control	Pre-test	38,28	7,54	-0.816	0.414
	Post-test	38,57	8,30		
Involvement	Pre-test	32,66	8,04	-3.066	0.002
	Post-test	40,00	6,38		

The "6 years olds" group

In control group with respect to $P\text{-value}=0/206>0.05$ so the measured creativity amount is not changed much. While the result for workshop group was $p\text{-value}=0.000<0.05$. In the experiment group, the zero assumption is rejected and for all the amounts are positive the researcher can conclude that the cooperation in creative activity had a great influence on the group creativity.

Table 4. Six years olds group results

Group	Stage	M	SD	z.	Sig.
Control	Pre-test	45,80	5,75	-3.265	0.206
	Post-test	46,20	6,08		
Involvement	Pre-test	44,18	8,15	-3.523	0.000
	Post-test	50,75	6,95		

Conclusion

The results show that the cooperation in creative activity increases 4-6 years old children's creativity. And this confirms the assumption of "maybe the most crucial purpose of creative play is flourishing of creativity". The results suggest to take these characteristics into consideration: playing and freedom of action, boosting imagination and improvisation and creating happiness. No activities can expand imagination like creating games. (McCasslin, 2004: 34). So children in games and pantomimes have the chance to build their own fantasy worlds and every time they wish, they can travel between realities to fantasy. Improvisation is one of the main characteristics of creative play through which kids can reach self-esteem and create whatever they want without any threatening risk. The freedom in this method is one of the leverages and consequently all these aspects will lead to a great thing called creativity.

Based on the results, the most changes occur at first in picture puzzles, the picture interpretation and at last in verbal creativity. The 4-6 years old kids have newly entered society and are aware of their social circumstances and this fact may bring up some problems like shyness and consequently they often are reluctant to react to verbal tests, but in visual tests which they have more freedom, can show their real selves more easily.

Creativity as a basic phenomenon plays an important role in human life. This effective phenomenon is not hard to obtain as it seems. By so many researches on this topic it can be understood that the educational methods in which people actively use their creativity, the education will be sweet and will help people of the society to move forward on the path of success. Creative play as a modern method discovers new horizons in educational systems. Nowadays there have been many studies in different countries through which the knowledge of the young improved. These studies concentrate on strategies to increase the level of creativity and make the children ready to learn. In this method, children are not directly get information from the teacher and in this way they can use their creativity to reach the desired cognitive level and consequently better results will be gained.

In "collective exhibition of arts and education" declaration which published by the union of school managers and education for dramatic art in 2000 in Turkey, is written: "the future of our nation depends on creativity. In coming decades, the most important resources are human forces. If the nation wants to challenge in the future, it is necessary for us grow creative leaders" (Buchanan, 2016).

Unfortunately our educational system is not applying enough art and it is obvious looking at syllabi and decision makings. All the plans concentrate on educational success but without their useful cooperation.

In order to expand the role of creativity the researcher suggests the following statement:

1. Creating an “Art and creativity” center in educational organizations

In such centers, presence of art experts, child psychologists and experts in educative sciences is undeniable and to build such centers we need to:

- a. Collecting data and new creative art achievements
- b. Holding scientific seminars with creative art topics such as storytelling and creative play
- c. Scientific camps and close observations in the countries which are successful in this realm
- d. Recruiting art specialists who are familiar with psychology and educative science to be the leaders of creative play and storytelling workshops.

2. Necessity of a change in content of educational content and learning methods based on flourishing students’ creativity.

A Chinese proverb goes: “tell me and I will forget. Show me and I will remember. Engage me in the job and I will understand.” All the studies show that if students experience through learning, they learn it more deep (Buchanan, 2016).

3. Creating creative play centers in Kanoon Parvaresh.

Nowadays Kanoon Parvaresh offices in the country, here and there, because of their managers’ artistic taste are presenting creative play activities, but there is no disciplined structure by which all the offices and centers act together.

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