



WHAT ABOUT DRAMA? IMPLEMENTING DRAMA METHODS AMONG CROATIAN PRIMARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS

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Abstract

Drama pedagogy does not merely represent a form of creative educational work with children and youth with the purpose of developing their creativity and the education of complete and creative personalities. It also represents a way of experiential learning and teaching of various educational content, encourages personal growth and socialization or acquisition life skills. In this paper, we attempted to examine the opinions of primary education teachers in the Republic of Croatia regarding the frequency, importance and diversity of the use of drama methods. In addition, we wanted to examine teachers' assessments of competences and obstacles that arise in performing drama methods. The study involved (N = 434) primary education teachers, and the results show that teachers have a positive opinion of the use of drama methods and estimate that their application can develop different competencies. However, the lack of skills, knowledge and guidance in implementing drama methods is an obstacle to their more frequent application in the educational process. Regardless of the experience gained through drama workshops and activities, most respondents do not consider themselves competent for applying drama methods in their teaching. Based on the analysis of results, and for the purpose of attaining certain competences which refer to efficient organization of contemporary teaching practice including drama methods, recommendations were formulated for pre-service teacher formal education and for the professional teacher development and training.

Keywords: Drama Methods, Drama Pedagogy, Primary classroom teachers, Competences, Obstacles

Introduction

From the point of view of education, art is defined as the "social phenomenon which, on the one hand, enables expression of the individual, subjective experience of reality, and on the other hand, is a form of sensory communication among people" (Bognar & Matijević, 2002, p.142). Art is an important element of the world cultural heritage and many authors (Arnheim, 1974; Efland, 2002; Eisner, 2002; Hetland et al., 2007) maintain that art has a multifold significance for the holistic development of students' abilities, including psychomotor skills, creative thinking, critical thinking, emotional intelligence and the ability to express and interpret. Dramatic arts and the concept of drama, implies any form of expression where real or imaginary events, persons, objects, occurrences, and relationships are presented through role-play and situations (Fileš et al., 2008). Aristotle established that dramatic arts is the consequence of man's dramatic ability. "From childhood, people have an inherent instinct to imitate and man differs from other animals

in the fact man is the most skillful in imitation and that man's first knowledge is acquired through imitation" (Aristotle, 1983, p.14). Taking on various roles is part of our daily lives: acting is deeply rooted in the social context and can successfully be used in the educational process. However, in primary school, the aim is not to teach children to act as part of a separate discipline, but use acting or knowledge from the area of acting for learning about oneself, the world around us, and for learning about life. That is the aim of drama pedagogy which is becoming more present in the Croatian system of education.

Drama pedagogy in Croatia

"Drama pedagogy implies a set of learning and teaching methods which systematically apply drama expression as a man's ability which is used throughout the period of growth and development" (Krušić, 2008, p.16). Despite the relatively long time-period of drama pedagogy being part of learning and working in educational systems of the Anglo-Saxon countries, in Croatia, drama pedagogy is only becoming more widespread, although its concept is still incomprehensible. The reason behind it is its "twofold nature which equally belongs to two areas, on the one hand drama/theater/art expression and on the other, education and pedagogy" (Krušić, 2012, p.16). Still, despite that fact, its primary traits, the status of students and teachers in such a learning process, social forms of work and methods applied significantly contribute to its most important characteristic – positive effect of its application on the development of student competences (knowledge, ability, skills and attitudes) (Vukojević, 2016). Drama pedagogy was recognized globally several decades ago, not only as an aspect of learning and teaching children and youth, but implemented into many segments of social work with people of most diverse social and age groups. Today, it is studied and taught at teaching and theater higher education schools as it became a constituent of many national educational systems integrating the phenomenon of drama and theater into school curricula and introducing drama methods into the learning and teaching process (Krušić, 2012). The techniques and methods of drama pedagogy have a recognizable pedagogy core in the form of experiential learning and teaching which is in demand in present-day. The reason is the creation of a counterbalance to learning of intellectual data and to the method relying on the *ex-cathedra* teaching approach (Krušić, 2014). In comparison with worldwide, and Croatian theater and pedagogy literature, the number of Croatian scientific and professional research on drama pedagogy is negligible. During contemporary Croatian history, attempts to observe the drama medium as a means of pedagogical activity mostly remained out of or at the margins of theater and pedagogy reasoning (Krušić, 2012). Today, particular higher education institutions for teacher training include courses in theater and drama education, and since 2016, the Faculty of Teacher Education of Zagreb has initiated a professional program of study Drama pedagogy focusing on the acquisition of practical knowledge and skills. In 2010, the National curriculum framework for preschool, compulsory and secondary education was adopted. The curriculum is designed as a framework for the acquisition of core and specific competences and for the definition of expected achievements of students in various areas of education among which is the arts area (NOK, 2011). Within that area, drama culture and drama art has been incorporated for the first time, including expected outcomes for students in the area. The learning outcomes show determination for the recognition of drama art, within school and subject curricula not only as content of particular subjects (e.g. literature), but as a teaching method and for of experiential learning and teaching applicable in various areas of education and for a variety of learning topics (Krušić, 2014). Numerous research across the world (DICE, 2011; McLauchlan & Winters, 2014; Villadsen, 2012; Walker et al., 2011., Wright, 2006) showed that the application

of drama methods stimulates intellectual, emotional, moral and aesthetic development of personality and students develop responsibility, humanistic and moral beliefs, security and self-confidence, cooperation and experience in artistic creation. Although drama pedagogy in Croatia has seen an observed uplift, it still lacks the promptness and easiness in entering everyday teaching. The reason is the lack of scientific research and appropriate guidance for its implementation in teaching practice. The lack of research was the motif for this research aiming to examine the opinions of primary school teachers in Croatia on the status and application of drama methods in teaching.

Methodology and Methods

Aim and research problems

The aim of this research was to examine the frequency of use of drama methods in teaching, teachers' knowledge of various drama methods, teachers' opinions on the effectiveness of drama methods for the development of students' competences, and their competence and perception of teacher-training relating to the application of drama methods in teaching. Starting from the general aim, the following research problems were posed:

1. Establish the proportion of teachers who apply drama methods in teaching.
2. Establish the frequency of use of drama methods on a weekly basis.
3. Examine whether there is a correlation between the application of drama methods and the participants' years of work experience.
4. Examine whether there is a correlation between the application of drama methods and the grade level being taught.
5. Establish the subjects in which teachers most frequently use drama methods.
6. Establish which drama methods teachers know and use most/least frequently.
7. Establish the competence of teachers relating to drama methods in teaching (refers to teachers who apply drama methods).
8. Establish the teachers' perceptions relating to the training in applying drama methods.
9. Establish teachers' opinions relating to the development of students' competences through the application of drama methods.
10. Establish, according to the teachers' opinions, the most frequent obstacles for applying drama methods in teaching.

Hypotheses

In addition to the mentioned research problems, the following hypotheses were put forth:

H1 The majority of teachers apply drama methods in teaching.

H2 Teachers generally apply drama methods once per week.

H3 The years of a teacher's work experience are significantly negatively correlated with the application of drama methods in teaching.

H4 The application of drama methods is positively and significantly correlated with the grade level taught (refers to 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 4th grade of primary school).

H5 Teachers most frequently apply drama methods in the subject Croatian language.

H6 Teachers' weakest knowledge and least frequently used drama methods are forum theater and process drama.

H7 Teachers mostly consider themselves as incompetent for applying drama methods in teaching.

H8 Teachers find that they need a higher education for acquiring competences on the application of drama methods in teaching.

H9 The assumption is that teachers have positive opinions on the influence of drama methods on the development of particular competences of students (creativity, motivation, spoken and written expression).

H10 It is assumed that the most frequent obstacle for implementing drama methods is lack of time and insufficient training of teachers on the application of drama methods.

The hypotheses were formed based on previous research (Booth & Neelands, 1998; Bouderault, 2010; Dickinson&Neelands2006; Duff & Maley 2005; Haynes, 2008; Himberg&Jauhiainen, 1998; Moore & Caldwell, 1993; Moore, 2004; Neelands, 2004; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Toivanen, Antikainen & Ruismakl, 2012; Wagner, 1998; Wooland, 1993), on competences a primary education teacher should acquire in courses in the area of drama pedagogy which are present in programs for teacher training and through professional development on drama pedagogy proposed by the Education and Teacher Training Agency.

Instruments

For the purpose of examining opinions of primary education teachers on the application of drama methods in teaching and for establishing competences and obstacles which emerge in carrying out drama methods, a specially designed questionnaire based on the *Teacher opinions in the implementation of the drama method in mathematics teaching* (Tezer & Aktunç, 2010) and *Instrument for measuring teachers' beliefs and experiences related to inquiry teaching and learning and scientific inquiry* (Ibrahim, 2003) was used. For the purpose of this research, a five-degree Likert scale was applied (1-entirely disagree to 5-entirely agree with the statement). The items in the questionnaires were adapted to the specific characteristics of the teaching process in the Republic of Croatia.

Procedure

The questionnaire was created through the Google Disc platform and was sent to electronic addresses of primary schools in the Republic of Croatia asking that the questionnaire be forwarded to primary education teachers in their respective schools. The reason for using the Internet version is confidentiality of participants' data, anonymity and possibility of withdrawing from the research.

Participants

The research was carried out in October 2017, on a convenience sample of teachers (N=434) in the Republic of Croatia. The sample of teachers comprised 41% of teachers with a bachelor degree, 47.2% teachers with a higher education degree and 11.1% teachers with a master (professional or science) degree. The participants in the research were between 30 and 55 years of age.

Data analysis methods

The methods of data analysis include descriptive statistics, percentages, frequencies and Pearson's correlation coefficient.

Results and discussion

Table 1 shown the percentage of teachers who apply drama methods in their teaching. The results show that 84.1% of primary education teachers apply drama methods, while 15.9% do not apply drama methods in teaching. Considering that more teachers apply drama methods in teaching, hypothesis H1 is confirmed.

	Frequency	Percent
Implementing drama methods	365	84.1
Not implementing drama methods	69	15.9
Total	434	100.0

Table 1. Implementation of drama methods

Further results relate to hypotheses H2, H3, H4, H5 and H6 will be presented based on those participants who reported using drama methods in teaching (N=365). Table 2 shows the results of the frequency of use of drama methods. Hypothesis (H2), that teachers, on average, apply drama methods in teaching once per week was not confirmed. According to the obtained results, only 39.17% of primary education teachers apply drama methods once per week. We conclude that the majority of primary education teachers (54.7%) apply drama methods on average once per month.

Using drama methods	Frequency	Percent
Day	22	6.04
Week	143	39.17
Month	200	54.79
Total	365	100.0

Table 2. Using drama methods in the terms of frequency

The hypothesis (H3), that years of work experience significantly and negatively correlate with the application of drama methods in teaching was not confirmed. They hypothesis was formed with the assumption that teacher training at the faculty of drama pedagogy is more substantial than it had been ten or more years ago. Pearson correlation coefficient was applied and the results of the analysis ($r = -.087$, $p = .096$) show no significant correlation between the application of drama methods in teaching and years of work experience.

The hypothesis (H4), that the application of drama methods is positively and significantly correlated with the grade level taught (referring primarily to grades 1-4 of primary education) was not confirmed. The hypothesis was formed based on the assumption that the higher the grade level the more frequent the use of drama methods. The Pearson's correlation coefficient was applied and the results of the analysis ($r = .057$, $p = .279$) show no significant correlation between the grade level taught and the use of drama methods.

Table 3 presents the percentage of teachers who apply drama methods in the following subject areas: Croatian language, Science and social studies, Mathematics, Music education, Art education and Physical education. The hypothesis (H5) that primary education teachers mostly apply drama

methods in the subject Croatian language was confirmed. The results show that 99.1% of teachers apply drama methods when teaching the subject Croatian language.

Subject	Implementing drama methods		Not implementing drama methods	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Croatian Language	363	99,4	2	0.6
Science	213	58,3	152	41.7
Math	102	27,9	263	72.1
Music	250	68,4	115	31.6
Art	102	27,9	263	72.1
Physical Education	103	28,2	262	71.8

Table 3. Implementation of drama methods in subjects

Tables 4 and 5 show the variety of drama methods used. The assumption that teachers are least familiar with and least frequently use forum theater and process drama as drama methods proved correct. The results show that 14.7% of teachers know about the drama method forum theater, and only 3.8% of teachers are familiar with process drama, however only 4.6% apply that drama method in teaching. The reason can be found in the complexity of the mentioned drama methods as both are founded on several different drama procedures, followed with teachers' insufficient knowledge of the techniques and their manner of application.

Drama method	Knowledge of drama methods		No knowledge of drama methods	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Guided imagination	210	57.5	154	42.5
Story making	315	86.3	48	13.7
Story making with set initial sentence and/or last sentence	286	78.3	78	21.7
Creative narration	304	83.2	61	16.8
Speaking object	229	62.73	136	37.27
Improvisation on a topic	229	62.73	136	37.27
Imaginary ball	98	26.8	267	73.2
Improvisation with different ending	271	74.2	93	25.8
Phone conversation	266	72.8	99	27.2
Teacher in role	148	40.5	217	59.5
Live images	133	36.4	232	63.6
Internal monologue	122	33.4	243	66.6
Hot seat	230	63	135	37
Pantomime	329	90.1	36	9.9
Process drama	67	18.3	298	81.7
Forum theatre	54	14.7	311	85.3

Table 4. Knowledge of different drama methods

Drama method	Use of drama methods		Lack of use of drama methods	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent
Guided imagination	167	45.7	198	54.3
Story making	297	81.3	68	18.7
Story making with set initial sentence and/or last sentence	220	60.2	145	39.8
Creative narration	256	70.1	109	29.9
Speaking object	161	44.1	204	55.9
Improvisation on a topic	152	41.6	213	58.4
Imaginary ball	58	15.8	307	84.2
Improvisation with different ending	198	54.2	167	45.8
Phone conversation	169	46.3	196	53.7
Teacher in role	102	27.9	263	72.1
Live images	70	19.1	295	80.9
Internal monologue	42	12.3	322	87.7
Hot seat	129	35.3	236	64.7
Pantomime	265	72.6	100	27.4
Process drama	17	4.6	348	95.4
Forum theater	14	3.8	351	96.2

Table 5.Using different drama methods in the terms of frequency

The hypothesis (H7), that teachers’ mostly consider themselves incompetent for applying drama methods in teaching was disproved. According to the results, 30.1% of the participants consider themselves incompetent, while 69.9% consider themselves competent for applying drama methods in teaching. The results show that more than 50%, i.e. the majority of participants consider themselves as competent for applying drama methods in teaching and therefore hypothesis (H7) is not confirmed.

Teachers	Frequency	Percent
Yes	255	69.9
No	110	30.1

Table 6.Competence for implementing drama methods in teaching

Table 7 shows the opinions of primary education teachers on the need for education in applying drama methods in teaching. The hypothesis (H8) that teachers find that higher education is necessary for acquiring the competence of applying drama methods in teaching was incorrect. Actually, 61.1% of primary education teachers find that professional development is needed for acquiring competences for the application of drama methods in teaching (at meetings provided by the Education and Teacher Training Agency) therefore hypothesis (H8) is not confirmed.

Group	Frequency	Percent
Higher education	72	16.6
Professional development	265	61.1
Drama workshops	97	22.4

Table 7. Opinions about acquiring drama method competences

The hypothesis (H9), that teachers, generally, have positive opinions on the influence of drama methods on the development of particular student competences proved correct. The data analysis showed that teachers find that the application of drama methods in teaching mostly develops the following competences: spoken expression (M=4.54, SD=0.626), self-confidence (M=4.49, SD=0.653), imagination and creativity (M=4.50, SD=0.613), communicative and social skills (M=4.48, SD=0.638), collaborative relationships and interest for team work (M=4.44, SD=0.675) and motivation (M=4.43, SD=0.674). The obtained results are in agreement with research which showed that the application of drama methods develops more emotional and expressive vocabulary (Booth & Neelands, 1998; Moore, 2004; Moore & Caldwell, 1993; Richards & Rogers, 2001; Wagner, 1998; Wooland, 1993), stimulates authenticity and imagination in forming personal ideas, offers possibilities for students to use language in an appropriate and meaningful manner (Duff & Maley, 2005), develops self-confidence and language skills (Haynes, 2008) and encourages personal growth and development of critical thought, collaboration and communication within a group (Bouderault, 2010).

The hypothesis (H10), that the most frequent obstacle for using drama methods is lack of time and insufficient training of teachers on the application of drama methods in teaching was confirmed. The analysis of results showed that teachers find that the most frequent obstacles in the application of drama methods in teaching are lack of professional development on drama education (M=3.87, SD=0.886), inadequate training on drama education during pre-service teacher education (M=3.68, SD=1.020) and lack of time during the teaching lesson (M=3.68, SD=1.028). The obtained results are in agreement with research (Dickinson & Neelands, 2006; Himberg & Jauhiainen, 1998; Johnson & Johnson, 2009; Toivanen, Antikainen & Ruismakl, 2012) which showed that insufficient training of teachers was the major obstacle pulling along other obstacles. According to Toivanen, Antikainen & Ruismakl (2012) for applying drama as a teaching method one should develop skills which comprise: classroom management, drama experience, planning, self-confidence and enthusiasm. Drama in its essence is unpredictable and teachers are not able to know what will happen during a drama performance. Therefore, training for implementing drama methods is essential in order to become more flexible in unpredictable situations (Dickinson & Neelands, 2006). Time also emerged as an obstacle mentioned by teachers in this research. However, Neelands (2004) stresses that time does not present an obstacle to the teacher if the teacher is capable of planning and applying drama as a teaching method.

Conclusion and recommendations

Quality teaching processes are reflected in the teacher's professional competence to apply contemporary pedagogical-psychological knowledge about learning and teaching in organizing the teaching process. In contemporary educational settings, the teacher is not the central source of knowledge. The teacher's role is directed towards teaching students how to independently learn content, how to use available sources of knowledge and information and how to exchange

them with others in a group, how to mutually work and create and develop personal skills and abilities. One of the ways in which this can be achieved is through the application of drama methods in the learning and teaching process. The research results show that primary education teachers in the Republic of Croatia are familiar with drama methods and that a large number of them apply drama methods in their teaching practice. Unfortunately, the frequency of applying drama methods is reduced to once per month and only within the subject Croatian language. On the other hand, many teachers assessed themselves as competent for applying drama methods regardless of the insufficient training in the area of drama pedagogy. Although they have a positive opinion on the application of drama methods and their importance for the development of student competences, the results point to a need for professional development which can be considered a significant cause for such underuse of drama methods in teaching practice. Based on the analysis of results, and for the purpose of attaining certain knowledge, skills and competences which refer to efficient organization of contemporary teaching practice including drama methods, the following recommendations were put forth:

- a) During formal pre-service teacher training, it is necessary to focus attention towards the acquisition of competences relating to the organization of the teaching process by implementing drama methods. In addition to acquiring quality applied theoretical knowledge of drama pedagogy, it is necessary to involve students in drama workshops which can be organized within the student-teacher practicum as part of their program of study.
- b) During formal pre-service primary teacher education, it is necessary to focus attention towards the acquisition of competences which refer to the application and implementation drama methods in teaching practice. One of the possible ways of acquiring such competences is through teaching methodology practicum courses in all primary education subject areas. They would provide students with opportunities to organize and carry out teaching using drama methods. In that way they would gain the experience which will be the foundation for further development of competences in on the application and implementation of drama methods in their future work.
- c) Topics on effective planning and organization of teaching by applying drama methods should be more systematically included into course content of primary education teaching methodologies and enable students to gain insight into the manners of implementation of drama methods along with practical experience.
- d) Throughout the program of study, students, future primary education teachers, should engage in carrying out small-scale or large-scale action research on the application of drama methods in teaching practice and out-of-school environments. The results of their research can be shown and applied during their teaching practice for all subjects within primary education teaching.

In addition to quality formal education, an appropriate support system for all teachers should be ensured which would enable them to systematically develop those competences which they find to have insufficiently developed. The professional identity of a teacher should be observed as complex, dynamic and multidimensional system. The support system for teachers implies inclusion of topics on effective planning and organization of teaching by applying drama methods through professional development meetings put forth by the Education and Teacher Training Agency. Helping teachers enhance their teaching and increase motivation can be provided through best-practice experiences. The mentioned recommendations lead us to the conclusion that within the pre-service teacher education programs, key competences

that future teachers acquire during their formal education and which are necessary for professional organization of contemporary teaching should be examined, questioned and defined. The defined area of competence should awaken the role and responsibility of all institutions involved in teacher education, from formal to lifelong education and, emphasize the importance of their cooperation with the aim of achieving and maintaining a high level of teacher competence. Advancement of any school or educational system is reflected in the teacher's competence. Therefore, quality teacher education is one of the major factors influencing the level of student educational achievements.

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