

## **A Primary School Teacher's Journey on Using Drama Method in the Classroom: Collaborative Action Research Model\***

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### **Abstract**

This study aims to determine a primary school teacher's observations and experiences regarding in-service training on drama method within the framework of collaborative action research model. The first author was invited to offer a 120-hour Drama Course upon request of the teachers in a primary school. In the 14th week, the action research process started with a teacher who wanted to implement the drama method in her classroom. Collaborative action research cycle was consisted of following phases: structuring the lesson plan, implementing, and monitoring the lesson plan in the classroom, teacher's observation of the process, and reflection of the findings obtained through student feedback and reflective diaries. The teacher prepared 4 lesson plans, implemented, and evaluated them in this cycle, which lasted a total of 8 weeks. According to results, Derya teacher actively participated in the process, questioned her practices systematically, and became open to development and change with the students and researcher's feedback. Based on the findings obtained, it is suggested that collaborative action research model in in-service training should be used. Thus, thanks to this model based on practice, it may be possible to reduce the theoretical weight of traditional in-service training and seminars.

**Keywords:** Drama, Collaborative Action Research, In-Service Training, Elementary School Teacher

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## INTRODUCTION

The need for the integration of drama efficiently and effectively into the education system has been in the education agenda for a long time. Because the aims and achievements of drama overlap with the skills required by the age we live in, this situation occurs. Drama is defined as an enactment of an idea or a subject by using improvisation and role-playing techniques based on the life experiences of a group (Adıgüzel, 2014). The group, life-oriented, role-playing, and game processes that the drama hosts enable children to develop from different angles. Baldwin (2008) states that drama develops the child holistically in cognitive, physical, linguistic, cultural, social, creative, aesthetic, and emotional areas. The contributions of drama to social and affective development are important for the education systems that are criticized for focusing more on cognitive development. Goleman (2018) states that today we leave the emotional education of children to chance and this has devastating effects. As solution, he suggests that schools should fully consider what the student needs in the classroom and develop an educational vision by integrating mind and emotions.

Ken Robinson (2015) emphasizes the importance of a holistic development that includes both emotional and cognitive characteristics and underlines some competencies required for the individuals of our age. These competencies include curiosity, asking questions, creativity, generating and applying new ideas, analysing information and opinions, constructing logical arguments, expressing oneself effectively, working with others, effective citizenship, building empathy, awareness of emotions, and personal balance and harmony. Robinson states that same sources and status should be provided for disciplines including science, human sciences, mathematics, physical education, language arts and fine arts to gain relevant competencies in schools. He states that we shape our thoughts, emotions, and experiences of the world through fields such as drama. McCaslin (2016) also mentions that the aims of contemporary education and the purpose of drama overlap. These include creativity and aesthetic development, critical thinking, social development and collaborative skills, communication skills, development of moral and spiritual values, self-knowledge and understanding and valuing others' values and cultural backgrounds.

In the report called "Road Map for Arts Education" which emphasizes the importance of developing the creative thinking capacity required by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) (2006), evaluated art as a tool in learning and teaching the cultural and artistic dimension of curricula and drama method had its place between these tools. The report grounded the need for art education, which drama is a component, on four basic reasons. Among these, following opinion draws attention: It is human's right to receive education in which culture and art are complementary. In addition, it was highlighted in the report that education systems must adapt to changing conditions to meet creative, flexible and innovative workforce demands in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. At this point, it was presented that there was a need for art education that equips students with skills that enable them to express themselves and evaluate the world critically. Moreover, among the mentioned reasons is the belief that cultural practices, artistic knowledge and skills will strengthen personal and collective identities as well as values and promote the preservation of cultural diversity. The report states that teachers should have access to the materials and training they need for the effectiveness of this process and creative partnerships between ministries, schools and teachers should be encouraged within this framework.

The practices carried out by the Ministry of National Education (MEB) General Directorate of Teacher Training and Development set a good example for drama education in 2019 in our country for the creative partnerships mentioned above. An activity and practice-based professional training program was developed for teachers in September 2019 and this program included Drama in Education, Drama in Nature, and Drama in the Museum (MEB, 2019). In addition, MEB Ankara In-Service Training Institute opened the Drama Instructor Training in Education course in August 2019 and took the first steps of a process that would enable the teachers within its body to learn the drama method (Ankara In-Service Training Institute, 2019).

These attempts are valuable; however, they must be supported by in-service training, teacher opinions, expert contributions and research, and a roadmap must be determined considering the problems and suggestions. In-service training includes goals such as fulfilling the pre-service training needs in terms of professional competence, acquiring the knowledge, skills and behaviours which innovations and developments in the field of education demand, and supporting the development of the education system (Ministry of National Education In-Service Training Regulation, 1994). However, it can be stated that there are some problems in the realization of the relevant objectives. According to some studies, professional development needs cannot be determined completely, and most teachers do not find the professional development activities which they participate in effective. Traditional courses and seminars are considered ineffective because they focus on theory, are detached from the context, do not provide monitoring and feedback, and are based on memorization (Bümen, Ataş, Çakar et al., 2012).

The problems generally regarding in-service training processes are also experienced in the field of drama. As a matter of fact, one of the reasons why drama is not widespread in schools and is not implemented effectively is inadequate in-service training. (Bertiz, 2011). In a study conducted with 16 primary teachers who received drama training through the Ministry of National Education or the school they work in, teachers stated that they did not feel themselves competent enough to implement drama and added that they needed to be monitored by experts and they wanted to have more in-service training in the field of drama (Çetingöz, 2014). In another study, after a 30-hour drama training, the data obtained from 102 culture teachers revealed the demand that drama should be taught gradually by connecting it with groups divided into branches and courses and indicated that teachers required more experiences to use drama in their lessons (Akkocaoğlu Çayır, Akhun, & Şimşek, 2016). 51 pre-school teachers working in the state school evaluated the in-service trainings related to drama and stated that the training should last longer and include more steps, it should be carried out more frequently, and the number of groups should be standard. In addition, teachers stated that the training events were occasionally carried out in the form of conferences, those who gave the training had a lack of knowledge, and they needed relevant sharing such as activity pools for implementation (Kavaz, 2017). However, drama is one of the teaching methods which primary school teachers desire to learn through in-service training (Ergin, Akseki & Deniz, 2012). At this point, it can be stated that teachers become individuals who not only get knowledge but also produce knowledge and they are more critical and reflective in their practices carried out with the collaboration of the field expert and they may exceed the boundaries of existing in-service teacher training models with action research (Aksoy, 2003; Kuzu, 2009; Uzuner, 2005). The support of the field expert can play an important role in solving the problems that teachers encounter when they start to apply the drama method and the cooperation with the field expert can foster the professional development of teachers. In this respect, the purpose of this paper is to examine the observations and experiences of a primary school teacher who has just been introduced to drama during the learning and implementation process of the drama method within the framework of the collaborative action research model.

### **Collaborative Action Research Model in In-Service Teacher Training**

Action research, which is defined as a cycle in which teachers examine their own practices and the achievements of their students in the process, organize their practices as a result of their observations and maintain this process systematically, has an important role in teacher education (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Gore & Zeichner, 1991; Tripp, 1987). In action research, teachers or teacher candidates become an active part of the learning process by asking challenging questions about their own practices and make a positive change in education possible by developing reflective thinking skills (Elliott, 2015; Gore & Zeichner, 1991). In-service teacher training based on action research has more lasting effects in terms of learning a new pedagogical approach as it is usually long-term and places teachers at the centre (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009).

It is considered that action research will allow teachers to think systematically about their own practices and support them to develop positive attitudes towards their profession (Feldman & Minstrell, 2000). In this process, teachers not only become reflective and questioning practitioners

(Gore & Zeichner, 1991), they also increase their knowledge of learning and teaching processes that take place in their classrooms. Unlike traditional teacher education models that are disconnected from classroom practices (Darling-Hammond, 2005), when teachers participate in in-service training within the context of action research, they examine and think about their own practices and make sustainable changes in their own classroom with the pedagogies they have just learned (Elliott, 1991). Thus, a step is taken towards filling the gap between theory and practice.

An important focus of action research is the collaboration between teachers and academics (Clift, Veal, Johnson, & Holland, 1990). In this collaboration, an attention is paid to create settings where teachers can focus on the “problems” they will encounter during the implementation, work together with field experts so that they can have the required “time and support”. In this approach, teachers are expected to take steps in their own classes as well as learning the theoretical dimensions of new pedagogical approaches in order to reveal problems related to the implementation. Collaborative action research is a systematic model that promote teachers to think reflectively about their own practices with the support and guidance of the field expert (Gore & Zeichner, 1991). Like other types of action research, teachers create data-driven knowledge on how to change their practices for the better and solve problems they encounter in their classes (Wahlgren & Aarkrop, 2020).

In a study, 19 drama activities based on learning outcomes were developed and implemented in cooperation with a drama expert and primary school teacher in response to the needs of teachers who joined in-service teacher training but were not experienced in drama method (Flynn, 1997). Here, solutions were sought with the drama expert to the difficulties such as noisy classroom, irrelevant questions asked by students and lack of interest in activities. The collaboration between the teacher and the drama expert turned out to be an effective learning process for both and carrying out professional development workshops in cooperation with teachers were included among the future studies of the drama expert. The collaboration leads the way for research about in-class drama practices.

As a result of in-service training in which the researchers became partners with the teachers, planned the drama lessons and instructed together considering the needs, the teachers stated that the student participation and their interest towards the lesson changed positively, but they had lack of knowledge about drama, and they had problems in classroom management (Stinson, 2009). In addition, due to the hierarchical, top-down, and centralized administration in Singapore, where the study was conducted, teachers had difficulties in practising drama, a new method, in their classrooms. Time constraints were added to these difficulties, which also emerged in other studies (Flynn, 1997). However, thanks to the positive relationship built between teachers and the researchers during the process, the teachers stated that they were not alone against all these difficulties. Therefore, researcher-teacher partnership provided positive and productive opportunities for learning and implementing drama method.

Although there are few studies conducted in collaboration with field experts in learning the drama method and its application in classrooms, they offer effective opportunities for teachers’ professional development. Collaboration with the field expert not only leaves the teacher alone in the process, but also allows them to work together in solving the problems encountered by the teacher while applying the drama. This paper sought answers to the following research question in the light of the data obtained from the in-service training program that a drama expert and a teacher who has just learnt drama and wants to implement in her classroom based on collaborative action research: What are the observations and experiences of a primary school teacher who has implemented drama method within the framework of collaborative action research model?

## METHOD

### Research Model

Collaborative action research, one of the qualitative research methods, was used in this study (Lune & Berg, 2017). Action research is generally defined as a systematic data collection and analysis process by practitioners to identify and solve problems that arise in practice (Mills, 2000). In addition to solving problems in practice, collaborative action research is a frequently used research model for teachers' professional development (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009; Somekh & Zeichner, 2009). Collaborative action research brings a researcher who has a comprehensive knowledge of the field and a teacher together and it involves implementation of a new teaching method and scientific evaluation related to the implementation after the process is examined by the researcher (Lune & Berg, 2017; Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). In this approach, there is an intense interaction between the practitioner and the researcher. Including the problems that arise in practice and the researcher's suggestions for solutions in the action research cycle, lesson plans are developed and become more effective in the following cycles. According to Yıldırım and Şimşek (2016), in collaborative action research, the interaction between researcher and teacher, and description and analysis of the teachers' observations and experiences in action research cycles are at the forefront.

### Context, Participants, and In-Service Training Process

The first author who is an expert on the field of drama was invited upon the request of teachers working in a state primary school in Ankara to take a Drama Course within the scope of in-service training. The course, which lasted 120 hours in total, started on December 21, 2019 and ended on May 24, 2019. In the process, recognition of individual characteristics, communication between individuals and groups, the theoretical, social, psychological dimensions of drama and its relationship with arts, and the use of drama as a method were the main topics. It was emphasized in the course that during the use of drama as a learning method, the stages of warm-up, animation, and evaluation must be structured.

Following the applied lessons on the aforementioned subjects, sample lessons about the use of drama in primary schools were held and teachers were asked to plan a drama lesson which was applied to their colleagues.

The action research process started with a teacher (Derya teacher) who wanted to implement drama method in her classroom through collaboration with the field expert in the 14<sup>th</sup> week of the drama course. In addition to the information obtained from the literature, the other reasons for the use of drama method during the action research process include drama's need for extensive knowledge and skills, Derya teacher's wish, and students' demands from her. Derya teacher is a graduate of vocational school and has been working as a primary school teacher for 30 years. Derya, who teaches the third grades, decided to use the drama method in her classroom after being introduced to drama method and thus the collaboration process between the first author / expert and she were planned.

First of all, Derya teacher was asked to determine on which subject, problem, outcome and etc., she wanted to use drama in the framework. Considering her observations and the needs of her students, the teacher decided to work on "rules" within the scope of the Social Studies lesson. After determining the subject to teach with drama method, the meeting times and meeting contents for the field expert and Derya teacher were decided. The collaboration process between Derya teacher and expert consisted of the following stages:

1. Structuring the lesson plan under the guidance of an expert
2. Implementation of the lesson plan in the classroom and monitoring by the expert

3. Teacher's evaluation process and its aftermath through expert observation, student feedback and reflective diaries.
4. The teacher's evaluation process, relevant questions, and reflection of her findings in the next lesson plan in line with the expert's observations

Following the stages mentioned above, Derya teacher prepared 4 lesson plans and then applied and evaluated them. These stages, which were repeated for each lesson plan, took 8 weeks in total. During the preparation stage of the lesson plans, the expert answered Derya teacher's questions, gave feedback by following her practices, and guided Derya teacher so that the data obtained from the evaluation process could shed light on her next lesson plan. The expert and the teacher held two meetings for each practice in order to prepare a lesson plan and observe its implementation. At the end of these interviews, which took place six times over eight weeks, the process was evaluated together, and the problems encountered in the process were solved together and the plans made at every turn were adapted to the procedures and principles of the drama method. After the third lesson plan, it was determined that the teacher did not need the field expert's support during the planning process based on drama method (6<sup>th</sup> interview) and it was decided to end the action research process with the fourth lesson plan. The analysis of Derya teacher's observations and experiences regarding the process also supports this decision.

### **Data Sources**

In collaborative action research, both the teacher and the researcher use various data sources to examine the process (Mills, 2000). After the drama lessons, the teacher got feedback from the students to evaluate her own practice and examine its effect on the students. Although student feedbacks were not analysed within the scope of this study, the teacher reported classroom observations with the feedbacks, made general evaluations and did self-evaluation on her own practices, and thus systematically wrote three different articles at the end of each action cycle. In addition, the teacher was asked to keep a diary about the drama practices she carried out in her classroom.

Another data collection tool included within the content of this study is the semi-structured interview carried out at the end of the fourth cycle with the teacher. Interview is a strong data collection tool in action research as it strengthens the interaction between the researcher and the teacher and makes the other collected written data more detailed (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The interview with the teacher was administered in the school where the teacher worked and lasted about 45 minutes. In addition to the data the teacher gathered and data collected from the teacher, the researcher's notes are particularly important data source for this study. The researcher in these notes included descriptions which would improve the instruction positively in terms of the applied approach.

The data obtained from different sources aim at revealing the observations and experiences of the teacher who practised the drama method within the framework of collaborative action research model. Data variety contributes to minimization of the limitations of a single data collection method by avoiding biased presentation of findings in qualitative research (Maxwell, 2005).

### **The Researchers' Role and Attitude**

The teacher is a researcher in collaborative action research and plays an active role in the determination of the implementation process. However, in this study in which the observations and experiences of the teacher were reported, the teacher could not be included in the data analysis and reporting of the findings process due to reasons such as school break and time constraint. The subject matter expert (first author of the article) and the second author, who took an active role in the collaboration process, reported the research. Both authors are teacher educators. The first author spent a lot of time in the application environment both as a drama expert and as a collaborator with the teacher. In this process, she gave some advice to the teacher on how to improve drama lesson plans and the application of the drama method. In addition, she generated data by describing the process

from her own perspective for the study. In this sense, the first researcher is the person who observes the practices as a field expert and cooperates with the teacher. Although the second author was involved in design of the study, selection of data sources, analysis of the data and reporting of the study, she did not join the implementation. She contributed to the process in terms of creating a collaborative action research model in teacher education and the methodological follow-up of this model. Both authors are concerned about developing an alternative approach for in-service teacher training and consider that teachers should take an active role in their own education and the teacher and teacher educator cooperate while implementing a new approach.

### **Data Analysis**

The audio recording of the interview with the teacher was transcribed for the analysis of the collected data. The transcribed interview and the other written data were uploaded on computer. The data were encoded with content analysis (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). During the coding process, the meaningful parts which refer to the teacher's professional development were given names (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). The two authors of the article came together and grouped the codes obtained in the first analysis in accordance with the action research model and obtained umbrella themes under which the grouped codes could be included (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). While introducing the themes, codes were examined, compared, associated, and conceptualized using *constant comparison* method (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). These themes were organized within the context of the action research model and interpreted in accordance with the research question (Corbin & Strauss, 2008).

### **Reliability and Validity of the Research**

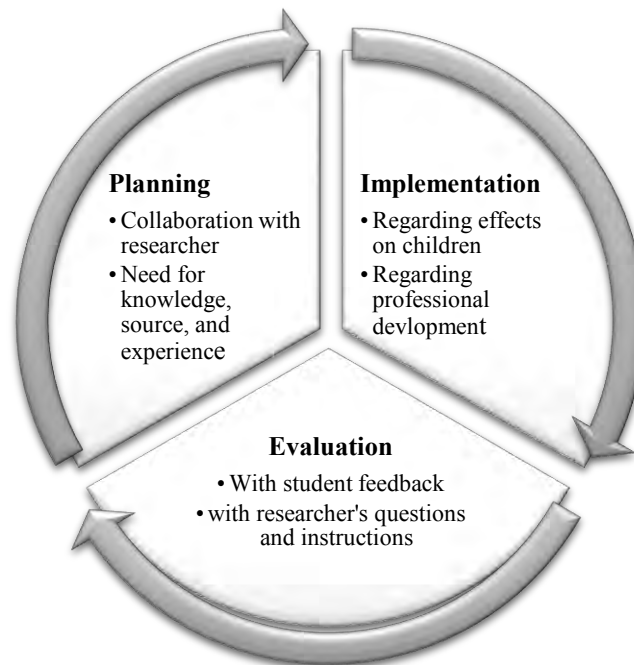
There are various methods to ensure validity and reliability in qualitative research (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Internal validity is whether the explanations for reporting the findings are consistent within the context of a particular study. In this study, data diversification method was used to ensure internal validity. In other words, the data and teacher's observations and experiences were gathered from different sources including interviews, diaries, and self-evaluation reports and they were subjected to analysis. Thus, the observations and experiences of the teacher applying the drama method within the framework of the collaborative action research model were included in the findings with the help of various data sources.

In addition to data diversification, the researcher spent a lot of time in the field due to the nature of the collaborative action research and composed the researcher notes which described the class and school where the study was carried out and the context of the implementation in addition to the data gathered from the teacher (Uzuner, 2005). The two authors checked the consistency of the data obtained from different participants during the data analysis and the quotes obtained from the teachers were included in the findings.

Based on the assumption that social events vary according to the environment they are in, it is not possible to directly generalize the findings of qualitative research to another environment (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). However, considering the external validity of the study, the authors described the context of the study, the participants, and the research process in detail in the previous sections so that the readers could understandable to the results. It is asserted that there may be differences in the way each researcher understands and interprets the phenomena in qualitative approaches (Yıldırım & Şimşek, 2016). Therefore, the researchers clarified their position in the study process. In addition, as stated before, both authors played an active role in the data analysis process and working together in the creation of umbrella themes, they verified their interpretations on the basis of data.

## FINDINGS

The aim of this study is to examine the observations and experiences of a primary school teacher who implements the drama method within the framework of collaborative action research model. Accordingly, the findings will be presented under the stages of the collaborative action research model. The general view of the themes obtained in data analysis is as given in Figure 1:



**Figure1.** Collaborative action research model in the implementation of drama method

### **Teacher Observations and Experiences in the Planning Stage**

While Derya teacher prepares her lessons on drama method, the planning phase she has worked with the researcher constitutes one of the most important parts of the collaborative action research. Derya teacher benefited from her collaboration with the researcher while preparing her lessons on the drama method. She also stated that due to the action research cycle (planning-implementation-evaluation) she was involved in, she often needed information, sources and experience.

#### ***Collaboration with Researcher***

The theme of collaboration with researcher indicates the strengths of the teacher's collaboration with the researcher in the planning stage of the drama lesson. Derya teacher draws attention to the importance of the researcher in diversifying the activity options and generating different ideas while preparing the drama activities. In addition, according to Derya teacher, another strength of the collaboration is the analysis of her plans by the researcher in terms of their suitability to the drama method.

It can be stated that it is important for the teacher to develop her own activities rather than ready or structured plans to gain the necessary knowledge and skills in terms of a new learning method she has been introduced to. However, the field expert accompanies the teacher for a while and gives feedback on what she has developed and thus this makes the teacher feel safe and encouraged to use the relevant method at this stage. An example of Derya teacher's opinion parallel to these findings is given as follows:



*“I received a lot of support from you regarding the plan. I always got support from you because I didn’t know too many techniques (used in drama) and whether my practices were appropriate or not. If I were alone, I would stay within certain patterns, but my horizon expanded. So I will learn more if I work with you more ...”*

### ***Need for knowledge, source, and experience.***

The theme of need for knowledge, sources and experience corresponds to the teacher’s understanding that knowledge and experience are a prerequisite for effective implementation of the drama method. Derya teacher mentioned the need for knowledge and experience for planning the drama lesson effectively, diversifying the activities, finding solutions to the problems encountered during the implementation stage where there was no expert support. At this point, sources and frequent implementations fill the gap left by the researcher. Derya teacher’s statements representing this theme are given as examples:

*“Since there is no exemplary teacher in front of me, I think I should probably read books about them because I think I have to know a lot of activities... And the more you practice, the more you learn. Sometimes we start to find such practical solutions, that is, the more we do the same studies, the more practical we become.”*

Based on the above statements, it is regarded that Derya teacher needs to enrich and develop what she learned in the professional development course with new knowledge and experiences while planning the activities which she will use with the drama method. This situation shows that the teacher is open to development while learning and applying a new teaching method and focuses on the process rather than the result. The teacher stated that she became “more practical” as she practiced and emphasized the continuity of the learning process by expressing the need for knowledge, sources and experience for her own professional development and learning in drama.

Derya teacher also wants to prepare drama lesson plans by benefiting from other stages of the action research model. It can be stated that as there were features specific to the drama method such as improving the physical environment of the classroom and giving clear and understandable instructions for the animations which she experienced during the implementation and evaluation stages, she reconsidered them in the later planning stages. Repeating her need for knowledge and experience as well as being open to learning in the self-reflection report that she wrote following the course, she states the following while preparing her lesson plans:

*“While preparing the drama lesson plan, I need more knowledge and experience to ensure that the warm-up and animation stages are interconnected.”*

### **Teacher Observations and Experiences in the Implementation Stage**

During the implementation stage of the collaborative action research model, Derya teacher had the opportunity to observe both children and her own professional development. The teacher’s observations and experiences were collected under two themes, in terms of their effect on children and professional development.

#### ***Effects on Children***

During the implementation stage, Derya teacher evaluated the drama method in terms of its effects on children. In this context, the teacher observed that drama increases children’s knowledge retention, attracts their attention, enables them to cooperate, improves their creativity and imagination, and that they learn with fun. She stated that all of these made the lesson effective and efficient. Derya teacher’s statements on this issue are as follows:

*“While explaining a subject in the lesson, if I teach it with games, improvisation, animation, or still image, in one way or another, you retain the knowledge, that is, it becomes permanent. Its retention increases as a behaviour too because they realize their mistakes much better. Considering knowledge, it becomes more permanent as they learn while playing.”*

*“... they have learned to share, they have learned to give a role to everyone in the group, they try to cast everybody no matter how many groups there are. As they do these in every task, they do collectively so these will serve me because they do it in harmony. There are shows and events that I want to prepare for the next year. I think it will make my job easier.”*

*“I did not know the process very well; I even considered the drama as if it were just animating. But now I have learned the stages of drama, I can apply it at any time with children, I can transfer it to the lesson, and we have more effective lessons. The children also need their energy to be transferred correctly. It is really good in that sense”.*

In addition to what Derya teacher stated in the interview, she pointed out in the self-evaluation reports that the lessons in which the drama method was used were more effective and efficient:

*“The children liked the game I prepared for the warm-up stage very much and they wanted to play it again.”*

Derya teacher's positive observations of children during the implementation encouraged her to use drama method in her lessons and benefit from the drama method in her further studies. In addition, these observations inspired her to learn new games and activities and thus they supported her to consider children's need for learning with fun. Moreover, these observations in the implementation paved the way for regarding the problems that occur while using the drama method. This is an example from one of the findings mentioned by Derya teacher:

*“While one group is acting, the others do not listen to them, they focus on their own preparations. Those who could not complete their preparations, or whose preparations were not fully completed could not adapt to the others or could not listen... I also had a little difficulty in stopping the hyperactive children, that is, there are what we experienced most.”*

The observations Derya teacher made during the implementation stage of the drama method provided her with feedback about the children and led her to examine the strengths and weaknesses she experienced in the process with a reflective eye. As elaborated in the next theme, the implementation stage of action research constitutes an important building block for professional development.

### ***In terms of Professional Development***

Another theme determined during the implementation stage is the professional development of the teacher. Under this theme, Derya teacher's views about her own learning process in the implementation stage are included. The problems encountered and mistakes made during the implementation triggered the teacher to develop herself professionally. Derya teacher realized her mistakes as stated in the following expressions given below and progressed in the learning process by generating solutions to the problems that emerged during the implementation.

*“Well, I performed an application and my mistakes, I mean I make mistakes because there are things I do not know, but I can say that I learnt during the application. ...For example, during the implementation, I could not put the students in groups, that is, I have*

*problems with grouping ... What I mean is we can encounter such problems while grouping the students. I won't do this next time. For example, something happened. I could not decided whether I would intervene the students during acting or playing their roles. Later, during improvisation, acting their roles, I learned that I had to intervene. However, while forming the groups, sometimes they cannot share roles. I realized that I could help them choose their roles and tell them the situation much better."*

*"Now, I can solve the problems I have encountered while grouping the students or such things much more practically. You can encounter a problem suddenly and I have gained the habit of solving that problem in a practical way. That is, the more I have experience, the more I become experienced, and I solve the problems much more easily."*

In addition to the mistakes made and the problems encountered, the implementation became a tool to learn "new things" and it helped Derya teacher to learn through "doing and experiencing". As can be seen from the following statements, professional development became more permanent.

*"You know there is learning through experience. I learned through experience. You join in-service training, some people explain, there is no practice. If you do not practise it, it is not permanent, but now it has become more permanent. As what I taught to children became permanent, my knowledge has become permanent too. Now I can think practically about some subjects. Sometimes I can even give instant support to my colleagues, they say, fortunately, you are with us, we found a practical solution right away, we can do it right away with drama. I think I will become much better if I have a lot of experience."*

*"Let me tell you. When you tell us to prepare a lesson plan (in the course), I only stick to what I have learnt, that is, I do not have a broad perspective, but I learn new things in every drama work (while practising) ..."*

Derya teacher stated in the diaries she kept throughout the term that she learned something new from each drama practice and her experiences contributed to her professional development:

*"Any drama work performed is an experience for us. I practice different methods in every drama work, and I learn new things. As I practice more, I come up with new ideas and I see that I can produce."*

Derya teacher, with the above statements, revealed the importance of integrating knowledge acquired in the in-service training process with practices. Identifying the problems encountered during the implementation and trying different solutions in the next implementation are a meaningful experience in the teacher's journey to use the drama method. What instructions to give under which situations to the students, or the ways for the teacher to intervene the students in the drama lesson are features that can be grasped during the best practice. This process also makes it possible to consider mistakes as a learning opportunity. Derya teacher's statement supporting this view is given below:

*"And of course, I make a mistake at that moment and when I ask you, I learnt it when we talked about that mistake. I do not make that mistake again. It is all a new experience, I saw my mistakes, learned from my mistakes, I learned not to make it again or what to do where."*

Observation of the teacher's practices by the field expert made the implementation stage more effective. Presence of an expert that the teacher can consult when needed or to overcome her hesitations was important. Collaboration has accelerated the teacher's learning process.

The researcher's observation notes, grouping students (randomly or through a game), intervening students while acting their roles with such expressions as "you did it or didn't", giving clear and understandable activity instructions, organizing the physical environment of the classroom in accordance with the needs, starting the process with the students in a circle promote teacher's

determination. On the other hand, the fact that the teacher gives the instructions to the groups and withdraws, that is, she does not work with the groups, does not check whether they have questions, and does not move between the groups is noted as a factor preventing the effective use of the method. Another factor affecting the effectiveness of the method is that the teacher does not ask the students enough questions to make them think about their inferences, feelings, and opinions after the improvisations or during the evaluation stage. This situation may have caused the students to perceive drama as a game or as a means of fun but also it may avoid the realization of the purposes of drama such as creative and critical thinking. These obstacles can be explained by the teacher's traditional attitude. It is considered that the understanding of teacher-centred learning and classroom management that the teacher has experienced and used throughout her professional life affects the teacher's use of drama in her classroom.

### **Teacher Observations and Experiences Between Evaluation and Feedback**

The evaluation stage of the implementation of the drama method carried out in the action research cycle focuses on two themes. Students' feedback and the researcher's questions and instructions prompted the teacher to think reflectively about her practices and question her practices systematically. The students' feedback and the researcher's instructions given in the following sub-headings were instrumental in the teacher's self-evaluation and enriching the learning process of the drama method.

#### ***Through Students' Feedback***

Student feedback includes the observations and experiences of the teacher in line with the student observations and opinions obtained after each drama practice. Feedback on students' willingness to take the drama lesson motivated Derya teacher to try new practices. In addition, the observations about enhancing student creativity and imagination and retention of learned knowledge and the statements gathered from the students also contributed to the teacher's desire to implement the drama method. Derya teacher expressed her views on student feedback as follows:

*"The opinions of the students are more useful to me. Their opinions concern me more. Because we constantly questioned whether they enjoyed it or what they need. They give feedback, so it was definitely effective in that sense."*

*"Student feedback is definitely important because you are doing it for him, I am doing drama work for children. Giving them a message or teaching them something is my goal. You want to develop your imagination and your creativity, and you want to teach or there is a rule and you try to teach that rule. That's why student feedback is particularly important to me."*

Student feedback has an important place in the self-evaluation that Derya teacher does every week. Derya teacher stated the observations she made in her classroom in writing as follows:

*"Students state that they learn by having fun with drama, what they learn is more permanent, their talents are unearthed, their imagination improves, and their friendships improve."*

Derya teacher stated that referring to student feedback was effective for her learning process; but, the evaluation and reporting process of student observations and feedback took time.

### ***Through researcher's questions and instructions***

This theme includes the teacher's opinions about her learning process through researcher questions and instructions after each implementation. Derya teacher stated that she made progress in terms of being open to mistakes, considering mistakes as learning opportunities and being open to criticism.

*"Because of my personal interest in doing everything very well, everything will be the best. Even if I make a small mistake, I find it a bit difficult to accept my mistake in that sense. Maybe I am a little demoralized, but apart from that, I have gone beyond myself in the sense of being more open to criticism because I think that I must do everything properly, and thus I do not receive any criticism. At least now I have a belief that I can do wrong, I can get criticism, but I can fix it. It was particularly useful for me to excel myself."*

The teacher's revelation about herself is important. This view may indicate a point that might be an obstacle to the teacher's professional development. This is about being able to make self-criticism. In this process, what makes the teacher more open to criticism is to evaluate her own practices, and regularly to encounter the questions and feedback of the experts throughout the implementation. In addition, the self-evaluation questions and diaries after the implementation also reflected the teacher's strengths and caused her to think about her practices from different angles.

*"...What were my mistakes there, I have realized my mistakes better. If I have superior qualities, I start to notice them. They were good in that sense; I would not have realized them if there were no questions."*

*"I realized that those questions that were asked to me were the ones I wrote it first. If there were not any questions, maybe I would not have been so aware. I did it, I did it today, I did it like this, but because there were questions, I am looking for what my mistakes were and what they are."*

Derya teacher stated her personal reservations regarding self-evaluation and keeping a diary as follows:

*"It is because of me. It could be different if it were someone else. It is a problem because I'm thinking of what to write or whether I am writing correctly and I am difficult with myself. It is not difficult to write a diary, I can write it. While I am writing, I consider if my sentence is correct because I am little obsessed."*

On the other hand, Derya teacher stated that self-evaluation in action research would be used in other learning processes:

*"We evaluate ourselves in drama work; we can do the same, that is , evaluate ourselves, in the other studies , too. A preparation might be needed ... In this sense, the same thing can be used in the other lessons, could be administered. That is, it worked for me. My horizon has certainly broadened, and it was really a good experience."*

## **DISCUSSION**

This study aimed at determining Derya teacher's observations and experiences regarding the implementation of drama method within the framework of collaborative action research model. Teacher's observations and experiences were evaluated according to the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages of the collaborative action research. Her observations and experiences support the studies and conceptual discussions based on the collaborative action research model in in-service teacher training. Particularly, the active engagement of the teacher in the process made the learning of

a new method permanent (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 2009), developed a positive attitude towards the profession (Feldman & Minstrell, 2000), motivated the curiosity of learning due to the need for knowledge and experience, and had her gain reflective thinking skills (Gore & Zeichner, 1991).

The collaborative action research cycle pushed Derya teacher to systematic inquiries about her practices (Gore & Zeichner, 1991), triggered her need to learn despite being on the verge of her retirement and led her to change the teaching methods and techniques she currently uses. Based on the diaries kept by the teacher and the self-evaluation reports she wrote at the end of each drama cycle, it can be stated that needs and problems that arise with the implementation and evaluation stages of the action research model has an effect on the planning stage of next cycle. Derya teacher needed to enrich her plans with new information and try them, and it was revealed that even though the research was completed, the teacher's learning process continued. In other words, it is significant that Derya teacher thinks she is open to change and development without saying "I have learnt, and I am done" and thus it can be stated that this finding shows parallels with the literature (Clift, et al., 1990).

Derya teacher's collaboration with the subject-matter expert can be defined as a process of systematic data collection and analysis in the classroom (Mills, 2000). After implementing the drama method, the teacher kept reflective diaries with the questions and instructions provided by the researcher, questioned and reported her own practices in line with the feedback she received from the students. However, the teacher also mentions that writing is difficult and takes time in the action research process. Although the number of action research articles in the field of education is rare in our country, it was stated that the researchers and practitioners should gain more knowledge and experience in action research (Çalışkan and Serçe, 2018). In terms of professional development and in-service training process, it can be stated that the collaboration between researchers and teachers must also focus on the stages of writing and reporting. The support that the teacher will receive while analysing the data collected systematically from the students and putting them into practice serves as a bridge between the theory and practice (Wahlgren and Aarkrop, 2020).

The findings obtained from the teacher's observations and experiences show that each stage in the action research cycle positively affects professional development in addition to the contribution of the partnership with the subject-matter expert to the implementation of drama method (Flynn, 1997). In Derya teacher's own words, "self-actualization" can be regarded as an indication that she is open to development and change. As in other studies carried out in the field of drama (Dawson, Cawthon, Ihorn, and Judd-Glossy, 2017), Derya teacher stated that student participation in the classroom increased significantly. Because of the collaborative action research, Derya teacher had the opportunity to make the drama method more permanent by following this change and development in her students one-to-one. In this context, it can be said that it would be meaningful to benefit from the teacher's opinions and suggestions while determining the tools, questions, and instructions to be used in the evaluation process of in-service training programs.

Derya teacher stated that she made progress in planning the drama lesson, establishing relationships between activities, and preparing activities suitable for the warm-up, animation, and evaluation stages of the drama during the action research process. In addition to this, Derya teacher also mentioned her gains in connection with the problems experienced during the drama practice and generating solutions to them. As a matter of fact, providing immediate solutions to the problems when necessary and paying attention to the transition and continuity between drama activities and sessions are important qualities for a teacher who conducts the drama lesson (Tekerek, 2007).

Derya teacher stated that she needed more sources to diversify her activities during the planning stage of the drama lesson and highlighted that she shared her knowledge and experience with her colleagues. In parallel with this finding, Okvuran (2003) included following professional publications and sharing experiences with others among the qualifications of a drama teacher.

The other two prominent qualifications suggested by Okvuran (2003) regarding drama teacher's competencies are offering students the opportunity to express themselves and improving

their critical thinking skills. Although Derya teacher provides positive feedback on the process of using the drama method through action research, the researcher's notes reveal that the two qualities expressed by Okvuran have not yet existed for Derya teacher. The fact that the teacher does not ask the students enough questions, does not make them think, does not support them to share their feelings and opinions can have precedence over the use of drama. Derya teacher's attitude is not only towards the drama but towards the traditional teacher approaches raised in the problems in research in general.

Although Derya teacher states that she has positive observations and experiences during the planning, implementation and evaluation stages in her diaries, self-evaluation reports and interviews with the researcher, her past habits occur as the difficulties she encountered while implementing the drama method. However, it is considered that the professional knowledge and skills she acquired throughout the collaborative action research process (for example, getting feedback from students, reflective thinking and writing about her practices) will help her in the future. As a matter of fact, the teacher presented an exemplary drama lesson to the audience with her students at the opening of the Drama Room at the school following the end of the study and became in charge of the Drama Club, and shared her knowledge and experience with her colleagues on how to implement drama in their lessons at various meetings.

### **Results and Suggestions**

This paper includes the examination of in-service training on the drama method based on a teacher's observations and experiences in the process within the framework of the collaborative action research model. As a result of the study, although the teacher had difficulties in the implementation of the drama method, unlike other in-service training courses, she actively participated in the process, questioned her practices systematically, and became open to development and change with the feedback she received from the students and the researcher. Considering this result and a few number of action research studies in our country, it is suggested that the collaborative action research model in in-service training programs should be used. Thanks to this model based on practice, the theoretical weight of traditional in-service training and seminars can be reduced, and learning can be made more effective by spreading the process. In this study, one of the teachers who took the drama course volunteered to use drama in his classroom. A broader participation is recommended for the future research. In this way, both the collaborative action research model can become widespread and the functionality of the model can be examined with different subjects at different class levels.

Although this study was based on the collaborative work of the field expert (first author) and the teacher, the teacher could not be included in the data analysis and reporting process of the research due to time constraints as stated in the previous sections. It is suggested that the teacher should be included in the data analysis and research reporting process with a better time management in the further studies. Thus, it might be ensured that the teacher has a say in his/her own practices as well as taking part in the research effectively.

Drama is a multidimensional field including many concepts such as improvisation, play, art, theatre, and education. Creating an understanding of drama and understanding its theoretical foundations is only possible with practical in-service or pre-service training. To provide the effective use of drama and its continuity, it is important to ensure that the teacher can make a drama planning and implement the plans she has made. For this reason, it is quite valuable to structure in-service drama training with the cooperation of experts and with elements that include planning and implementation of drama.

Teachers should also consider traditional approaches with a critical point of view in order to effectively implement methods such as drama in which a student should be placed at the centre of learning process. Thus, it is suggested that in-service training should allow teachers to gain knowledge and skills related to the methods which promote learning through experience, and they must be supported by instructions including subjects that will enable them to absorb concepts such as "learning through experience", "constructivism", "learner-centred education", and "active learning".

In this study, the problems that teachers may encounter while implementing an innovative method such as drama and the practices for solving the problems were analysed in line with the teacher's own observations and experiences about the process. In conclusion, it can be stated that collaborative action research is an effective professional development model while learning and implementing a new teaching method.

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